

EXPLORING THE SCHNEIDER FAMILY BOOK AWARD, 2004-2018:  
A CASE STUDY HISTORY AND CONTENT ANALYSIS

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES  
COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

BY  
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DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST 2019

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## DEDICATION

For my husband, Dan, and our children, Aiden, Kellan, and Azure.  
Your love and support have meant everything.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I accepted my Master of Library Science diploma from Texas Woman's University in 2002, one of the attending professors at the graduation ceremony said to me "Now it's time for your Ph.D.!" I replied that I planned on it, and I had known for some time that I did not want my formal library education to end with a master's degree. Seventeen years later, this next step is finally a reality. A degree is ultimately bestowed on a single person, but the journey is only successful with the support, encouragement, and assistance of many people.

I extend my thanks to the librarians and staff of the Carrollton Public Libraries, and the TWU Denton and Dallas campus libraries. A library can only provide the resources it does with the commitment of the many people who work there. I always had a nice place to concentrate and write.

Dr. Paul Yeatts in the Center for Research Design and Analysis at Texas Woman's University has my gratitude for assistance in conducting the quantitative analyses for this study.

The thorough, detailed, meticulous recommendations and suggestions from Dr. Sylvia Vardell, Dr. Lynn Akin, and Dr. Jennifer Moore have been incalculably helpful. I am indebted to my advisor and dissertation committee chair, Dr. Sylvia Vardell, for many years of guidance, dating back to my master's degree and extending all the way through my doctorate degree. Thank you all for serving on my dissertation committee.

For a delicious lunch, an immeasurably informative and pleasant interview, and the very existence of the Schneider Family Book Award, my appreciation and thanks go to Dr. Katherine Schneider. Her generosity appears to know no bounds.

My family has been an endless source of support. Thank you to my three sisters-in-law for paving the way in the earning of doctorate degrees, and for cheering me on. I am enormously thankful for the many hours of childcare provided by my mother-in-law. My parents have always made it clear they are proud of me and my accomplishments, something that not every daughter (adult or no) is lucky enough to have and for which I am grateful. Thank you to my mom for many phone calls and much encouragement through the years!

I would like to thank my wonderful children, Aiden, Kellan, and Azure, who were just starting kindergarten, second grade, and fourth grade when I began the PhD program. As I complete my doctorate degree, you are now teenagers. Your willingness to accept more responsibilities and carry the load, around the house and in school, has been more helpful than you know. I am so very proud of each one of you. The next graduations we celebrate will be your own!

Finally, thank you to my husband Dan, without whom this would not have been possible. Words cannot adequately express my appreciation for the many ways you have supported and encouraged me. I look forward to our next adventures, together!

## ABSTRACT

SARAH DORNBACH

### EXPLORING THE SCHNEIDER FAMILY BOOK AWARD, 2004-2018: A CASE STUDY HISTORY AND CONTENT ANALYSIS

AUGUST 2019

The purpose of this case study was to examine the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and analyze the forty-six award-winning titles from 2004-2018 using a content analysis methodology. The Schneider Family Book Award honors literature written for a youth audience that portrays a disability experience and has been presented annually since 2004 by the American Library Association. Titles are selected in categories encompassing the intended age of the book's audience: Young Children's (ages 0-8), Middle Grades (ages 9-13), and Teen (ages 14-18). This award was started at the behest of Dr. Katherine Schneider, with the hope that it would encourage the writing and publication of more books for young people about disability.

For the award as a whole, results indicate that the gender of the protagonists was evenly balanced between male (49%) and female (49%). A majority of protagonists are white or Caucasian in ethnicity (67.3%). Most protagonists have a disability (83.7%). Realistic fiction is the most common genre (63%). A low percentage of authors and illustrators who have won this award appear to have relevant life experience to the disability about which they write (19.6%). Few of the winning titles could be considered

works of Own Voices (10.9%) – writing by persons with a disability about a character with the same disability.

Descriptive statistics indicate differences between the three age categories for several variables. The gender of protagonists is split nearly evenly in the teen category (47.1% male, 52.9% female), but in the young children's category, protagonists are overwhelmingly male (85.7%), and in the middle grades category the majority of protagonists are female (77.8%). The ethnicity of protagonists is predominantly white or Caucasian in the middle grades (83.3%) and teen (76.5%) categories, however in the young children's category, only 35.7% of the protagonists are white or Caucasian. Realistic fiction is the most common genre found in the winning titles from the middle grades (76.5%) and teen categories (80%), but biography is the most frequently occurring genre in the young children's category (42.9%). Chi-square analysis confirmed that the differences were statistically significant for the ethnicity and genre variables.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Literature for children and young adults is written for a variety of reasons and fulfills many different needs for young readers. Some books inform their youth audience about the world around them, while others build elaborate and innovative worlds that transport readers to a new, imagined reality. Some writing appears to exist solely to bring something beautiful to humanity. Many books accurately reflect our own world and provide youth readers with a glimpse into the lives of children and young adults both like, and unlike, themselves.

As time goes on, more teachers, librarians, authors, illustrators, and scholars of children's and young adult literature have realized and are emphasizing the importance of a varied and diverse body of literature for youth. This has been expressed as the necessity of "mirrors and windows" in children's and young adult literature. An influential essay by Rudine Sims Bishop (1990), as well as others, explained the need for cultural, racial, and other diversity in youth literature. Several youth literature awards have been established which recognize diverse, multicultural literature, including the Coretta Scott King Book Awards for excellence in youth literature by African American authors and illustrators, and the Pura Belpré Medal for Latino/a authors and illustrators.

More recently, the concept of mirrors and windows has been expanded to include other types of diversity, including class diversity and disability experiences (McNair 2016). The portrayal of disability in children's and young adult literature dates back to at

least the nineteenth century and is more recently emerging as an important and highly relevant element of youth literature. Like some other representations of diversity, there has been a literature award established which recognizes excellence in the portrayal of disability in literature for children and young adults – the Schneider Family Book Award.

The Schneider Family Book Award honors literature written for a child or young adult audience that portrays a disability experience. Awarded annually since 2004 by the American Library Association (ALA), the Schneider Family Book Award is presented to three or more authors (or author/illustrator pair) who successfully “embod[y] an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences” (ALA 2013). The titles are selected in categories encompassing the intended age of the book’s audience: Young Children’s (ages 0-8), Middle Grades (ages 9-13), and Teen (ages 14-18). The selections are announced each year at the American Library Association’s Midwinter Meeting, as one component of the Youth Media Awards Press Conference. Between 2004 and 2018, forty-six books had the distinction of receiving the Schneider Family Book Award.

The inspiration for the Schneider Family Book Award originated with Dr. Katherine Schneider, a clinical psychologist, life-long reader, and long-time advocate for persons with disabilities. Dr. Schneider, who has been blind since birth, named the award in honor of her family (Schneider 2013; 2017). Around the time of the death of her father, Dr. Schneider donated a portion of her inheritance to the American Library Association in order to create this award. Dr. Schneider influenced the creation of guidelines and

criteria for this award, originally modelling them after some of the criteria for the Coretta Scott King awards (Schneider 2012-2017).

Although the credit for the establishment of the Schneider Family Book Award rests with Dr. Schneider, the ALA is now solely responsible for selecting and presenting the winning titles for this award. Each year the Schneider Family Book Award Selection Committee is formed, comprised of seven to eight people appointed or elected through ALA (ALA 2014). The members of this committee are responsible for reading books that potentially meet the award criteria. From this larger body of literature, the committee makes each year's award selections.

### **Purpose and Significance**

The purpose of this study is to provide a more in-depth analysis of the Schneider Family Book Award than has previously been undertaken. The research will cover the history of the award, exploring how and why the award was created. A content analysis of the forty-six award-winning titles from 2004-2018 will provide insight into distinguishing features of the first fifteen years of the award's history.

There exists an abundance of research and articles, both investigative and simply descriptive, relating to the general topic of disability portrayal in literature for children and young adults, but comparatively little that focuses on the Schneider Family Book Award. The limited amount of published material that does concentrate on the Schneider Family Book Award is primarily descriptive in nature and very brief. There is only a single scholarly examination related to the Schneider Family Book Award, a critical discourse analysis by Curwood published in 2013 that analyzed three winning titles from



the teen category. This study will greatly expand the available professional writing about the Schneider Family Book Award and will add to the nearly non-existent empirical research on the subject.

The Schneider Family Book Award is a fairly recent addition to American Library Association youth literature awards. In contrast with the Newbery Award for the best book written for a youth audience published in the United States, which has been awarded since 1922, and the Caldecott Award for the best illustrated book for children, which has been awarded since 1938, the Schneider Family Book Award debuted in 2004. There is a wealth of literature about other ALA awards and their winning titles, but very little has been written about the Schneider Family Book Award. There has been no comprehensive study undertaken, either of the award's history or of the winning titles.

Several small-scale studies, examining a few or several of the winning titles, have been published, and a very brief biographical sketch of Dr. Katherine Schneider exists in *Children and Libraries*, the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the ALA. This is the first study that seeks to provide a more thorough understanding of the history of the award to date. It has the potential to contribute to library science literature by filling a gap in the available research on the topic of the Schneider Family Book Award. The study also attempts to broaden the understanding of this relatively new youth literature award and promote quality literature for children and young adults featuring characters with disabilities.

The primary limitations of this study are twofold. As a case study, the results are not generalizable beyond the Schneider Family Book Award. Swanborn (2010) notes that

some researchers may “experience difficulties in formulating conclusive results” with a case study approach (12). Although it would be interesting to compare the results of this study to other youth literature awards, the results apply only to the specific case of this particular award.

The Schneider Family Book Award is also an ongoing, dynamic award. This study covers the history of the award and analysis of the forty-six winning titles between 2004-2018. Already, the 2019 Schneider Family Book Award winners have been selected and announced. The titles to be selected as the 2020 Schneider Family Book Award winner and honor books are currently being published. The addition of new titles annually can easily alter trends or patterns noted for the first fifteen years of the award.

It was also revealed in January 2019 that a winner and an honor book would be selected in each age category, which means there are now six additional winning titles that will not be included in this study’s content analysis. There were forty-six winning titles in the first fifteen years that the Schneider Family Book Award existed; the second fifteen years of the award may well yield double that number of winning titles and honor books. It is possible there will be more additions or other changes made in the coming years to the Schneider Family Book Award.

Despite these noted limitations, this study has direct impact on the knowledge and understanding of several important demographics. Children with disabilities can benefit from more knowledge of the Schneider Family Book Award, and perhaps be introduced to a book that includes a character like them. Children, both with and without disabilities, and their parents, can learn more about the world around them and the people in it by

reading books that have won the Schneider Family Book Award. Practicing librarians and teachers, who each have opportunities to directly influence the reading habits of children and teenagers, can learn more about the Schneider Family Book Award, and recommend the winning titles to students and parents.

### **Research Questions**

There are two primary research questions, and two sub-questions, asked in this study:

1. What is the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and how did it come to be?
2. What does a content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018 reveal?
  - a. Are there differences between the three age categories, Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen, awarded the Schneider Family Book Award?
  - b. If there are differences, in which variables and between which age categories are the differences found?

### **Theoretical Framework**

There is a difference between studies that seek to test a theoretical framework and studies whose purpose is to aid in the formation of theory and see where the data may lead the researcher. In *Case Study Research* (2010, 76), Peter Swanborn lists four possibilities for a research study's relationship with theory:

1. No theory
2. Development of theory
3. Illustrating a theory
4. Testing a theory

This research study on the Schneider Family Book Award fits best into the second relationship – influencing the ongoing development of theory.

This study does not apply a theoretical framework to a set of data, and instead draws on the theory building strategies of Glaser and Strauss in their work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (1999). According to Swanborn (2010, 76), research to aid in the eventual development of theory may start with the selection of “some (probably) relevant variables and leave out some (probably) irrelevant ones.” The researcher selected several variables to study in relation to the Schneider Family Book Award, based upon related research. The construct of grounded theory allows for other patterns and trends to present themselves during the course of data collection.

### **Methodology**

A case study methodology is often a useful research approach when there is a lack of previous research on a subject. As a methodological approach, case study research can include a variety of different data sources and data collection methods, either qualitative or quantitative. The research questions asked in this research study are broad, general research questions, and are examples of the type of research questions often answered by case study research (Swanborn 2010, 16-17).

In *Case Study Research* (2010), Swanborn differentiates between extensive and intensive research. Case studies are an example of intensive research, intended to examine one aspect (case) of a social phenomenon in an in-depth manner (Swanborn

2010, 5). The Schneider Family Book Award can be studied as one case within the larger phenomenon of literary book awards, specifically ALA Youth Media Awards.

To answer the study's two primary research questions, several data collection methods are utilized. The first research question is: What is the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and how did it come to be? The data collection methods used to address this research question are qualitative in nature.

To answer this question, the researcher consulted the already available material that addressed the history of the Schneider Family Book Award, including the award's official website maintained by the American Library Association, the 2012 version of the Schneider Family Book Award Manual, various brief articles about the Schneider Family Book Award, and the personal blog of Dr. Katherine Schneider. The information gleaned from these materials allowed the researcher to identify gaps in what is known about the history of the Schneider Family Book Award.

To further understand the history of the Schneider Family Book Award, the researcher also conducted an in-person interview with Dr. Katherine Schneider, the patron of the award. Through the means of interview, the researcher learned more about the process of starting this award, and about Dr. Schneider's continued thoughts on the award in general. The provisional list of interview questions is included in Appendix H. Additional questions and comments came up during the course of the interview. Further clarification was provided by several follow-up emails to Dr. Schneider after the conclusion of the in-person interview.

The Program Officer of the ALA provided several official documents of ALA relating to the formation of the Schneider Family Book Award. These include the original Award Proposal (with a handwritten “approved” scrawled across the top), the original ALA Press Release and an internal email related to the establishment of the award, and a document containing “Tributes” to Dr. Schneider written by authors and illustrators who had won the Schneider Family Book Award and written for the tenth anniversary of the award. While Dr. Schneider’s interview tended to focus on her own experiences, an examination of ALA documents sheds additional light on the more specific timeline of the Schneider Family Book Award’s earliest years and corroborates Dr. Schneider’s memories. More details on the interview are provided in Chapter 4, and the interview transcript (minimally edited for clarity) is included in Appendix K.

To address the second research question, and its two sub-questions, a content analysis was performed. The research collection tool presented in Appendix J was utilized to conduct this content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018. According to Rossman and Rallis, a content analysis entails a “systematic examination of forms of communication to objectively document patterns” (2012, 196). While reading each of the forty-six relevant books, data regarding the content of each book was recorded. Data for several categorical and descriptive variables was collected. Prior to the main study, a pilot project was conducted to examine reliability and validity of the content analysis research tool. The pilot study was used to refine and strengthen the data collection tool used to perform the content analysis.

The variables studied for each of the winning titles include the gender, ethnicity, and disability status of all protagonist characters from the winning titles. Additional data collected includes the genre of the winning titles, the relevant life experience or disability status of the author or illustrator of each book, the type of disability or disabilities that are portrayed in each story, and the gender and ethnicity of secondary characters from the winning titles who have a disability. Other patterns, trends, or relationships that emerged while the study was conducted were also considered.

Several previously published studies indicated important and relevant variables to consider when studying the portrayal of disability in literature for children. McCabe et al (2011) discovered that female protagonists are generally under-represented in literature for children, including in the American Library Association's Caldecott Award. Several studies address both race and ethnicity as well as disability in literature for children and young adults, including Daniels (2004) who studied the portrayal of African American characters (also written by African American authors) with a disability in literature for youth and concluded that stereotypical depictions of disability are common. The Schneider Family Book Award guidelines provide the basis for several remaining variables to be studied.

The researcher performed a content analysis of the award as a whole, considering all forty-six winning titles from 2004-2018, and separately by age levels (young children's, middle grades, and teen). Taken as a whole, and using descriptive statistics, the researcher considered whether or not there appear to be any patterns that encompass the award-winning titles to date. The descriptive statistics will address questions

regarding the percentage of titles or frequency with which certain attributes appear in the forty-six Schneider Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018.

The sub-questions to the second research question address whether or not there are differences observed in the variables examined between the three age categories of the Schneider Family Book Award. If differences between the three age categories do exist, the researcher further examined where (between which age categories) these differences exist, and in which variable or variables differences may exist.

An additional inferential quantitative analysis was undertaken to better understand if statistically significant patterns emerged within the data collected for content analysis. The data collected is nominal, or categorical, in scale, and originates from independent groups rather than paired (before/after) groups. This type of data can be analyzed using chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests of frequency and homogeneity (McCrum-Gardner 2008). A chi-square statistical test is generally utilized to answer research questions related to the observed frequency of variables from different groups (Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs 2003). Within the specific framework of the Schneider Family Book Award, the chi-square test utilized addressed whether or not the frequencies observed in ethnicity and genre are consistent between the three age levels honored for this award. Some statistically significant differences were discovered and will be discussed in future chapters.

### **Conclusion**

This in-depth study will help encourage scholarly consideration of the Schneider Family Book Award within the broader field of literature for children and young adults. By exploring the history of the award and examining the winning titles to date through a



thorough and detailed content analysis, greater insight, and understanding of the award can be achieved. The results will help expand the knowledge of librarians, teachers, and parents. This case study of the Schneider Family Book Award will help promote this exceptional award within the field of library science and beyond. The next chapter will consider the foundation of previous research that grounds this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There has been literature written for a youth audience featuring characters with disabilities for over a century. *The Secret Garden*, written by Frances Hodgson Burnett and first published in 1911, included a young character who was unable to walk and used a wheelchair. Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did*, not well known today, but an "extraordinary success" in its own time, was published in 1872 and depicted a 12-year-old girl who becomes paralyzed after an accident (Keith 2001, 94). Depictions of disability date back even further than the 1800s in fairy tales and folklore. The quality of the depictions often does not measure up to modern standards, but nonetheless, authors have been including characters with disabilities in literature for youth for a lengthy amount of time. Over time, librarians, teachers, and scholars of literature for children and young adults began studying and writing about books for youth about disabilities and about experiences of disability.

The Schneider Family Book Award, which was first awarded in 2004 to three books for youth containing at least one character with a disability, came into being within a larger cultural framework that was becoming increasingly responsive to and aware of the needs of people with disabilities. There is a varied and increasingly complex body of scholarly and professionally written work addressing the general topic of the depiction of disability in children's and young adult literature, even as there is very little scholarly work specifically about the Schneider Family Book Award. The articles and single

research study which focus on the Schneider Family Book Award are discussed first, followed by an examination of articles and research focusing on the portrayal of disability in literature for children and young adults more generally.

### **Schneider Family Book Award**

Most of what is published about the Schneider Family Book Award is descriptive in nature and very brief. Verbeten (2005) provides a brief biographical portrait of the award's benefactor, Dr. Katherine Schneider, which appears to be based on Dr. Schneider's book *To the Left of Inspiration* (2005). This article highlights Dr. Schneider's history as a life-long reader and library patron. Wojahn (2007) offers an annotated list of winners up to the time the article was written, along with a brief history of the award. This author focuses on the unique attributes (an award for books featuring a disability experience) and novelty of the award (only in its fourth year at the time of publication) and encourages readers to find Schneider Family Book Award winners at their library.

Two articles are written by a people who served on the Schneider Family Book Award committee. The first summarizes the Schneider Family Book Award manual, notes several recent winners, and encourages librarians to volunteer to serve on the committee that chooses the award winners (McMillen 2007). McMillen also notes some of the specific disabilities that were portrayed in the winning titles to date, including depression, blindness, and stuttering, something very few other articles mention. Beecher (2016), who not only served on the Award selection committee but served as the Chair of the 2016 committee, also briefly outlined the award and then summarized the 2016

winners. 2016 was the first year that the committee selected four winning titles, instead of the typical three.

In “Great Reads, Intriguing Characters,” Klipper (2011) summarized the potential appeal of Schneider Family Book Award winners for teen audiences. Klipper further noted that Schneider Family Book Award winners offer “high quality depictions of members of minority populations,” which, particularly in the case of characters with disabilities, “have been underrepresented and at times misrepresented in literature for children and teens” (2011, 6).

Among the first references to the Schneider Family Book Award in professional literature is a 2003 blurb announcing the formation of the award in ALA’s *American Libraries*. Many articles simply list the most recent Schneider Family Book Award winners and might give a brief synopsis of the award (ALA 2005a; 2005b; 2006; ASHA 2015; CLA 2008; Mates 2006; Schulte-Cooper 2015; AAF 2016). A 2008 summary of recent award winners listed bibliographic information for 2008 winning titles in eleven ALA Youth Media Awards, including the Schneider Family Book Award (Libraries Unlimited 2008).

In 2006, *School Library Journal* (SLJ) did not include the Schneider Family Book Award amongst its reporting of the “Top Book Awards,” although many other awards were featured, including the newly debuted Geisel award and the often overlooked Batchelder Award (SLJ 2006a). However, SLJ did feature the Schneider Family Book Award in an additional “Awards” column in a later supplemental issue the same year (SLJ 2006b). *Library Media Connection* listed the Schneider Family Book Award

winners in both 2010 and 2012, among other ALA Youth Media Award Winners, but left out the Schneider Family Book Award in a similar listing in 2013 (Library Media Connection 2010; 2012; 2013).

Several articles, often in the context of recommending books with characters with disabilities for teachers or librarians to consider, mention the Schneider Family Book Award even if they do not examine the award in depth. Heim (2005) mentioned the recently established Schneider Family Book Award in an article in which the author examined several exemplary chapter books for youth published after 1993. Campbell (2006), in an article for a librarian audience that included both tips for selection of books featuring a disability experience, and tips for weeding the library collection of outdated portrayals of disability, mentioned the establishment of the Schneider Family Book Award and wrote that books that have won this award “should always be considered for inclusion in collections about disabilities” (n.p.). Menchetti, Plattos, and Carroll (2011, 64) listed six Schneider Family Book Award winners as examples of books that portray disability in both a positive and accurate manner, and note that books receiving this award “should always be considered for inclusion in collections about disability.” Miller-Lachmann (2014) held up Schneider Family Book Award winners as good examples of “complexity of characterization” in reference to characters with disabilities. White (2015, 68) referred to the Schneider Family Book Award as “an invaluable resource” for identifying young adult novels that portray “life with a disability both realistically and positively while avoiding stereotypes.”

Prater and Dyches (2008) shared a “Top 25 List” of highly recommended books for children and young adults that feature a character or characters with disabilities, mentioning the Schneider Family Book Award, though misnaming it as the “Schneider Family Awards,” and incorrectly noting that the book *Dad and Me in the Morning* was a Schneider Family Book Award winner. (The authors may have confused this book, about a young boy who is deaf, with *Dad, Jackie, and Me*, about a young boy with a deaf father, which was a 2006 Schneider Family Book Award winner.) In the context of Radical Change Theory, Emmerson et al. (2014) examine the portrayal of disability in Canadian and American picture books, including seven Schneider Family Book Award winners (which the authors refer to as the “American Schneider Awards”).

Other sources draw attention to certain winning titles rather than the Schneider Family Book Award as a whole. *Voice of Youth Advocates* (VOYA), a journal focusing on teen and young adult library services, reported solely the middle grades and teen winners (VOYA 2004; 2008). In a 2008 poetry column found in *Book Links* magazine, Vardell acknowledges various Youth Media Awards winners from the poetry genre, including *Reaching for Sun*. This winner in the middle grades category was, at the time (and remained so until 2018, when the verse novel *Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess* won in the middle grades category), the only poetry book to have been awarded the Schneider Family Book Award. In 2016, the only year between 2004-2018 in which four titles were honored, *The Horn Book Magazine* inadvertently left off *The War That Saved My Life* in their list of Schneider Family Book Award winners (Impromptu 2016). A correction was issued in the next issue (Correction 2016).

The single scholarly examination directly related to the Schneider Family Book Award is a critical discourse analysis. Curwood (2013) conducted this literary analysis of three young adult novels that were recipients of the Schneider Family Book Award. The three novels (*Jerk, California*; *Marcello in the Real World*; and *Five Flavors of Dumb*) won in the teen category in consecutive years, 2008-2010. It is unclear why Curwood selected these three titles in particular to examine. It does appear that they were selected due to being Schneider Family Book Award honorees, and for their high-quality, accurate depictions of disability. There would have been several other young adult winners also available for selection from previous or later years. The author does note that at least one of the other winning titles, *Waiting for Normal* (Schneider Family Book Award winner in the Middle Grades category in 2009) does not lend itself to a critical discourse analysis of this nature, due to the protagonist's disability not playing a central part in the plot or theme of the book.

Curwood draws from the traditions of critical pedagogy and critical discourse analysis to investigate the "construction of disability" in these three novels for young adults. Curwood examined the novels to discover the character, or characters, who embodied a "normalcy narrative," which was defined differently, though never explicitly, by the characters in each story. Also present in each of the three books was a character or a situation that acted as a catalyst to introduce the main character to a "disability counternarrative." This counternarrative prompted each of the characters to see their place in the world differently, and to question their previous thoughts and assumptions

about what it means to be “normal” or not. The author’s intent was to “trace the roles that identity and power have in shaping the novel’s plot, characterization, and theme.”

Curwood also encouraged teachers working with adolescent classes to employ critical literacy in their classrooms in an effort to encourage critical thinking skills as students consider the portrayal of disability in books written for a young adult audience. Although this study would be hard to generalize, it offers the potential of impacting teachers and librarians directly. These teachers and librarians in turn can impact the lives of adolescents, the target audience for at least one-third of Schneider Family Book Award winners. Additionally, and as also noted in Chapter 5, the study could be replicated or expanded upon with other Schneider Family Book Award winning titles. Curwood’s study approached the three winning titles from a theoretical perspective that is useful for interrogating power structures, whereas the current case study and content analysis uses a theoretical basis (grounded theory) that can provide a broad basis for future studies.

For the first several years after the Schneider Family Book Award was established, it was common to see the winners reported exclusively in library-related publications such as ALA’s own *American Libraries*, or in journals related to the field of literature for youth such as *School Library Journal* (ALA 2005a; 2005b; 2006; SLJ 2006a; SLJ 2006b). More recently, Schneider Family Book Award winners have been reported in publications outside of the library or literature world, such as those associated with the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and *DIVERSEability Magazine* (ASHA 2015; AAF 2016; Beecher 2016).



There is some inconsistency in the literature, and even within ALA's own published and online information, in noting the targeted ages of and the descriptors for the three age categories within the award. Most articles successfully convey the general essence of the award—that there are three separate categories honored, with the intended audiences for each category being progressively older children and teens—and none are very far off target. The age ranges and/or descriptors for the three categories may have varied slightly since the award's inception (ALA 2012; 2014; Schneider 2017). Some inconsistencies are noted even within the same article (ALA 2005a). The young children's category has also been documented as the "Grade School" category. This category is sometimes noted as books written for ages 0-10, especially in older articles, rather than ages 0-8 (McMillen 2007; Verbeten 2005). The category for middle grades, or books with an intended audience of 9-13 years old, is sometimes referred to as the Middle School category for ages 11-13 (Campbell 2006; Prater and Dyches 2008). The teen category may be listed as appealing to ages 13-17, 13-18, or 14-18, and has been called the High School category as well (McMillen 2007).

Although inconsistency in reporting can be understood (or perhaps even expected, since ALA's own documents and websites offer varying information), some articles report altogether inaccurately on the Schneider Family Book Award. Brenna (2013), despite a record of other writing of quality about literature featuring characters with disabilities and being an award-winning author herself of such books, presents the Schneider Family Book Award as almost a sister award to the Caldecott Medal. Brenna incorrectly notes that "the Schneider Awards have been given to eight titles," when in

fact eight titles, in 2013, had won in only the young children's category. The other age categories are entirely ignored, despite this article discussing several other chapter books, including winners of the Dolly Gray Award. Brenna notes that "none of the award winners include characters with autism or developmental disabilities," which again was true for the picture book winners of the Schneider Family Book Award as of 2013, but which ignores several middle grades or teen chapter book winners such as *Rules*, *Anything But Typical*, and *Marcelo in the Real World*, all of which feature a character with autism (515). This is further puzzling as Brenna was one of the authors of a study two years prior that examined both *Rules* and *Anything But Typical* (Barker et al. 2011), and a 2008 article of Brenna's also examined *Rules* (noting that it was a Newbery Honor Medal winner, but not noting its status as a Schneider Family Book Award winner). Although Brenna's 2013 article intended to focus on picture books, the reader is unfortunately presented with an incomplete and inaccurate view of the Schneider Family Book Award. Despite a scarcity of scholarly writing about the Schneider Family Book Award, there is little reason for anyone to think that the award honors only picture books.

It is not unusual to come across an article or study that examines one or more Schneider Family Book Award winning titles that does not note the award-winning status of the book nor mention the award by name. Two studies, a dissertation and an article published ahead of the full dissertation, examine the portrayal of Owen from *Becoming Naomi León*, noting both positive, and negative, aspects of the portrayal of this character with a disability (Walker 2009; Walker et al. 2008). Rana (2017) examines *Five Flavors of Dumb*, Antony John's 2011 Schneider Family Book Award winner in the teen

category, along with three other young adult novels featuring a character with cochlear implants. Although “quality” is cited as a reason for selecting the four titles discussed, nothing in the article indicates that *Five Flavors of Dumb* won the Schneider Family Book Award. In studying how elementary students respond to the depiction of disability in children’s literature, Wilkins et al. (2016) utilize three Schneider Family Book Award winners (*A Boy and a Jaguar*; *Emmanuel’s Dream*; and *The Pirate of Kindergarten*), but do not mention the award. Gilmore and Howard (2016), with a number of graduate psychology students, reviewed fifty-seven children’s and young adult titles featuring a disability experience, four of which had won the Schneider Family Book Award (*Anything But Typical*; *Looking Out For Sarah*; *Rules*; and *A Boy and a Jaguar*). They also do not mention the award, nor any other awards won by other titles on their list.

Two of the above studies took place outside of the United States (Rana; Gilmore and Howard). Wilkins et al. was carried out in South Carolina, though ultimately published in *The British Journal of Special Education*. Knowledge of the Schneider Family Book Award appears to be growing in the U.S., but outside of the U.S., it may remain quite unknown, despite several of the winning titles themselves gaining at least limited international audience based on the internationally published articles that include reference to or study of books that have won the Schneider Family Book Award.

### **Disability and Literature for Children and Young Adults**

There is a more abundant history of writing broadly related to the topic of disability portrayal in literature for children and young adults than there is specifically about the Schneider Family Book Award. Scholarly examinations of literature for youth

featuring a character or characters with a disability date back at least several decades, and some of the children's and young adult literature examined is more than a century old. The professional literature ranges from single page articles recommending a few select titles, to multi-volume tomes containing encyclopedic knowledge on the subject (at least to the point of publication). History, trends, and research focuses both general and particular, are examined in order to place the Schneider Family Book Award within the larger field of study. This section will first address research and essays from the three decades prior to the establishment of the Schneider Family Book Award, beginning with the 1970s, and then move on to works published in 2000 and later.

### **Education for All Handicapped Children Act**

In the mid to late 1970s, articles and studies began appearing in the United States that examined literature about disability written for a youth audience. The impetus for many, if not most, of these articles and studies appears to be the passage in 1975 of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142. This was the legislative directive for the "mainstreaming" of school age children with disabilities (then typically referred to as "handicaps") into "regular" education classrooms. The law, mentioned specifically in most of the articles from this time period, went into effect during the 1977-78 school year (Fein and Ginsberg 1978; Monson and Shurtleff 1979).

The articles published in the time period shortly before and after Public Law 94-142 was passed rarely reference earlier or similar studies, though a handful of earlier articles do exist on the topic of disability portrayal in literature for children. They primarily cite earlier studies written about literature created for an adult audience, or

studies about (real) children with disabilities. A few studies base their examination of disability portrayal in youth literature on earlier studies of the portrayal of racial minorities in youth literature (Beardsley 1981-82). There was a very limited amount of research on the subject of literature for children and young adults featuring a disability experience prior to the mid-1970s. Saunders (2004) claims that the study of literature for children and young adults featuring a disability portrayal has been produced “primarily in response to legislation bringing disabled children into inclusive schooling” (n.p.). This certainly appears to be true of most of the scholarly works produced in the 1970s.

That students with disabilities were to be educated in the same classrooms as students without disabilities (or at least students not visibly appearing to have a disability, or not diagnosed as having a disability) appears, at the time, to have created concern on the part of many teachers about how students without disabilities would react to having students with disabilities in the same classroom. Scores of articles consider the question of how to “change attitudes” in the classroom toward students with disabilities using children’s literature (Monson and Shurtleff 1979; Crook and Plaskon 1980; Greenbaum, Varas and Markel 1980; Hopkins 1980; Litton, Banbury and Harris 1980; Beardsley 1981-82; Stroud 1981c; Dobo 1982). An assertion frequently found in the early professional literature is that exposing students, in a classroom setting, to books featuring one or more characters with a disability will help foster positive attitudes toward real children with disabilities. Just looking at the titles of certain articles makes it clear that this is a primary purpose for many authors:

- “Altering Attitudes Toward the Physically Handicapped...” (Monson and Shurtleff 1979)
- “Materials for Educating Nonhandicapped Students...” (Litton, Banbury, and Harris 1980)
- “Developing Positive Attitudes Toward the Handicapped...” (Hopkins 1980)
- “Improving Attitudes Toward Retarded Children...” (Gottlieb 1980)

Fein and Ginsburg assert that “[c]hildren’s literature can be effective in preparing children to accept the handicapped” (1978, 802). Garry urges teachers and parents to use the provided bibliography of books featuring characters with a disability to “bring about a more positive attitude” (1978, 113). Hornburger and Shapiro (1977) follow this general trend as well, although they additionally note that simply reading a book and doing nothing else is unlikely to alter attitudes.

Authors of the era seemed quite fixated with changing assumed bad attitudes of their students. Gottlieb (1980) offers some insight into why this might have been, by noting that early “mainstreaming programs” were evaluated, in part, on how well children with disabilities were “socially accepted by their nonhandicapped classmates” (106). While certainly a discouraging notion by today’s standards, this would help explain why so many articles of the era push for acceptance on the part of non-disabled students.

The articles, for the most part, both assume a poor attitude on the part of students without a disability, as well as centering the concerns of these students without a disability. Rarely is the point of view of a student with a disability considered. It is much later when the professional literature begins to consider how, or if, students with

disabilities see themselves portrayed in books for children and young adults. The assumption that students (and perhaps even adults) without (visible) disabilities will have trouble accepting students with (visible) disabilities is rarely, if ever, challenged. The feelings, reactions, and lives of students without disabilities are centered. Even today, this is not an uncommon approach. It is much later that the reactions of and direct impact on students living with a disability are considered.

### **Accuracy of Disability Portrayal and Literary Quality**

The content of articles written in this era, and into the early 1980s, typically focused on disability as a general concept, and not on particular disabilities. Many articles simply provide an annotated bibliography of books for youth featuring some type of disability portrayal (Fein and Ginsberg 1978; Garry 1978; Litton, Banbury and Harris 1980). At this point, literary quality of the literature referenced is rarely considered, nor is the likely popularity of the books among children themselves. Baskin (1974) alone is an exception to this, as the author considers gender, race, stereotypes, and looks for other themes and patterns in forty-five books for youth featuring a character with a disability.

Baskin would go on to co-author with Harris *Notes from a Different Drummer: A Guide to Juvenile Fiction Portraying the Handicapped* in 1977, a text which expanded upon Baskin's 1974 article, offered a lengthy annotated bibliography, and was one of the only scholarly considerations of the time to address both the literary quality of books for youth about disabilities as well as the accuracy of the disability portrayal. This book was later described by Mellon (1989a, 144) as a "landmark book," which "was one of the first attempts to establish standards for evaluating such fiction." Tal (2001) described it as

“groundbreaking.” Baskin and Harris would further update this text in 1984 with *More Notes from a Different Drummer: A Guide to Juvenile Fiction Portraying the Disabled*, which greatly expanded their earlier work. Bibliographies, annotated or otherwise, of books for youth with one or more characters with a disability continued appearing in the professional literature up to the present time, although the emphasis on quality, both in terms of accuracy of the disability and literary quality, has increased tremendously.

Apart from Baskin and Harris’s works, quality and accuracy of the portrayal of disability is occasionally considered, and often found lacking (Biklen and Bogdan 1977; Schwartz 1977; Thurer 1980). The consideration of accuracy of the depiction of disability, and whether or not it is positive, increased during the 1980s. Stroud’s (1980a; 1980b; 1981a; 1981b) series of articles considered the portrayal of different types of disability, including physical, mental, and emotional disabilities, in literature for an adolescent audience. While the author notes improved literary quality in recent years, and recommends a handful of titles, it is also noted that many books featuring a character with a disability continue to be “virtually plotless, with cardboard characters, forced dialogue, and superficial treatment [of the disability]” (Stroud 1981b, 522).

Several other articles consider quality and accuracy in literature for children. Watson (1982) examined fifty-four books for children and teens, all published since 1977, twenty of which the author would recommend and consider positive. Sapon-Shevin (1982) examined the portrayal of “mental retardation” (a term common at the time, but now typically referred to as “cognitive disability” or “intellectual disability”) in both children’s and young adult literature, also detailing many problems, but concluding more



recently published titles offer higher quality portrayals. Wagoner (1984) examined similar content to Sapon-Shevin, referring to the disabilities as “cognitive disabilities” rather than “mental retardation,” providing an annotated bibliography noting both problematic and positive aspects of titles included. Numerous articles continued to encourage the use of literature for children and young adults to influence attitudes and general acceptance amongst non-disabled children and students (Bauer 1985; Bauer, Campbell, and Troxel 1985; Dobo 1982; Salend and Moe 1983; Stroud 1980a; Stroud 1981c).

The title of Gold’s 1983 article, “That’s Me! The LD Child in Literature” seemed to imply a consideration for the concerns and reactions of actual children with learning disabilities, and what they see in literature featuring a character or characters who are (supposed to be) like them. Gold’s annotated bibliography of ten recommended titles that feature a central character with a learning disability, in the end, only tangentially considered that real children with learning disabilities would benefit from seeing good portrayals of children like them in books. Gold does at least avoid centering the concerns of children without disabilities. Moore (1984) also briefly acknowledged young readers with a disability, as children who are in need of “role models” to be found in the literature they read.

Additional articles during the 1980s brought some new or unique approaches to the study of literature for children and young adults about disabilities. Two studies considered the presence of disability experiences in basal readers for young children, each of which found little to no representation of disabilities in this type of instructional

reading material (Hopkins 1982; Moore 1984). Lewis and Johnson (1982) surveyed graduate students, classmates enrolled in a special education course, to determine if their knowledge about disability (referred to by the authors as “handicapping conditions”) was increased by reading literature for children featuring a disability experience. Seventy percent of the graduate students surveyed agreed that reading this literature had “increased their knowledge about handicapping conditions” (16).

Mellon, who is the parent of a child with spina bifida, authored two 1989 articles, one of which was written for a school librarian audience and stressed the importance of a varied collection of books about disability, and also the importance that these books be accurate in the information they presented about disabilities (1989b). The second article by Mellon again emphasized the need for accuracy about disability, and also noted that books portraying characters with disabilities should focus on similarities between children, rather than differences (1989a).

Two articles addressed changes and improvements seen in literature for children about disabilities. Goodman (1985) provided a general historical overview and noted an increase in both quantity and quality of the literature available for children featuring a disability experience. Goodman was comparing then contemporary literature to literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Harris and Baskin (1987) offered a more in-depth examination of trends and differences they had noted in the decade since their formative *Notes from a Different Drummer* had been published, focusing on young adult fiction in particular. They found that a more diverse array of disabilities was being included in fiction for young adults and that accuracy in information about the disability

portrayed was improving. The authors also stressed that misinformation continued to be a problem, and noted the “unexpected but welcome appearance of sophisticated humor in recent books about disability” (190). Nearly thirty years Harris and Baskin’s brief comment about humor, McGrail and Rieger (2014) would explore humor in literature for children featuring a character with a disability, noting many instances where humor was used successfully in a positive and inclusive manner.

### **The 1990s**

Articles and research of the decade of the 1990s continue several earlier trends. Many bibliographies were published, providing (usually for a teacher audience) lists of books featuring the portrayal of a disability experience. Two book-length annotated bibliographies were published in 1992 that provide extensive references to books, both fiction and non-fiction, that feature the portrayal of disability experiences. Friedberg, Mullins, and Sukiennik (1992) compiled a list of non-fiction titles about disability for children and youth adults. Their stated aim for their book was to “present a selection of books that foster constructive attitudes toward human differences” (ix). Robertson’s annotated bibliography of the same year compiles fiction titles written for a youth audience. Robertson’s annotations address flaws in the books listed, but usually focus on what is done well. The annotations address both the quality of the book overall and the quality of disability portrayal.

Robertson notes a general improvement in the quality of disability portrayal in youth literature, and attributes this improvement, at least in part, to earlier bibliographies such as Baskin and Harris’s 1977 *Notes from a Different Drummer* (2). Harrill et al.

(1993) also note an improvement in quality of representation of disabilities. This study examined forty-five books for youth that include a character with a disability, fifteen of which were published prior to 1978 and thirty of which were published after 1978. The authors noted improvements in pre- and post-1978 titles, based on ratings by four teachers on ten criteria.

Some articles of this decade are simply a list of titles and other bibliographic information, and offer no indication of quality, including Kupper (1994), who compiled a list of titles published between 1989-1994 for the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. Stelle (1999) provides a bibliography of thirty fiction titles that feature a child with a disability as a main character. Rather than rating the books on literary merit or accuracy of the depiction of disability, Stelle rates the books based on “curriculum connections,” and how easily the author perceives each title could be incorporated into classroom education. Another bibliography provides an extensive list of over one hundred fifty books about disabilities and health issues (Cothorn 1994). While not addressing either the quality of the writing or the accuracy of the depiction of disability, Cothorn does encourage teachers and parents to discuss the books with youth readers and consider carefully the appropriateness of each title for individual readers.

Despite the exceptions noted above, most of the bibliographies and other articles published during the 1990s that discuss literature featuring the depiction of a disability experience do consider quality as an important consideration when selecting books for youth readers. A majority of these bibliographies at least comment upon the overall

quality of the literature, or the accuracy of the disability portrayal. This includes Carlin, Laughlin, and Sangia's monograph length *Understanding Abilities, Disabilities, and Capabilities: A Guide to Children's Literature* (1991). This work reviews literature for youth in different categories of disability portrayals, such as speech impairments or orthopedic impairments, and rates each book based on both literary merit and quality of the disability portrayal. Landrum (1998-99) also uses a rating system in an annotated bibliography of sixteen adolescent novels published primarily between 1990-1997. The novels are rated based on several criteria, including both literary criteria (plot, character development, and tone) and the quality of the disability portrayal. Hulen, Hoffbauer, and Prenz (1998) published an annotated bibliography of approximately seventy books for children and young adults published after 1992. The authors included only books they deemed to be of "excellent" quality.

The primary focus of one article is the quality and accuracy of the depiction of disability in literature for youth. Heim (1994) noted, "authors who write novels with disabled characters have an obligation to present accurate, up-to-date information." This article (very frequently cited in later years), written by a parent of a child with a "mental disability" (a common term used in the 1990s), lays out five criteria for evaluating books that feature the depiction of a disability experience, including:

1. Accuracy of information
2. Lack of stereotypes
3. Literary quality
4. Confronting the disability
5. Not 'using' disabled characters

The author also examines six novels written for a youth audience featuring positive, well-written portrayals of characters with a mental disability. Although Heim focuses on the portrayal of mental disabilities (now commonly referred to as cognitive or intellectual disabilities), the criteria she outlines could be applied broadly to any portrayal of a disability experience. Heim ends her article with a list of several other recommended books for youth.

Most of the articles from the 1990s focus on disability in general, although a few do discuss particular types of disability. Orr et al. (1997) present a bibliography of books for kindergarten through eighth grade readers that feature characters with “developmental disabilities,” including Down syndrome. Although the authors do not discuss quality overtly, their annotations indicate that the books are recommended and offer positive portrayals of developmental disabilities. Heim (1994), as noted, focuses on the portrayal of mental disabilities, although her criteria can be applied quite broadly. Prater (1999) also focuses on the portrayal of “mental retardation,” evaluating sixty-eight books for children and youth adults that feature at least one character with this disability.

One thesis and an article from the mid-1990s examine the portrayal of deaf or hearing-impaired characters in literature for youth. Wilding-Diaz’s 1993 thesis asked sixty adult readers, with varying degrees of experience as a deaf person or with deaf children, to respond to six picture books that feature a deaf character. This study concluded that there is a need for both a higher quantity of, as well as higher quality literature about characters who are deaf. Turner and Traxler’s (1997) article also focuses on the portrayal of characters who are deaf or hearing-impaired. After encouraging

inclusive classroom environments, this article offers an annotated list of twelve books featuring a deaf or hearing-impaired character.

### **Vocabulary of Disability**

The vocabulary used to describe disability and disability experiences has evolved through the years, with many notable changes first seen during the 1990s. In the latter half of this decade, articles began addressing “inclusion” and “inclusive” environments through literature. This trend would continue into at least the early 2000s. The title of Blaska and Lynch’s 1998 article asks “Is Everyone Included?” and the authors go on to note that “[a]ll young children must be routinely represented in the children’s fiction and nonfiction we select for our classrooms” (36). Several other articles discuss the importance of creating an inclusive classroom (Gross and Ortiz 1994; Hulen, Hoffbauer, and Prenn 1998; Turner and Traxler 1997). “Inclusion” is often discussed in rather general terms, applied to all children and not necessarily related directly to children with disabilities. Gross and Ortiz (1994) do at least partially focus on the inclusion of students with disabilities rather than students without disabilities.

As was seen in earlier decades, many articles of the 1990s propose to help improve the attitudes and level of acceptance toward people (especially children and other students) with disabilities by children and young adults without disabilities. With an eye to preparing “all students for their social responsibilities,” Umerlik (1992, 35) encourages classroom use of young adult literature that features a disability experience. The author cites lack of social acceptance of students with disabilities by peers as a primary reason for teachers to introduce literature featuring the depiction of disabilities to

their students. Andrews (1998) also cites “promoting positive attitudes” as a reason to encourage reading books about people with disabilities. Both Andrews and Umerlik also emphasize the need for accurate depictions of disability. Kelly (1995) promotes “raising awareness” among teenage students about disabilities, in part by reading books that feature a disability experience.

There is some research to indicate that an improvement in attitudes is possible using literature for children and young adults. Two research studies in the 1990s directly studied the question of whether or not the attitudes of children toward people with disabilities can be influenced by reading books featuring the depiction of disability. Both studies focused on young children. Trepanier-Street and Romatowski (1996) tested children in kindergarten and first grade on an “attitudes inventory” regarding their general acceptance of other children with disabilities. After the pre-test was administered, the children were read six books featuring a depiction of disability by their classroom teacher. The teacher also engaged in “book-related activities” with the research subjects. Afterward, the students were again tested on the “attitudes inventory” research tool. The results indicated an increase overall in the level of acceptance toward people with disabilities, although the researchers observed that the change was “not substantial” (47). The researchers noted that the children scored relatively high on the pre-test, but that there were still improvements seen after the research interventions.

Favazza and Odom (1997) also studied young children’s acceptance level of people with disabilities before and after research interventions. The research interventions in this study were divided into two groups, “direct” interventions (“high



contact” – interacting with real people with disabilities), and “indirect” interventions (“low contact” – reading books and participating in discussions about disabilities). The results indicated an improvement in both groups in the subjects’ acceptance level of people with disabilities, though there was more improvement among those who participated in the “direct” or “high contact” interventions. Simply reading about and discussing disabilities did result in some positive change in attitude, however. The researchers also noted more improvement in attitude in girls than in boys in each intervention group.

Two additional articles in the 1990s do not fit into other classifications discussed so far. Davidson, Woodill, and Bredberg (1994), British and Canadian authors publishing outside of the library or educational world, examined historical presentations of disability. The authors surveyed stories or poems written for children written in nineteenth century Britain, often published in periodical literature, which, the authors note, was commonly read at that time. This study found that portrayals of disability in this literature reflected the highly religious, and often brutal and poverty-stricken, reality of the time. The authors described the disability portrayals of this era as “divinely ordained” and a part of life that cannot be overcome, just endured. The authors did not characterize the depictions of disability they studied as either positive or negative.

In a somewhat meta approach to studying literature about disabilities written for a young adult audience, Burns (1997) examined bibliographies and other guides to youth literature about disability, and then offers strategies for evaluating *bibliographies* of

books with a disability portrayal. Some of the suggested guidelines include considering the following:

- “What does the compiler consider to be a disability?
- Which criteria have been applied when selecting the titles included?
- Are the stories, and the list, aimed at the non-disabled child, to inform them about disability, or has it been considered that someone with a disability might use the list to discover more about their own disability?
- Is the list intended for children to use, or is it aimed at adults choosing for children?” (43)

Burns is a rare author who addressed several facets of studying youth literature about disabilities that other authors and scholars routinely ignore, such as considering the reactions and opinions of children and young adults with disabilities. That Burns identifies herself as a person with a disability is probably quite relevant.

Burns (1997) further examined, along with a youth audience, fifteen young adult novels featuring a depiction of disability that were found on multiple recommended lists or bibliographies. The youth reception to the novels was not overwhelmingly positive, with Burns reporting that “[s]everal of the [teenage] reviewers complained that the stories were ‘boring,’” highlighting that considerations of “quality” are relevant to the depiction of the disability, literary merits, and interest level and readability by actual youth readers (47).

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that prohibits several forms of discrimination based on disability, was signed into law (United States Department of

Justice 2019). The same year, the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act was revised, updated, and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA, like the original 1975 Act, is federal legislation that ensures students with disabilities will receive “free appropriate public education” in the United States (United States Department of Education 2019; University of Washington 2017). Despite their passage in the very early 1990s, many articles published in this decade continue to reference the earlier 1975 Act.

### **The Year 2000 and Beyond**

Thus far, this literature review has examined professional and scholarly work related to the portrayal of disability in children’s and young adult literature from the (approximately) three decades prior to the establishment of the Schneider Family Book Award. The remainder of the literature review will focus primarily on publications from the year 2000 and later, or put another way – from around the time the Schneider Family Book Award was established until the current day.

The writing by librarians, teachers, and scholars from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s on the subject of disability in literature for children and young adults was fairly prolific and approached the topic from a variety of contexts. The professional writing on the subject from the year 2000 and later increased dramatically, both in volume and in variety. Some of the same approaches common in the 1970s-90s are still seen even today (bibliographies and lists of recommended books are an ever popular, and useful, approach to articles). Many authors continue to ground their examinations in relevant legislation or

social conditions, though the particular law and social conditions have evolved over nearly five decades.

There continue to be an abundance of articles which encourage librarians and educators to share books about disability with their students for the purpose of creating an inclusive environment in their classroom or library (Adomat 2014; Bland and Gann 2013; Gavigan and Kurtts 2011; Hazlett, Sweeney, and Reins 2011; Iaquina and Hipsky 2006; Kitterman 2002; Kurtts and Gavigan 2008; Miller 2012; Ostrosky et al. 2015; Prater 2000; Price, Ostrosky and Mouzourou 2016; Rieger and McGrail 2015; Rogers and Writt 2010). Dunn (2010, 17) encourages teachers of English to “use literary and other texts as a springboard for informed discussions of disability and ableism.” Matthew and Clow (2007, 65) assert that “all children benefit from the casual inclusion of disabled characters as part of their everyday ‘diet’ of fiction.” Many of these essays highlight a few, or offer a bibliography of many, recommended titles.

Blaska (2003) presented an annotated bibliography in one chapter of her book, *Using Children’s Literature to Learn About Disabilities and Illness*, rating each book according to literary quality (outstanding, very good, or fair), and noting whether the book offers “information about disability or illness,” or is a “story about disability or illness,” or is a “story with character/s with disability or illness.” Blaska’s book also offers an entire chapter describing disabilities and medical conditions, as background information for the teacher or parent.

It is much more common after the year 2000 for authors to reference children or students with disabilities in their articles, rather than focusing exclusively on children

without disabilities. Campbell (2006) writes that “[b]ooks about children with disabilities can help children with disabilities feel less alone, and can help children without disabilities become more accepting of their peers with disabilities” (n.p.). Writing about children with disabilities, Kaiser (2007) notes it is “imperative” that “they are able to find literature at their interest level that reflects an acceptance of their particular disability or special need” (5). Wopperer (2011) wrote that “[l]iterature provides the necessary perspectives for children and young adults with disabilities to see themselves differently, more positively” (28).

The purpose of the articles published in the 2000s and 2010s varies widely. In general, there is a good mix of scholarly, empirical research and non-research based essays. As seen in earlier decades, many essays target a librarian or teacher audience with the challenge of considering the inclusivity or diversity of their children’s or young adult library or classroom collections with regard to characters with disabilities. Kaiser (2007) provides an extensive, though un-annotated, list of over three hundred titles of books for children and young adults on topics ranging from alopecia to vision impairment. She includes both chronic illness and disabilities in her lists, as well as a section on death and dying, siblings with illnesses, temporary disabilities, and books simply about “differences and similarities.” Both fiction and informational titles are included. Rogers and Writt (2010) also offer a shorter, annotated topical list, and include books about both illnesses and disabilities. Another study investigated not library collections, but school librarians’ professional involvement in the lives of, and accommodations for, students with

Individual Education Plans (IEPs), many of whom are students with disabilities (Allen and Hughes-Hassell 2010).

The Allen and Hughes-Hassell article, as well as others, note the importance of the ADA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federal laws passed regarding persons with disabilities. As was also common in previous decades, several authors attempt to draw parallels between the passage of assorted legislation and the increase in literature that includes positive portrayals of disability (Campbell 2006). Clearly, the issue of disability portrayal in literature for children and young adults is part of larger, and evolving, social and judicial issues regarding accommodations, acceptance, and understanding of persons with disabilities. Some authors express the belief that this acceptance and understanding is not yet widespread (Campbell 2006).

### **International Literature**

Early in the 2000s, two separate journals dedicated a full issue solely to the topic of disability in children's and young adult literature—*Bookbird* in 2001 (volume 39, issue 1) and in 2004 *Disability Studies Quarterly*, the online journal of the Society for Disability Studies (volume 24, issue 1). In each case, the entries ranged from short essays to lengthier research articles, and a diverse range of topics were addressed. *Bookbird* is the journal of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), headquartered in Switzerland, and thus has an international focus by design (IBBY 2017).

One of the largest changes seen in the literature since 2000 is the increase in international articles and research addressing the portrayal of characters with disabilities in the literature of countries outside of the United States. Many international writers

address similar concerns as writers from the United States have done, such as quantity and quality of the available literature for youth, but from the perspective of their own country's culture, laws, and heritage.

Haberl considers such literature from Austria and Germany in a 2001 article. Naseri (2001) analyzes Iranian literature for children, focusing on five different types of disability including mental, verbal, visual, psychosocial, and movement disability. An Austrian author of children's literature relates his experiences as a wheelchair user, how these experiences come to be portrayed in his books for children, and reflects on what he calls the "pedagogy of repression" which often results in negative, or at least uncomfortable, interactions with non-wheelchair users (Huainigg 2001). These three articles were published in the 2001 *Bookbird* issue focusing on disabilities in literature for children. *Bookbird*, as noted earlier, has an international focus (IBBY 2017).

After 2001, there appears to be a gap of several years, at least in studies published in the English language, before international scholarship on disability in literature for children and young adults begins appearing more frequently. It is also relevant to note that the terms "young adult literature," or "teen literature," were not expressed in the studies examining books published for children in a language other than English, nor was this age group referred to by the authors of the cited studies.

In 2010, Aisawi examined the portrayal of disability in stories written in Arabic for children. The author noted that literature for children is in itself a fairly recent addition to Arabic literature, far more so than in Western countries, and disability representation is newer still. Aisawi located twenty-eight relevant titles, nineteen of

which have publication dates of 2000 or later. The twenty-eight titles were published in Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia. Overall, Aisawi found an assortment of disabilities portrayed, a variety of ages of characters with a disability portrayed, and a mix of male and female characters. The author also noted a tendency toward “romanticized” portrayals of disability that are not representative or authentic.

Abou Ghaida (2016) also studied the depiction of disability in Arabic children’s literature. Six years after Aisawi, forty-seven books written in Arabic (not translated into Arabic) are examined. Abou Ghaida notes that the portrayal of disability in this literature is very positive, stating that “Arabic books on disability...promote a vision of disabled people at the heart of their communities rather than on the fringes” (2016, 3). The author also notes that some of the books’ portrayals, though positive, also foster a usually unattainable ideal of the “disabled over-achiever,” an issue also addressed at times by scholars in the U.S. and elsewhere. Abou Ghaida lastly laments the immense discrepancy between these positive portrayals in literature and the experiences of real people with disabilities in the Arabic world.

Debroy (2018), an Indian scholar and professor at Dehli University, examined historical portrayals in Indian literature of disability. The author concluded that slowly evolving social and cultural attitudes toward disability in India are also being reflected in Indian literature, including literature for children. Debroy writes that “[c]hildren’s literature in modern India no longer portrays disability as the penalty for some sin, and it is no longer associated with evil or malevolence,” although the quantity of literature available to Indian children featuring a portrayal of disability is still quite limited (20).



The lack of books for children that portray a disability experience is often noted in studies focusing on books published in a language other than English. Although similarly noted in books published in English, particularly prior to around the year 2000, the scarcity appears to be quite marked in other countries. Gonen et al. (2015) studied “illustrated storybooks” written in Turkish that depict a character with a disability and were able to locate only thirty titles. Twenty-two of these titles have been translated into Turkish. The authors used a, perhaps, unusually broad definition of disability, as some of the thirty titles examined included a version of “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves” (dwarfism being the disability portrayal), a story about an elephant whose ears are too big, characters who are clumsy, and a book called *Everyone Matters* that is about “respect for differences” in general. Also from Turkey, Vuran (2014) publishes an unusual account of finding so few stories for children about disabilities, that the author organized a series of workshops for pre-service teachers in order for them to write and publish stories featuring a character with a disability. Of the seventeen participants in the workshops, nineteen stories were written and eventually published by an educational book company in Turkey.

From geographically near Turkey, two additional articles from Cyprus and Israel study some aspect of disability portrayal in literature for children. Monoyiou and Symeonidou (2016) examined fifty books written or translated into the Greek language that focus, somehow, on diversity. Of these fifty, twenty-three are noted to focus on an experience of disability. In Israel, Lea (2015) interviewed twenty-three special education teachers who had read and discussed the book *Shelley the Hyperactive Turtle* with their

classes. Articles like this, which directly examine the use of literature featuring a disability portrayal in a classroom, are fairly rare, although a couple have been previously discussed.

Scholars from England, Canada, and Australia have also published on the topic of the portrayal of disability in literature for children and young adults. Brenna's writing often focuses either exclusively, or with a particular emphasis on, Canadian texts (Brenna 2009b, 2011; Emmerson et al. 2014; Emmerson and Brenna 2015). A 2010 study utilized literature that was "most readily available to UK schools," although at least one of the titles, *Freak the Mighty*, was written by an American author and originally published in the United States (Beckett et al. 2010). For the most part, articles published in or written by authors from the four above named English-speaking countries do not present their studies as focusing on literature from a particular country of origin such as "British children's literature" or "Australian literature for children."

Although each country has its own literature for children and teens, there is certainly some overlap in the books available in English in these countries and the United States. At least one Schneider Family Book Award winner was originally published in Canada, then a year later published in the U.S. (*The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B*). Rana (2017), a scholar from a German university and publishing in a British journal, examines four young adult books featuring a character with a cochlear implant. Two of these books were published in England, and two in the United States. Australian scholars Gilmore and Howard (2016) examined fifty-seven titles (including four Schneider Family Book Award winners) which were published in Australia, England, Canada, and the U.S.

Although some articles from these countries do focus on the author's particular country, there is also some commonality in the discussion.

### **Race and Ethnicity and the Portrayal of Disability**

Returning to scholars and scholarly work from the United States, but keeping the focus multicultural, there are several studies that address race or ethnicity in conjunction with disability in literature for children and young adults. Dyches and Prater (2005, 215) noted several representations "from minority races and cultures" in their study on characters with developmental disabilities. However, a later study examined books that won the Dolly Gray Award, an award presented by the Center for Exceptional Children for youth literature that features characters with developmental disorders, and found that "[c]haracters with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds are rarely depicted" (Artman-Meeker, Grant and Yang 2016). Daniels (2004) focuses on disability combined with minority status, in this case literature for children and young adults that includes a character with a disability and is written by African American authors. Daniels studied the portrayal of African American characters with a disability in this literature, concluding that stereotypical depictions of disability were common.

Yenika-Agbaw (2011a) notes that many of the historical studies of the depiction of disability in youth literature focus on white characters, and sought to answer the research question "How is disability represented in Africana (African and African diaspora) adolescent novels?" (210). The results of this study indicated differences in the presentation of disability between African novels, which often presented disability as

“unnatural,” and African American novels, which usually presented disability as “natural” (216).

Another author examined the intersection of race and disability in the novels, written for a teen audience, featuring the Tillerman family by Voigt, positing that “racist and ableist pedagogies are connected” (Lesley 2014, 49). The author discusses (still fairly recent) historical occurrences of disproportionate diagnoses of Black students as disabled, which led to (and the likely purpose of which was) continued legal segregation in schools.

Crandall (2009), a former high school English teacher, related his regret that, in his time as a classroom teacher, he did not often consider disability issues as related to literature, even though he valued and promoted other forms of diversity in literature. He recounts how this began to change when he read a young adult novel featuring a Native American Indian character who had a disability (Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*). This article highlights how representation matters, and that even a single title can influence a reader’s awareness of disability.

### **What’s Missing in the Portrayal of Disability Experience**

Despite the above articles noted, considerations of race or ethnicity together with disability are still fairly rare. The researcher could not locate articles or research that specifically address Hispanic or Latino/a characters and disability, or Native American/American Indian representations of disability. McNair (2016), writing about expanding the concept of “mirrors and windows” in literature for youth, included several types of diversity in her analysis, including racial & cultural diversity, class diversity,

disability experiences, and even genre diversity. The concept of “mirrors and windows,” based on Bishop’s 1990 article, is used to acknowledge the need for children and young adults to be able to see themselves in literature (books as “mirrors”), as well as for them to be able to learn more about the wider world through literature (books as “windows”). Crisp et al. (2016) also examined books for youth about disability as one aspect of diversity, studying the classroom collections in twenty-one preschools in Atlanta, Georgia. The authors found that a very small percentage of the early childhood books available in these classrooms included a depiction of disability.

Several articles examine the portrayal of disability in other American Library Association awards, such as the Caldecott Award (Dyches, Prater and Jenson 2006; Martinez, Koss, and Johnson 2016; Myers-Hughes and Bersani 2009-2010) and the Newbery Award (Leininger et al. 2010). No studies examining the portrayal of disabilities in other ALA awards, such as the Coretta Scott King Award, Pura Belpre Award, Printz Award, or Sibert Award, can be located. The Dolly Gray Children’s Literature Award is another award honoring excellence in literature for children and young adults that “appropriately portray individuals with developmental disabilities” (DADD 2014). Dyches, Prater, and Leininger examined the Dolly Gray Children’s Literature Award in a 2009 paper.

### **Expanding Analyses of Disability**

Most articles and research published before the year 2000 on the subject of literature for children and young adults about disability considered disability as a general concept. Book lists and bibliographies might group their recommended titles by type of

disability, but rarely would scholars focus on the portrayal of a specific disability or type of disability, such as books featuring a character who is blind, or books featuring characters who use a wheelchair. After 2000, there was still a large assortment of articles that consider disability in a broad sense, discussing “disability inclusive literature” or the portrayal of characters with disabilities without focusing on a single disability or type of disability. Some scholars also began studying the portrayal of specific disabilities or types of disabilities.

Some articles focus on a type of disability, some of which are quite general. One such article discusses portrayals of mental disability (Mills 2002). Dyches and Prater (2005) studied characters with developmental disorders, about half of whom had autism spectrum disorders, and found that characterizations had improved since an earlier study. Rhiger, an author with a prosthetic arm, presents a bibliography of books that include portrayals of physical disability (2011). Adomat (2009) also addressed physical disabilities, studying two adolescent novels published in the 1980s with teen protagonists who become physically disabled during the course of the plot. Koc, Koc, and Ozdemir (2010) note positive, neutral, and negative portrayals in characters with physical or sensory impairments in the forty-six picture books the authors examined. Scrofano (2015) discussed young adult literature featuring a character with a mental illness and noted an increase in accurate young adult literature reflecting experiences with mental illness. Several studies address learning disabilities (Kendrick 2004; Prater 2003; Prater, Dyches, and Johnstun 2006). Sotto and Ball (2006) take on “communication disorders in children’s literature. Gavigan (2013) considered characters with cognitive disabilities,

and Meyer (2013) the portrayal of intellectual disabilities in literature for young adults. Still others appear to have a hard time nailing down a specific area, such as Johnson (2010), which lists “Physical and Emotional Issues” in its title, notes in the abstract that it will examine “physical and mental disabilities,” and yet uses “learning disabilities” as a keyword to the article.

A growing body of literature addresses specific disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder (Brenna 2013; Crowley 2009; Dyches, Prater, and Cramer 2001; Gaffney and Wilkins 2016; Maich and Belcher 2012; Sigmon, Tackett, and Azano 2016). Depictions of Down syndrome are considered by Christensen (2001), who noted that the purpose of the picture books studied varied somewhat, but skewed heavily toward wanting to inform the reader about the disability rather than telling a story. Manthorpe (2005) addressed representations of dementia in fiction for children. Altieri presents a series of articles which consider the portrayal of dyslexia in literature for children and adolescents (2006; 2008a; 2008b). Two studies consider the portrayals of characters with attention deficit disorder (Demetrulias 2000) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Prater, Johnstun, and Munk 2005). With the exception of Down syndrome, all of the above disabilities are portrayed by one or more books that won the Schneider Family Book Award between 2004-2018.

### **Portrayal of Deaf or Hearing-Impaired Characters**

Studies addressing the portrayal of deaf, Deaf, or hearing-impaired characters in children’s and young adult literature are particularly numerous—at least as compared to the number of studies located which address other particular disability experiences. (The

word “deaf” with a lower-case “d” refers to a medical condition, often considered a disability. The word “Deaf” with a capital “D” refers to a member of the Deaf community, who consider themselves members of a cultural minority, rather than individuals with a disability.) Most articles, even those more recently published, still lament either the scarcity of deaf or Deaf characters in children’s and young adult literature, the lack of research to examine the few deaf or Deaf characters who do exist, or both (Golos and Moses 2011; Pajka-West 2007, 2010). Many analyze various books to discover whether the presentation is one that favors deafness as a medical condition and disability, sometimes referred to as a pathological portrayal, or one that focuses on the Deaf community, sometimes referred to as a cultural portrayal.

One of the earliest examinations of the portrayal of deaf characters in children’s literature is Wilding-Diaz’s 1993 thesis asking sixty adult readers, with varying degrees of experience as a deaf person or with deaf children, to respond to six picture books. The author specifically eliminated books about being deaf in favor of stories featuring a deaf character. Although some positive aspects were noted by the participants, in general the study concluded that many more, and better, portrayals of deaf experiences are needed. Turner and Traxler’s (1997) article encouraging inclusive classroom environments offers an annotated list of twelve books featuring a deaf or hearing-impaired character.

Bailes (2002) offers a rigorous and in-depth examination of a single picture book, *Mandy*, and concludes that the story centers around the hearing world, rather than the Deaf world. Brittain (2004) offers an international look at the portrayal of deaf characters in children’s illustrated books. This study critiques five books, including two Danish



picture books featuring Danish Sign Language, and focuses in particular on the illustrations. Brittain concludes that the books centering deafness as a culture also include more creative, colorful, and imaginative illustrations than those books written from a hearing perspective. Golos and Moses (2011) and Golos, Moses, and Wolbers (2012) analyze twenty picture books for pathological versus cultural representations of deafness and Deafness. In their 2011 study, the authors focus on the textual representation of medically deaf and culturally Deaf characters. The same twenty titles are used to analyze the illustrations and how the representation of deafness and Deafness are shown visually (Golos, Moses and Wolbers 2012). Two of the twenty books analyzed in these studies are Schneider Family Book Award winners (*The Deaf Musicians*; *Kami and the Yaks*). The authors concluded that the majority of representations, in both text and illustrations, were from a medical rather than a cultural perspective.

There are fewer studies examining novels or other books for older readers than there are examinations of deaf characters in picture books. Nichols (2005) is one of the first to examine chapter books, rather than picture books, featuring a deaf character and concluding that most of the portrayals are positive and accurate. A master's thesis, this study lacks the rigor and depth of many others, although is one of the only to take note of the number of male/female characters who are deaf and compare it with actual population statistics regarding people who are deaf (similar rates, among the books studied here—slightly more than half are males). Fields, Kim, and Spencer (2016) suggest “pairing” poor representations of deafness in classic literature (for example, the depiction of Miss

Tutti and Miss Frutti from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*) with other, better, representation of deaf characters.

One of the more notable aspects of this subset of literature that examines the portrayal of deaf characters is the centering of the experiences of deaf child and teen readers. The authors nearly universally position the experiences and feelings of deaf and Deaf children and adolescents at the forefront, although the importance of non-deaf children and others learning accurate information about deafness is also consistently addressed. At least two of the authors are associated with Gallaudet University, either as a professor or as a former student, indicating that they are members of the Deaf community themselves.

There are at least seven Schneider Family Book Award winners, spanning all three age categories, featuring a portrayal of deaf (small “d”), deaf-blind, or hearing-impaired character (*Dad, Jackie, and Me*; *The Deaf Musicians*; *A Dog Called Homeless*; *Five Flavors of Dumb*; *Hurt Go Happy*; *Kami and the Yaks*; *Wonderstruck*). The extent and quality of portrayals of Deaf, with a capital “D,” characters in Schneider Family Book Award winning titles would be an interesting topic for a future study.

### **Portrayal of Blind or Visually Impaired Characters**

Few studies examine the portrayal of blind or visually impaired characters in literature for children and young adults. Two studies from 2000 examine the portrayal in young adult literature, however, though they are published separately, the content of these articles overlaps enormously (Carroll and Rosenblum 2000; Rosenblum and Carroll 2000). These authors provide factual information on blindness and visual impairment,

list several questions to consider for those trying to determine the merit of a particular book that includes a character or characters who are blind or visually impaired, and also provide an annotated bibliography of several young adult books featuring such a character. Each study mentions in passing that blind and visually impaired young adults deserve to see accurate representations of themselves in books, but do not focus on that. The authors note that, although it is more common for people to be born blind or visually impaired, nearly all of the characters they encountered instead became blind or visually impaired during the course of the story. In the seventeen years since these studies were published, there do not appear to have been any additional scholarly examinations of characters who are blind or visually impaired in young adult literature. Several Schneider Family Book Award winners feature a character who is blind or visually impaired, however only one of these could be considered young adult literature (*Things Not Seen*).

Two more recent studies focus on the portrayal of blind or visually impaired characters in picture books. Cheadle (2010) utilizes several sets of guidelines, including the Schneider Family Book Award guidelines, to evaluate several picture books featuring one or more blind characters. This author also briefly mentions the reactions of children who are blind to the stories, but does not make it the focus of her analysis. None of the picture books Cheadle examines were Schneider Family Book Award winners, although two Schneider Family Book Award winners are picture books featuring at least one character who is blind or visually impaired and were published prior to the date of this study (*Looking Out for Sarah*; *Piano Starts Here: The Young Art Tatum*).

Hughes (2012) also examines several picture books for their portrayal of blindness or visual impairment, focusing especially on the visual representation of blindness in the illustrations. Hughes notes that the visual representations can sometimes contradict what is written in a book's text. Although Hughes praises the portrayal of blindness in Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (better classified as an illustrated novel rather than a picture book), she neglects to mention that blind children and adolescents themselves would be unable to experience this primarily visual portrayal. Hughes does specifically reference the Schneider Family Book Award and notes the importance of teacher and parent awareness of this and other awards for children's and young adult literature.

Also noted, by researchers of both picture books and adolescent literature, is an unfortunate, and highly unrealistic, number of characters whose sight is only temporarily lost, with vision later either miraculously or medically (or miraculously medically) restored. The issue of "miracle cures" is also relevant to studies of historical portrayals of disability in literature for a youth audience.

### **Authors Weigh In**

Several authors of literature for children or young adults weigh in on the subject in separate articles (Brenna 2009a; Minaki 2009; Strick 2013). Two of the authors, Brenna and Minaki, have at least one book featuring a character with a disability. Strick is the author of a picture book that contains "no mention of disability in the text," but that "casually" features many experiences of disability included in the illustrations. One of the authors has cerebral palsy herself, while the others do not appear to self-identify as

persons with a disability (Minaki 2009). Gervay (2004) detailed the extensive process she used to better understand, medically, physically, and emotionally, the lives of young burn victims before writing her fictional story *Butterflies* about a teenager who was burned in an accident as a young child.

As Heim (1994) noted in her pivotal and frequently cited article “authors who write novels with disabled characters have an obligation to present accurate, up-to-date information.” Each of these authors clearly do have their child or young adult readers in mind, and note the potential impact that good, and poor, literature can have on a child’s life. Their informative essays offer a unique perspective on the challenges (not in a negative sense) related to writing accurate, honest characters with disabilities while retaining good storytelling and avoiding negative pitfalls.

### **Genre and Format in the Portrayal of Disability**

Few studies examine, or even mention, genre as related to the portrayal of disability in children’s and young adult literature. No studies are known to examine poetry, fantasy, or informational texts, for example, for their portrayals, as a genre, of disability experiences. Yenika-Agbaw (2011b) could perhaps be considered a study of traditional literature, as tales by Hans Christian Anderson are examined. This would be a study of one author of traditional literature, rather than a broad look at the genre itself. Kunze’s (2013) study does have as a subtitle “Disabilities in Children’s Biographies,” however this research focuses solely on the portrayal of Helen Keller in children’s biographies. Again, it is not truly a study of the genre as a whole, and no other studies of disability portrayal in biographies for children and young adults have been located. This

would be an area that would greatly benefit from extended exploration, as there are numerous biographies written for youth about both well-known historical figures with a disability, such as Helen Keller, Louis Braille, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Wilma Rudolph. Many other biographies examine less well-known figures with a disability, including several Schneider Family Book Award winners (*A Boy and a Jaguar*; *Django: World's Greatest Jazz Guitarist*; *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah*; *Piano Starts Here: The Young Art Tatum*; *Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille*; *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin*).

Not genre studies, but rather studies of a particular format, two studies examined the portrayal of disability in graphic novels for young adult readers (Irwin and Moeller 2010; Moeller and Irwin 2012). These researchers first examined young adult graphic novels recommended by librarians, randomly selecting half of the 2008 Great Graphic Novels for Teens (produced by YALSA, Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association) list to assess for disability portrayal (Irwin and Moeller 2010). They followed up with a similar study in 2012 that examined twenty-nine young adult graphic novels that appeared on the *New York Times* Graphic Books Best Seller list during 2009. In each study, the authors discovered more representations of disability than had been expected, with twelve out of thirty recommended graphic novels and eighteen of twenty-nine best-selling graphic novels containing at least one character with a disability. However, the representations were generally considered poor, with the authors noting a prevalence of stereotypical representation, especially of “pitiable” or “evil” characters with disabilities. The graphic novel is a book format that has

experienced a tremendous increase in publication and interest during the last decade or two. It is encouraging that portrayals of disability in graphic novels have begun to be examined; clearly, there is much more that could be done.

### **Historical Perspective and Analysis of Disability Portrayal**

Found nearly universally is the opinion that portrayals of characters with disabilities are generally better now than they used to be (Adomat 2014; Dyches and Prater 2005; Miller-Lachman 2014; Scrofano 2015; Wopperer 2011). Researchers and essayists made note of such things as “over the past thirty years many authors have begun to portray characters with disabilities differently” and describe older literature for children and young adults featuring characters with disabilities in negative terms (Wopperer 2011, 28). The older literature is described as rarely featuring characters with disabilities to begin with, and when it does those characters are often stereotypical, secondary, flat, one-dimensional, or unimportant. Wopperer (2011, 28) described characters with disabilities from the nineteenth century as being only “pale, puny, or deformed.”

Coats (2001) agreed that depictions of disabled characters are improving, but noted also that characters with disabilities continue to be portrayed as “in the service of something” and that some literature continues to present “the idea that disability must serve some purpose, not necessarily for the disabled person, but for the people around him or her” (13).

Examinations of historical literature continue, with ever more modern criteria and knowledge upon which to base critique of outdated presentations of disability. One study

examined four of Hans Christian Anderson's stories that were written for children (Yenika-Agbaw 2011b). The author utilized critical disability theory in order to examine issues of power as related to characters with disabilities. This is also the only article noted for considering non-human characters with disabilities, including the Little Mermaid (who is mute) and the Steadfast Tin Soldier (who is missing part of his leg). Yenika-Agbaw also considers the Ugly Duckling as a character with a disability, something else unique to this study, as simply being "ugly" does not appear to be considered a disability elsewhere in the literature.

Lois Keith examined in detail portrayals of disability – particularly disability that involved paralysis or a character being or becoming unable to walk – in popular books of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in her 2001 book *Take Up Thy Bed and Walk: Death, Disability and Cure in Classic Fiction for Girls*. The author noted that "[f]rom the 1850s, up until very recently...there were only two possible ways for writers to resolve the problem of their characters' inability to walk: cure or death" (5). An edited version of one chapter of Keith's book appeared in the 2004 *Disability Studies Quarterly* issue that focused exclusively on youth literature. Overall, Keith's works thoroughly cataloged and critiqued the many poor ways classic literature could depict a disability experience, noting in particular how often characters with disabilities were simply used as a "vehicle in which the non-disabled protagonist travels in order to become a happier and better person" (2004).

Butler (2016) studied one of the books also considered by Keith, Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did*, originally published in 1872, and contrasted it with



Jacqueline Wilson's *Katy*, published in 2015 and a "modern retelling" of the earlier novel. In both novels, the titular Katy characters become paralyzed following an accident. Butler, a wheelchair user herself, concluded that the modern *Katy* was a much better, more positive, and accurate portrayal of a wheelchair user than was the 19<sup>th</sup> century version.

One study, although not comprehensive, offered some interesting counter examples to the typical views of disability in nineteenth century writing for children. Dowker (2004) does generally support the idea that historical literature is more likely to present stereotypical portrayals of disability. However, the author also revealed that there did exist some nuance in the literature of the time, and that there were some positive portrayals of disability, even in nineteenth and early twentieth century literature. Dowker noted that the titles that "endure" from this time period – that is, the titles that continue to be read or are still recognized today – usually feature the poor, low quality depictions that are often intently critiqued by modern readers. The author cited an 1875 book by Dinah Mulock, *Little Lambe Prince and His Travelling Cloak*, as an example of a fairly positive portrayal of disability, overall (even as "lame" is no longer considered an acceptable way to describe a physical disability), as the character with a disability was successful in his own right and did not need to be "cured" in order to find this success. Dowker concluded by noting that books "reflect not only the attitudes of the authors and of nineteenth century readers, but also those of later readers who have kept them in print" (n.p.).

## **Reader Responses to Disability Portrayal**

There continued to be research the question of whether or not reading books containing characters with disabilities could positively affect the attitudes or behavior of children or teens, with varying results. Cameron and Rutland (2006) did note a statistically significant, positive change in “attitude scores” for children five to ten years of age, following a six-week intervention in which the researchers read, and discussed in small groups, books featuring a character with a disability. Darragh (2010) studied the responses of 229 eighth grade students to reading (or not reading) literature featuring a character with a disability. Analysis of variance did not reveal a statistically significant difference between the two groups of readers to a survey about attitudes regarding persons with disabilities. The results of Smith-D’Arezzo and Moore-Thomas’s (2010, 12) study of fifth grade students indicated that “perceptions of students with learning disabilities were not significantly, positively affected” by reading and discussing books about learning disabilities. At the end of Adomat’s (2014) study utilizing teacher-led classroom discussion of disability following whole-class read alouds of books with characters with disabilities, teachers and parents reported students in the study exhibiting more understanding of people, especially other children, with disabilities.

## **Criteria for Analyzing Portrayal of Disability**

Many articles, in the tradition of Heim (1994), offer criteria for analyzing the portrayal of characters with disability in literature for youth (Landrum 2001; Miller 2012; Myers and Bersani 2008-09; Nasatir and Horn 2003; Rhiger 2011; Smith-D’Arezzo 2003). Artman-Meeker, Grant, and Yang (2016) developed a “decision-making

framework” featuring twenty questions in six categories for teachers to use in evaluating books for children and teens featuring characters with a disability. Bland and Gann (2013, 258), building on prior work, came up with several “key concepts” and an acronym to aid in selection of high-quality literature for children and young adults related to disability: I AM NOT THE DISABILITY.

I = Inclusive Literature is Realistic

A = Accurate and Balanced

M = Multidimensional Characters

NOT = Not the Focal Point of the Story

T = Typical Interactions

H = Honest, Positive, Respectful Language

E = Engaged in Meaningful Relationships and Situations

Disability is what I have, not who I am.

Favazza et al. (2000) mentioned that teachers not knowing what to look for, in regards to quality of depictions of characters with disabilities, would serve as a barrier to having more representations of disability in classroom environments.

### **Conclusion**

Scholarly examination of the Schneider Family Book Award is limited, however scholarly examination of children’s and young adult literature featuring the portrayal of a disability experience is much more abundant. Spanning over four decades, this body of work consisting of empirical research, articles, essays, books, and bibliographies is multifaceted and increasingly varied. Researchers, primarily from the fields of library

science and education, have examined disability in general, and examined the portrayal of specific disabilities or types of disability. Some studies focus on illustration and visual representation of disability, and many focus on textual representations of a disability experience. Researchers study, analyze, and recommend (or not) books from many formats and genres, books for youth readers of many ages, and supply suggested guidelines or criteria for selecting appropriate books. Much less often, researchers study and report the reactions, responses, and feelings of actual children and young adults who have read books featuring the portrayal of a disability experience. Some of the same observations, concerns, and conclusions are noted throughout the literature, irrespective of the date published.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to provide detailed investigation of the history of the Schneider Family Book Award from 2004-2018, covering the formation of the award and a content analysis of the winning titles from the award's first fifteen years. The Schneider Family Book Award honors books written for a child and young adult audience which contain a "distinguished portrayal of people living with a disabling condition" (ALA 2014). Although there exists a great variety of writing and research on the general topic of the portrayal of disabilities in literature for children and young adults, very little previous research focuses specifically on the Schneider Family Book Award. This chapter will consider the design of this research and the methodology employed for gathering and analyzing the data for this study.

#### **Research Questions**

There are two primary research questions, and two sub-questions, asked in this study:

1. What is the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and how did it come to be?
2. What does a content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018 reveal?

- a. Are there differences between the three age categories, Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen, awarded the Schneider Family Book Award?
- b. If there are differences, in which variables and between which age categories are the differences found?

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The dearth of prior research and the broad research questions this study sought to answer indicate that a case study methodology would be an ideal research approach. Although definitions of case study research can vary, in general this methodology can include several different data sources and data collection methods. These methods may be either qualitative or quantitative in nature. The research questions answered by case study research tend to be broad, general questions, often beginning with “what” or “how,” especially when there is limited prior research available (Swanborn 2010, 16-17).

#### **Data Collection Methods – First Research Question**

The first research question is: What is the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and how did it come to be? The data collection methods used to address this research question are qualitative in nature. The methods utilized include document analysis and a personal interview with Dr. Katherine Schneider.

To answer this question, the researcher first consulted the already available published and online material that provided information regarding the history of the Schneider Family Book Award. This included the award's official website maintained by the American Library Association ([www.ala.org/awardsgrants/schneider-family-book-](http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/schneider-family-book-)

award), the 2012 version of the Schneider Family Book Award Manual, various brief articles published about the Schneider Family Book Award, and the personal blog of Dr. Katherine Schneider (ALA 2003; 2005a; 2005b; 2006; 2012; 2018c; Schneider 2012-19). A summary of this information is presented in Chapter 4. The information gleaned from these materials allowed the researcher to identify voids in what is known about the history of the Schneider Family Book Award.

To further understand the history of the Schneider Family Book Award, the researcher conducted an interview with Dr. Katherine Schneider, the patron of the award. Through the interview process, the researcher learned more about the process of starting this award, and also about Dr. Schneider's continued thoughts on the award in general. The provisional list of interview questions is included in Appendix H. Additional questions and comments came up during the course of the interview. A full transcript of the interview, edited minimally for clarity, is included in Appendix K. Follow-up emails to Dr. Katherine Schneider further clarified several points discussed during the original interview.

The Program Officer of the ALA provided several official documents of ALA relating to the formation of the Schneider Family Book Award. These include the original Award Proposal (with a handwritten "approved" scrawled across the top), the original ALA Press Release, an internal email related to the establishment of the award, and a document containing "Tributes" to Dr. Schneider written around the tenth anniversary of the award by authors and illustrators who had won the Schneider Family Book Award. While the personal interview with Dr. Schneider focused on her own experiences, an

examination of ALA documents shed additional light on the more specific timeline of the Schneider Family Book Award's earliest years and corroborated Dr. Schneider's memories. Discoveries made in these resources are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

In *Case Study Research* (2010), Peter Swanborn differentiates between extensive and intensive research. Case studies are an example of intensive research, intended to examine one aspect (case) of a social phenomenon in an in-depth manner (Swanborn 2010, 5). The Schneider Family Book Award can be studied as one case within the larger phenomenon of literary book awards, specifically ALA Youth Media Awards. This research presents a timeline for the formation of the Schneider Family Book Award, while also placing this award within the larger context of the American Library Association Youth Media Awards.

### **Data Collection Methods – Second Research Question**

The second research question is: What does a content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018 reveal? The research method utilized to answer this question was a content analysis of the forty-six Schneider Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018. According to Rossman and Rallis, a content analysis will entail a “systematic examination of forms of communication to objectively document patterns” (2012, 196). The research collection tool presented in Appendix J was utilized to conduct this content analysis. Each of the forty-six Schneider Family Award winning books was read at least twice, and data regarding the content of each book was recorded.

The parameters for the content analysis are partially laid out in the research question itself. The components of the content analysis were the relevant forty-six



Schneider Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018. The data to be collected and the variables to be analyzed within these forty-six titles were determined by relevant research material and the criteria and guidelines for the Schneider Family Book Award. A pilot project was completed to determine the validity and reliability of the data collection tool used for the content analysis. The pilot study was used to refine and strengthen the data collection tool used to perform the content analysis.

Several previously published studies indicated important and relevant variables to consider when studying the portrayal of disability in literature for children. The gender and ethnicity of all protagonist characters were two variables studied, and the gender and ethnicity of secondary characters with a disability in each story were also recorded. McCabe et al (2011) discovered that female protagonists are generally under-represented in literature for children, including in another of the American Library Association's Youth Media Awards, the Caldecott Award. Other studies also considered gender in relation to disability portrayal in youth literature. Ayala (1999) studied fifty-nine picture books and early readers with a primary character with a disability and noted that more of these characters were male than were female. Saad (2004), in a study of protagonists with a chronic illness, found that a far greater percentage of these protagonists are female rather than male. Altieri (2006) discovered that male and female characters with dyslexia faced different primary issues within the plot of the stories.

Many studies address race or ethnicity as well as disability in literature for children and young adults (Abou Ghaida 2016; Aisawi 2010; McNair 2016; Naseri 2001). Gillespie et al (1994) examined the occurrence of characters of various ethnicities

in Newbery Medal winning books, and whether the characters were “major, minor, or mentioned.” Ayala (1999), in addition to noting a preponderance of male characters, also noted that few of the fifty-nine picture book titles featuring a primary character with a disability examined in this study included “ethnically diverse” characters. Daniels (2004) studied the portrayal of African American characters (also written by African American authors) with a disability in literature for youth and concluded that stereotypical depictions of disability are common.

Yenika-Agbaw (2011a) notes that many of the historical studies of the depiction of disability in youth literature focus on white characters, and sought to answer the research question “How is disability represented in Africana (African and African diaspora) adolescent novels?” (210). The results of this study indicated differences in the presentation of disability between African novels, which often presented disability as “unnatural,” and African American novels, which usually presented disability as “natural” (216). Another author examined the intersection of race and disability in one series of books written for a teen audience (Lesley 2014).

The variables examined for each of the winning titles in this study include the gender, ethnicity, and disability status of all protagonist characters. The protagonist, or main character, of a story is the character to whom most of the action of the book occurs. Multiple protagonists are possible. The protagonist character or characters for each of the forty-six winning titles, as determined by the researcher, are noted in Table 9 in Chapter IV.

The categories for the gender variable were as follows:

1. Male
2. Female
3. Non-binary or genderqueer
4. Animal or non-human

The same gender categories were used, and gender was recorded, for all characters considered a protagonist character (regardless of disability status), and for all secondary characters with a disability. Descriptive statistics for the gender variable were tabulated for the award as a whole, and for each of the three age categories (young children's, middle grades, and teen) separately. Results for the gender of protagonist characters were compared between the three age categories.

The ethnicity of all protagonist characters was recorded, as was the ethnicity of all secondary characters who were portrayed with a disability. The ethnic group categories considered for this variable were as follows:

1. Black, African, or African American
2. Hispanic or Latino/a
3. Arab or Arab American
4. Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander
5. Native American/American Indian
6. White or Caucasian
7. Multiple or Mixed-race
8. Other or Unknown
9. None or Non-human

Categorizing human beings according to pre-selected labels has obviously been a historically fraught practice. Deciding who “belongs” to each group has also varied tremendously over time. However, in our multicultural society, the issue of literature representing a multitude of cultures is highly relevant. The ethnicities and cultures noted are commonly addressed by scholars of literature for children and young adults (Lynch-

Brown, Tomlinson, and Short 2011; Smolen and Oswald 2011). The researcher used context from each book, including illustrations when applicable, to determine the best descriptor for each relevant character.

The Schneider Family Book Award guidelines provide the basis for several remaining variables to be studied. The primary criterion for the award is that a given book “must portray some aspect of living with a disability” (ALA 2014). There must be at least one character who has a disability within the story, and the guidelines allow that this character “may be the protagonist or a secondary character.” Furthermore, at least one character with a disability “should be integral to the presentation, not merely a passive bystander” (ALA 2014).

Data was collected relating to the disability status of each protagonist character. This is a binary, categorical variable, with only the options of “yes,” the protagonist does have a disability, or “no,” the protagonist does not have a disability. Data for each protagonist was collected, whether the sole protagonist of a book or one of multiple protagonists from a single title.

During the interview with Dr. Schneider for this research project, another variable to study was suggested. This variable was distilled to “relevant life experience” of the author or illustrator, to indicate whether an author or illustrator appeared to have any personal experience related to the disability portrayed within their book. Within the disability rights movement, the thoughts, opinions, writing, and other creative products of people with disabilities are encouraged, especially when they have direct relevancy to living with a disability. This idea is sometimes summed up as “nothing about us without

us” (Schneider 2017). It is the promotion of people with disabilities knowing best their own needs and the ins and outs of their lives.

For the purposes of this study, “relevant life experience” was defined as having a disability oneself, being a close relative (parent or sibling) of a person with the disability portrayed, or being a teacher or former teacher of students with the disability. This was also a binary variable, with “yes” indicating that an author or illustrator of the book does have relevant life experience regarding the disability portrayed in the book. “Unknown or no” indicated that the relevant life experience of an author cannot be determined with available information, or an author or illustrator does not appear to have relevant life experience related to the portrayed disability.

This variable was difficult to discern with precision. No author or illustrator is at all required to disclose any disabilities they, their family members, and especially their minor children may have. Yet, it is also an extremely important and highly relevant topic within the disability rights movement, and in our society overall. Dr. Schneider discussed the importance it has to her, personally, during the interview for this study.

When the author or illustrator did appear to have relevant life experience, their experiences were further examined to determine if the book could be described as a work in line with “Own Voices.” Own Voices is a descriptor used to indicate a work that is created by a member of a particular community, often a marginalized community, who is writing, speaking, or communicating about a community of which they are a part (Gomez 2017). There is an effort within the greater Disability Rights community to encourage and promote the stories, experiences, and efforts of people with disabilities. Own Voices

books would not include writing by or efforts of family, friends, or teachers, but would solely be the products of people with disabilities themselves.

Scholars of literature for children and young adults have also observed the importance of an author's understanding and perspective, and Patricia Dunn in her book *Disabling Characters* notes that "an author's experience with disability is highly relevant" (2015, p. 15). Dunn emphasizes throughout her work that the disability status of the author is germane to the entire presentation of disability, writing that "differences in conflict and how they are eventually resolved may be related to the disability status of their respective authors" and "the way in which novels seem to 'blame' different things for their characters' problems, and also in what each character has to 'overcome' in order to find his or her identity" is often directly related to the personal experience the author has (or does not have) with disability (2015, p. 90-91).

In the end, the researcher decided to keep this variable, but avoid definitive assertions regarding the results, and instead use language such as "it appears as though..." when reporting results. No authors or illustrators were contacted personally. Biographical material in the books, and author websites were consulted. If nothing regarding a disability was mentioned, then an answer of "unknown or no" was recorded for the "relevant life experience" variable.

A book may be of any genre and be eligible for receiving the Schneider Family Book Award. The criteria for the award note that the content of a winning title may be "fiction, biography, or other form of nonfiction" (ALA 2014). The genre, or multiple genres in certain cases, for each title was recorded for the content analysis, and

descriptive statistics were tabulated for the award as a whole, and for each of the three age categories (young children's, middle grades, and teen) separately. Results were compared between the three age categories.

The genre categories were as follows:

1. Biography
2. Fantasy or Science Fiction
3. Informational
4. Historical Fiction (the setting occurs at least 20 years prior to publication, i.e., a book published in 2010 and set in 1980 would be historical fiction)
5. Realistic Fiction (written about a time contemporaneous to or within 20 years of the publication of the book, i.e., a book published in 1981 and set in 1980 would be realistic fiction)
6. Poetry
7. Traditional Literature

For each of the forty-six titles, the researcher recorded all genres that were applicable.

Multiple genre selection was possible. Some categories are mutually exclusive, i.e. – historical fiction and realistic fiction, or historical fiction and biography. Other categories, such as poetry, can sometimes be combined with other genres. These categories, the characteristics of each genre, and criteria for inclusion in a given genre are outlined in *Essentials of Children's Literature* (Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson, and Short 2011).

The next variable recorded was a follow-up to the question of whether or not a protagonist was portrayed with a disability. When the answer was “yes,” the type of disability was recorded. This was for descriptive purposes only and the disabilities were not further categorized or grouped. Multiple disabilities were sometimes present and noted in a single character.

Some data regarding secondary characters with a disability was collected next. The first variable was a binary “yes” or “no” variable that asked whether one or more secondary characters with a disability were present in the story. When there was not a protagonist with a disability, the answer to this was automatically “yes” (otherwise the book would not have qualified for the Schneider Family Book Award). If the answer was “no,” there were no secondary characters with a disability present in the book, then data collection for that particular title was complete. For each secondary character with a disability, gender, ethnicity, and disability type were recorded. A vast majority of books had between zero to two secondary characters with a disability, however there were up to ten secondary characters with a disability in a single title.

### **Pilot Project**

A pilot project was performed to assess reliability and validity of the content analysis research tool for this study. Ten of the most recent Dolly Gray Children’s Literature Award winners, including five picture books and five novels, were selected for the pilot study. The selected titles are listed in Appendix I. The Dolly Gray Children’s Literature Award is conferred bi-annually by the Center for Exceptional Children’s Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD), and honors books for children and young adults which “authentically portray individuals with developmental disabilities” (DADD 2014). Although this book award has a narrower scope than the Schneider Family Book Award, the titles selected for each are similar in nature. One title, *Reign Rain* by Ann M. Martin, won both the Dolly Gray Children’s Literature Award and the Schneider Family Book Award (and thus was excluded from the pilot study).



Two research analysts with expertise in literature for children and young adults, plus the researcher, read the ten selected Dolly Gray Award titles and completed the content analysis research tool for each title. The results were then compared to assess the percentage of agreement between the three results (Table 1). The results were further analyzed to assess the validity of the research tool.

Table 1. Pilot Project: Percent Agreement, Content Analysis Variables

Variable	Percent Agreement
Gender (Protagonist)	93.2
Ethnicity (Protagonist)	89.8
Protagonist with Disability?	89.8
Type of Disability/ies (Protagonist)	76.6
Genre	93.2
Relevant Life Experience (Author or Illustrator)	96.6
Secondary Character/s with Disability?	89.8
Type of Disability (Secondary)	86.4
<b>Overall</b>	<b>89.4</b>

Reliability is a measure of how similar the responses are between two or more raters or analysts on the same research instrument. There is some disparity as to what percent agreement is needed to suggest reliability in a research tool. Some qualitative research manuals note that inter-rater consistency of at least 80% is adequate (DePoy and Gitlin, 2016). Another text suggests 85% to 90% would be the desired range for percent agreement to indicate a reliable measure (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2014). An overall percent agreement of 89% between three analysts, as calculated in this pilot study, is a strong indication that the research instrument is reliable (Table 1).

Examining the responses in more detail, beyond simple percent agreement, can offer additional insight and clarity on the research instrument. For example, the analysts offered slightly different responses as to the gender of the protagonists (93% agreement).

With further examination, this appears to be due to some disagreement as to who the protagonist is, rather than the gender of individual characters being open to interpretation or difficult to discern. For the two picture books in question, one of the analysts selected a different protagonist than the two other analysts selected, affecting the results for both the gender of the protagonist (coincidentally), as well as the questions regarding whether or not the protagonist, or any secondary characters, in the story were portrayed with a disability. This illustrated the need for a clear definition of “protagonist.” That a book has won an award due to the portrayal of a disability experience within the text does not necessarily mean that the character with a disability is the protagonist. Nor is the narrator of a story always the protagonist. The protagonist is the main character of the story, and the character to whom most of the action of the book occurs.

The variables related to ethnicity of characters, as well as the genre of each title, also had relatively high percent agreement between the raters (nearly 90% for ethnicity and 93% for genre). Despite the high degree of agreement, it would still be beneficial to clearly define the parameters of each variable. Ethnicity, in particular, can be a sensitive and difficult, yet powerful and entirely relevant subject. The pilot study highlighted the fact that clear parameters for this variable can only help, not hinder.

The lowest percent agreement on a particular variable came in the “type of disability” variable, at only 76.6% agreement between the three raters. Some of this, again, was related to the need for a clear determination of who is considered the protagonist character. Other cases of disagreement between the analysts highlighted the need to carefully consider whether multiple disabilities are present. The results for one

book, for example, included one analyst indicating that the protagonist had the disability obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). A second analyst recorded Autism Spectrum Disorder for the same book, same protagonist. A third analyst noted both OCD and Autism for this protagonist. A careful second reading of the book revealed that the protagonist in question would best be described as having both OCD and Autism. This “counted” as zero agreement between the raters, although in fact they did have some similarities in their responses. It would be more concerning had the analysts often listed entirely different disabilities, but that did not occur.

The pilot project was successful on two fronts. As a result of the pilot, one variable was removed, as it was deemed unnecessary to the purpose of the study. Originally, the research collection tool asked the analysts to classify the disabilities portrayed into the three categories of physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. The criteria and guidelines for the Schneider Family Book Award provide that the award can go to any book written for a youth audience that features a disability experience, and further clarify that the disability portrayed may be a “physical, mental, or emotional” disability (ALA 2014). It was discovered that categorizing disabilities into these three categories was difficult and imprecise to the point of being useless. The terms are useful as a broad measure of what books may be considered for the Schneider Family Book Award, and successfully open up a range of disability experiences for consideration. They are much less functional as a categorization variable after the fact.

Also useful as a result of the pilot study was that the researcher was better able to clearly define other variables and the categories within them. Overall, the pilot project

fulfilled its purpose in that it helped to refine and strengthen the data collection tool used to perform the content analysis.

### **Research Analysis**

Descriptive statistics are presented first for the award as a whole, and then for each of the three age categories. The researcher also considered other patterns, trends, or relationships that emerged while the study was conducted. For example, there were no content analysis variables related to the representation of LGBTQ characters, but an initial summation is presented. The sub-questions to the second research question address whether or not there are differences observed in the variables examined between the three age categories of the Schneider Family Book Award. When differences between the three age categories do exist, the researcher further examines where (between which age categories) these differences exist, and in which variable or variables differences may exist.

An additional inferential quantitative analysis was undertaken to better understand if statistically significant differences exist between the three age categories (young children's, middle grades, and teen) for which data was observed. The data collected is nominal, or categorical, in scale, and originates from independent groups rather than paired (before/after) groups. This type of data can be analyzed using chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests of frequency and homogeneity (McCrum-Gardner 2008). A chi-square statistical test is generally utilized to answer research questions related to the observed frequency of variables from different groups (Hinkle, Wiersma and Jurs 2003).

Within the specific framework of the Schneider Family Book Award, the chi-square tests utilized addressed whether or not the frequencies observed in ethnicity and genre were consistent between the three age levels honored for this award. A chi-square test related to the gender variable was not possible, despite descriptive data indicating a difference between the three age categories in the gender of protagonists, because the underlying assumptions that are necessary to perform a chi-square analysis were not met.

### **Conclusion**

The researcher used a case study and content analysis methodology in order to answer the broad research questions asked in this study of ALA's Schneider Family Book Award. Case study research can encompass both qualitative and quantitative methods. Several data collection methods were utilized in order to answer the two research questions and two sub-questions. Qualitative methods were primarily utilized in this study, with one aspect of one research sub-question addressed with a quantitative analysis.

Document analysis and a personal interview with Dr. Katherine Schneider were used to address the first research question. The researcher performed a content analysis of the forty-six winning titles from 2004-2018, considering the award as a whole, and also separately by age levels (young children's, middle grades, and teen) to answer the second research question and the two sub-questions. Taken as a whole, and using descriptive statistics, the researcher considered whether or not there appear to be any patterns that encompass the award-winning titles to date. Descriptive statistics addressed questions regarding the percentage of titles or frequency with which certain attributes appear in the

forty-six Schneider Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018. The following chapter will present the results of these analyses.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This study examines the history of the ALA's Schneider Family Book Award for youth literature featuring a disability experience, including a content analysis of the winning titles from 2004-2018. This chapter focuses on presenting the data, analysis, and results.

#### **Research Questions**

There are two primary research questions, and two sub-questions, asked in this study:

1. What is the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and how did it come to be?
2. What does a content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018 reveal?
  - a. Are there differences between the three age categories, Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen, awarded the Schneider Family Book Award?
  - b. If there are differences, in which variables and between which age categories are the differences found?

First, the history of the Schneider Family Book Award will be discussed in depth, including the development of the award, the parameters for categories within the award, and the terms and criteria for the award. Dr. Katherine Schneider's own experience with

the award will then be considered based on an in-person interview conducted by the researcher. Finally, the content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018 will be presented in depth.

### **History of the Schneider Family Book Award**

The Schneider Family Book Award honors literature written for a child or young adult audience that portrays a disability experience. Awarded annually since 2004 by the American Library Association, the Schneider Family Book Award is presented to three or more authors (or author/illustrator pair) who successfully “embod[y] an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences” (ALA, 2013). The titles are selected in categories encompassing the intended age of the book’s audience: Young Children’s (ages 0-8), Middle Grades (ages 9-13), and Teen (ages 14-18). The selections are announced each year at the American Library Association’s Midwinter Meeting, as one component of the Youth Media Awards presentation. From 2004-2018, forty-six books have had the distinction of receiving the Schneider Family Book Award.

### **American Library Association Youth Media Awards**

The Schneider Family Book Award is a fairly recent addition to American Library Association Youth Media Awards (Table 4.1). These awards are a collection of around twenty awards related to the field of children’s and young adult literature (ALA 2019a). Thirteen of the Youth Media Awards were established prior to the creation of the Schneider Family Book Awards. One of these thirteen, the Andrew Carnegie Medal for



Excellence in Children’s Video, is no longer in existence and was awarded for the last time in 2017 (ALA 2017).

Eight additional ALA Youth Media Awards have been launched since the 2004 inaugural year of the Schneider Family Book Awards. These include the Theodore Seuss Geisel Award for books for beginning readers (established 2006), the Odyssey Award the audiobooks for youth (2008), the William C. Morris Debut Award for books written for a teenage audience by a first-time author (2009), the Excellence in Nonfiction for Youth Adults award for informational books written for teens (2010), the Mike Morgan and Larry Romans Children’s and Youth Adult Literature Award which are part of the Stonewall Book Awards for GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender) books (2010), the Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement for African American authors of youth literature (2010), and the Excellence in Early Learning Digital Media started in 2019 for “distinguished digital media for an early learning audience” (ALA 2019b).

Fifteen ALA Youth Media Awards honor authors, illustrators, or producers for an individual creative work, usually a written and/or illustrated work of literature for young readers. An additional five awards honor an author, illustrator, or scholar for a collective body of work or significant contributions to the field of children’s and young adult literature, over either a lifetime or another extended period of time.

Table 2. Inception Year of American Library Association Youth Media Awards

Name of Award	Inception Year
John Newbery Medal	1922
Randolph Caldecott Medal	1938
Children’s Literature Legacy Award <sup>1</sup>	1954
Mildred L. Batchelder Award	1968

May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture Award	1969
Coretta Scott King Award	1970
Margaret A. Edwards Award	1988
Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video <sup>2</sup>	1991
John Steptoe New Talent Award	1995
Pura Belpré Award	1996
Alex Awards	1998
Michael L. Printz Award	2000
Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal	2001
<b>Schneider Family Book Award</b>	<b>2004</b>
Theodore Seuss Geisel Award	2006
Odyssey Award	2008
William C. Morris Debut Award	2009
Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults	2010
Mike Morgan and Larry Romans Children's and Young Adult Literature Award <sup>3</sup>	2010
Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement	2010
Excellence in Early Learning Digital Media	2019

<sup>1</sup>The Children's Literature Legacy Award was formerly called the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award

<sup>2</sup>The Andrew Carnegie Medal was last awarded in 2017 (ALA 2017)

<sup>3</sup>The Mike Morgan and Larry Romans Children's and Young Adult Literature Award is part of the Stonewall Book Awards

The Newbery Award was the earliest award for youth literature to be established in the United States and was first awarded in 1922. It is probably the best known of all the ALA youth literature awards. Throughout the years, many additional awards have been added. Many of the awards have both winner and honor books each year. For example, there is one title each year that receives the Newbery Medal. The Newbery committee may also choose to select one or more Newbery Honor titles in a given year. The Newbery, Caldecott, Batchelder, Coretta Scott King, Pura Belpré, Printz, Sibert, Geisel, and Odyssey awards follow this model of one winner and one or more honor books each year. Until 2019, the Schneider Family Book Award was one of the only ALA Youth Media Awards that follows a different model – three age categories, with

one winner in each category each year. In 2019, the president of the American Library Association announced, as she introduced the award at the Youth Media Awards Press Conference, that there would be one winner and one honor book selection in each of the three age categories. The six books – three winner and three honor – selected in 2019 were not included in this paper’s analysis, but are noted in Appendix G.

The parameters for many of the Youth Media Awards presented by the American Library Association often limit the selections for certain awards to particular age ranges. The Newbery Award is for books with an intended audience up to fourteen years of age. The Printz Award is for books for twelve to eighteen-year-olds. The Coretta Scott King and Pura Belpré awards both feature winners and honor books in an illustrated category as well as a written category, thus generally ensuring that children and young adults of all ages will be able to find a book that might appeal to them somewhere within the award. In other awards, rather than a specified age range, the format of the book honored limits the intended audience to a small range of ages. For example, the Geisel Award is given to books for beginning readers, thus limiting the intended audience to approximately 4-7 years of age.

It was announced in early 2018 that several already established youth literature awards from ALA affiliates would be added to the Youth Media Awards Press Conference beginning in 2019 (ALA 2018b). These include awards for literature for youth from the American Indian Library Association (AILA), the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA), and the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL). These groups are all affiliates of ALA, rather than divisions within ALA.

Beginning with the Newbery Award in 1922, the various ALA awards honored only written, printed material until the inception of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video in 1991, which recognized quality videos for children. (This is not to be confused with the Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction, established in 2012 to honor books written for an adult, not youth, audience, and which continue to be awarded by ALA.) The Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Children's Video was last awarded in 2017 (ALA 2017). In 2008, the Odyssey Award began honoring outstanding audio-recorded books for children and young adults. The remaining thirteen, and thus the majority of ALA's youth media awards, are awarded to materials that are primarily available in print form.

Depending upon the criteria for each individual award, it is possible for books that win the Schneider Family Book Award to also be awarded another of the ALA youth media awards. This has happened several times during the history of the Schneider Family Book Award. The 2007 winner in the middle grades category, Lord's *Rules*, was also awarded a Newbery Honor medal in the same year. The 2014 winner in the young children's category, Bryant's *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin*, was also awarded a Robert F. Sibert Honor medal in the same year. In 2016, Bradley's *The War That Saved My Life* was honored with at least three ALA Youth Media Awards – the Schneider Family Book Award in the middle grades category, a Newbery Honor medal, and the Odyssey Award winner. Reynolds's *As Brave As You*, was both a 2017 Schneider Family Book Award winner in the middle grades category, and a 2017 Coretta Scott King Author Honor award winner.

### **Schneider Family Book Award – Award Seal**

Many literature awards for books, whether the award is for a book for an adult audience or a child audience, designate an award seal to be affixed to the front cover of the book. The Schneider Family Book Award's award seal has a blue background with silver writing. The words "Schneider Family Book Award" appear around the top edge of the circular seal. The same words are, supposedly, repeated in Braille on the bottom half of the award seal. Unfortunately, it is not real Braille, in that it is not readable as Braille, in more ways than one. The award seal is often printed, rather than affixed, onto book covers, and there are no raised dots. Even when an award seal with raised dots is affixed to a book's cover, this seal very quickly becomes worn down, and the dots are no longer raised. And even if these problems did not exist, the "Braille" on the award seal is not real Braille, but rather "like a children's scribble," according to Dr. Schneider (Schneider 2017). The addition of these dots was, presumably, intended to be real Braille, and as the award manual notes, was done in "homage to Dr. Schneider" (ALA 2014). Dr. Schneider did not have any input into the design of the award seal (Schneider 2017).

### **Schneider Family Book Award – Terms, Definitions, and Criteria**

The Schneider Family Book Award is presented annually to authors and illustrators of youth literature who successfully "embod[y] an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences" (ALA 2013). Terms and criteria for the selection of the books to be honored by this award are presented in the Schneider Family Book Award Manual, found online on the homepage for the award (ALA 2014). A link to the Manual can be found in the reference list for this paper. The Manual lists

both definitive criteria of the award, as well as suggestions or preferences for the committee to consider as they make their selections. The criteria for the award have not changed, for the most part, since the inception of the award in 2004. There is a statement regarding preference for accessible formats that has been removed, and the suggested age ranges for the three categories to be awarded have been altered slightly.

First and foremost amongst the definitions for the Schneider Family Book Award is that a book must feature the portrayal of some type of disability experience. The Schneider Family Book Award is intended to “recognize and honor books for their distinguished portrayal of people living with a disabling condition” (ALA 2014). Although not stated in precisely this way in the Schneider Family Book Award Manual, this amounts to the necessity for at least one character in the book to have a disability. The terms and definitions for the award specify that the “person with the disability may be the protagonist or a secondary character” (ALA 2014). This paper, in part, studied characters with disabilities in winning titles from 2004-2018 and whether these characters are protagonists or secondary characters, among other attributes.

Whether protagonist or secondary character, the Schneider Family Book Award Manual does instruct the committee to consider books in which the character with a disability is “integral to the presentation, not merely a passive bystander” (ALA 2014). As demonstrated by this research project, a majority of Schneider Family Book Award winning titles feature a protagonist character with a disability. A protagonist, or main character, by definition is “integral to the presentation” of the story (regardless of what other faults there may be related to disability portrayal in the story).

There are a few Schneider Family Book Award winning books in which the protagonist does not have a disability, and one or more secondary characters comprise the only disability portrayal in a given title. There do not appear to be any books that have won the Schneider Family Book Award which do not meet the award's criteria for a character with a disability who is "integral to the presentation." Although there do exist within the winning titles portrayals of secondary characters with a disability who are quite minor and relatively unimportant, it is never the sole disability experience portrayed in the book.

### **Schneider Family Book Award – Age Categories**

There are three categories in which Schneider Family Book Award winners are selected – young children's, middle grades, and teen. These are delineated in the Schneider Family Book Award Manual. Each category is based on an intended age range for the audience of the selected titles. The age ranges and/or descriptors for the three categories appear to have varied slightly since the award's inception, and even ALA's own material is inconsistent in varying places as to the specifics of the categories (ALA 2012; Schneider 2017). What does remain consistent, even between somewhat outdated sources, is that there are three separate categories honored, with the intended audiences for each category being progressively older youth.

The first category noted is the young children's category, for books with an intended age range of zero to eight years old (ALA 2014). It is not specified that books selected for the young children's category must be picture books, but in the first fifteen years in the award's history, all of the titles selected in the young children's category

were books published in the picture book format. Although not included in any further analysis, the 2019 Schneider Family Book Award winner and honor book were also both picture books. Earlier sources of writing about the Schneider Family Book Award often indicated an age range for the intended audience of books from the young children's category as zero to ten years old. This category has been referred to as the "grade school" category, rather than the young children's category (ALA 2005a; 2005b; 2006; Verbeten 2005).

The second category of Schneider Family Book Award winning books is the middle grades category, for books with an intended audience in the age range of approximately nine to thirteen years of age. The format of the winning titles in this category is again not specified within the Schneider Family Book Award Manual. All of the winning titles between 2004-2018 have been chapter books, with one of these chapter books being an illustrated novel. The middle grades category appears to have originally been referred to as the middle school category, intended for books for ages 11-13 (ALA 2005a; 2005b; 2006).

"Middle school" is commonly understood to include roughly sixth through eighth grades, whereas "middle grades," as well as the age range of nine to thirteen years, would extend the grade level of the intended audience to roughly fourth through seventh or eighth grades. "Middle grades" rather than "middle school" appears to be the best descriptor for this age category based on the large number of winning titles in the category that would have appeal to and be appropriate for fourth and fifth grade students. Even during the 2019 announcement of the Schneider Family Book Awards during the



Youth Media Awards, the presenter first referred to this “middle” category as the “Middle School” category. The term “middle grades” was used later during the same presentation when the winner and honor book titles were formally announced.

The third and final category of Schneider Family Book Award winning books is the teen category, for books with an intended audience in the age range of fourteen to eighteen years of age. All of the winning titles in this age category, between 2004-2018, have also been chapter books, although, again, the format is not specified by the award terms, definitions, or criteria. The teen category has been referred to as the High School category at times, and the age ranges of the intended audience have varied slightly, including ages thirteen to seventeen, ages thirteen to eighteen, and ages fourteen to eighteen. “Teen” is probably the best descriptor for this age category based on the first fifteen years of winning titles, most of which would likely appeal to and be appropriate for youth ages thirteen and older. While again not included in any further analysis, the 2019 Schneider Family Book Award teen honor book was the first short story collection selected to date.

### **Schneider Family Book Award – Award Manual**

The most current Schneider Family Book Award Manual is considered here as the most accurate source for information relating to the three categories of books awarded the Schneider Family Book Award. Unfortunately, even some of the award’s official online webpages, as recently as 2018, listed contradictory information regarding the age categories of the award. The 2018 middle grades winning title, *Macy McMillian and the Rainbow Goddess*, is listed as the “Middle School Book” on one of the official pages for

this award of the American Library Association (ALA 2018c). Another 2018 press release by the ALA correctly listed the same titles as the “Middle Grades” winner (ALA 2018a). The official webpages related to the Schneider Family Book Award, and maintained by the American Library Association, have been difficult to navigate in general, and can present somewhat contradictory information.

What does or does not constitute a “disability portrayal” is intentionally left vague and open-ended. The Schneider Family Book Award allows for the portrayals of “physical, mental, or emotional” disabilities. The award Manual specifies that each committee is responsible for “decid[ing] on the qualifications of particular titles” (ALA 2014). Over the first fifteen years of the Schneider Family Book Award, the winning titles have portrayed a great variety of disability experiences. The various disability experiences portrayed will be examined in more depth in the presentation of the content analysis results.

The Schneider Family Book Award Manual also specifies that “[b]ooks with death as the main theme are generally disqualified” (ALA 2014). Although “death” is a subject, not a theme (the theme of a book can only be expressed as a complete sentence, not a single word – however, a single word may accurately express a subject or occurrence that is depicted within a given story), this criteria also addresses a common criticism in very early depictions of disability in literature for children and young adults. There are many examples throughout the historical literature of the character with a disability simply being killed off by the end of the story, often as a plot device to further a non-disabled character’s “growth” or “understanding” of the world.

Although there are two Schneider Family Book Award winning books in which a character with a disability dies during the course of the plot, there are no winning titles from 2004-2018 in which death could be considered central to the theme of the story. Outside of stories about now-deceased historical figures, where the death may be noted as a historical fact rather than a plot occurrence, there are two titles in which a secondary character with a disability dies during the course of the story. The 2006 teen category winner, *Under the Wolf, Under the Dog*, briefly describes a suicide completion by a minor secondary character (the character was important in the life of the protagonist, however was a minor character within the plot of the story).

The 2011 middle grades winner, *After Ever After*, concludes with the death of a fairly prominent secondary character who was disabled. Although wrenching, the death is handled with grace and respect on the part of the author. The character's death is not simply a plot device. It does not further the development of characters without disabilities (nor characters with disabilities, for that matter). Nor is the death depicted as "for the best" or in any way a favorable outcome, both of which have been historically common in the portrayals of characters with a disability. There were also a large number of deaths depicted in the story *Rose Under Fire*, the 2014 winner in the teen category, the setting of which is a Nazi concentration camp during World War II. None of the characters who die during the course of this story were considered characters with a disability for the purpose of this study.

### Schneider Family Book Award – Further Criteria

Schneider Family Book Award winning titles “must be published in English,” however they do not have to be written by an author from the United States (ALA 2014). Other American Library Association book awards, such as the Newbery Medal, are exclusively awarded to U.S. authors. Most of the Schneider Family Book Award winners from 2004-2018 were first published in the United States, but several were first, or concurrently, published in Canada or the United Kingdom/Great Britain (Table 3). Most of the authors and illustrators honored with a Schneider Family Book Award appear to be from the United States, but there are a few exceptions. These include British author Sarah Lean, author of the 2013 middle grades winner *A Dog Called Homeless*, and Canadian author Teresa Toten, author of the 2016 teen winner *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B*. The award criteria further state that the “award may be given posthumously” (ALA 2014). Additionally, one Schneider Family Book Award winner was written and published bilingually, in both English and Spanish. *My Pal, Victor/mi amigo, Víctor* by Diane Gonzalez Bertrand, was the 2005 winner in the young children’s category.

Table 3. Schneider Family Book Award Winning Titles First, or Concurrently, Published Outside of the United States

Title and Author	Year Awarded	Place of First Publication
	SFBA	
<i>Tending to Grace</i> Kimberly Newton Fusco	2006	United States and Canada (concurrent)
<i>The Deaf Musicians</i> Pete Seeger and Paul DuBois Jacobs	2007	United States and Canada (concurrent)
<i>Back to Front and Upside Down!</i> Claire Alexander	2013	United Kingdom

<i>A Dog Called Homeless</i> Sarah Lean	2013	Great Britain
<i>The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B</i> Teresa Toten	2016	Canada
<i>Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess</i> Shari Green	2018	United States and Canada (concurrent)

Currently, the Schneider Family Book Award is presented to authors and illustrators of books that were published during the prior calendar year. For example, the three 2018 winning titles were all published during 2017. In the very early years of the award, it appears that books with publication dates within the prior two or three years, rather than just one year, were considered. The inaugural awards in 2004 were presented to three books published between 2001-2003 – *Looking Out for Sarah* (Lang 2001), *A Mango Shaped Space* (Mass 2003), and *Things Not Seen* (Clements 2002). The 2005 winner in the teen category, Abeel’s *My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir* was published in 2003, and the 2006 winner in the teen category, Rapp’s *Under the Wolf, Under the Dog*, was published in 2004. The 2006 middle grades winner, *Tending to Grace* by Fusco, was published two years prior to winning, in 2004. Finally, the 2008 winner in the teen category, *Hurt Go Happy* by Rorby, was first published in 2006. Beginning in 2009, it appears that all Schneider Family Book Award winners were published in the year prior to winning the award.

There is a cash award given to recipients of the Schneider Family Book Award. The endowment from Dr. Katherine Schneider provides for this monetary award each year (ALA 2014; Schneider 2017). Each author, or author/illustrator pair, receives \$5000.00, which is split between the author and the illustrator, when applicable. It is

presumed that the two authors of the 2013 teen category winner, Peter Lerangis and Henry Mazer, shared the five-thousand-dollar prize. The 2005 young children's winning title, *My Pal Victor/Mi amigo Victor*, was written by Diane Gonzalez Bertrand, illustrated by Robert L. Sweetland, and translated by Eida de la Vega. It is unknown if the translator of a work receives any of the award money. It is also unknown how the monetary award was handled in 2016, the year that there were four winning titles. Both Kimberly Brubaker Bradley's *The War That Saved My Life* and Lynda Mullalee Hunt's *Fish in a Tree* won in the 2016 middle grades category.

Some of the criteria to be considered by the selection committee, and listed in the Schneider Family Book Award Manual, relate directly to disabilities and their portrayal in the selected titles. The criteria specify that the portrayal of any disability, must be presented as "part of a full life, not something to be pitied" (ALA 2014). It has been a common criticism of disability portrayals in past (and sometimes present) literature for youth that characters with a disability are portrayed as either pitiful or pitiable, often in direct contrast to characters without a disability. The award criteria also stipulate that the disability experiences portrayed should be "realistic, avoiding exaggeration or stereotypes," and that "information on a disability must be accurate" (ALA 2014).

The Schneider Family Book Award Manual also delineates some literary criteria for the winning selections in the areas of content, style, and illustration and design. No genre of books is excluded from the award, as the criteria note that any selected work may be "fiction, biography, or other form of nonfiction" (ALA 2014). Other literary criteria noted are criteria that could be applied to any literature of quality for children and

young adults. For example, age appropriate themes are expected, the book should be generally engaging and feature “distinctive use of language for plot and character development” (ALA 2014). Books selected for the Schneider Family Book Award, outside of all other criteria, should be examples of quality literature for children and young adults. As the award Manual states, simply and directly, the books “[s]hould be well written” (ALA 2014).

There was, at least briefly, a stated preference in the award manual’s criteria for books available in accessible format. An earlier version of the Schneider Family Book Award Manual dated June 2012 included the statement that “[p]reference will be given to books that can be made available in accessible formats” (ALA 2012). This statement is no longer listed amongst the criteria in the Schneider Family Book Award Manual currently available on the online homepage for the award, and dated June 2014 (ALA 2014). It is unknown why this statement, only expressed as a preference and not as an absolute criterion, was removed from the award manual, or why the presenters of this award would not want to give preference to books that persons with disabilities could themselves access.

### **Dr. Katherine Schneider – Personal History**

The Schneider Family Book Award was first presented in 2004 to three books that had been published between 2001-2003. The award was started at the behest of Dr. Katherine Schneider, who donated the requisite funds to the American Library Association to establish the award. Although the award was formally established in 2003, and then first presented in early 2004, the complete history of the award dates back many

years prior to this and is closely related to Dr. Schneider's own history. Dr. Schneider was kind enough to grant a personal interview with the researcher and shared her thoughts, insights, and experiences with the award that bears her family name.

Dr. Katherine Schneider was born in the United States in 1949, following a premature delivery. As a baby, she was placed in an incubator with elevated oxygen levels. Unknown at the time, the increased oxygen saturation also increased incidences of what is now called retinopathy of prematurity. Dr. Schneider recounts in her book *To the Left of Inspiration: Adventures in Living with Disabilities* (2005) that her parents realized early in her life that something was different, that she was not tracking objects with her eyes in the same way as other babies. Although Dr. Schneider also recounts some memories as a very young child with severely limited sight, she most often writes that she has been, or refers to herself as being, "blind since birth."

Dr. Schneider attended grade school and high school at a time before relevant laws, such as 1975's Public Law 94-142, or the Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990, required educational opportunities to be provided to students with disabilities. Despite this, Dr. Schneider attended a typical American public school system in Michigan during the 1950s and 1960s, "mainstreamed" before "mainstreaming" was either standard practice or mandated by law. She writes that her mother, who had been a teacher of deaf students, in particular pushed for her "to have access to public education at a time when this wasn't common" (Schneider 2005, p. 22).

A love of books and reading throughout her life is evident from a study of Dr. Schneider's history. She learned to read Braille as a child, and recounts receiving books



by mail from the Michigan Library for the Blind, and later the Library of Congress Braille Library. The limited selection available at the time left a lot to be desired, but the books brought a lot of pleasure and enjoyment nonetheless. She even attempted, at around age ten, to read the entirety of the *World Book Encyclopedia*, which had recently been provided to her local library in Braille format, eventually realizing that such an endeavor was probably better limited to the entries that she found personally interesting (Schneider 2005; Schneider 2013, p. 16).

“Talking Books,” as audio book recordings were first called, added to her selection of reading material, and Dr. Schneider recounts “many happy summer afternoons lying in my room reading classics like *Little Women*” (Schneider 2005, p. 56). Her mother, and later other readers, would read aloud to her other material, especially for school, that was not otherwise accessible. This early love of reading and books continued well into adulthood, but with improved technology, and greater availability and variety of reading material. Instead of utilizing thirty-three rpm record players (or cassette tapes, or books on CD), Dr. Schneider now often utilizes a computerized reading machine, which can express in audio format various typewritten (but only typewritten, textual) material.

Dr. Schneider also continues to utilize local libraries, as well as Bookshare ([www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org), which provides ebooks to “people with reading barriers”), and audio books distributed by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped ([www.loc.gov/nls](http://www.loc.gov/nls)), a division of the Library of Congress (Schneider 2017). Audio books provided by the National Library Service utilize (human) narrators who read aloud the various selections. Bookshare titles are described by Dr. Schneider as “like Hal

the computer reading to you,” however the speed at which they can be played can also be increased without “sound[ing] like Donald Duck,” thus also increasing the number of books that can be read (Schneider 2017). “So many books, so little time,” as the saying goes, and as Dr. Schneider also affirms (Schneider 2017).

In addition to being a life-long reader, Dr. Schneider has also spent a lifetime advocating for people with disabilities. She describes the various forms her advocacy has taken over the years, including community speeches, school presentations, visits with Girl Scout and Boy Scout groups, articles in magazines and newspapers, designing and running a “mentoring program...matching psychologists and psychology students who have similar disabilities,” and even the deceptively simple act of sticking up for herself and her needs in many different situations (Schneider 2005, p. 17).

In 2010, Dr. Schneider published a book for children with disabilities called *Your Treasure Hunt: Disabilities and Finding Your Gold*. Although her blindness, and her guide dog, are sometimes the focus of her advocacy, Dr. Schneider is clearly interested in advancing the understanding of, and especially the inclusivity of, all types of disability experiences. In addition to the Schneider Family Book Award, around 2013 Dr. Schneider also established the Katherine Schneider Journalism Award for Excellence in Reporting on Disability (McGuire 2013; Schneider 2017).

### **Establishment and Early Years of the Schneider Family Book Award**

In 2004, Dr. Schneider’s commitment to advocacy, combined with her decades long love of reading and a deep respect for libraries, together with an inheritance from her father, all coalesced and the Schneider Family Book Award was established by the

American Library Association. Sometime in 2002, she believes, Dr. Schneider approached ALA about the possibility of establishing an award to honor “books about kids with disabilities” (Schneider 2017). ALA was receptive to the idea, however made clear from the beginning that it would take a sizeable amount of money, not just a great idea, to actually establish such an award. About this initial phone call, Dr. Schneider recounts that ALA (or at least the person with whom she first spoke) was “kind of nonplussed by somebody calling them out of the blue, who wasn’t clearly Bill Gates or something, saying ‘I got *some* money’” (Schneider 2017).

Within time, Dr. Schneider made a monetary donation to the American Library Association in the amount of three-hundred thousand dollars to start the award (Schneider 2017). Although the credit for the establishment of the Schneider Family Book Award rests with Dr. Schneider, ALA has since been the organization solely responsible for the award. It is a committee of seven to eight people, appointed or elected by ALA, who select the winning titles each year. Since the second year of the award, the winners are announced at ALA’s Midwinter Meeting each January (or occasionally February) at the Youth Media Awards Press Conference (ALA 2014). The presentation is held in front of a live audience, and more recently has also been livestreamed on the internet. At the ALA Annual Meeting, held every summer in either June or July, there is a luncheon held honoring the various authors and illustrators who won an award that year. Dr. Schneider herself has, on several occasions, presented a physical plaque to the winning authors and illustrators in person at this event (Schneider 2017).

When the Schneider Family Book Award winning titles are announced, only the current year's committee members already know the results. In fact, the winning titles are only officially selected and confirmed earlier during the Midwinter meeting itself, usually on the Friday before the Youth Media Awards presentation (ALA 2012; ALA 2014). The authors and illustrators, and their publishers, have also been recently informed of their achievement upon the announcement at the Youth Media Awards presentation, usually the day before the official announcement occurs (ALA 2014).

Although the Schneider Family Book Award Manual states that the ALA Staff Liaison for the award will notify Dr. Schneider "of winners immediately after Midwinter," it appears that this does not occur in practice. Dr. Schneider stated that she "scrambles to find out" the selected titles most years, and further elaborated that at no time in the award's history has anyone from the American Library Association personally informed her of the winning titles (Schneider 2017, 2019). The Schneider Family Book Award Manual also states that Dr. Schneider will be sent "two copies of each winning book," which Dr. Schneider confirms does happen, as she puts it, "religiously" every year. Dr. Schneider is provided with two print copies of each title, however she reads nearly all of the books through Bookshare or the National Library Service (Schneider 2019).

### ***Wonderstruck* Controversy**

In 2012, an illustrated novel called *Wonderstruck*, written and illustrated by Brian Selznick, was one of two middle grades winners selected by the committee to receive a Schneider Family Book Award. *Wonderstruck* is an illustrated novel featuring two

seemingly unrelated stories, each featuring a deaf protagonist. The story of one protagonist is related entirely in words, while the story of the second protagonist is told entirely by illustration. This selection was the first, and remains the only, selection by the award committee to which Dr. Schneider objected.

*Wonderstruck* as a book is fairly unique in format and composition, as it is essentially half novel, and half extended-length wordless picture book. It is not a “Graphic Novel” in the sense that it contains paneled, comic book like drawings and scenes, but it is a “graphic novel” in the sense that is a novel length work that contains a lot of illustrations that are fundamental to understanding the story presented. Wordless picture books are often fascinating works of art, successfully telling a story that sighted people can follow without the help of any (or very minimal) textual elements. The crucial distinction of the previous statement is that books such as *Wonderstruck* are nearly entirely limited to the enjoyment of sighted people. As Dr. Schneider accurately noted, “[i]t may be fine book, but no blind person can read a graphic novel, no matter what kind of scanner or technology they have” (Schneider 2013, 17).

The Schneider Family Book Award is presented to books for youth featuring a portrayal of a physical, mental, or emotional disability experience, as judged by the committee for each given year. Any disability experience is acceptable, and it is up to the committee each year to decide if a book meets this basic requirement for the award. As noted earlier, Dr. Schneider does not have any input into the titles that are awarded the Schneider Family Book Award. Those decisions are entirely up to each year’s committee members. In the case of *Wonderstruck*, Dr. Schneider strongly objected to the

committee's selection, which she discussed both during the in-person interview and in her 2013 book *Occupying Aging: Delights, Disabilities, and Daily Life*.

Dr. Schneider writes that the first thing she does annually upon learning the titles of the Schneider Family Book Award winners is to check “how many [are] available in accessible formats” so that she may begin reading them (2013, 15). In 2012, two of the three winning titles were already available in accessible format when Dr. Schneider checked. The third title was *Wonderstruck*, and it soon became apparent why that title was currently unavailable in an accessible format – wordless picture books (or, in this case, a title in which half of the book is essentially a novel length wordless picture book) are difficult to produce in audio format or in Braille. Dr. Schneider seemed quite hurt that the committee would select a book for an award that bears her family name that she herself could not access. She described her reaction to this selection as a “gut punch” (Schneider 2017). Additionally, she notes that other blind people she is acquainted with “complained to her about its being chosen,” again due to the award bearing her name (Schneider 2013, 17).

Dr. Schneider did contact the ALA to relay her concerns. And while she recounted that her interactions with them on this matter were professional, it does not appear that she believes that her concerns were truly understood. She reported: “I don’t think they took very seriously my solution, which was making the award ‘pending’ or if you can’t make it pending, make a strong case to the author, that, OK, you know, *you* know what you meant! *You* describe [the visual parts of the book] and, make that

available on your website or whatever for blind kids to be able to go out there and get that” (Schneider 2017).

Indeed, it could have been a bit of a “pie in the face” for ALA to announce that a book had won an award, only to rescind the award afterward. As was discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, neglecting to consider the wants, needs, and perspective of people with disabilities themselves has been fairly common throughout the scholarly history of literature for youth featuring a disability experience. Dr. Schneider’s disappointment that the committee did not appear to consider “what it would feel like to be asked to sponsor something that ‘your kind’ of people can’t have” and that “[p]robably they’ve never had that experience of exclusion” is understandable (2013, 17).

During the in-person interview, the researcher inquired as to whether or not the author of *Wonderstruck*, Brian Selznick, was aware of Dr. Schneider’s concerns regarding the award. Dr. Schneider’s memories were not exact as to the progression of events, but she indicated that she thought she had probably contacted him at the time, assuring the researcher that she would have shared her concerns as they related to blind children and not her “gut punch” reaction (Schneider 2017). Dr. Schneider could not recall for certain if Mr. Selznick responded.

On Brian Selznick’s author webpage, the Schneider Family Book Award is not listed among the several awards listed for *Wonderstruck*, which include a notation that this title was an American Library Association Notable Children’s Book (Selznick 2017). It is unknown as to why the Schneider Family Book Award is excluded from this list. Many other websites for authors who have won the Schneider Family Book Award

prominently list the award among their accolades. It seems like a rather remarkable omission in light of Brian Selznick's remarks on the Schneider Family Book Award written for the award's tenth anniversary:

When I was writing *Wonderstruck*, one of my biggest challenges was to make the experiences of my deaf characters believable, since I myself am not deaf. I read many books and interviewed a lot of Deaf people, and tried hard to channel what I learned into the book. Winning the Schneider Family Book Award was the most wonderful confirmation that I'd succeeded in my efforts to create realistic, unique individuals who happen to be deaf. Many people in the Deaf\* community have since let me know that they fully agree with the Schneider Family Book Award, telling me I've captured something true from their experience, and I couldn't be prouder. (Tributes from Schneider Authors 2014)

About four months or so after the announcement in early 2012 that it had won a Schneider Family Book Award, The National Library Service was able produce an audio recording of *Wonderstruck*, something Dr. Schneider describes as a "Herculean effort" (Schneider 2013, 86; 2017). Dr. Schneider was able to read this version, although she remained unimpressed (Schneider 2013). She related that "their person did an excellent job, I guess, of describing the big chunks that were pictures. But... you could tell, it would have been a whole lot better book if you could see it" (Schneider 2017).

### **Further Thoughts**

In general, Dr. Schneider has been very happy with the results of the Schneider Family Book Award. She believes that it has had the intended effect, which was to encourage the publication of more books for youth about disability and to further improve the quality of such literature. There are two changes she reports that she would have made, in retrospect. She would have made "available in an accessible format" a clear and unambiguous criterion for the award, not just a preference (and not merely a



stated preference that would later be removed entirely). She also would have made the disability status of the author as something for the committee to consider, and to give preference to authors with a disability themselves or with close family members with a disability (Schneider 2017).

### **Conclusion – History of the Schneider Family Book Award**

The Schneider Family Book Award was started at the behest of Dr. Katherine Schneider, with the hope that it would encourage the writing and publication of more books for youth about disability. The ALA is responsible for the presentation of the award annually, and between 2004-2018 forty-six titles received this award.

Understanding the history, categories, and criteria for the Schneider Family Book Award helps to set the stage for the next step of the research project: an analysis of the forty-six books that received the award in its first fifteen years.

### **Content Analysis of Award-Winning Titles, 2004-2018**

What do the books that have won the Schneider Family Book Award show us about the presentation of a disability experience? How do the forty-six titles differ, and how to the three age categories honored differ, if at all? The research question and sub-questions to be addressed in this section are:

What does a content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018 reveal?

Are there differences between the three age categories, Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen, awarded the Schneider Family Book Award?

If there are differences, in which variables and between which age categories are the differences found?

The research collection tool presented in Appendix J was utilized to conduct a content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018. Data for several categorical and descriptive variables was collected for the forty-six titles. The forty-six winning books are listed as a whole in Appendix B. The winning titles from 2004-2018 are first examined collectively, with descriptive data presented for the Schneider Family Book Award as a whole. Descriptive data for each of the three age categories, young children's, middle grades, and teen, are presented separately, and differences between the age categories are examined. Finally, a Chi-square analysis is used to examine select variables for statistically significant differences between the three age categories of the Schneider Family Book Award.

The variables studied for each of the winning titles include the gender, ethnicity, and disability status of all protagonist characters from the winning titles. Additional data collected includes the genre of the winning titles, the relevant life experience or disability status of the author or illustrator of each book, the type of disability or disabilities that are portrayed in each story, and the gender and ethnicity of secondary characters from the winning titles who have a disability. Additional details, emerging patterns, or other notable features that were observed during data collection are also presented.

### **All Age Categories**

From 2004 and 2018, forty-six books were awarded the Schneider Family Book Award, each of which was read multiple times during the data collection phase for this

content analysis. The researcher examined primarily print copies of each book, and also listened to audiobook recordings of several winning titles.

### **Overview – All Age Categories**

A general summary of the variables examined across all age levels of the Schneider Family Book Award is as follows. For the award as a whole, the gender of protagonists is evenly divided between male (49%) and female (49%) characters. A majority of protagonists are white or Caucasian in ethnicity (67.3%). Most protagonists have a disability (83.7%). Realistic fiction is the most common genre across the forty-six award-winning titles (63%). A substantial majority of authors or illustrators appear to have no relevant life experience related to the disability they write about (80.4%). Very few books could be considered part of Own Voices (10.9%), in which an author or illustrator with a disability has created a book about that disability. Throughout the Schneider Family Book Award, many various disabilities are portrayed. A slim majority of the books feature at least one secondary character with a disability (54.3%). Like the protagonist characters, a majority of the secondary characters with a disability are also white or Caucasian in ethnicity (83.7%). A more detailed examination of the variables across the Schneider Family Book Award as whole reveals more nuance about these variables. Analysis by age category, and between age categories, provides further insight and understanding of the Schneider Family Book Award recipients.

### **Gender of Protagonists – All Age Categories**

Across the forty-six Schneider Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018, there are forty-nine protagonists. Multiple protagonists found within a single title

are possible, though unusual, thereby there are forty-nine protagonists rather than forty-six. Only three out of the forty-six total books have multiple protagonists. *Wonderstruck*, from the middle grades category, has two protagonists. From the teen category, both *Girls Like Us* and *When We Collided* also have two protagonist characters. The remaining forty-three titles have one protagonist each.

Of the forty-nine protagonists, forty-eight (98%) are human characters (or essentially human, in the case of one anthropomorphized pig), and one (2%) is an animal character. Of the forty-eight human or essentially human characters, twenty-four (49%) are male and twenty-four (49%) are female (Table 4). There are no protagonists in the forty-six titles studied who appear to identify as non-binary or genderqueer. From this data, it appears that gender of the protagonists is quite evenly split for the award overall. Further examination by age levels will reveal some marked differences in the gender of the protagonists between the young children's, middle grades and teen categories.

Table 4. Gender of Protagonists – All Age Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	24	49.0
Female	24	49.0
Non-binary or Genderqueer	0	0.0
Animal or Non-human	1	2.0
Total	49	100.0

#### **Ethnicity of Protagonists – All Age Categories**

The ethnicity of the forty-nine protagonists is shown in Table 5. White or Caucasian is the most common ethnicity portrayed, with thirty-three (67.3%) protagonists overall identified as white or Caucasian. The second most common ethnicity for protagonists across all age levels together is Black, African, or African American, with

five protagonists (10.2%) overall. No other ethnicity is represented more than two or three times across the award.

The remaining protagonists include three (6.1%) who are multiple or mixed race, two (4.1%) Hispanic or Latino/a, two (4.1%) Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander, two (4.1%) other or unknown, whose ethnicity falls outside of any of the other named categories or cannot be determined with any degree of certainty, and two (4.1%) that are animal or non-human. The anthropomorphized pig previously mentioned is considered male for gender purposes, but animal or non-human for the purposes of ethnicity. There are no protagonists in any 2004-2018 Schneider Family Award winning title who can be characterized as either Arab or Arab American, or Native American/American Indian. Like the gender variable, further between group analysis reveals differences in the ethnicity of the protagonists between the three age levels awarded.

Table 5. Ethnicity of Protagonists – All Age Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Black, African, or African American	5	10.2
Hispanic or Latino/a	2	4.1
Arab or Arab American	0	0.0
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	2	4.1
Native American/American Indian	0	0.0
White or Caucasian	33	67.3
Multiple or Mixed Race	3	6.1
Other or Unknown	2	4.1
Non-human or None	2	4.1
Total	49	100.0

#### **Disability Status of Protagonists – All Age Categories**

Overall, the majority of protagonists are portrayed as having a disability (Table 6). Forty-one (83.7%) out of the forty-nine total protagonists have some type of

disability, and only eight (16.7%) protagonists do not have a disability. The forty-one protagonists with a disability cover thirty-nine of the Schneider Family Award winning books between 2004-2018. Only seven of the winning titles during this time period exclusively feature one or more secondary characters, and no protagonist, with a disability. There appears to be little to no difference between age levels as to whether or not there is a protagonist with a disability present in the story. Of the seven titles in which there is no protagonist with a disability, two are from the young children’s category, three are from the middle grades category, and two are from the teen category.

Table 6. Disability Status of All Protagonists – All Age Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Disability Status	Number	Percent
Yes, Protagonist with Disability	41	83.7
No, Protagonist without Disability	8	16.3
Total	49	100.0

### **Genre – All Age Categories**

A majority of Schneider Family Book Award winning books can be described as realistic fiction. Although it is possible for one book to fall into multiple genres, most of the Schneider Family Book Award winning books can be categorized into a single, distinct genre. There are two exceptions to this, as two books, both from the middle grades category, do fall into multiple genres. The remaining forty-four titles are best represented by one genre category only. There are therefore a “total” of forty-eight genres, as shown in Table 7, however the percent of each individual genre is still calculated out of a total of forty-six titles.

A majority of titles overall, twenty-nine (63%) fall into the genre of realistic fiction. Other genres represented include biography, with seven titles (15.2%), historical

fiction with six titles (13.0%), fantasy or science fiction with four titles (8.7%), and poetry with two titles (4.3%). There are no books that are categorized in the traditional literature or informational genres. Biography is often considered a subset of the informational genre, however for the purposes of this study biography is considered its own category. More detailed analysis of titles, and why certain specific titles have been categorized a certain way, is included in the analysis of each individual age category. A comparison between the three age levels reveals some differences between the young children, middle grades, and teen levels, although not quite to the same extent as the differences between age levels seen for the gender and ethnicity of the protagonists. A list of all titles and their genre is found in Appendix F.

Table 7. Genre: Total Number of Each Genre, All Age Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Genre	Number	Percent
Biography	7	15.2
Fantasy or Science Fiction	4	8.7
Informational	0	0.0
Historical Fiction	6	13.0
Realistic Fiction	29	63.0
Poetry	2	4.3
Traditional Literature	0	0.0
Total	48 <sup>1</sup>	>100.0 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Two books in the Middle Grades category fall into multiple genres, therefore the total number of genres comes to forty-eight although there are only forty-six total winning titles

<sup>2</sup>Percent is calculated out of forty-six titles total, therefore totaling more than one hundred percent

### **Relevant Life Experience of Authors – All Age Categories**

Fewer than twenty percent of the 2004-2018 Schneider Family Book Award winning titles are written by an author who appears to have relevant life experience directly related to the disability portrayed in the book (Table 8). Thirty-seven (80.4%) of

the forty-six books are written or illustrated by a person or persons without personal experience related to the disability portrayed. Only nine (19.6%) books in total, three in each of the age levels, are written by an author with some form of personal experience related to the disability portrayed, based on all available information. For the purposes of this study, relevant personal experience could include having the disability oneself, being the parent or sibling of a person with the disability portrayed, or being a teacher or former teacher of students with the disability portrayed.

Table 8. Relevant Life Experience of the Author or Illustrator: All Age Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award

Relevant Life Experience of Author/Illustrator	Number	Percent
Yes	9	19.6
No	37	80.4
Total	46	100.0

Only a little more than half of these nine titles in which the author or illustrator has some relevant life experience could additionally be considered Own Voices stories. Own Voices is an effort within the greater Disability Rights community to encourage and promote the stories, experiences, and efforts of people with disabilities. Own Voices books would not include writing by or efforts of family, friends, or teachers, but would solely be the products of people with disabilities themselves. There appear to be only five (10.9%) books from the forty-six 2004-2018 winning titles that meet this criterion.

*A Boy and a Jaguar*, from the young children's category and about a young boy who stutters, is written by Alan Rabinowitz. The author biography included with the book notes that Mr. Rabinowitz experienced stuttering as a child himself (Rabinowitz 2014). From the middle grades category, *Tending to Grace*, about a teenage girl who stutters, is written by Kimberly Newton Fusco. The author's website notes that Ms. Fusco



stuttered while growing up (Fusco 2018). The only Own Voices books from the young children's and the middle grades categories are both about stuttering, and, though Own Voices, are noted as conditions that each author experienced as a child, not as ongoing experiences into adulthood.

All three titles from the teen category in which the author has relevant experience could also be considered works in line with Own Voices. Samantha Abeel writes a memoir/semi-autobiography, *My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir* (categorized in the biography genre for this study) about her own dyscalculia (a learning disability) and anxiety. The biographical information included in Jonathan Friesen's *Jerk, California* notes that Mr. Friesen has Tourette's syndrome, as does Jack (Sam), the protagonist of his story, and one additional secondary character also (Friesen 2008). Emery Lord writes about a teenage girl who has been diagnosed with bi-polar disorder in *When We Collided*. Ms. Lord has discussed her personal experiences with mental health issues in interviews (Adler 2016).

### **Disabilities Portrayed – All Age Categories**

Although only a small percentage of the authors or illustrators appear to have relevant experience to the disability experiences about which they write, as a group they have written about a large assortment of disability experiences. While a somewhat subjective statement, there do appear to be a large variety of disabilities portrayed throughout the forty-six Schneider Family Book Award winning titles to date (Table 9). Counting both protagonists and secondary characters, there are eighty-four characters portrayed with some type of disability. There are over forty distinct disabilities portrayed.

Table 9. Disabilities Portrayed: All Age Categories, Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Title (Year Won) and Character Name	Character Type	Disability or Disabilities Portrayed
<u>Young Children's</u> <i>Looking Out for Sarah</i> (2004)	Sarah	Blind
<i>My Pal, Victor;</i> <i>Mi amigo, Victor</i> (2005)	Victor	Wheelchair User
<i>Dad, Jackie and Me</i> (2006)	Father	Deaf
<i>The Deaf Musicians</i> (2007)	Lee Max	Hearing-impaired Deaf or Hearing-impaired
<i>Kami and the Yaks</i> (2008)	Kami	Deaf
<i>Piano Starts Here:</i> <i>The Young Art Tatum</i> (2009)	Art Tatum	Severe Visual Impairment
<i>Django: World's Greatest</i> <i>Jazz Guitarist</i> (2010)	Django Reinhardt	Burned Hands
<i>The Pirate of Kindergarten</i> (2011)	Ginny	Double Vision
<i>Back to Front and Upside</i> <i>Down!</i> (2013)		

	Stanley	Protagonist	Dyslexia
<i>A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin</i> (2014)	Horace Pippin	Protagonist	Arm Injury/Loss of Use of Arm
<i>A Boy and a Jaguar</i> (2015)	Alan	Protagonist	Stuttering
<i>Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah</i> (2016)	Emmanuel Yeboah	Protagonist	Missing Part of Leg
<i>Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille</i> (2017)	Louis Braille	Protagonist	Blind
<i>Silent Days, Silent Dreams</i> (2018)	James Castle	Protagonist	Deaf, Mutism, possible Autism
<u>Middle Grades</u> <i>A Mango Shaped Space</i> (2004)	Mia Adam Billy	Protagonist Secondary Secondary	Synesthesia Synesthesia Synesthesia
<i>Becoming Naomi León</i> (2005)	Owen Skyla	Secondary Secondary	Physical Differences (various) Alcohol Induced Mental Illness
<i>Tending to Grace</i> (2006)	Cornelia Aunt	Protagonist Secondary	Stuttering Illiteracy

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<i>Rules</i> (2007)	David Jason	Secondary Secondary	Autism Spectrum Disorder Non-verbal; Wheelchair User
<i>Reaching For Sun</i> (2008)	Josie	Protagonist	Cerebral Palsy
<i>Waiting for Normal</i> (2009)	Addie/Addison Mommers/Diane	Protagonist Secondary	Dyslexia Bi-polar Disorder
<i>Anything But Typical</i> (2010)	Jason	Protagonist	Autism Spectrum Disorder
<i>After Ever After</i> (2011)	Jeremy Tad/Thaddeus	Protagonist Secondary	Late Effects of Chemotherapy Late Effects of Chemotherapy; Wheelchair User
<i>Wonderstruck</i> (2012)	Ben Rose	Protagonist Protagonist	Partial Hearing Loss, then Deaf Deaf
<i>Close to Famous</i> (2012)	Foster	Protagonist	Learning Disability (reading related, unspecified)
<i>A Dog Called Homeless</i> (2013)	Callie Sam	Protagonist Secondary	Mutism (temporary/selective) Deaf-Blind; Heart Murmur; Asthma
<i>Handbook for Dragon Slayers</i> (2014)			

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	Princess Tilda	Protagonist	Club Foot
<i>Rain Reign</i> (2015)	Rose	Protagonist	Autism Spectrum Disorder
<i>Fish in a Tree</i> (2016)	Ally Travis	Protagonist Secondary	Dyslexia Dyslexia (presumed)
<i>The War That Saved My Life</i> (2016)	Ada Colonel McPherson	Protagonist Secondary	Club Foot Blind
<i>As Brave As You</i> (2017)	Grandpop	Secondary	Blind
<i>Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess</i> (2018)	Macy Iris Gillan	Protagonist Secondary	Deaf Dementia
<u>Teen</u> <i>Things Not Seen</i> (2004)	Alicia	Secondary	Blind
<i>My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir</i> (2005)	Samantha	Protagonist	Dyscalculia, Anxiety
<i>Under the Wolf, Under the Dog</i> (2006)	Steve Welton Shannon Lynch Silent Starla Richard Nugent	Protagonist Secondary Secondary Secondary Secondary	Mental Illness; Blind (One Eye) Mental Illness Addiction Mental Illness Depression

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<i>Small Steps</i> (2007)	Ginny	Secondary	Cerebral Palsy
<i>Hurt Go Happy</i> (2008)	Joey	Protagonist	Deaf
<i>Jerk, California</i> (2009)	Jack (Sam) Francine Old Bill	Protagonist Secondary Secondary	Tourette's Syndrome Tourette's Syndrome OCD
<i>Marcelo in the Real World</i> (2010)	Marcelo	Protagonist	Autism Spectrum Disorder
<i>Five Flavors of Dumb</i> (2011)	Piper Baby Grace	Protagonist Secondary	Deaf Deaf; Cochlear Implants
<i>The Running Dream</i> (2012)	Jessica Rosa	Protagonist Secondary	Amputated leg Wheelchair User
<i>Somebody, Please Tell Me Who I Am</i> (2013)	Ben Chris	Protagonist Secondary	Traumatic Brain Injury Autism Spectrum Disorder
<i>Rose Under Fire</i> (2014)	Rose Roza	Protagonist Secondary	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Physical Maiming (by Nazis); Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
<i>Girls Like Us</i> (2015)	Biddy	Protagonist	Intellectual Disability

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	Quincy	Protagonist	Intellectual Disability
<i>The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B</i> (2016)			
	Adam/Batman	Protagonist	OCD
	Robin (Robyn Plummer)	Secondary	OCD (in remission); Bulimia; Cutting
	Wolverine (Peter Kolchak)	Secondary	OCD; Hypochondria
	Snooki (Elizabeth Mendoza)	Secondary	OCD
	Wonder Woman (Connie Brenner)	Secondary	OCD; Claustrophobia
	Iron Man (Kyle Gallagher)	Secondary	OCD
	Green Lantern (Tyrone Capell)	Secondary	OCD
	Captain America (Jacob Rubenstein)	Secondary	OCD
	Thor/Viking (Nicholas Redmond)	Secondary	OCD
	Carmella Ross	Secondary	Mental Illness (Hoarding)
	Sweetie (Wendell)	Secondary	Unclear, possibly Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder
<i>When We Collided</i> (2017)			
	Vivi	Protagonist	Bi-polar Disorder
	Jonah's Mom	Secondary	Depression
<i>You're Welcome, Universe</i> (2018)			
	Julia	Protagonist	Deaf
	Jordyn	Secondary	Deaf; Cochlear Implants
	Mee	Secondary	Deaf
	Ma	Secondary	Deaf

Some of the disabilities portrayed could potentially fall under similar broad categories. For example, throughout the forty-six winning titles, there are characters who have a club foot, an amputated leg, a leg mis-formed/partially missing at birth, burned hands, and an injured arm, all of which could be categorized as physical disabilities. However, categorizing disability in this manner is generally beyond the purpose of this study. The Schneider Family Book Award criteria provide for the inclusion of portrayals

of emotional, mental, or physical disabilities. Upon examination, the researcher determined that these categories are most helpful as a means of keeping the Schneider Family Book Award inclusive and open to many different disability experiences. It was not within the parameters of this study to try to place the disabilities portrayed by certain books or characters into one or more of these categories.

There are some disabilities that are portrayed only a single time over forty-six books. For example, the protagonist in *The Pirate of Kindergarten* has double vision, and the protagonist from *Somebody Please Tell Me Who I Am* endures a traumatic brain injury. There are some disabilities that are portrayed in only a single book, but by two or more characters, such as the protagonist and two secondary characters who have synesthesia in *A Mango Shaped Space*. Some disabilities appear common, at least by the numbers, such as OCD. There are ten characters with OCD across all of the Schneider Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018. However, this disability experience is only portrayed in two books. A minor character from *Jerk, California* has OCD. The nine remaining portrayals of OCD are all found in *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B* (the protagonist and eight secondary characters, who are all members of an OCD support group).

Some disabilities are portrayed multiple times across many characters and over several books. For example, there are fourteen characters in nine different books who are Deaf or deaf. This includes one character who is deaf-blind, but does not include characters with a hearing impairment. There are more characters who are deaf than there are characters with any other single disability. There are six characters in six different



books who are blind. These six do not include characters with a different visual impairment other than blindness, but do include the character who is deaf-blind. There are five characters in five different books who have autism spectrum disorder. There is one additional character from an additional book, whose story is based on a real person, who may have been autistic (as noted by the author).

### **Secondary Characters with a Disability – All Age Categories**

Overall, a slim majority, twenty-five out of the forty-six (54.3%), of the books feature at least one secondary character with a disability. When present, there is most often only one secondary character with a disability present in the story (eighteen out of the twenty-five titles that feature a secondary character with a disability). In five books, there are two secondary characters with a disability. In *Under the Wolf*, *Under the Dog*, the protagonist and an additional four secondary characters are portrayed as having various disabilities. *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B* features the most characters with a disability overall, as the protagonist and an additional ten characters are portrayed with various disabilities. In each of these last two books, the protagonist is a member of a support or therapy group for his disability, thus the introduction of additional characters with a disability is built into the structure of the story itself.

### **Further Observations – All Age Categories**

Although not a variable explicitly studied, it was observed that there is very little representation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender characters found in the Schneider Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018. None of the protagonists appear to be, are described as, or are portrayed as being LGBT. There is minimal representation in

a handful of mostly minor characters, three of which are secondary characters with a disability. Most of this representation is by adult-aged characters, rather than youth-aged characters.

It is heavily implied in the middle grades book *The War That Saved My Life* that character Susan had been involved in a same sex relationship, prior to the events of the story, with a now deceased woman named Becky. The somewhat fuzzy and ambiguous description of Susan and Becky's relationship seems historically accurate, and possibly even progressive by the standards of the early 1940's setting. There are also two adult male characters from the middle grades book *Waiting for Normal* who are in a relationship with each other. None of these characters are depicted as having a disability, although descriptions of Susan's past behavior (prior to the story's setting) do hint at possible depression following the death of Becky. Neither *The War That Saved My Life* nor *Waiting for Normal* uses the terms gay, lesbian, or homosexual anywhere in the text. However, both do portray the characters' relationships as simply a part of life.

After fifteen years, it appears that *You're Welcome Universe*, from the teen category, introduced the first openly lesbian characters, as the protagonist has two mothers. Like the mothers from this story, most of the characters who appear to identify as LGBT are adult-aged characters. Five out of six LGBT characters are adults. The single youth aged LGBT character, self-identified as homosexual, is one of the members of the OCD support group in *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B*. Two of the five adult LGBT characters are characters with a disability (Mee and Ma, protagonist Julia's mothers from *You're Welcome, Universe*, who are both Deaf).

## **Conclusion – All Age Categories**

Using the data collection tool for the content analysis, the general composition of the forty-six Schneider Family Book Award winners from 2004-2018 reveals several things. The gender of protagonists is evenly divided between male and female characters when examining all forty-six titles. The ethnicity of a majority of these protagonists is white or Caucasian. Most protagonists are portrayed as having a disability of some type. Realistic fiction is the most common genre across the forty-six award-winning titles. Very few authors or illustrators appear to have relevant life experience related to the disability they write about, and only five books throughout the entire award from 2004-2018 can definitely be considered part of Own Voices, with authors with a disability depicting a character with the same disability. A large variety of disabilities are portrayed, including autism, the experiences of being blind or deaf, using a wheelchair, and mental illness. A slight majority of the forty-six books overall do feature at least one secondary character with a disability. A majority of the secondary characters with a disability are also white or Caucasian in ethnicity.

A more detailed examination of the variables across the Schneider Family Book Award as whole reveals more nuance about these variables. Analysis by age category, and between age categories, provides further insight and understanding of the Schneider Family Book Award. Next, the young children's category will be examined in detail.

### **Young Children's Category**

This section will present an analysis focusing on the young children's age category, which honors books written for an audience aged approximately 0-8 years of

age. There are fourteen Schneider Family Book Award winners in the young children's age category between 2004-2018. A list of the authors and titles (along with the year the book won the Schneider Family Book Award) is presented here. A full list including complete bibliographic citations can be found in Appendix C.

### **Title List – Young Children's Category**

- Alexander, Claire. 2012. *Back to Front and Upside Down!* (won 2013)
- Bertrand, Diane Gonzalez. 2004. *My Pal, Victor/Mi amigo, Victor*. (won 2005)
- Bryant, Jen. 2013. *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin*. (won 2014)
- Bryant, Jen. 2016. *Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille*. (won 2017)
- Christensen, Bonnie. 2009. *Django: World's Greatest Jazz Guitarist*. (won 2010)
- Lang, Glenna. 2001. *Looking Out for Sarah*. (won 2004)
- Lyon, George Ella. 2010. *The Pirate of Kindergarten*. (won 2011)
- Parker, Robert Andrew. 2008. *Piano Starts Here: The Young Art Tatum*. (won 2009)
- Rabinowitz, Alan. 2014. *A Boy and a Jaguar*. (won 2015)
- Say, Allen. 2017. *Silent Days, Silent Dreams*. (won 2018)
- Seeger, Pete and Paul DuBois Jacobs. 2006. *The Deaf Musicians*. (won 2007)
- Stryer, Andrea Stenn. 2007. *Kami and the Yaks*. (won 2008)
- Thompson, Laurie Ann. 2015. *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah*. (won 2016)
- Uhlberg, Myron. 2005. *Dad, Jackie, and Me*. (won 2006)

## **Overview – Young Children’s Category**

Fourteen titles have received the Schneider Family Book Award in the young children’s category between 2004-2018. There are only fourteen winners in fifteen years, as no title was selected in the young children’s category in 2012, one of the years that two middle grades winners were chosen. All of the Schneider Family Book Award winning books in the young children’s age level are picture books, featuring both text and illustrations. The target audience age range for these books is 0-8 years of age.

A broad overview of the fourteen winning titles in the young children’s age level reveals that an overwhelming majority of the protagonists in this category are male. The protagonists reflect a variety of ethnicities, with the most common ethnicity of the protagonists being white or Caucasian. Most of the protagonists are portrayed as having a disability. There is some variety in the genre of winning titles from the young children’s age level, with the most common genre being biography. Very few of the winners in the young children’s category are written or illustrated by an author or illustrator with relevant life experience to the disability or disabilities that are portrayed in the book. A large variety of disabilities are portrayed within these fourteen picture books. Most of the books feature only one character with a disability, who is usually the protagonist, and there are only a handful of secondary characters with a disability at this age level.

## **Gender of Protagonists – Young Children’s Category**

To date, the protagonists are overwhelmingly male in the young children’s category of the Schneider Family Book Award. There are fourteen protagonists featured over fourteen titles, as there is only one protagonist in each story. Twelve (85.7%) of the

fourteen books feature a male main character (Table 10). Only a single title (7.1%) features a female protagonist – Ginny from *The Pirate of Kindergarten*. There is also one (7.1%) animal protagonist out of the fourteen protagonists. The anthropomorphized Stanley from *Back to Front and Upside Down!*, though visually depicted as a mouse, is clearly gendered as male. Even Perry, the Black Lab Retriever, guide dog, and protagonist of *Looking Out for Sarah*, (though he is coded as “animal” rather than “male”) is still a male dog. There are more stories about musicians (three) amongst the young children’s winning titles than there are stories that have a female protagonist (one), or stories that feature any female character with a disability (two).

Table 10. Gender of Protagonists – Young Children’s Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	12	85.7
Female	1	7.1
Non-binary or Genderqueer	0	0.0
Animal or Non-human	1	7.1
Total	14	99.9

### **Ethnicity of Protagonists – Young Children’s Category**

The ethnicity of the protagonists in the young children’s category features more diversity than does the gender of the protagonists (Table 11). Five (35.7%) of the fourteen protagonists at this age level are white or Caucasian. While still the most common ethnicity, this does not represent a majority of the protagonists, and is a much lower percentage of white or Caucasian protagonists than is found in either the middle grades or teen categories. There are three (21.4%) Black, African, or African American protagonists, making this the second most common ethnicity among the protagonists in the young children’s category.

Table 11. Ethnicity of Protagonists – Young Children’s Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Black, African, or African American	3	21.4
Hispanic or Latino/a	1	7.1
Arab or Arab American	0	0.0
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	1	7.1
Native American/American Indian	0	0.0
White or Caucasian	5	35.7
Multiple or Mixed Race	0	0.0
Other or Unknown	2	14.3
Non-human or None	2	14.3
Total	14	99.9

Two (14.3%) of the fourteen protagonists were coded as other or unknown. One of these main characters, Django from *Django: World’s Greatest Jazz Guitarist*, is of Roma heritage (thus falling into the “other” part of “other or unknown”). Although set in Europe, it did not appear that white or Caucasian would be an accurate reflection of Django’s ethnicity. The other protagonist coded as other or unknown, from *The Deaf Musicians*, falls into the unknown side. *The Deaf Musicians* features illustrations in which the ethnicity of characters is difficult to discern. The text also does not offer any concrete clues, and it does not appear that the characters are based on real people.

The ethnicity of an additional two (14.3%) protagonists is animal or non-human. This accounts for the two animal protagonists previously discussed. There is one (7.1%) protagonist who is Hispanic or Latino/a, Victor from *My Pal Victor/Mi Amigo Victor*. One (7.1%) protagonist of the fourteen total is an Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander main character. Kami from *Kami and the Yaks* is a fictional Sherpa boy living high in the Nepalese Himalayas. He is the only Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander protagonist in the young children’s age level, and also the only Asian, Asian

American, or Pacific Islander protagonist within the Schneider Family Book Award winning books as a whole. No winning titles in the young children's age category from 2004-2018 featured Arab or Arab American, Native American/American Indian, or multiple or mixed-race protagonists.

Three of the winning titles from the young children's category feature a Black, African, or African American protagonist, all three of which are biographies. Two are biographies of African Americans who lived in the early to mid-1900s – *Piano Starts Here: A Young Art Tatum* and *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin*. The third book, *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah*, chronicles the story of a boy born in Ghana in the 1970s. None of these three books were written by a Black author, but *Emmanuel's Dream* was illustrated by Sean Qualls, an African American man who has previously won a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor award. Just as the relevant life experience of authors as related to disability is relevant to this paper and to the Schneider Family Book Award as a whole, so too is the ethnicity of authors relevant to the study of children's and young adult literature.

### **Disability Status of Protagonists – Young Children's Category**

As seen in the Schneider Family Book Award as a whole between 2004-2018, the majority of protagonists from the young children's age level are portrayed with a disability (Table 12). Twelve (85.7%) of the young children's protagonists have a disability, and only two (14.3%) do not (Table 12). In *Looking Out for Sarah* the protagonist is Perry the Guide Dog, and Sarah is a fairly prominent, but ultimately non-protagonist, secondary character who is blind. *Dad, Jackie, and Me* features a child



protagonist whose father is deaf. In each of the two stories in the young children's age level in which the protagonist does not have a disability, the secondary character who does have a disability is quite prominent in the story.

Table 12. Disability Status of Protagonists – Young Children's Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Disability Status	Number	Percent
Yes, Protagonist with Disability	12	85.7
No, Protagonist without Disability	2	14.3
Total	14	100.0

### Genre – Young Children's Category

There is some diversity to be found in the genre of the winning titles from the young children's age level, or at least a little more variability than is found at either the middle grades or teen levels. Each of the books in this age level falls into one, and not multiple, genre categories. Biography is the most common genre, with six (42.9%) titles total (Table 13). One of these is autobiographical, Alan Rabinowitz's *A Boy and a Jaguar*. The second most common genre in the young children's age level is realistic fiction, representing four (28.6%) titles out of the fourteen. There are three (21.4%) historical fiction stories found in this age level. There is a single (7.1%) fantasy or science fiction title, which is *Back to Front and Upside Down!*, which merits inclusion in this genre due to its talking, walking, human-like animal characters. Content wise, this book is otherwise quite similar to realistic fiction titles. There are no informational, poetry, or traditional literature titles, though biography can be considered a specific type of informational book.

Table 13. Genre: Total Number of Each Genre, Young Children's Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Genre	Number	Percent
Biography	6	42.9
Fantasy or Science Fiction	1	7.1
Informational	0	0.0
Historical Fiction	3	21.4
Realistic Fiction	4	28.6
Poetry	0	0.0
Traditional Literature	0	0.0
Total	14	100.0

Biography is already the most common genre in the young children's category and there are additionally three titles that are biographical in nature, but ultimately best categorized in other genres. Two of the books which are best described as historical fiction (*Dad, Jackie and Me* and *Silent Days, Silent Dreams*), and one of the books best described as realistic fiction (*Looking Out for Sarah*), are about real people. Each of these three contain enough fictionalized material to be best classified as something other than biography. It is not uncommon for biographies written for a youth audience, and picture book biographies in particular, to skirt the line between fiction and non-fiction. It would be fair to say that the majority of winners in the young children's category are at least biographical in nature, although not all of them are authentic enough to consider part of the genre of biography.

### **Relevant Life Experience of Authors – Young Children's Category**

Following the pattern seen in the Schneider Family Book Award as a whole, there are very few titles from the young children's age level that appear to be written by an author (or illustrated by an illustrator) with some relevant life experience related to the disability portrayed in the book. Eleven (78.6%) of winning titles in the age level are

written or illustrated by people who do not appear to have any relevant life experience. Only three (21.4%) titles are written or illustrated by someone with relevant life experience. Myron Uhlberg grew up communicating with his deaf father in sign language. In *Dad, Jackie, and Me*, Uhlberg's father and son characters share a love of the Brooklyn Dodgers and Jackie Robinson, and based on his own memories of childhood. The father of Pete Seeger, himself a musician (though never as famous as his son) and musicologist, experienced hearing loss which prevented him from becoming a conductor (Swed 2014). Seeger's *The Deaf Musicians* features a musician protagonist who experiences hearing loss, and his music career is affected.

The third title written by an author with relevant experience is Alan Rabinowitz's *A Boy and a Jaguar*. This alone would be the single winning title in the young children's age level that would be considered an Own Voices text. Rabinowitz writes an autobiographical account about his struggle with stuttering as a youth and young adult (Rabinowitz 2014). This is one of only five titles total throughout the entirety of the Schneider Family Book Awards to be written by an author who has personally experienced the disability portrayed.

### **Disabilities Portrayed – Young Children's Category**

The types of disabilities portrayed in the young children's award-winning titles are varied and numerous (Table 14). There is not a certain "kind" of disability that is most commonly portrayed, although there are multiple titles that feature blind or deaf characters, and several forms of physical impairment. Other disabilities portrayed include hearing loss, double vision, severely reduced vision, use of a wheelchair, dyslexia,

stuttering, a fire-related injury resulting in loss of mobility in hands, a war-related injury resulting in loss of use of one arm, being born with a portion of one leg missing, and a character who is possibly autistic as well as both deaf and mute.

Table 14. Disabilities Portrayed: Young Children's Category, Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Title (Year Won) and Character Name	Character Type	Disability or Disabilities Portrayed	
<i>Looking Out for Sarah</i> (2004)	Sarah	Secondary	Blind
<i>My Pal, Victor; Mi amigo, Victor</i> (2005)	Victor	Protagonist	Wheelchair User
<i>Dad, Jackie and Me</i> (2006)	Father	Secondary	Deaf
<i>The Deaf Musicians</i> (2007)	Lee Max	Protagonist Secondary	Hearing-impaired Deaf or Hearing-impaired
<i>Kami and the Yaks</i> (2008)	Kami	Protagonist	Deaf
<i>Piano Starts Here: The Young Art Tatum</i> (2009)	Art Tatum	Protagonist	Severe Visual Impairment
<i>Django: World's Greatest Jazz Guitarist</i> (2010)	Django Reinhardt	Protagonist	Burned Hands
<i>The Pirate of Kindergarten</i> (2011)			

	Ginny	Protagonist	Double Vision
<i>Back to Front and Upside Down!</i> (2013)			
	Stanley	Protagonist	Dyslexia
<i>A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin</i> (2014)			
	Horace Pippin	Protagonist	Arm Injury/Loss of Use of Arm
<i>A Boy and a Jaguar</i> (2015)			
	Alan	Protagonist	Stuttering
<i>Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah</i> (2016)			
	Emmanuel Yeboah	Protagonist	Missing Part of Leg
<i>Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille</i> (2017)			
	Louis Braille	Protagonist	Blind
<i>Silent Days, Silent Dreams</i> (2018)			
	James Castle	Protagonist	Deaf, Mutism, possible Autism

### Secondary Characters with a Disability – Young Children's Category

There are few secondary characters with a disability within the young children's winning titles. The brevity of picture books, in general, leaves less room for the introduction of additional characters as compared with a lengthier chapter book format. Only three secondary characters, in three books, are found within these fourteen books. Two (66.7%) of these three characters are male, and one (33.3%) is female. Two of the

secondary characters with a disability are white (66.7%), and one (33.3%) is a human character of unknown ethnicity. There are neither enough textual nor visual context clues presented in the story to accurately determine ethnicity.

### **Further Observations – Young Children’s Category**

Jen Bryant, the author of two of the winners in the young children’s category (*A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin* and *Six Dots: A Story of Louis Braille*), is the only author or illustrator between 2004-2018 to have won the Schneider Family Book Award twice, in both 2014 and 2017.

### **Conclusion – Young Children’s Category**

The fourteen award winning Schneider Family Book Award books from the young children’s age category are written in picture book format. They overwhelmingly feature male protagonists, but also feature protagonists from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Most of the protagonists in the young children’s winning titles are portrayed with a disability. A majority of the books is at least biographical in nature, and many are authentic enough to fully place within the genre of biography. Most of the authors and illustrators of these books do not appear to have a disability, when consulting available information. Many disability experiences are portrayed, including double vision, stuttering, and the experience of being blind. There are few secondary characters with a disability found in the winning titles at this age category, perhaps due to the brief nature of the picture book format.

Following the young children's category, honoring books with an intended audience of ages 0-8, the next section will examine the middle grades age category for books written for a youth audience aged 9-13.

### **Middle Grades Category**

There are seventeen Schneider Family Book Award winning titles in the middle grades category between 2004-2018. The middle grades category honors books written for an audience of approximately 9-13 years of age. A list of the authors and titles (along with the year the book won the Schneider Family Book Award) is presented here. A full list including complete bibliographic citations can be found in Appendix D.

#### **Title List – Middle Grades Category**

- Baskin, Nora Raleigh. 2009. *Anything but Typical*. (won 2010)
- Bauer, Joan. 2011. *Close to Famous*. (won 2012)
- Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. 2015. *The War That Saved My Life*. (won 2016)
- Connor, Leslie. 2008. *Waiting for Normal*. (won 2009)
- Fusco, Kimberly Newton. 2004. *Tending to Grace*. (won 2006)
- Green, Shari. 2017. *Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess*. (won 2018)
- Haskell, Merrie. 2013. *Handbook for Dragon Slayers*. (won 2014)
- Hunt, Lynda Mullaly. 2015. *Fish in a Tree*. (won 2016)
- Lean, Sarah. 2012. *A Dog Called Homeless*. (won 2013)
- Lord, Cynthia. 2006. *Rules*. (won 2007)
- Martin, Ann M. 2014. *Rain Reign*. (won 2015)
- Mass, Wendy. 2003. *A Mango-Shaped Space*. (won 2004)

Reynolds, Jason. 2016. *As Brave as You*. (won 2017)

Ryan, Pam Munoz. 2004. *Becoming Naomi León*. (won 2005)

Selznick, Brian. 2011. *Wonderstruck*. (won 2012)

Sonnenblick, Jordan. 2010. *After Ever After*. (won 2011)

Zimmer, Tracie Vaughn. 2007. *Reaching for Sun*. (won 2008)

### **Overview – Middle Grades Category**

There are more winning books from the middle grades age category (seventeen) than either young children's (fourteen books) or teen (fifteen books) categories. In two separate years, 2012 and 2016, there were two titles selected by the committee in the middle grades category. In 2012, both *Wonderstruck* and *Close to Famous* were selected as middle grades winners. There was no selection in the young children's category in 2012, keeping the total number of winning titles at three for that year. *Wonderstruck* is an illustrated novel, so although there was no picture book selection that year, there was still an illustrated selection. In 2016, there were a total of four winning titles, the only year during the 2004-2018 time period in which this occurred. That year, the committee selected one title in the young children's and teen categories, and two titles in the middle grades category (*Fish in a Tree* and *The War That Saved My Life*). The target age range for the audience of middle grades books is 9-13 years of age.

An examination of the seventeen middle grades winning titles reveals that a large majority of the protagonists at this age category are female. A majority of the protagonists are white or Caucasian. Most of the middle grades protagonists are portrayed as having a disability. The books awarded in this age category are primarily realistic



fiction. They are typically written by authors whose personal experience with disability is unknown, or authors without personal experience with the disability portrayed. Only one title could be considered a work in line with Own Voices. Like all age levels of the Schneider Family Book Award, the middle grades titles portray a variety of disability experiences. More than half of the titles feature at least one secondary character with a disability.

### **Gender of Protagonists – Middle Grades Category**

Whereas the protagonists in the young children's category were overwhelmingly male, nearly the opposite result is found in the middle grades titles. Fourteen (77.8%) of the eighteen middle grades protagonists are female (Table 15). There are only four (22.2%) male protagonists in total. All of the middle grades protagonists are human protagonists; there are no animal or non-human protagonists in this category. There were three male protagonists in a row in the years 2010-2012 (Jason from *Anything But Typical*, Jeffrey from *After Ever After*, and Ben from *Wonderstruck*). *Wonderstruck*, as noted earlier, has two protagonists, one male and one female. The fourth male protagonist is from the 2017 middle grades winner - Genie from *As Brave As You*.

There are eighteen protagonist characters found in the seventeen middle grades titles. Most middle grades winning titles have only one protagonist, just as all fourteen of the award-winning books at the young children's age level have a single protagonist each. There is one middle grades title, however, with two protagonists. *Wonderstruck*, the 2012 winner, has two main characters whose stories are told in an alternating fashion. The story of one of the protagonists, Ben, is written in third person narration. The story of

Rose, the second protagonist, is shown through a series of illustrations. Rose’s story is akin to a novel-length wordless picture book.

Table 15. Gender of Protagonists – Middle Grades Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	4	22.2
Female	14	77.8
Non-binary or Genderqueer	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0
Total	18	100.0

### **Ethnicity of Protagonists – Middle Grades Category**

Just as the gender make-up of middle grades protagonists skews strongly in a particular way (female), the ethnicity of the protagonists is also quite one-sided. Fifteen (83.3%) of the eighteen protagonists in this age category are white or Caucasian (Table 16). There are two (11.1%) protagonists who can be identified as multiple or mixed race (Naomi from *Becoming Naomi León* and Foster from *Close to Famous*), and one (5.6%) protagonist who is Black, African, or African American (Genie from *As Brave As You*). Although Naomi and Foster are best categorized as mixed race, Naomi has been raised by her white great-grandmother and, culturally, is not close to her Mexican heritage. Foster also appears to have been raised in a predominantly white culture, and *Close to Famous* is written by a white author. Additionally notable is that, of the three protagonists who are not white, only one has a disability herself (Foster). As uncommon as a non-white protagonist is at all in the middle grades category, it is rarer still to encounter a non-white protagonist with a disability.

Table 16. Ethnicity of Protagonists – Middle Grades Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Black, African, or African American	1	5.6
Hispanic or Latino/a	0	0.0
Arab or Arab American	0	0.0
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	0	0.0
Native American/American Indian	0	0.0
White or Caucasian	15	83.3
Multiple or Mixed Race	2	11.1
Other or Unknown	0	0.0
Non-human or None	0	0.0
Total	18	100.0

### Disability Status of Protagonists – Middle Grades Category

Of the fourteen female protagonists in the middle grades category, twelve (85.7%) have a disability (Table 17). Of the four male protagonists, three have a disability. Overall, only three of the titles in middle grades do not have a protagonist with a disability. Just as seen in the young children's category, the vast majority of middle grades titles (over 80%) have a protagonist with a disability, and in only three titles (17.6%) is the disability experience portrayed limited to only a secondary character or characters.

Table 17. Disability Status of Protagonists – Middle Grades Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Disability Status	Number	Percent
Yes, Protagonist with Disability	15	83.3
No, Protagonist without Disability	3	16.7
Total	18	100.0

### Genre – Middle Grades Category

By genre, the winning titles in the middle grades category are overwhelmingly realistic fiction (Table 18). While overall the award is 63% realistic fiction, the

percentage is even higher when examining the middle grades category. Thirteen (76.5%) of the seventeen middle grades titles can be described as realistic fiction. A similar percentage of realistic fiction is also found in the teen category (80%). Genre presents a unique situation in middle grades category, as there are two books that fall into multiple genres.

The only two books across the Schneider Family Book Award to fall into multiple genre categories are found in the middle grades category. The 2008 winner *Reaching For Sun* and the 2018 winner *Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess* are both verse novels, which places them within the genre of poetry. Most, if not all, verse novels would best be described as both poetry and an additional genre. Both books also fall into the realistic fiction genre.

Table 18. Genre, Total Number of Each Genre, Middle Grades Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Genre	Number	Percent <sup>2</sup>
Biography	0	0.0
Fantasy or Science Fiction	2	11.8
Informational	0	0.0
Historical Fiction	2	11.8
Realistic Fiction	13	76.5
Poetry	2	11.8
Traditional Literature	0	0.0
Total	19 <sup>1</sup>	>100.0

<sup>1</sup>Two Middle Grades books fall into multiple genres, therefore the total number of genres comes to nineteen although there are only seventeen Middle Grades winning titles

<sup>2</sup>Percent is calculated out of seventeen titles total, therefore totaling more than one hundred percent

Other genres represented in the middle grades category include historical fiction and Fantasy or Science Fiction. Two books, *Wonderstruck* and *The War That Saved My Life* are Historical Fiction. *Wonderstruck*, one of the 2012 winners, is alternatively set in

1977 and 1927, primarily in New York City. The *War That Saved My Life* is set during World War II in England. Two titles are fantasy or science fiction books, including *Handbook for Dragon Slayers*, a book with a setting similar to medieval Europe, with magical horses, Wild Hunters from the underworld, real dragons, and in which the protagonist briefly turns into a dragon herself.

The second middle grades book in the category of fantasy or science fiction, *A Dog Called Homeless*, is a title that contains enough fantastical elements to be categorized as Fantasy, although it shares a lot of elements with realistic fiction. An argument could be made for categorizing this book as realistic fiction instead, and it is indeed very similar to other titles in the realistic fiction genre. However, the protagonist Callie, as well as two other characters, see and communicate with Callie's deceased mother. The book treats this phenomenon as real, even though many characters, including the rest of Callie's family, do not share (or believe) her experiences. This book could also be described as containing elements of magical realism. Most of the middle grades winning titles are easily and clearly categorized into their respective genres; *A Dog Called Homeless* is the only one that is a little harder to categorize as far as genre.

### **Relevant Life Experience of Authors – Middle Grades Category**

As also seen in the other two age categories, there are very few middle grades winning titles that are Own Voices or otherwise written by authors with relevant life experience with the disability portrayed in their books. Only three (17.6%) of the seventeen titles were written by an author with relevant life experience. These three titles won in consecutive years early in the award's history – *Tending to Grace* in 2006, *Rules*

in 2007, and *Reaching for Sun* in 2008. Cornelia from *Tending to Grace* is a protagonist whose life is affected by stuttering. According to her website, the author of *Tending to Grace*, Kimberly Newton Fusco, also struggled with stuttering while growing up (Fusco 2018). This is the single middle grades title that can be considered an Own Voices book. The author of *Rules*, Cynthia Lord, is the mother of a child with autism (Lord 2006). *Rules* portrays David, and 10-year-old, secondary character with autism. *Reaching for Sun* follows protagonist Josie, who has cerebral palsy. Author Tracie Vaughn Zimmer (now Tracie Vaughn) previously was a teacher, and taught students of different ages who had various developmental disabilities and learning differences (Zimmer 2007). In the eleven years since *Reaching for Sun* won, there does not appear to have been another middle grades winning title written by an author with relevant life experience to the disability or disabilities portrayed in their books.

### **Disabilities Portrayed – Middle Grades Category**

As with the other age categories, there is a wide variety of disability experiences portrayed in the middle grades winners (Table 19). Some disability portrayals are unique to this age category, and not explored in the books for young children or teens. These include synesthesia (*A Mango Shaped Space*), illiteracy (*Tending to Grace*), cerebral palsy (*Reaching for Sun*), late effects of chemotherapy (*After Ever After*), deaf-blindness (*A Dog Called Homeless*), and dementia (*Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess*). Two middle grades books feature a female protagonist with a club foot (*Handbook for Dragon Slayers* and *The War That Saved My Life*), which hinders their ability to walk. Other disabilities portrayed in the seventeen middle grades titles include stuttering,

learning disabilities, deafness, use of a wheelchair, Asperger's syndrome/autism, and blindness. As also observed in the other two age categories, there is a large variety of disabilities explored throughout the winning titles.

Table 19. Disabilities Portrayed: Middle Grades Category, Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Title (Year Won) and Character Name	Character Type	Disability or Disabilities Portrayed
<i>A Mango Shaped Space</i> (2004)	Mia Adam Billy	Protagonist Secondary Secondary
		Synesthesia Synesthesia Synesthesia
<i>Becoming Naomi León</i> (2005)	Owen Mother	Secondary Secondary
		Various Physical Differences Alcohol Induced Mental Illness
<i>Tending to Grace</i> (2006)	Cornelia Aunt	Protagonist Secondary
		Stuttering Illiteracy
<i>Rules</i> (2007)	David Jason	Secondary Secondary
		Autism Spectrum Disorder Non-verbal; Wheelchair User
<i>Reaching For Sun</i> (2008)	Josie	Protagonist
		Cerebral Palsy
<i>Waiting for Normal</i> (2009)	Addie/Addison Mommers/Diane	Protagonist Secondary
		Dyslexia Bi-polar Disorder
<i>Anything But Typical</i> (2010)	Jason	Protagonist
		Autism Spectrum Disorder

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<i>After Ever After</i> (2011)	Jeremy Tad/Thaddeus	Protagonist Secondary	Late Effects of Chemotherapy Late Effects of Chemotherapy; Wheelchair User
<i>Wonderstruck</i> (2012)	Ben Rose	Protagonist Protagonist	Partial Hearing Loss, then Deaf Deaf
<i>Close to Famous</i> (2012)	Foster	Protagonist	Learning Disability (reading related, unspecified)
<i>A Dog Called Homeless</i> (2013)	Callie Sam	Protagonist Secondary	Mutism (temporary/selective) Deaf-Blind; Heart Murmur; Asthma
<i>Handbook for Dragon Slayers</i> (2014)	Princess Tilda	Protagonist	Club Foot
<i>Rain Reign</i> (2015)	Rose	Protagonist	Autism Spectrum Disorder
<i>Fish in a Tree</i> (2016)	Ally Travis	Protagonist Secondary	Dyslexia Dyslexia (presumed)
<i>The War That Saved My Life</i> (2016)	Ada Colonel McPherson	Protagonist Secondary	Club Foot Blind
<i>As Brave As You</i> (2017)	Grandpop	Secondary	Blind

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<i>Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess</i> (2018)	Macy Ms. Gillan	Protagonist Secondary	Deaf Dementia
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### **Secondary Characters with a Disability – Middle Grades Category**

Eleven of the seventeen middle grades titles have at least one secondary (non-protagonist) character who is portrayed as having a disability. Three of these eleven books have two secondary characters with a disability (*A Mango Shaped Space*, *Becoming Naomi León*, and *Rules*), and there are fourteen secondary characters with a disability, in total, throughout the middle grades category. In three titles, the protagonist did not have a disability, and the secondary character or characters are the sole disability experience portrayed in the book (*Becoming Naomi León*, *Rules*, and *As Brave As You*).

### **Further Observations – Middle Grades Category**

One additional title, *Tending to Grace*, an early winner in the middle grades category, would probably have found a better fit in the teen category due to the general content of the book. However, the 2006 Schneider Family Book Award Committee did not place it in the teen category, so it is still counted amongst the middle grades titles.

### **Conclusion – Middle Grades Category**

Although the protagonists in the middle grades category are predominantly female, the opposite is true of the secondary characters. Only four secondary characters are female, and ten are male (71.4%). Although the protagonists and secondary characters within the middle grades titles vary by gender, they are similar as to ethnicity. Just as the vast majority of protagonists in the middle grades category are white or Caucasian, so too

are the secondary characters overwhelmingly white or Caucasian (85.7%). Only two (14.3%) of the fourteen secondary characters are not white or Caucasian. One is Grandpop from *As Brave As You*, who is an African American man. Owen from *Becoming Naomi León* is protagonist Naomi's brother, and, like Naomi, is half white and half Mexican. Also like Naomi, he is culturally closer to his white heritage, as their father (who is Mexican) and their father's family have been kept out of Naomi and Owen's lives, and they have been raised by their mother's grandmother, who is white. The books awarded in this age category are primarily realistic fiction. They are typically written by authors without personal experience with the disability portrayed, and only one title could be considered a work in line with Own Voices. Like all age levels of the Schneider Family Book Award, the middle grades titles portray a variety of disability experiences. More than half of the titles feature at least one secondary character with a disability.

The winners in the middle grades category of the Schneider Family Book Award are written for an intended audience of approximately 9-13 years of age. The next section will consider the third, and final, age category of the award, the teen category.

### **Teen Category**

There are fifteen Schneider Family Book Award winning titles in the teen category between 2004-2018. The teen category honors books written for an audience of approximately 14-18 years of age. A list of the authors and titles (along with the year the book won the Schneider Family Book Award) is presented here. A full list including complete bibliographic citations can be found in Appendix E.

### **Title List – Teen Category**

- Abeel, Samantha. 2003. *My Thirteenth Winter*. (won 2005)
- Clements, Andrew. 2002. *Things Not Seen*. (won 2004)
- Friesen, Jonathan. 2008. *Jerk, California*. (won 2009)
- Gardner, Whitney. 2017. *You're Welcome, Universe*. (won 2018)
- Giles, Gail. 2014. *Girls Like Us*. (won 2015)
- John, Antony. 2010. *Five Flavors of Dumb*. (won 2011)
- Lord, Emery. 2016. *When We Collided*. (won 2017)
- Mazer, Harry and Peter Lerangis. 2012. *Somebody Please Tell Me Who I Am*. (won 2013)
- Rapp, Adam. 2004. *Under the Wolf, Under the Dog*. (won 2006)
- Rorby, Ginny. 2006. *Hurt Go Happy*. (won 2008)
- Sachar, Louis. 2006. *Small Steps*. (won 2007)
- Stork, Francisco X. 2009. *Marcelo in the Real World*. (won 2010)
- Toten, Teresa. 2013. *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B*. (won 2014)
- Van Draanen, Wendelin. 2011. *The Running Dream*. (won 2012)
- Wein, Elizabeth. 2013. *Rose Under Fire*. (won 2014)

### **Overview – Teen Category**

All fifteen books which have won in the teen category of the Schneider Family Book Award from 2004-2018 are chapter books. Two feature a small number of illustrations or other visual material sprinkled throughout the text (*The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B* and *You're Welcome, Universe*), but neither could truly be described as an illustrated novel. Like many books written for a teenage audience, the books that have

won in the teen category of the Schneider Family Book Award are longer, feature more complex plots, and feature more mature subject matter and themes than do (most) of the middle grades titles. The target age range for the audience in the teen category is ages 14-18.

As a group, these fifteen books can be described in the following general terms. The protagonists are nearly even split between male and female characters, an obvious difference from either the young children's or middle grades categories. A substantial majority of the protagonists are white or Caucasian. As seen throughout the award, most of the protagonist characters have a disability. The winners in the teen category are overwhelmingly realistic fiction books, even more so than were the middle grades winners. Very few of the books are written by authors who have relevant personal experience to the disability about which they are writing. However, the few teen books that are written by authors with such experience can all be considered works in line with Own Voices. Like the award as a whole, there is a wide variety of disabilities portrayed throughout the books in the teen category. There are many secondary characters with disabilities found within this age category, and a majority of the teen books feature at least one secondary character with a disability.

### **Gender of Protagonists – Teen Category**

Of the fifteen winning titles in the teen category of the Schneider Family Book Award from 2004-2018, there are seventeen protagonists. The gender of these seventeen protagonists is very nearly equal between male and female, with eight male (47.1%) and nine (52.9%) female protagonists (Table 20). This is quite unlike either the young

children’s category, which featured an overwhelming majority of male protagonists, or the middle grades category, which featured predominately female protagonists. There are no animal or non-human protagonists in the winning books from the teen category.

There are seventeen protagonists in the teen category rather than fifteen because two titles feature two equally apportioned protagonists each. Biddy and Quincy are both protagonists from *Girls Like Us*, and Vivi and Jonah are the protagonists featured in *When We Collided*. In each case, both protagonists offer first person narration in alternating chapters throughout the books.

Although split evenly by gender, further exploration of the protagonists in the teen category reveals a notable difference. All nine female protagonists in the teen category are portrayed with a disability, so 100% of the female protagonists, yet only five (62.5%) of the eight male teen protagonists are portrayed as having a disability. These are the only three protagonists from the teen category, in total, who do not have a disability, and they are all male protagonists.

Table 20. Gender of Protagonists – Teen Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	8	47.1
Female	9	52.9
Non-binary or Genderqueer	0	0.0
Animal or Non-human	0	0.0
Total	17	100.0

### **Ethnicity of Protagonists – Teen Category**

Despite the equity between genders found in the teen category protagonists, these protagonists do not offer a large amount of diversity of ethnic or cultural portrayals. Just as found in the middle grades titles, the protagonists in the teen category are

overwhelmingly white or Caucasian (Table 21). Thirteen (76.5%) of the seventeen teen protagonists are white or Caucasian. Only four (23.5%) protagonists, or less than a quarter of all teen protagonists, are identified as an ethnicity other than white or Caucasian.

Table 21. Ethnicity of Protagonists – Teen Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Black, African, or African American	1	5.9
Hispanic or Latino/a	1	5.9
Arab or Arab American	0	0.0
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	1	5.9
Native American/American Indian	0	0.0
White or Caucasian	13	76.5
Multiple or Mixed Race	1	5.9
Other or Unknown	0	0.0
Non-human or None	0	0.0
Total	17	100.1

There is one (5.9%) protagonist who is Black, African, or African American – Armpit (Theodore) from *Small Steps*. Armpit is a young Black American male, and one of the only protagonists in the teen category who does not have a disability. There is one (5.9%) protagonist who is Hispanic or Latino/a. Marcelo, from *Marcelo in the Real World*, is a Hispanic teen, and is the only protagonist of color in a book that is also written by an author of color, Francisco X. Stork. Additionally, there is one (5.9%) protagonist who identifies as multiple or mixed race, and one (5.9%) protagonist who is Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander. Quincy from *Girls Like Us* describes herself as mixed-race, the only protagonist from the teen level to do so (Giles 2014). *You're Welcome, Universe* introduces the reader to Julia, who self-describes as having Indian ethnicity, as does her biological mother. Julia's family is comprised of two mothers, and

biological or other information on her father is not presented. While it is possible that Julia could fall into the multiple or mixed-race category, the context information presented in the book supports only a classification of Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander alone.

### **Disability Status of Protagonists – Teen Category**

As seen throughout the Schneider Family Book Award as a whole, and within each of the age categories as well, most of the protagonists in the teen category are portrayed with a disability. Fourteen (82.4%) of the seventeen protagonists have a disability of some type (Table 22). Only three (17.6%) of the protagonists from the teen category do not have a disability, and as previously discussed all three happen to be male protagonists. Bobby from *Things Not Seen*, and Armpit from *Small Steps* are not portrayed with disabilities (although Bobby does become invisible during the course of the plot – a condition that was not ultimately considered a disability for the purpose of this study). Jonah from *When We Collided* is the third, and last, protagonist from the teen category without a disability. *When We Collided* does feature a protagonist with a disability, as Vivi is also a main character. *Things Not Seen* and *Small Steps* are the only two books from the teen category without a protagonist with a disability.

Table 22. Disability Status of Protagonists – Teen Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Disability Status	Number	Percent
Yes, Protagonist with Disability	14	82.4
No, Protagonist without Disability	3	17.6
Total	17	100.0

## Genre – Teen Category

The vast majority of the teen category winning titles from 2004-2018 are realistic fiction. Realistic fiction is the best, and only, genre descriptor for twelve (80.0%) of the seventeen total winning books in the teen category. There are no titles in this category that fall into multiple genres. Only three (20%) titles are not realistic fiction. Outside of realistic fiction, there is one (6.7%) biography, one (6.7%) fantasy or science fiction, and one (6.7%) historical fiction title (Table 23).

*Things Not Seen* falls into the fantasy or science fiction genre, due to the protagonist becoming invisible during the course of the plot because of a faulty electric blanket. Other than the invisibility, *Things Not Seen* is structurally more similar to realistic fiction titles than most fantasy or science fiction titles. The setting is modern day United States, and there is no alternate world built, or an alternate/future Earth portrayed. *My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir* is, as the title indicates, a memoir of the author's youth and placed in the biography genre, although some content is fictionalized. *Rose Under Fire* falls into the genre of historical fiction and is set during World War II.

Table 23. Genre: Total Number of Each Genre, Teen Category of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Genre	Number	Percent
Biography	1	6.7
Fantasy or Science Fiction	1	6.7
Informational	0	0.0
Historical Fiction	1	6.7
Realistic Fiction	12	80.0
Poetry	0	0.0
Traditional Literature	0	0.0
Total	15	100.1



### **Relevant Life Experience of Authors – Teen Category**

Only a small percentage of the fifteen winning titles in the teen category from 2004-2018 are written by authors with relevant life experience. Twelve (80.0%) books are written by authors whose disability status is unknown, or who do not appear to have any personal experience regarding the disability portrayed in their books. Three (20%) out of the fifteen titles in the teen category are written by authors with relevant experience to the disability about which they wrote. In each of these three cases, the books are an example of Own Voices writing. The teen category is the only category where all of the books written by an author with relevant life experience to the disability portrayed can also be considered examples of Own Voices. The percentage of books written by an author with any relevant life experiences is still quite small, however. This is typical of the award as a whole, and of each of the three categories awarded.

The first of the three teen titles written by an author with a disability is by Samantha Abeel, who writes about her own experiences growing up with dyscalculia, learning differences, and also anxiety, in *My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir*. Just as his protagonist Jack Keegan in *Jerk, California* has Tourette's syndrome, author Jonathan Friesen also has Tourette's syndrome and based his story loosely on his own experiences (Friesen 2008). Emery Lord writes about bi-polar disorder and depression in *When We Collided*. Ms. Lord has discussed her own experiences with various mental health issues in interviews (Adler 2016). As is typical of all of the age categories, however, the majority of winners in the Teen category are not written by authors with personal or relevant experience of disability.

## Disabilities Portrayed – Teen Category

The disabilities portrayed, as in the young children's and middle grades categories, are quite varied (Table 24). Some disabilities that are unique to the teen category are dyscalculia (*My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir*), Tourette's syndrome (*Jerk, California*), limb amputation (*The Running Dream*), traumatic brain injury (*Somebody, Please Tell Me Who I Am*), post-traumatic stress disorder (*Rose Under Fire*), intellectual disability (*Girls Like Us*), and obsessive-compulsive disorder (*Jerk, California* and *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B*). Additionally, there are protagonists who have an unspecified mental illness or mental break from reality (*Under the Wolf, Under the Dog*), have Autism (*Marcelo in the Real World*), have bi-polar disorder (*When We Collided*), and three books that feature protagonists who are Deaf (*Hurt Go Happy*, *Five Flavors of Dumb*, and *You're Welcome, Universe*).

Table 24. Disabilities Portrayed: Teen Category, Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Title (Year Won) and Character Name	Character Type	Disability or Disabilities Portrayed
<i>Things Not Seen</i> (2004)	Alicia    Secondary	Blind
<i>My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir</i> (2005)	Samantha    Protagonist	Dyscalculia, Anxiety
<i>Under the Wolf, Under the Dog</i> (2006)	Steve    Protagonist Welton    Secondary Shannon Lynch    Secondary Silent Starla    Secondary Richard Nugent    Secondary	Mental Illness; Blind (one eye) Mental Illness Addiction Mental Illness Depression

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<i>Small Steps</i> (2007)	Ginny	Secondary	Cerebral Palsy
<i>Hurt Go Happy</i> (2008)	Joey	Protagonist	Deaf
<i>Jerk, California</i> (2009)	Jack (Sam) Francine Old Bill	Protagonist Secondary Secondary	Tourette's Syndrome Tourette's Syndrome OCD
<i>Marcelo in the Real World</i> (2010)	Marcelo	Protagonist	Autism Spectrum Disorder
<i>Five Flavors of Dumb</i> (2011)	Piper Baby Grace	Protagonist Secondary	Deaf Deaf; Cochlear Implants
<i>The Running Dream</i> (2012)	Jessica Rosa	Protagonist Secondary	Amputated leg Wheelchair User
<i>Somebody, Please Tell Me Who I Am</i> (2013)	Ben Chris	Protagonist Secondary	Traumatic Brain Injury Autism Spectrum Disorder
<i>Rose Under Fire</i> (2014)	Rose Roza	Protagonist Secondary	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Physical Maiming (by Nazis); Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
<i>Girls Like Us</i> (2015)	Biddy	Protagonist	Intellectual Disability

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	Quincy	Protagonist	Intellectual Disability
<i>The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B</i> (2016)			
	Adam/Batman	Protagonist	OCD
	Robin (Robyn Plummer)	Secondary	OCD (in remission); Bulimia; Cutting
	Wolverine (Peter Kolchak)	Secondary	OCD; Hypochondria
	Snooki (Elizabeth Mendoza)	Secondary	OCD
	Wonder Woman (Connie Brenner)	Secondary	OCD; Claustrophobia
	Iron Man (Kyle Gallagher)	Secondary	OCD
	Green Lantern (Tyrone Capell)	Secondary	OCD
	Captain America (Jacob Rubenstein)	Secondary	OCD
	Thor/Viking (Nicholas Redmond)	Secondary	OCD
	Carmella Ross	Secondary	Mental Illness (Hoarding)
	Sweetie (Wendell)	Secondary	Unclear, possibly Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder
<i>When We Collided</i> (2017)			
	Vivi	Protagonist	Bi-polar Disorder
	Jonah's Mom	Secondary	Depression
<i>You're Welcome, Universe</i> (2018)			
	Julia	Protagonist	Deaf
	Jordyn	Secondary	Deaf; Cochlear Implants
	Mee	Secondary	Deaf
	Ma	Secondary	Deaf

### Secondary Characters with a Disability – Teen Category

A majority of the winning titles at the teen level feature at least one secondary character with a disability. Of the fifteen teen category titles, eleven (73.2%) feature one or more secondary characters with a disability. There are forty-three secondary characters with disabilities found throughout all age levels of the Schneider Family Book Award, twenty-six of which are found in books from the teen category. Three titles from the teen category feature three or more secondary characters with a disability. No winning titles

from either the young children's or the middle grades categories features more than two secondary characters with a disability. Books written for teens, in general, are longer and have more complex plots than books written for younger age groups. This may be one reason why there are more secondary characters with disabilities found at this age category – there is simply more space to include them in the story.

The secondary characters with a disability in the teen category are somewhat balanced as far as gender. Fifteen (57.7%) of the twenty-six total are female, and eleven (42.3%) are male. One year can make a big difference in descriptive statistics such as this. If only the 2004-2017 winners are included (and the 2018 winner *You're Welcome, Universe* is excluded), there would have been twelve female and eleven male secondary characters with a disability.

By ethnicity, the secondary characters with a disability, again like the protagonists, are overwhelmingly white or Caucasian. Although the secondary characters, in general, are described in less detail than the protagonists in each story, there are enough context clues, typically, to reasonably discern ethnicity. It is estimated that at least twenty-four (92.3%) out of the twenty-six secondary characters with a disability in the teen category are white or Caucasian. There is only a single secondary character with a disability found in the teen category who is definitively not white or Caucasian. Ma, one of protagonist Julia's two mothers (and noted as her biological mother) from *You're Welcome, Universe*, is described as being of Indian ethnicity, and thus categorized as Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander. Another secondary character from *The Unlikely Hero from Room 13B* can best be categorized as of unknown ethnicity. Elizabeth

Mendoza has a last name that is common among Hispanic people, but her character is never described in detail during the course of the novel. This character takes on the nickname of “Snooki,” a real-life actress/TV personality whose ethnicity is also unclear, but appears to be non-white.

Determining who would be “counted” as a secondary character with a disability became particularly interesting in the case of one winning title in the teen category, *Under the Wolf, Under the Dog*. The protagonist, Steve, is hospitalized during the course of the novel for reasons related to mental health. A specific diagnosis is not mentioned or shared during the course of the plot, but it appears that Steve suffers a break from reality, possibly due to (or perhaps simply made all the worse by) the use of various drugs, both legal and illegal. Steve, protagonist and narrator, flat out tells the audience that he is an unreliable narrator. The novel is told entirely in first person narration, leaving it somewhat unclear as to what is in the narrator’s mind versus what might have really happened. It becomes difficult for the reader to discern with enough clarity which characters might be disabled, when the reader is at times unsure if the events are truly occurring as described.

#### **Further Observations – Teen Category**

One additional title, *Tending to Grace*, an early winner in the middle grades category, would probably have found a better fit in the teen category due to the general content of the book. However, the 2006 Schneider Family Book Award Committee did not place it in the teen category, so it is still counted amongst the middle grades titles.

Like many of the other non-white characters found throughout the Schneider Family Book Award winning titles, however, Ma is written by a white author. Armpit, Quincy, and Julia are all characters who are created by white authors.

### **Conclusion – Teen Category**

The fifteen winners in the teen category of the Schneider Family Book Award can be described in the following general terms. The gender of the protagonists is nearly evenly split between male and female characters. Of these protagonists, a substantial majority is white or Caucasian, and most of the protagonist characters have a disability. The winners in the teen category are overwhelmingly realistic fiction books. Very few of the winning titles are written by authors who have relevant personal experience to the disability or disabilities about which they depict. However, the few teen books that are written by authors with such experience can all be considered Own Voices works. Throughout the books in the teen category, there is a wide variety of disabilities portrayed. There are many secondary characters with disabilities found within this age category, and a majority of the teen books feature at least one secondary character with a disability.

### **Analyzing Differences Between Age Categories**

Some differences exist between the three age categories recognized within the Schneider Family Book Award. The research question considered in this section of the analysis is: What does a content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018 reveal? The two sub-questions to be addressed in this sub-section are:

Are there differences between the three age categories, Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen, awarded the Schneider Family Book Award?

If there are differences, in which variables and between which age categories are the differences found?

### **Relevant Variables**

In the previous sub-sections, nominal data were reported for the variables of gender of protagonists, ethnicity of protagonists, disability status of protagonists, genre of winning titles, and relevant life experience of authors. Apparent differences between age categories were noted in the categories of gender of protagonists, ethnicity of protagonists, and genre of winning titles. The data for the disability status of protagonists and the relevant life experience of authors were noted to be fairly consistent across the award as a whole and between the three age categories awarded. A further quantitative analysis, a chi-square analysis, was attempted for the three variables in which a difference was noted. The alpha, or significance level, of this analysis is set at  $\alpha = .05$  level, indicating that results returning a *p*-value of .05 or less would be considered statistically significant.

### **Chi-Square Analysis**

An additional inferential quantitative analysis was undertaken to better understand if statistically significant patterns emerged within the data collected for content analysis. The data collected is nominal, or categorical, in scale, and originates from independent groups rather than paired (before/after) groups. This type of data can be analyzed using



chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests of frequency and homogeneity (McCrum-Gardner 2008). A chi-square statistical test is generally utilized to answer research questions related to the observed frequency of variables from different groups (Hinkle, Wiersma and Jurs 2003). The chi-square tests utilized for this paper, and discussed in this sub-section, addressed whether or not the frequencies observed in ethnicity and genre are statistically consistent between the three age levels honored for this award.

One of the three variables in which differences were noted in the descriptive statistics, the gender of protagonists, could not be further quantitatively analyzed as data for this variable did not meet the underlying assumptions that are necessary to perform a chi-square analysis. Every statistical test has certain assumptions that must be met in order to perform an accurate test that returns a trustworthy result. For a chi-square analysis, there must be categorical variables, independent observations, an adequate sample size, and adequate cell size. The data returned from this study are categorical (nominal) in nature, and they are independent. The sample size required is not standard or always agreed upon by statisticians, however the sample size is deemed adequate for this study as it at least meets the minimum number that may be recommended (CRDA 2016; McCrum-Gardner 2008).

The assumption for which the data do not conform to the recommended levels is the cell size, which must be a minimum of five (Coladarci et al. 2011). For all three of the variables considered, gender of protagonists, ethnicity of protagonists, and genre, this was an issue. For ethnicity of protagonists and genre, the data was recoded in a way that would meet the minimum cell size required. For the gender of protagonists, there was no

acceptable way to recode the data returned for this variable, and a statistical analysis of the differences between the three age categories for the gender of protagonist variable was not conducted.

For the ethnicity variable, there were forty-seven human protagonists overall (and thus forty-seven results for the ethnicity of the protagonist variable), a majority of whom were noted to be white or Caucasian. The two protagonists who were coded as animal or non-human were excluded from this portion of the analysis for reasons outlined below.

The minimum cell size desired to perform a chi-square analysis is five, and the absolute minimum necessary is at least two. A chi-square analysis will not return trustworthy, or interpretable, results if any cell size is one or zero (Coladarci et al 2011; CRDA 2016). In order to reach the minimum requirement, the data were recategorized into “white” or “non-white.” Because there were few protagonists who were Black, African, or African American, Hispanic or Latino/a, Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander, or multiple ethnicities or mixed-race, there were many “cells” that did not reach the minimum of two. The framing of “white” versus “non-white” is not ideal, but was the only recategorization that would make a chi-square analysis possible. The two protagonists who were coded as animal or non-human were excluded from this portion of the analysis because it is not at all appropriate to categorize animals in the same category as “non-white.”

The results found a statistically significant relationship between the age category variable and the ethnicity variable,  $\chi^2 (2) = 6.48, p = .039$ . In other words, there is a

difference between age categories for the variable of ethnicity of protagonists, coded here as “white” and “non-white.”

For the genre variable, there were forty-eight genre results overall. The majority of these were realistic fiction, which far fewer results for biography, fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, or poetry. Once again, in order to meet the required minimum cell size, the data were recategorized slightly into “realistic fiction” and “other,” with the other category encompassing all genres that were not realistic fiction.

The results indicated a statistically significant relationship between the age category variable and the genre variable,  $\chi^2(2) = 8.85, p = .012$ . This result confirms that there is a difference between age categories for the variable of genre, coded here as “realistic fiction” and “other.”

### **Conclusion – Differences Between Age Categories**

A chi-square analysis was performed to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the frequencies observed in the ethnicity and genre variables between the three age categories. Based on the descriptive data for the ethnicity and genre variables, there appeared to be differences in the frequencies observed between the age categories. There were also differences observed in the gender variable, however a chi-square analysis was not possible to conduct using the gender variable due to the assumption of adequate cell size not being met.

The first research sub-question addressed by this analysis was: Are there differences between the three age categories, Young Children’s, Middle Grades, and Teen, awarded the Schneider Family Book Award? The second research sub-question

addressed by this analysis was: If there are differences, in which variables and between which age categories are the differences found? The results of the quantitative analysis indicate that there are statistically significant differences between the three age categories for the ethnicity and genre variables. The relationship between the age category and ethnicity variable was statistically significant at the  $p = .039$  level. The relationship between the age category and genre variable was statistically significant at the  $p = .012$  level.

### **Conclusion – Content Analysis of Award-Winning Titles, 2004-2018**

This section utilized a content analysis to study the forty-six Schneider Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018. Several variables were studied, and each variable was considered for the award as a whole (all age categories, and for the young children's, middle grades, and teen categories separately. When possible and relevant, an additional quantitative analysis was performed to determine if statistically significant differences exist between the three age categories honored for this award. The variables for which data were collected for the content analysis were gender of protagonist characters, the ethnicity of protagonist characters, the disability status of protagonist characters, the genre or genres of the winning titles, the relevant life experience or disability status of the author or illustrator of each book, the type of disability or disabilities that are portrayed in each story, and whether or not there are secondary characters who have a disability in the story, and if so, the gender and ethnicity of each secondary character with a disability.

For the award as a whole, the gender of protagonists is evenly divided between male (49%) and female (49%) characters. A majority of protagonists are white or Caucasian in ethnicity (67.3%), and most protagonists have a disability (83.7%). Realistic fiction is the most common genre (63%). Very few books have an author or illustrator who appears to have relevant life experience related to the disability about which they write (19.6%). There are even fewer winning titles that could be considered a work of Own Voices (10.9%), that is, a book about a disability created by an author or illustrator with that same disability. A large variety of disabilities is portrayed. Many of the books feature at least one secondary character with a disability (54.3%). Like the protagonist characters, a majority of the secondary characters with a disability are also white or Caucasian in ethnicity (83.7%).

In considering the young children's category of the Schneider Family Book Award, this study found that the gender of an overwhelming majority of the protagonists in this category is male (85.7%). The protagonists reflect a variety of ethnicities, with the most common ethnicity of the protagonists being white or Caucasian (35.7%). Most of the protagonists are portrayed as having a disability (85.7%). There is some variety in the genre of winning titles from the young children's age level, with the most common genre being biography (42.9%), and several other titles being biographical in nature even though they were best categorized as fictional stories. Very few of the winners in the young children's category are written or illustrated by an author or illustrator with relevant life experience to the disability or disabilities that are portrayed in the book (21.4%), and only one could be considered a work in line with Own Voices (7.1%). A

large variety of disabilities is portrayed within these fourteen picture books. Most of the books feature only one character with a disability, who is usually the protagonist, and there are only a handful of secondary characters with a disability at this age level.

The results for the middle grades category show that the majority of protagonists found in the winning titles in this category are female (71.4%). A vast majority of protagonists in the middle grades category are white or Caucasian (85.7%), and a sizeable majority of the protagonists are depicted as having a disability (85.7%). The books awarded in this age category are primarily realistic fiction (76.5%). They are typically written by authors without personal experience with the disability portrayed (17.6%), and only one title could be considered a work in line with Own Voices (5.9%). The middle grades winning titles portray a variety of disability experiences. More than half of the titles feature at least one secondary character with a disability (64.7%).

For the teen category, it was found that the gender of the protagonists is nearly evenly split between male (47.1%) and female (52.9%) characters. A substantial majority of these protagonists is white or Caucasian (76.5%), and most of the protagonist characters have a disability (82.4%). The winners in the teen category are overwhelmingly realistic fiction books (80%). Very few of the winning titles are written by authors who have relevant personal experience to the disability or disabilities about which they depict (20%). However, the few teen books that are written by authors with such experience can all be considered Own Voices works. Throughout the books in the teen category, there is a wide variety of disabilities portrayed. There are many secondary

characters with disabilities found within this age category, and a majority of the teen books feature at least one secondary character with a disability (73.3%).

There appeared to be differences between the three age categories for the variables of gender of protagonist, ethnicity of protagonist, and genre or genres of the stories. The gender of protagonist variable did not meet the assumptions necessary to perform an additional quantitative analysis. A chi-square statistical analysis was performed to assess the relationship between age categories and the ethnicity of protagonists, and to assess the relationship between age categories and the genre of the stories. Statistically significant results were returned, indicating that there are differences between the age categories for the ethnicity of protagonists and the genre of winning titles.

The next chapter will interpret the results reported here in Chapter IV, and place the results within the larger historical sphere of literature for children and young adults about disability.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The results of this study illuminate the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and provide a meaningful analysis of the forty-six award winning titles from 2004-2018. The Schneider Family Book Award honors literature written for children and young adults that portrays a disability experience.

#### **Interpreting Results**

This study sought to answer research questions related to the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and the content of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What is the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and how did it come to be?
2. What does a content analysis of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018 reveal?
  - a. Are there differences between the three age categories, Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen, awarded the Schneider Family Book Award?
  - b. If there are differences, in which variables and between which age categories are the differences found?



## **Results – History of the Award**

The first research question considered was: What is the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and how did it come to be? The Schneider Family Book Award was started at the behest of Dr. Katherine Schneider following a monetary donation to the American Library Association in 2002. The award coalesced from decades of advocacy for people with disabilities on the part of Dr. Schneider, combined with her life-long love of books, reading, and libraries. An inheritance from her father allowed Dr. Schneider the ability to provide the necessary endowment to establish the Schneider Family Book Award. Although the idea for the award originated with Dr. Schneider, the American Library Association, through the Schneider Family Book Award Committee, is solely responsible for conferring the award.

The creation of the award occurred within the greater context of literature for children and young adults about disability. Literature written for a youth audience had featured characters with disabilities dating back to at least the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth century and beyond characters with disabilities began offering increasingly representative experiences of disability. Scholars of children's and young adult literature were beginning to study books about disability, and the passage of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, in 1975 provided the impetus to a much greater consideration with the educational and library worlds of literature for youth about disabilities.

Scholarly considerations of literature for children and youth adults that depict a disability experience often initially focused on ways to use literature to help students

without disabilities feel more comfortable around students with disabilities. These students with disabilities were being integrated into “mainstream” classroom settings as a result of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Over time, scholarly examinations greatly expanded, to include more study of the portrayal of disability and the quality of the literature containing these depictions.

One of the purposes for establishing the Schneider Family Book Award was to encourage the publication of more, and better quality, literature for children and young adults about disabilities (Schneider 2017). In general, scholarly considerations of literature for youth about disabilities have indicated such an improvement in the quality, especially when compared with earlier depictions of disability. There is no causal relationship implied here, between the establishment of the Schneider Family Book Award and the growing quality of literature for youth about disabilities, as this phenomenon in particular has not been studied. In fact, prior to this research study, there has been no empirical research about the Schneider Family Book Award as a whole.

The Schneider Family Book Award is one of around twenty awards related to the field of children’s and young adult literature that comprise the ALA Youth Media Awards. Honoring literature written for a child or young adult audience which portrays a disability experience, the award is presented to books in three age categories – young children’s (ages 0-8), middle grades (ages 9-13), and teen (ages 14-18). The winners are announced annually at ALA’s Midwinter meeting, typically held in late January or early February. This award is presented to authors and illustrators of books that were published

during the prior calendar year, however, in the very early years of the award, books with publication dates within the prior two or three years, were considered.

Terms and criteria for this award are presented in the Schneider Family Book Award Manual (ALA 2014). The primary criterion for the award is that a book must feature the portrayal of some type of disability experience. It is left to each year's Schneider Family Book Award committee to determine what may comprise a disability experience, as the definition of "disability" is intentionally left vague in the award manual (ALA 2014). The Schneider Family Book Award allows for the portrayals of "physical, mental, or emotional" disabilities. To be considered for this award, a book must feature at least one character with a disability who is "integral to the presentation" of the story, although this character does not have to be the main character, or the protagonist, of the story (ALA 2014).

### **Results – Content Analysis**

This study sought to provide a glimpse into the content of the winning Schneider Family Book Award titles for the first fifteen years of the award. The broad research question and sub-questions provided a basis for an inquiry that focused on particular variables, but also allowed for the discovery of other patterns and trends within the award-winning titles. The variables specifically studied included gender of protagonist characters, the ethnicity of protagonist characters, the disability status of protagonist characters, the genre or genres of the winning titles, the relevant life experience or disability status of the author or illustrator of each book, the type of disability or disabilities that are portrayed in each story, and whether or not there are secondary

characters who have a disability in the story, and if so, the gender and ethnicity of each secondary character with a disability.

The first variable considered the gender of protagonist characters in Schneider Family Book Award winning titles (Table 25). This study found that for the award overall, the protagonists were evenly balanced between male and female (with one additional animal protagonist). There were no protagonists who identified as non-binary or genderqueer. When the three age categories were examined separately, there were substantial differences in the gender of protagonists. The young children's age category features almost exclusively male protagonists. The middle grades age category features predominantly female protagonists. The teen category mimics the award as a whole and features nearly an even balance of male and female protagonists.

Table 25. Gender of Protagonists: Comparison Between the Award as a Whole and Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

	Number	Percent
Whole Award		
Male	24	49.0
Female	24	49.0
Non-binary or Genderqueer	0	0.0
Animal or Non-human	1	2.0
Total	49	100.0
Young Children's		
Male	12	85.7
Female	1	7.1
Non-binary or Genderqueer	0	0.0
Animal or Non-human	1	7.1
Total	14	99.9
Middle Grades		
Male	4	22.2
Female	14	77.8
Non-binary or Genderqueer	0	0.0

Animal or Non-human	0	0.0
Total	18	100.0
Teen		
Male	8	47.1
Female	9	52.9
Non-binary or Genderqueer	0	0.0
Animal or Non-human	0	0.0
Total	17	100.0

It is additionally noteworthy that although the teen category features a balance of male and female protagonists, all of the female protagonists (100%) have a disability, and only 62.5% of the male protagonists in this age category are portrayed with a disability. A chi-square test to determine statistical significance in the difference in the gender of protagonists between the three age categories was not possible due to the data not meeting assumptions necessary to perform a chi-square analysis.

Another variable studied considered the ethnicity of protagonists, again for the award as a whole, and by each age category separately (Table 26). For the award overall, a majority (67.3%) of the protagonists are white or Caucasian. About ten percent (10.2%) of protagonists overall are Black, African, or African American, 6.1% are multiple or mixed race, 4.1 % of the protagonists overall are Hispanic or Latino/a, 4.1% are Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander, 4.1% are other or unknown ethnicity, and 4.1% are non-human or animal protagonists. Across the Schneider Family Book Award from 2004-2018, there were no Arab or Arab American protagonists or Native American/American Indian protagonists.

Table 26. Ethnicity of Protagonists: Comparison of the Award as a Whole and Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

	Number	Percent
<b>Whole Award</b>		
Black, African, or African American	5	10.2
Hispanic or Latino/a	2	4.1
Arab or Arab American	0	0.0
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	2	4.1
Native American/American Indian	0	0.0
White or Caucasian	33	67.3
Multiple or Mixed Race	3	6.1
Other or Unknown	2	4.1
Non-human or None	2	4.1
Total	49	100.0
<b>Young Children's</b>		
Black, African, or African American	3	21.4
Hispanic or Latino/a	1	7.1
Arab or Arab American	0	0.0
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	1	7.1
Native American/American Indian	0	0.0
White or Caucasian	5	35.7
Multiple or Mixed Race	0	0.0
Other or Unknown	2	14.3
Non-human or None	2	14.3
Total	14	99.9
<b>Middle Grades</b>		
Black, African, or African American	1	5.6
Hispanic or Latino/a	0	0.0
Arab or Arab American	0	0.0
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	0	0.0
Native American/American Indian	0	0.0
White or Caucasian	15	83.3
Multiple or Mixed Race	2	11.1
Other or Unknown	0	0.0
Non-human or None	0	0.0
Total	18	100.0
<b>Teen</b>		
Black, African, or African American	1	5.9
Hispanic or Latino/a	1	5.9
Arab or Arab American	0	0.0

Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	1	5.9
Native American/American Indian	0	0.0
White or Caucasian	13	76.5
Multiple or Mixed Race	1	5.9
Other or Unknown	0	0.0
Non-human or None	0	0.0
Total	17	100.1

There are differences in the ethnicity of protagonists between each of the three age categories, if examined separately. The young children's category is the only category in which less than half of protagonists are white or Caucasian (35.7%). White or Caucasian protagonists are still the most common ethnicity found in this age category, however. In the middle grades category, an overwhelming majority of the protagonists are white or Caucasian (83.3%). In the teen category, there is also a very high percentage of protagonists who are white or Caucasian (76.5%).

The differences between results for the young children's, middle grades, and teen categories for the ethnicity of protagonists were shown to be statistically significant using a chi-square analysis, at the  $p = .039$  level. This variable was recoded into "white" and "non-white," and the two animal protagonists were excluded, in order to perform this statistical analysis.

This study also considered the disability status of the protagonists in the stories. The Schneider Family Book Award guidelines and criteria require that a book offer some portrayal of a disability experience to be considered for this award. The guidelines further outline the expectation that at least one character with a disability "should be integral to the presentation," but also "may be the protagonist or a secondary character" (ALA 2014). It was discovered that a large majority of protagonist characters in Schneider

Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018 do have a disability (Table 27).

There was little difference between the age categories, with the frequency of protagonists with a disability being very similar between the young children's, middle grades, and teen categories.

Table 27. Disability Status of Protagonists: Comparison of the Award as a Whole and Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

	Number	Percent
Whole Award		
Yes, Protagonist with Disability	41	83.7
No, Protagonist without Disability	8	16.3
Total	49	100.0
Young Children's		
Yes, Protagonist with Disability	12	85.7
No, Protagonist without Disability	2	14.3
Total	14	100.0
Middle Grades		
Yes, Protagonist with Disability	15	83.3
No, Protagonist without Disability	3	16.7
Total	18	100.0
Teen		
Yes, Protagonist with Disability	14	82.4
No, Protagonist without Disability	3	17.6
Total	17	100.0

For the award as a whole, 83.7% of protagonists were portrayed with a disability. In the young children's category 85.7% of protagonists, in the middle grades category 83.3% of protagonists, and in the teen category 82.4% of protagonists were portrayed with a disability of some type. As there was little difference between the categories, no chi-square test was performed to assess statistical differences.



Another variable considered for this study was the genre of the award-winning titles. The Schneider Family Book Award guidelines and criteria provide for the award to be presented to a book for children or young adults of any genre (ALA 2014). This study found that in Schneider Family Book Award winning titles from 2004-2018 the most common genre found is realistic fiction, with 63% of titles overall (Table 28). The next most common genre overall is biography, with 15.2% of titles. Thirteen percent of titles were from the genre of historical fiction, 8.7% of titles overall were fantasy or science fiction, and 4.3% of titles were poetry. There were a “total” of forty-eight genres, despite there being only forty-six winning titles, because two titles from the middle grades category fell into multiple genres. There were no winning titles between 2004-2018 that were either traditional literature or information books. Biography can be considered a subset of informational books, however for the purposes of this study was considered as its own genre.

Table 28. Genre of Winning Titles: Comparison of the Award as a Whole and Young Children’s, Middle Grades, and Teen Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

	Number	Percent
Whole Award <sup>1</sup>		
Biography	7	15.2
Fantasy or Science Fiction	4	8.7
Informational	0	0.0
Historical Fiction	6	13.0
Realistic Fiction	29	63.0
Poetry	2	4.3
Traditional Literature	0	0.0
Total <sup>2</sup>	48	>100.0
Young Children’s		
Biography	6	42.9
Fantasy or Science Fiction	1	7.1
Informational	0	0.0

Historical Fiction	3	21.4
Realistic Fiction	4	28.6
Poetry	0	0.0
Traditional Literature	0	0.0
Total	14	100.0
Middle Grades <sup>3</sup>		
Biography	0	0.0
Fantasy or Science Fiction	2	11.8
Informational	0	0.0
Historical Fiction	2	11.8
Realistic Fiction	13	76.5
Poetry	2	11.8
Traditional Literature	0	0.0
Total <sup>4</sup>	19	>100.0
Teen		
Biography	1	6.7
Fantasy or Science Fiction	1	6.7
Informational	0	0.0
Historical Fiction	1	6.7
Realistic Fiction	12	80.0
Poetry	0	0.0
Traditional Literature	0	0.0
Total	15	100.1

<sup>1</sup>Two books in the Middle Grades category fall into multiple genres, therefore the total number of genres comes to forty-eight although there are only forty-six total winning titles

<sup>2</sup>Percent is calculated out of forty-six titles total, therefore totaling more than one hundred percent

<sup>3</sup>Two Middle Grades books fall into multiple genres, therefore the total number of middle grades genres comes to nineteen although there are only seventeen Middle Grades winning titles

<sup>4</sup>Percent is calculated out of seventeen titles total, therefore totaling more than one hundred percent

For the genre variable, there were differences observed between the age categories. Although realistic fiction was the most common genre overall, biography was the most common genre found in the young children's winners. Almost 43% of young children's winners were biographies, 28.6% were realistic fiction, 21.4% were historical

fiction, and 7.1% were fantasy or science fiction. Realistic fiction was the most common genre found in the middle grades category, by far (76.5%). Other genres in the middle grades category were fantasy or science fiction (11.8%), historical fiction (11.8%), and poetry (11.8%). The two poetry books were both books that fell into multiple genre categories (realistic fiction and poetry, in each case). Realistic fiction was also overwhelmingly the most common genre found in the teen category (80%). Other genres found in the teen category included biography (6.7%), fantasy or science fiction (6.7%), and historical fiction (6.7%).

From a descriptive standpoint, results indicate that young children's winners were more likely to be biography whereas middle grades and teen winners are more likely to be realistic fiction. The differences between results for the young children's, middle grades, and teen categories for the genre or genres of winning titles were shown to be statistically significant using a chi-square analysis, at the  $p = .012$  level. This variable was recoded into "realistic fiction" and "other" in order to perform this statistical analysis. A chi-square test was not feasible using the genre data as originally coded because the assumption of adequate cell size was violated. There were several cells with one or zero entries, while the minimum cell size is five (Coladarci et al. 2011, 383).

This study also considered whether the author or illustrator of a work might have relevant life experience to the disability or disabilities portrayed in their Schneider Family Book Award winning books. Overall, there was a low incidence (19.6%) of books with an author or illustrator who appeared to have relevant life experience (Table 29). The remaining 80.4% of books have authors or illustrators without relevant life

experience, or whose experience could not be determined with certainty and is thus unknown. The frequency was similar across all age categories of the award, with 21.4% of the young children's books, 17.6% of the middle grades books, and 20% of the winning titles in the teen category appearing to be written or illustrated by a person with relevant life experience to the disability portrayed in the story.

Table 29. Relevant Life Experience of the Author or Illustrator: Comparison of the Award as a Whole and Young Children's, Middle Grades, and Teen Categories of the Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

	Number	Percent
Whole Award		
Relevant Life Experience of Author/Illustrator		
Yes	9	19.6
No	37	80.4
Total	46	100.0
Young Children's		
Relevant Life Experience of Author/Illustrator		
Yes	3	21.4
No	11	78.6
Total	14	100.0
Middle Grades		
Relevant Life Experience of Author/Illustrator		
Yes	3	17.6
No	14	82.4
Total	17	100.0
Teen		
Relevant Life Experience of Author/Illustrator		
Yes	3	20.0
No	12	80.0
Total	15	100.0

This study further examined whether or not the relevant life experience of the authors or illustrators could be considered works that are part of Own Voices. Within the Disability Rights community, there is currently focus on promoting stories and other

writing in line with Own Voices – that is, people with disabilities telling their own stories, in their own way, rather than having non-disabled people doing it.

It can be difficult to tell whether an author is writing an “own voice” story of disability or not. Authors and illustrators are not under any obligation to share personal details of their lives. Biographical information on authors and illustrators, when included with a book at all, is usually quite brief, and even author and illustrators’ own websites do not always offer additional information. This is an important variable, to the disability community as a whole and to Dr. Schneider in particular, and should not be ignored. For this study, the variable is expanded to include information as to whether the author or illustrator has “relevant experiences” in their lives related to the disability or disabilities portrayed in their titles. A “yes” would include authors or illustrators with a close family member with the relevant disability.

The Schneider Family Book Award criteria provide for the inclusion of portrayals of emotional, mental, or physical disabilities. This study found that a large variety of disabilities are portrayed throughout the winning titles from the first fifteen years of the award. There are at least eighty-four characters (forty-one protagonists and forty-three secondary characters) who are portrayed with some type of disability. There are over forty different disabilities portrayed. Some disabilities listed, such as claustrophobia, hypochondria, bulimia, and cutting, are found within the Schneider Family Book Award only in conjunction with another disability – in this case, all four appear concurrently in various characters who also have OCD.

Some disabilities are portrayed multiple times across many characters and over several books. There are fourteen characters in nine different books who are Deaf or deaf, making this the most frequently appearing disability. This includes one character who is deaf-blind, but does not include characters with a hearing impairment (or the one secondary character who may have been either deaf or hearing-impaired). Another disability that affects a large number of characters, but is found in only two books over all, is OCD. One winning title in the teen category featured nine characters with OCD (one with OCD currently in remission). A tenth character with OCD appears as a minor secondary character in a different book. There are six characters in six different books who are blind. These six do not include characters with a different visual impairment (including blind in one eye) other than blindness, but do include the character who is deaf-blind. There are five characters in five different books who have autism spectrum disorder. There is one additional character from an additional book, whose story is based on a real person, who may have been autistic (as noted by the author).

Characters are listed by title, along with their disabilities, in Chapter IV (Table 9, Table 14, Table 19, Table 24). Here, the many types of disabilities portrayed are listed by age category, by year in which they appeared, by the total number of characters who have each disability, and the number of titles in which the disability portrayal appears (Table 30 and Table 31).

Table 30. Disabilities Portrayed by Age Category, Number of Characters, and Number of Titles: Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Disability	Number of Characters	Number of Titles
<u>Young Children's</u>		
Arm Injury/Loss of Use of Arm	1	1

Autism (possible)	1	1
Blind	2	2
Burned Hands	1	1
Deaf	3	3
Deaf or Hearing-impaired <sup>1</sup>	1	1
Double Vision	1	1
Dyslexia	1	1
Hearing-impaired	1	1
Missing Part of Leg	1	1
Mutism	1	1
Severe Visual Impairment	1	1
Stuttering	1	1
Wheelchair User	1	1
<u>Middle Grades</u>		
Alcohol Induced Mental Illness	1	1
Asthma	1	1
Autism Spectrum Disorder	3	3
Bi-polar Disorder	1	1
Blind	2	2
Cerebral Palsy	1	1
Club Foot	2	2
Deaf	3	2
Deaf-Blind	1	1
Dementia	1	1
Dyslexia	2	2
Dyslexia (presumed)	1	1
Heart Murmur	1	1
Illiteracy	1	1
Late Effects of Chemotherapy	2	1
Learning Disability (reading related, non-specified)	1	1
Mutism (temporary/selective)	1	1
Non-verbal	1	1
Partial Hearing Loss	1	1
Physical Differences (various)	1	1
Stuttering	1	1
Synesthesia	3	1
Wheelchair User	2	2
<u>Teen</u>		
Addiction	1	1
Amputated Leg	1	1
Anxiety	1	1

Autism Spectrum Disorder	2	2
Bi-polar Disorder	1	1
Blind	1	1
Blind in One Eye	1	1
Bulimia	1	1
Cerebral Palsy	1	1
Claustrophobia	1	1
Cochlear Implants	2	2
Cutting	1	1
Deaf	7	3
Depression	2	2
Dyscalculia	1	1
Hypochondria	1	1
Intellectual Disability	2	1
Mental Illness	3	1
Mental Illness (Hoarding)	1	1
OCD	9	2
OCD (in remission)	1	1
Physical Maiming (by Nazis)	1	1
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	2	1
Tourette's Syndrome	2	1
Traumatic Brain Injury	1	1
Unclear (possibly ADHD)	1	1
Wheelchair User	1	1

<sup>1</sup>Not specified during the course of the plot

Many of the disabilities portrayed occur in only one book across the award as a whole (Table 30). In the young children's category, there appear several disabilities which do not appear in the middle grades or teen categories, such as loss of use of arm due to an injury sustained in war, burned hands, double vision, and being born with part of a leg missing (although there is a character in the teen category who has part of her leg amputated following an accident). Some disabilities that appear only in middle grades winning titles include alcohol induced mental illness, asthma (which appears concurrently in a character with a heart murmur and who is deaf-blind), club foot (two characters in two different books), dementia, heart murmur (occurring in a character who



also has asthma and is deaf-blind), illiteracy, late effects of chemotherapy, and synesthesia (three characters in a single book). Winners in the teen category alone included disabilities such as addiction, an amputated leg, anxiety, bulimia (in conjunction with OCD), claustrophobia (in conjunction with OCD), cochlear implants, cutting (in conjunction with OCD), depression, dyscalculia, hypochondria (in conjunction with OCD), intellectual disability (two characters in one book), physical maiming (intentionally carried out by the Nazis), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD – two characters in one book), Tourette’s syndrome, and a traumatic brain injury.

Table 31. Disabilities Portrayed by Year Won: Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Year Won and Disability	Number of Characters	Age Category
<u>2004</u>		
Blind	2	Young Children’s; Teen
Synesthesia	3	Middle Grades
<u>2005</u>		
Alcohol Induced Mental Illness	1	Middle Grades
Anxiety	1	Teen
Dyscalculia	1	Teen
Physical Differences (various)	1	Middle Grades
Wheelchair User	1	Young Children’s
<u>2006</u>		
Addiction	1	Teen
Blind in One Eye	1	Teen
Deaf	1	Young Children’s
Depression	1	Teen
Illiteracy	1	Middle Grades
Mental Illness	3	Teen
Stuttering	1	Middle Grades
<u>2007</u>		
Autism Spectrum Disorder	1	Middle Grades
Cerebral Palsy	1	Teen
Deaf or Hearing-impaired <sup>1</sup>	1	Young Children’s

Hearing-impaired	1	Young Children's
Non-verbal	1	Middle Grades
Wheelchair User	1	Middle Grades
<u>2008</u>		
Cerebral Palsy	1	Middle Grades
Deaf	2	Young Children's; Teen
<u>2009</u>		
Bi-polar Disorder	1	Middle Grades
Dyslexia	1	Middle Grades
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder	1	Teen
Severe Visual Impairment	1	Young Children's
Tourette's Syndrome	2	Teen
<u>2010</u>		
Autism Spectrum Disorder	2	Middle Grades; Teen
Burned Hands	1	Young Children's
<u>2011</u>		
Cochlear Implants	1	Teen
Deaf	2	Teen
Double Vision	1	Young Children's
Late Effects of Chemotherapy	2	Middle Grades
Wheelchair User	1	Middle Grades
<u>2012</u>		
Amputated Leg	1	Teen
Deaf	2	Middle Grades
Learning Disability (reading related, non-specified)	1	Middle Grades
Partial Hearing Loss	1	Middle Grades
Wheelchair User	1	Teen
<u>2013</u>		
Asthma	1	Middle Grades
Autism Spectrum Disorder	1	Teen
Deaf-Blind	1	Middle Grades
Dyslexia	1	Young Children's
Heart Murmur	1	Middle Grades
Mutism (temporary/selective)	1	Middle Grades
Traumatic Brain Injury	1	Teen

<u>2014</u>	1	Young Children's
Arm Injury/Loss of Use of Arm	1	Middle Grades
Club Foot	1	Teen
Physical Maiming (by Nazis)	2	Teen
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder		
<u>2015</u>	1	Middle Grades
Autism Spectrum Disorder	2	Teen
Intellectual Disability	1	Young Children's
Stuttering		
<u>2016</u>	1	Middle Grades
Blind	1	Teen
Bulimia	1	Teen
Claustrophobia	1	Middle Grades
Club Foot	1	Teen
Cutting	1	Middle Grades
Dyslexia	1	Middle Grades
Dyslexia (presumed)	1	Teen
Hypochondria	1	Teen
Mental Illness (Hoarding)	1	Young Children's
Missing Part of Leg	8	Teen
OCD	1	Teen
OCD (in remission)	1	Teen
Unclear (possibly ADHD)		
<u>2017</u>	1	Teen
Bi-polar Disorder	2	Young Children's; Middle
Blind		Grades
	1	Teen
Depression		
<u>2018</u>	1	Young Children's
Autism (possible)	1	Teen
Cochlear Implants	6	Young Children's; Middle
Deaf		Grades; Teen
	1	Middle Grades
Dementia	1	Young Children's
Mutism		

<sup>1</sup>Not specified during the course of the plot

Table 31 presents the disabilities portrayed in Schneider Family Book Award winning titles by year and notes the age category in which each disability was portrayed.

No particular patterns appear to emerge. Some years, as few as two disabilities are portrayed, for example in 2004 the only disabilities portrayed were characters who were blind and characters with synesthesia. In that year, both the young children's and teen books featured a blind character, and no additional characters with disabilities. The 2004 middle grades winner portrayed one protagonist and two secondary characters with synesthesia, and no additional portrayals of disability. In 2018, for the first time, the same disability was portrayed in the winning titles from all three age categories. All three winning titles from 2018 feature at least one character who is deaf. Out of the fourteen characters throughout the history of the award who are deaf, six of them appeared in books that won in 2018.

There are some patterns and trends which appear when studying the Schneider Family Book Award as a whole, including an even balance of male and female protagonists, a noted propensity for the ethnicity of protagonists to be white or Caucasian, a tendency for the winning titles to be realistic fiction, and the presence of at least one secondary character with a disability. Each of these patterns for the award as a whole show differences when examining the winning titles by age category. Other patterns noted for the award as a whole also hold true at each of the age categories. These include the tendency for protagonists to be portrayed with a disability, the general lack of relevant life experience of authors and illustrators to the disability portrayed in the books, and the variety of disability experiences that are portrayed by the winning titles.

### **Significance of Study**

The purpose of this study is to provide a more detailed analysis of the Schneider Family Book Award than has been previously performed. The Schneider Family Book Award is an award, first presented in 2004 and annually since, by the American Library Association to books written for children and young adults that feature the portrayal of a disability experience. This relatively new award has not yet been studied in great detail.

Very little prior research exists on the Schneider Family Book Award. This is the first study to provide a more detailed timeline of the history of the award, based on several sources including an interview with the founder and benefactor of the award, Dr. Katherine Schneider. A few studies or papers have provided a scholarly examination of one or more Schneider Family Book Award winners. This is the first research to examine all forty-six winning titles from 2004-2018. No other research has examined the variables studied in this award, either for the award as a whole, or by age category. This is the first study to conclude that there are statistical differences between age categories for at least two variables, the ethnicity of protagonists and the genre or genres of winning titles.

There is a relatively large body of research and other professional writing on the general subject of disability in literature for children and young adults, beginning at least thirty years before the Schneider Family Book Award was founded. Even more recent research and other non-empirical writing about disability in children's and young adult literature often does not address the Schneider Family Book Award specifically.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

This study focused on the history of the Schneider Family Book Award and the works that have received this award from 2004-2018. The content analysis was limited to the forty-six award winning titles from 2004-2018. It did not consider all of the books published during these years that include characters with disabilities. In addition, the 2019 winning titles, announced on January 28, 2019, were not included in this study. The books that will be recognized by the 2020 Schneider Family Book Award are already being published and will soon be considered by the 2020 Schneider Family Book Award committee. The award is ongoing, and next two, five, and fifteen years might reveal new or different patterns than were observed in the 2004-2018 winning titles. The addition of new titles annually may alter trends or patterns noted at this juncture.

Also announced in January 2019, the Schneider Family Book Awards were expanded from one winning title in each of the three age categories to one winning title and one honor book in each age category. There were six award-winning or honor books in 2019 for an award that, with only one exception, had previously honored only three titles per year. This announcement made this research study both immediately outdated, yet even more fitting. This is a study of the first fifteen years of the Schneider Family Book Award, and as it turns out, it is a study of the award before the addition of honor books. Other changes in the award guidelines or structure are also possible in the future.

The content analysis for this research focused on several descriptive variables, including gender and ethnicity of the protagonists and secondary characters with a disability, the frequency of protagonists with or without a disability, the genre of each the

winning titles, whether or not the author and illustrator appear to have life experience related to the disability portrayed, and a descriptive list of disabilities portrayed. This study uses a case study methodology and provides a meaningful history of the award and an overview of the award-winning titles from 2004-2018.

This study did not address the quality or accuracy of the disability portrayal or examine the interaction between characters with disabilities and those without. Recent studies generally note an improvement in the quality of the portrayal of disability in youth literature, especially when compared to portrayals in historical literature. However, other studies note that stereotypical depictions can still be found. Given that this study found that a very small percentage of authors or illustrators have personal experience with the disabilities they write about, an examination of accuracy would be very beneficial.

Future studies could address the Schneider Family Book Award from a disability studies standpoint. Disability studies is “the study of the sociological, political, historical, and cultural perspectives of disability” (Saunders 2004, n.p.). Examining the portrayal of disability in the award-winning titles from this perspective would allow a researcher to focus on a “Social Model” of disability, rather than a medical model.

Other theoretical perspectives could also provide insight into the presentation of disability in award-winning titles. Curwood (2013) drew from the traditions of critical pedagogy and critical discourse analysis to conduct a literary analysis of three young adult novels that were recipients of the Schneider Family Book Award in consecutive

years, 2008-2010. Other and future Schneider Family Book Award winning-titles could also be considered from a similar theoretical standpoint.

Despite the limitations noted, this study has the potential to directly impact the knowledge and understanding of practicing librarians. It is desired that this research will help encourage scholarly consideration of the Schneider Family Book Award within the broader field of literature for children and young adults, as well as further exploration of the depiction of disability in literature for young people overall. By exploring the history of the award and examining the winning titles for the first fifteen years of the award from 2004-2018 through a thorough and detailed content analysis, greater insight and understanding of the award is possible. The results will expand the knowledge base of librarians, teachers, and parents – the demographic who are seen as “gatekeepers” to accessing books for young people. Even more importantly, this expanded awareness among librarians, teachers, and parents can impact the reading choices of children and young adults and offer a wider range of readers’ advisory. It is hoped that this case study of the Schneider Family Book Award will help promote this exceptional award within the field of library science and beyond, and encourage an informed discussion of the depiction of disability in literature for young people.



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## APPENDIX A

### Criteria for the Schneider Family Book Award



Criteria for the Schneider Family Book Award  
Schneider Family Book Award Manual (ALA 2014)

1. Content

- May be fiction, biography, or other form of nonfiction.
- Must portray the emotional, mental, or physical disability as part of a full life, not as something to be pitied.
- Representation of characters with disabilities should be realistic, avoiding exaggeration or stereotypes.
- Person with disability should be integral to the presentation, not merely a passive bystander.
- The theme must be appropriate for and respectful of the intended audience age.
- Information on a disability must be accurate.

2. Style

- Should be well written
- Should be engaging with distinctive use of language for plot and character development and setting delineation.
- Book should be judged on its own merit as a self-contained entity, not as part of a series, and irrespective of supportive materials such as a CD or other supplemental material.

3. Illustration and Design

- Text and images should complement or enhance each other, with differentiated contrast between text, pictures, and background.
- Format and typeface must be age appropriate size, clearly readable, and free of typographical errors.
- Layout should be easy to follow, enhancing the flow of the story or information.
- Preference will be given to books that can be made available in accessible formats. \*\*This criterion was removed from the most recent edition of the Schneider Family Book Award Manual, dated June 2104, but was still present in the Schneider Family Book Award Manual updated June 2012

## APPENDIX B

Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018

- Abeel, Samantha. 2003. *My Thirteenth Winter*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.
- Alexander, Claire. 2012. *Back to Front and Upside Down!* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.
- Baskin, Nora Raleigh. 2009. *Anything but Typical*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.
- Bauer, Joan. 2011. *Close to Famous*. New York: Puffin Books.
- Bertrand, Diane Gonzalez. 2004. *My Pal, Victor/Mi amigo, Victor*. Illustrated by Robert L. Sweetland. Translated by Eida de la Vega. McHenry, IL: Raven Tree Press.
- Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. 2015. *The War That Saved My Life*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.
- Bryant, Jen. 2013. *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin*. Illustrated by Melissa Sweet. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- , 2016. *Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille*. Illustrated by Boris Kulikov. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Christensen, Bonnie. 2009. *Django: World's Greatest Jazz Guitarist*. New York: Roaring Brook Press.
- Clements, Andrew. 2002. *Things Not Seen*. New York: Philomel Books.
- Connor, Leslie. 2008. *Waiting for Normal*. New York: Katherine Tegen Books.
- Friesen, Jonathan. 2008. *Jerk, California*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Fusco, Kimberly Newton. 2004. *Tending to Grace*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Gardner, Whitney. 2017. *You're Welcome, Universe*. New York: Random House Children's Books.
- Giles, Gail. 2014. *Girls Like Us*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.
- Green, Shari. 2017. *Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess*. Toronto, Ontario: Pajama Press.

- Haskell, Merrie. 2013. *Handbook for Dragon Slayers*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books.
- Hunt, Lynda Mullaly. 2015. *Fish in a Tree*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books.
- John, Antony. 2010. *Five Flavors of Dumb*. New York: Dial Books.
- Lang, Glenna. 2001. *Looking Out for Sarah*. Watertown, Massachusetts: Charlesbridge Publishing.
- Lean, Sarah. 2012. *A Dog Called Homeless*. New York: Katherine Tegen Books.
- Lord, Cynthia. 2006. *Rules*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Lord, Emery. 2016. *When We Collided*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Lyon, George Ella. 2010. *The Pirate of Kindergarten*. Illustrated by Lynne Avril. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Martin, Ann M. 2014. *Rain Reign*. New York: Feiwel and Friends.
- Mass, Wendy. 2003. *A Mango-Shaped Space*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Mazer, Harry and Peter Lerangis. 2012. *Somebody Please Tell Me Who I Am*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Parker, Robert Andrew. 2008. *Piano Starts Here: The Young Art Tatum*. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books.
- Rabinowitz, Alan. 2014. *A Boy and a Jaguar*. Illustrated by Cátia Chien. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Rapp, Adam. 2004. *Under the Wolf, Under the Dog*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.
- Reynolds, Jason. 2016. *As Brave as You*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Rorby, Ginny. 2006. *Hurt Go Happy*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates.
- Ryan, Pam Munoz. 2004. *Becoming Naomi León*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Sachar, Louis. 2006. *Small Steps*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Say, Allen. 2017. *Silent Days, Silent Dreams*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books.

- Seeger, Pete and Paul DuBois Jacobs. 2006. *The Deaf Musicians*. Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Selznick, Brian. 2011. *Wonderstruck*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Sonnenblick, Jordan. 2010. *After Ever After*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Stork, Francisco X. 2009. *Marcelo in the Real World*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books.
- Stryer, Andrea Stenn. 2007. *Kami and the Yaks*. Illustrated by Bert Dodson. Palo Alto, CA: Bay Otter Press.
- Thompson, Laurie Ann. 2015. *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah*. Illustrated by Sean Qualls. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books.
- Toten, Teresa. 2013. *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B*. New York: Delecorte Press.
- Uhlberg, Myron. 2005. *Dad, Jackie, and Me*. Illustrated by Colin Bootman. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers.
- Van Draanen, Wendelin. 2011. *The Running Dream*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Wein, Elizabeth. 2013. *Rose Under Fire*. New York: Hyperion.
- Zimmer, Tracie Vaughn. 2007. *Reaching for Sun*. New York: Bloomsbury Children's Books.

## APPENDIX C

Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018  
Young Children's (ages 0-8)

Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018  
Young Children's (ages 0-8)

- Alexander, Claire. 2012. *Back to Front and Upside Down!* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.
- Bertrand, Diane Gonzalez. 2004. *My Pal, Victor/Mi amigo, Victor*. Illustrated by Robert L. Sweetland. Translated by Eida de la Vega. McHenry, IL: Raven Tree Press.
- Bryant, Jen. 2013. *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin*. Illustrated by Melissa Sweet. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- , 2016. *Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille*. Illustrated by Boris Kulikov. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Christensen, Bonnie. 2009. *Django: World's Greatest Jazz Guitarist*. New York: Roaring Brook Press.
- Lang, Glenna. 2001. *Looking Out for Sarah*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing.
- Lyon, George Ella. 2010. *The Pirate of Kindergarten*. Illustrated by Lynne Avril. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Parker, Robert Andrew. 2008. *Piano Starts Here: The Young Art Tatum*. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books.
- Rabinowitz, Alan. 2014. *A Boy and a Jaguar*. Illustrated by Cátia Chien. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Say, Allen. 2017. *Silent Days, Silent Dreams*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books.
- Seeger, Pete and Paul DuBois Jacobs. 2006. *The Deaf Musicians*. Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Stryer, Andrea Stenn. 2007. *Kami and the Yaks*. Illustrated by Bert Dodson. Palo Alto, CA: Bay Otter Press.
- Thompson, Laurie Ann. 2015. *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah*. Illustrated by Sean Qualls. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books.
- Uhlberg, Myron. 2005. *Dad, Jackie, and Me*. Illustrated by Colin Bootman. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree Publishers.

## APPENDIX D

Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018  
Middle Grades (ages 9-13)



Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018  
Middle Grades (ages 9-13)

- Baskin, Nora Raleigh. 2009. *Anything but Typical*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.
- Bauer, Joan. 2011. *Close to Famous*. New York: Puffin Books.
- Bradley, Kimberly Brubaker. 2015. *The War That Saved My Life*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.
- Connor, Leslie. 2008. *Waiting for Normal*. New York: Katherine Tegen Books.
- Fusco, Kimberly Newton. 2004. *Tending to Grace*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Green, Shari. 2017. *Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess*. Toronto, Ontario: Pajama Press.
- Haskell, Merrie. 2013. *Handbook for Dragon Slayers*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books.
- Hunt, Lynda Mullaly. 2015. *Fish in a Tree*. New York: Nancy Paulsen Books.
- Lean, Sarah. 2012. *A Dog Called Homeless*. New York: Katherine Tegen Books.
- Lord, Cynthia. 2006. *Rules*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Martin, Ann M. 2014. *Rain Reign*. New York: Feiwel and Friends.
- Mass, Wendy. 2003. *A Mango-Shaped Space*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Reynolds, Jason. 2016. *As Brave as You*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Ryan, Pam Munoz. 2004. *Becoming Naomi León*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Selznick, Brian. 2011. *Wonderstruck*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Sonnenblick, Jordan. 2010. *After Ever After*. New York: Scholastic Press.
- Zimmer, Tracie Vaughn. 2007. *Reaching for Sun*. New York: Bloomsbury Children's Books.

## APPENDIX E

Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018  
Teen (ages 14-18)

Schneider Family Book Award, 2004-2018  
Teen (ages 14-18)

- Abeel, Samantha. 2003. *My Thirteenth Winter*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.
- Clements, Andrew. 2002. *Things Not Seen*. New York: Philomel Books.
- Friesen, Jonathan. 2008. *Jerk, California*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Gardner, Whitney. 2017. *You're Welcome, Universe*. New York: Random House Children's Books.
- Giles, Gail. 2014. *Girls Like Us*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.
- John, Antony. 2010. *Five Flavors of Dumb*. New York: Dial Books.
- Lord, Emery. 2016. *When We Collided*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Mazer, Harry and Peter Lerangis. 2012. *Somebody Please Tell Me Who I Am*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rapp, Adam. 2004. *Under the Wolf, Under the Dog*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.
- Rorby, Ginny. 2006. *Hurt Go Happy*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates.
- Sachar, Louis. 2006. *Small Steps*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Stork, Francisco X. 2009. *Marcelo in the Real World*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books.
- Toten, Teresa. 2013. *The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Van Draanen, Wendelin. 2011. *The Running Dream*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Wein, Elizabeth. 2013. *Rose Under Fire*. New York: Hyperion.

## APPENDIX F

Genre of All Winning Titles, 2004-2018

# Genre of All Winning Titles, 2004-2018

Title	Genre
<b>Young Children</b>	
<i>Looking Out For Sarah</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>My Pal, Victor; Mi amigo, Victor</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Dad, Jackie and Me</i>	Historical Fiction
<i>The Deaf Musicians</i>	Historical Fiction
<i>Kami and the Yaks</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Piano Starts Here: The Young Art Tatum</i>	Biography
<i>Django: World's Greatest Jazz Guitarist</i>	Biography
<i>The Pirate of Kindergarten</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Back to Front and Upside Down!</i>	Fantasy or Science Fiction
<i>A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin</i>	Biography
<i>A Boy and a Jaguar</i>	Biography
<i>Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah</i>	Biography
<i>Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille</i>	Biography
<i>Silent Days, Silent Dreams</i>	Historical Fiction
<b>Middle Grades</b>	
<i>A Mango Shaped Space</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Becoming Naomi León</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Tending to Grace</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Rules</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Reaching for Sun</i>	Realistic Fiction; Poetry
<i>Waiting for Normal</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Anything But Typical</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>After Ever After</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Wonderstruck</i>	Historical Fiction
<i>Close to Famous</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>A Dog Called Homeless</i>	Fantasy or Science Fiction
<i>Handbook for Dragon Slayers</i>	Fantasy or Science Fiction
<i>Rain Reign</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Fish in a Tree</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>The War That Saved My Life</i>	Historical Fiction
<i>As Brave As You</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess</i>	Realistic Fiction; Poetry

Teen	Fantasy or Science Fiction
<i>Things Not Seen</i>	Biography
<i>My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Under the Wolf, Under the Dog</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Small Steps</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Hurt Go Happy</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Jerk, California</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Marcelo in the Real World</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Five Flavors of Dumb</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>The Running Dream</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Somebody Please Tell Me Who I Am</i>	Historical Fiction
<i>Rose Under Fire</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>Girls Like Us</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>When We Collided</i>	Realistic Fiction
<i>You're Welcome, Universe</i>	

## APPENDIX G

### 2019 Schneider Family Book Award Winners and Honor Books

## 2019 Schneider Family Book Award Winners and Honor Books

### 2019 Young Children's

#### Young Children's Award Winner

*Rescue and Jessica: A Life Changing Friendship*

Written by Jessica Kensky and Patrick Downes

Illustrated by Scott Magoon

#### Young Children's Honor Book

*The Remember Balloons*

Written by Jessie Oliveros

Illustrated by Dana Wulfekotte

### 2019 Middle Grades

#### Middle Grades Award Winner

*The Truth as Told By Mason Buttle*

Written by Leslie Connor

#### Middle Grades Honor Book

*The Collectors*

Written by Jacqueline West

### 2019 Teen

#### Teen Award Winner

*Anger is a Gift*

Written by Mark Oshiro

#### Teen Honor Book

*(Don't) Call Me Crazy: 33 Voices Start the Conversation About Mental Health*

Edited by Kelly Jensen

At eight o'clock in the morning on January 28th, 2019, the annual American Library Association's (ALA) Youth Media Awards Press Conference began with a welcome by ALA president Loida Garcia-Febo. Perhaps the premiere event in the world of children's and young adult literature, the presentation took place at ALA's Midwinter Meeting and was simultaneously livestreamed to a worldwide audience. Among the many



awards announced this morning were the 2019 Schneider Family Book Award winners, an award recognizing quality literature for a youth audience which features a disability experience.

Just before the ALA president announced the final results for the 2019 Schneider Family Book Award, she made the surprise announcement that there had been an addition to this award. For the first time, the 2019 Schneider Family Book Award would include both a winning title and an honor book in each of the three age categories. The announcement made this research study both immediately outdated, yet even more fitting. This is a study of the first fifteen years of the Schneider Family Book Award, and as it turns out, it is a study of the award before the addition of honor books.

Among the 2019 Schneider Family Book Award winners is *The Truth as Told By Mason Buttle*, written by Leslie Connor. This is the second Schneider Family Book Award for Connor, both presented in the middle grades category, as she also won the award for *Waiting For Normal* in 2009. Emery Lord is one of the thirty-three authors featuring in 2019's teen honor book, *(Don't) Call Me Crazy: 33 Voices Start the Conversation About Mental Health*. Lord won the Schneider Family Book Award in the teen category in 2017 for *When We Collided*.

## APPENDIX H

Interview Questions, Dr. Katherine Schneider

## Interview Questions, Dr. Katherine Schneider

Could you tell me about how the Schneider Family Book Award came to exist?

- Was the award your idea?
- Did you intend to focus on literature for children and young adults from the beginning?
- Did you always want the award to be part of the American Library Association's youth media awards?
- When did you first propose the idea of this award to ALA? Was it accepted right away?
- Could you describe the process of working with ALA to create this award?
- Are there funding sources for this award in addition to your and your family's endowment?
- Do you have ongoing financial contributions to ALA for this award, or is the award funded solely through your original endowment? What was the amount necessary to establish the award?
- Did you have any input regarding the design of the award seal?
- Some articles indicate slightly different age ranges for the award's three age categories than are currently listed in the Schneider Family Book Award manual. Have the noted age ranges changed through the years?

How was it decided that, typically, three books would be honored each year?

- Other ALA book awards feature a "winner" and "honor" books, but the SFBA avoids this. Was that an intentional decision?
- 2016 was the first year that four titles were selected for this award. Do you think that selecting more than three books each year might become a more common occurrence?

Outside of titles selected as SFBA winners, how often do you read children's or young adult literature?

- Do you follow other ALA youth media awards?
- Do you read other literature for children and young adults in general, or specifically that which focuses on disability?
- Are you aware of the Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award and do you read the books honored by that award?

Do you have any involvement with the selection committee, or the selection process?

- Are you in contact with the selection committee during the selection process?
- Do you have any input in the selection process, or are the winning titles a surprise to you each January?
- Are you made aware of the winners each year before they are publicly announced, or before the authors and illustrators are contacted?
- Have you ever, or would you ever, serve on the selection committee?

Do you read the winning titles each year?

- What are your impressions of the selections, overall?
- Have you noticed any overall or general changes in winning titles over the now 13 years that the award has been in existence?
- Has there ever been a winning title that was entirely inaccessible for you? Or one that was very difficult for you to locate?
- You mentioned that the 2012 selection of *Wonderstruck*, an illustrated novel, was “like a punch in the gut” to you. Could you elaborate on that?
- You describe in *Occupying Aging* that one of the selections that year was inaccessible to you—was this *Wonderstruck*?
- You mentioned in an interview that *Looking Out for Sarah* was one of your favorite titles—do you have other SFBA winners that were especially notable for you?

APPENDIX I  
Pilot Study Book List

Pilot Study Book List  
Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award

**Picture Books**

*The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin*  
By Julia Finley Mosca, illus. by Daniel Rieley

*My Friend Suhana*  
By Shaila Abdullah and Aanyah Abdullah

*My Brother Charlie*  
By Holly Robinson Peete and Ryan Elizabeth Peete, illus. by Shane W. Evans

*Just Because*  
By Rebecca Elliott

*Understanding Sam and Asperger Syndrome*  
By Clarabelle van Niekerk and Liezl Venter

**Chapter Books**

*The Someday Birds*  
By Sally J. Pla

*Remember Dippy*  
By Shirley Reva Vernick

*Mockingbird*  
By Kathryn Erskine

*The London Eye Mystery*  
By Siobhan Dowd

*A Small White Scar*  
By K.A. Nuzum

APPENDIX J

Data Collection Tool

Data Collection Tool (1 of 3)

Title	Year	Level	Genre_1	Genre_2	Experience of Author	Gender_P1	Gender_P2	Ethnicity_P1	Ethnicity_P2	Disability_P1



Data Collection Tool (2 of 3)

Title	Disability_P2	Type_P1	Type_P2	Secondary	Gender_S1	Gender_S2	Gender_S3	Gender_S4	Ethnicity_S1

Data Collection Tool (3 of 3)

Title	Ethnicity_S2	Ethnicity_S3	Ethnicity_S4	Type_S1	Type_S2	Type_S3	Type_S4

## APPENDIX K

### Transcript

Personal Interview with Dr. Katherine Schneider

Transcript  
Personal Interview with Dr. Katherine Schneider

[SD] This is Dr. Katherine Schneider and Sarah Dornback. Are you ready to begin?

[KS] Yes.

[SD] And it is OK with you to record?

[KS] Absolutely.

[SD] It's audio only, not video.

[KS] Absolutely.

[SD] We can stop this interview anytime, for any reason. You may answer or not any question you want, and, please, feel free to let me know if you need a break, or anything else at all.

[SD] My dissertation is on the history of the Schneider Family Book Award, and also I am doing a content analysis of the award-winning titles to date. I've read all 40 of the books, and I've listened to as many of them as I can find through my own library and through Audible. I'm sure that I've haven't gotten all of the available audio books that are out there, but I've listened to a few of them. My interest today is to learn more about how the Schneider Family Book Award came to exist. I've read a little bit about it, in previous interviews of yours, and I understand that it was you and your father together, who decided upon the award, or was it primarily you who...?

[KS] It was me. When I was visiting my dad in his last few months of life... There would be an inheritance, and I knew that, and he knew that, and...ah...he said something to the tune of 'Well, you're just going to give it to some do-good cause, aren't ya?'

[SD] (laughs)

[KS] And I said 'Yeah, probably would.'

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] But, ah, I would think about what cause I thought would be OK with him. Because some of my liberal leanings weren't his leanings.

[SD] OK.

[KS] So...I thought and I thought and I said...I told him as an idea developed in my mind that... 'books about kids with disabilities...' there weren't enough and there weren't enough good ones.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And, did he think that was a suitable thing to consider for a good cause? He was good with that. So, ah...

[SD] OK.

[KS] My brother got a house, and I got the money to make the award.

[SD] Mmhm...OK.

[KS] So, I knew nothing. You know, I was a clinical psychologist at work at the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And I knew nothing, I'd been on Friends of the Library Board, I'd been on the library...the local library board, I'd been President of the local library board, I'd done some fundraising for them, so, I knew about ALA...

[SD] OK.

[KS] ...so I thought: Well, OK, that's probably where it ought to come from...

[SD] Alright.

[KS] ...so that's it's a reasonable, well-regarded award.

[SD] OK.

[KS] So, I called up somebody in, maybe, Public Relations, or something like that, at ALA, and said 'Hey, I have got a great idea for you.'

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] There's Coretta Scott King Awards, but there's nothing for books about kids with disabilities.

[SD] Yes.

[KS] So, 'How 'bout we do that?' And the person was 'Well, that's...that's a nice idea, that's a good idea, but...ah...it's gonna take some money.' And I said, 'Well, I got some.'

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And they were kind of nonplussed by somebody calling them out of the blue, who...

[SD] (laughs) Yes...

[KS] ...wasn't clearly Bill Gates or something...

[SD] (laughs) Right.

[KS] ...and saying 'I got *some* money.' So, there was a little bit of a dance about 'Can you afford this?' (laughs)

[SD] Yes. (laughs)

[KS] And... it turned out that... Yeah! Now, at some point, I think ALA kicks in some too.

[SD] OK.

[KS] For example, once a year, they have a luncheon for the winners...

[SD] Yes.

[KS] ...and their publisher, and so they...they throw a nice luncheon. And I've been to a couple of those, and then I've started giving a little pep talk at them, by phone.

[SD] Oh! Each year?

[KS] Pretty much!

[SD] Ok.

[KS] Pretty much. I've missed a few, but I've... I enjoy doing that. And then, so... I basically copied the Coretta Scott King criteria, except putting in disability, and tweaked them a little...and... What a lot of non-librarians don't realize is I've got nothing to do with picking them.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Because sometimes people will say ‘Hey, you know, I read a book...consider my book.’ And, by all means, look it up on ALA, and submit your books, and go for it!

[SD] Yes. (laughs)

[KS] But I’ve got nothing to do with it.

[SD] So you have never sat on a committee?

[KS] No.

[SD] I didn’t think that you had.

[KS] Can’t!

[SD] You can’t.

[KS] I think I can’t, because of...being the donor, I think there’s probably an IRS rule or something.

[SD] Oh. I hadn’t even thought about an IRS rule. I thought, just...you know...

[KS] Bad form.

[SD] Yeah, exactly. (laughs)

[KS] Maybe this gets ahead of the story, but that came up once as a really...messy thing, for lack of a better word.

[SD] Are you talking about *Wonderstruck*? Or, something else?

[KS] Yeah, *Wonderstruck*.

[SD] OK. Yes. I did have a few questions about that.

[KS] OK.

[SD] If you’re willing to still talk about it, and if not...

[KS] Oh yeah, oh yeah. You bet.

[SD] We can get there.

[SD] The first year that the award was given, was 2004. Do you know about when you first contacted ALA?

[KS] Uh, that would be in 2002.

[SD] OK. That seems like a pretty quick turn around, for getting a brand new award up and running.

[KS] Yeah!

[SD] That's not too bad.

[KS] Yeah, I think they hopped on it.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] I think they saw the point, and the money was there...

[SD] Yes.

[SD] Is it considered an endowment, then, the money that you donated to ALA?

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] Or, just a... I'm not super familiar with the difference between just a donation and an endowment, so, I can look that up...

[KS] Well, I think it's endowment...

[SD] OK.

[KS] ...would be what you call it. Because, it sits there and generates interest.

[SD] OK.

[KS] I think once or a couple years they had to go into the principal.

[SD] OK.

[SD] So, there weren't any other funding sources, initially, besides your donation?

[KS] No.

[SD] But, ALA holds the luncheon...



[KS] I don't know if other people contribute to it when they see it, and say 'Wow, that is so cool.' or if they just say 'Ok, that's cool.'

[SD] Was it a one-time financial contribution on your part?

[KS] Yep.

[SD] OK.

[KS] Yep. I don't know that that was the altogether best way to do it, but being as how I'd never done it before, and will never do it again, exactly that way, I...just did it.

[SD] Are you comfortable sharing the dollar amount?

[KS] I thought about that...I guess...because you can probably figure it out. It was about three hundred thousand.

[SD] OK.

[KS] Which, to people like me is a whole lot. And I think, you know, it's...it does what it needs to do, but it's... When people hear about it, I think they think I'm in a different financial bracket than I'm in.

[SD] Yes, heh. I can imagine that a lot of people would hear that and think 'Wow, that must be just a drop in the bucket.'

[KS] Yep! And, I'm not terribly wanting other people to think, 'Oh! Gee, I've got a good idea! I'll go to Schneider!'

[SD] Right.

[KS] So, I don't advertise the gift.

[SD] Sure.

[KS] And, I call it the Schneider *Family* Book Award, because my parents raised me to value education, that's why the award is appropriate to be named in their honor.

[SD] Yes.

[KS] And, my brother, he had a sibling with a disability, so he's involved, in a way. And I sometimes give the books to his kids or his grandkids, as the case may be, to see what they make of them, and that's kind of a fun way of involving the family.

[SD] Mhm.

[KS] But... It's my baby.

[SD] It sounds like you went to ALA almost right away, you didn't consider a state award, or, any other library association?

[KS] Nope. I didn't know of any other.

[SD] Ok. Does Wisconsin have a state library...? I assume they probably do.

[KS] Yeah, yeah. But, it's not a Wisconsin issue, it's a national issue.

[SD] Absolutely, yes.

[SD] In a few of the early articles about the Schneider Family Book Award, I noted a slightly different age range for the three age categories than are currently listed. Did those change through the years? Or, evolve just a little bit...or there are some typos perhaps...?

[KS] What were the...?

[SD] Initially, I saw 0-10, 10-13, and 14 and up. And I've also seen it listed as books for 'Young Children,' 'Middle *School*' books, and 'High School' or 'Teen' books. And then, currently, most [sources] list it as 0-8, and then 9-13 or 'Middle Grades' they call it, rather than 'Middle School,' and then the 'High School' slash 'Teen.'

[KS] I think that's what was initially intended, and I think they just... I think they keep adjusting the age because, apparently, they have trouble getting really excellent young kid books.

[SD] I have I read that somewhere, also.

[KS] Yeah, I don't know what that's about, but I think that's why they keep adjusting it.

[SD] Ok. Alright.

[KS] To try to get...logical divisions, but also get some into the younger group.

[SD] Alright.

[SD] I was also wondering about the design of the award seal, and if you had any input in that?

[KS] No.

[SD] That was all ALA?

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] OK.

[KS] And... I know they think they were being sensitive to put faux Braille on it...

[SD] Yeah?

[KS] Um...

[SD] The books I have, the...the dots, they are not raised anymore, so you can't...even if you knew where to look, or where to feel for them, you really...

[KS] Well, and it wasn't Braille.

[SD] Oh, it's not?

[KS] It's kind of faux Braille.

[SD] OK.

[KS] Like when a kid scribbles.

[SD] I had no idea.

[KS] And you say, 'Oh! You wrote! Cool!'

[SD] Oh my goodness... I did not know. That's good to know.

[KS] Well... Their intentions were good.

[SD] I'm sure that they were.

[KS] And for a while there, that was 'high art,' to put a bunch of dots on a piece of art and say 'oh, its Braille art.' *No*. Not so much.

[SD] My sister-in-law is an audiologist. She knows sign language, and I remember her saying something [like] that. When my kids were young, 'baby signs' books were big, and she looked at them and said 'Well...its more "baby gestures..." it's not ASL.'

[KS] Yep. That's the same idea.

[SD] Are you good to keep going?

[KS] Yep.

[SD] Alright.

[SD] You mentioned, and I've read, that you based the qualifications [for the Schneider Family Book Award], at least somewhat, on the Coretta Scott King [Book Award].

[KS] Mmhm.

[SD] [The] Coretta Scott King [Award], and many of the other ALA book awards, feature a winner, and honor books each year, and the Schneider Family Book Award avoids that distinction - of winner and honor. Was that intentional? Did you want to avoid that in particular?

[KS] Maybe there wasn't enough money.

[SD] OK.

[KS] Because I wanted it to parallel theirs.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] They may not have had enough money to have several winners in each category.

[SD] Ah, OK.

[KS] Because, if you figure, OK, three hundred thousand, you figure 5% interest a year...you've got about fifteen [thousand] now to play with.

[SD] And then that's...three books.

[KS] They're about five thousand apiece, so...

[SD] Yep. Alright.

[KS] Now, obviously, you know, if there was a great infusion [of money], maybe they could do more.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And I don't even know if they...if the committee feels a need to do more, because... You could argue that having several winners makes things even better.

[SD] Mmhm.

[SD] I do like, personally, that there's definitely a range of... There's a book for every age, just about every year. I like that a lot. The Newbery awards, sometimes people have criticized them a little bit because they tend to skew older...

[KS] Hm.

[SD] ...and, so there's not always a Newbery winner for younger grades. So, I do like that all the children are represented most years.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] Although there have been a couple where they, they did, I think, two middle school...

[KS] Two middles...

[SD] ...two middle grades, and one teen.

[KS] And no young.

[SD] Yeah.

[SD] And then of course, last year, there were four books honored.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] I wondered at the time if that was going to...if that would be kind of a new trend, to honor more than three books each year.

[KS] I don't know.

[SD] So it's completely up to the committee, then?

[KS] Yep.

[SD] Alright. Very good.

[SD] When the books are decided upon by the committee, do they let you know before the general public?

[KS] No.

[SD] You find out with everybody else?

[KS] I do, and I scramble to find out. They don't tell me.

[SD] They don't go out of their way to let you know?

[KS] No.

[SD] Alright.

[SD] Have you been to an ALA Midwinter meeting, where they announce [the winning titles]?

[KS] No.

[SD] OK.

[KS] I've been to the general one, where they're actually awarded.

[SD] OK.

[KS] And I've handed out the award a couple times.

[SD] Oh, that's interesting. I'll have to ask about that. I have attended one ALA Midwinter.

[KS] Oh.

[SD] They were in Dallas one year. And so, I saw the awards announced, live, and they were live streaming it as well. And that was neat, although it's not quite as neat, perhaps, as actually seeing the authors, and...

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] ...getting to hear their thoughts. But, that was nice. Do you follow any of the other ALA youth awards? Such as Newbery, or Caldecott, or, Coretta Scott King?

[KS] I look at them. I'm in a whole lot of different book clubs. And, sometimes I consider kid books when I'm looking for a good book to recommend. So, I notice them, but I don't follow them like I do the Schneider.

[SD] OK.

[SD] How often do you read non-Schneider-Award-winning literature for children or young adults?

[KS] Oh, probably at least monthly.

[SD] Excellent.

[KS] I like kid books. There's a lot of truth in them.

[SD] Me too! I did not know what I wanted to do in life, but I got a history degree in college.

[KS] Mm!

[SD] And my last semester I needed an English credit, and at the school I was at, Children's Literature was an English credit that fit my schedule.

[KS] Huh!

[SD] So I took that, and I loved it, and I decided to become a librarian.

[KS] Wow. Isn't that interesting, how things happen?

[SD] Mmhm!

[KS] I started out as a physics major in college, and calculus and chemistry were kicking my butt, and I took a psych course because I needed something at 8 o'clock, and there it went!

[SD] Yeah!

[KS] (laughs) Yeah, as a psychologist, I've had courses in career theory, and that kind of stuff, because a lot of my work was college students.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] You have all these theories about why people pick what they pick, and then there's the 'dart board' theory...

[SD] Yes! (laughs) Yep.

[KS] That works too.

[SD] Absolutely.

[SD] Can you tell me more about the year you handed out the awards? Is that what you said, it was an ALA summer meeting? Their annual?

[KS] Ah, let's see... I've done it in... I did it in New Orleans, I did it in Orlando, and I did it in Chicago, so I actually handed them out three times, I think.

[SD] To each of the three or more authors and illustrators?

[KS] Yeah. It's, ah... it's just a big meeting.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And, you know, maybe fifty awards are given out, so you herd onto the stage. They've had a little practice, so that the right person comes up when their name is called.

[SD] Yep.

[KS] You come, and they shake. And [a] couple things that struck me were, how many really wonderful awards there are.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] That...jeez, I never heard of that one...I never heard of *that* one...

[SD] Uh-huh.

[KS] That was fun. And then it also struck me that the platform wasn't accessible for wheelchair users.

[SD] Oh. OK.

[KS] And I thought, wow, you know, what are we assuming?

[SD] Yeah.

[SD] And was that a time that you chose to make a comment about accessibility?

[KS] I think I probably did, knowing me. But, I don't know that it's fixed, I don't know that it isn't, and of course, it depends on the facility.

[SD] Yeah.



[KS] But the facilities, because of ADA, would have ramps. They would have to, legally.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] So, all it would take is asking. AND not waiting until you, quote, 'need it.'

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] Because I think a lot of people think 'Oh, well, we'll do something if we *have* to,' at the last minute. But my point about that is...you're setting a tone.

[SD] Yes.

[SD] Do you recall when the last year you attended ALA was?

[KS] Ahh...It was probably at least ten years ago.

[SD] Ok, so very early years of the award, then.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] Do you plan to attend any other meetings?

[KS] I don't know...it's... Oh, wait, I went [to] Washington D.C. too...

[SD] OK.

[KS] I was at that one. Ahh... For me to attend and enjoy ALA, takes somebody by my side, pretty much 24/7.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And, finding a friend that would consider that great entertainment is hard to do.

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Now, the time with a librarian - she's a school librarian from here - and she and I went, we went to Washington, and it was a ball, because she was just as much about running around the big old field house where they have all the vendors, and picking up free books...

[SD] Yes.

[KS] She was just as much about it as I was!

[SD] Yes.

[KS] That was a ball. She's retired, I'm retired... I don't know that could we do a victory lap on that one.

[SD] I see. It is...it's a lot.

[KS] That was amazing to me—I think there were ten thousand people there...

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] ...and I was just thinking, 'Whoa! I didn't know there were ten thousand librarians in the world!' You know?

[SD] (laughs)

[KS] I also met, or... I was looking around the vendors...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] There was a sculptor that I got interested in, and a few years ago, I arranged for there to be a sculpture here on campus in honor of guide and other service dogs.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And, that was that sculptor's dog, so going to those kinds of things, you always get ideas of what you could do.

[SD] Yeah.

[SD] Have you heard about the Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award?

[KS] Yeah, but I don't remember which one it is.

[SD] That is the award given by the Council for Exceptional Children, for portrayals of characters with developmental disorders in children's books.

[KS] Oh, OK! Now, was that short-lived?

[SD] It is still ongoing.

[KS] It's still perking?

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Ok. Because when I looked at that, I thought it was... I found it for a few years, and then I didn't find anything about it, so...

[SD] There's not a lot written about that [award], either. But they are still going, as far as I know. They started in 2000, and they only award every other year.

[KS] OK.

[SD] They do have 2016 winners up on their website.

[KS] Well, that's interesting.

[SD] They have, usually, two books a year.

[KS] Hm.

[SD] It's usually one picture book and one chapter book. And a couple of years it was only one book.

[KS] Do you think they have librarians picking?

[SD] I don't think so.

[KS] I don't either.

[SD] I don't think so. I think it is members of this...Council, it looks like. And I don't know how they choose, exactly, who. But it's their Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities.

[KS] Hm.

[SD] There was one book in common with the Schneider Family Book Award, if I recall correctly.

[KS] Oh, which one?

[SD] That was *Rain Reign*.

[KS] Oh, yeah!

[SD] Still good?

[KS] Yep.

[SD] Alright.

[SD] Just to make sure I have the answers on these... So, you do not keep in contact with the selection committee, at all? During the selection process, you're completely separate from that?

[KS] The only time I did was about the *Wonderstruck* issue.

[SD] And that was after the selection process, not before?

[KS] Right.

[SD] Ok. And, you have no input, and the winning titles are a surprise to you in January.

[KS] Yeah. And then, it's a scramble to find them in accessible format.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Some of which, and some of which aren't. Because if I'm going to make nice remarks to the luncheon, it behooves me to read the books.

[SD] Right.

[KS] (laughs)

[SD] Yes. Absolutely.

[KS] And, looking back on criteria, because I...when I started the ball rolling, I gave some suggestions about criteria, and should have made 'available in accessible format' as one of the criteria, probably.

[SD] Ok. That is listed in the award manual now, as a preference.

[KS] Yeah, it's...it's kind of like, well it's nice.

[SD] Ok. So, was that sentence in the award manual from the beginning, or is that something that was added later?

[KS] I think that's...probably was there from the beginning. I don't know that there was an award manual the first year. It may have developed over the first couple years or something.

[SD] OK. So, you did not write the award manual?

[KS] I did not.

[SD] That must be ALA, then.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] Because there is something to download, that is called the Schneider Family Book Award Manual. So...

[KS] And I think that's kind of...to say there's a preference for that is...it's still kind of old thinking...

[SD] Ok.

[KS] ...to me. But, it ain't my call.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Heh.

[SD] It seemed like it was...I don't have the award manual here, to look at now, but...

[KS] I think it was 'preference.'

[SD] I believe that is the...

[KS] Last time I looked at it. Yeah.

[SD] And it seemed like a sentence that was kind of thrown in at the end.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] There's criteria, and 'this is what the award is,' and oh, by the way, books in accessible format are given preference.

[KS] Yeah. I also would have given preference to books by a person *with*...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] ...or, a family member.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] But, see, that's... it's out of kind of a disability rights standpoint of... 'Nothing About Us, Without Us...' ...and other people getting it *mostly* right...isn't as good as somebody who gets it right because it's their lived experience, in my opinion.

[SD] Yeah. So, in retrospect, that is something you would have added to the criteria?

[KS] Well, I think it would have been negotiated about, anyway. Because, I get that librarians are better judges of books than civilians...(laughs)...in some ways.

[SD] Perhaps, in some ways, yeah. They typically—children's librarians, anyway—have read more widely than your average person in children's literature.

[KS] Yeah. So that's one perspective. I think on the committee there's always a person *with*, or at least that was my criteria. So, I was kind of thinking that they would stick up for that perspective.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] But, not all persons *with* consider that as important.

[SD] Yep.

[SD] Turning to the winning titles, this body of forty books, now, what have been your impressions, overall? Outside of the one that I know was problematic.

[KS] Ah, I've liked them. I think they...I think they've done a great job overall.

[SD] Have you...

[KS] I've got favorites.

[SD] Mmhm?

[KS] Ah... 'Thirteenth Winter' [*My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir*]...which was early...and by a person *with*. And, *Looking Out for Sarah*...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] I don't know if that author was blind, but she really got it - about guide dogs being wonderful, but not perfect as in a statue.

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Because the dog's under—at one point in the story—is under the table cleaning up the crumbs, so that...

[SD] Yes.

[KS] ...yeah, you...you get it! {referring to the author of *Looking Out for Sarah*}

[SD] Yeah. That's good to hear. When I read *Looking Out for Sarah*, and then I read your chapters in *To the Left of Inspiration* about your dogs, I thought, 'Wow, that sounds just like Perry!' in *Looking Out for Sarah*.

[KS] Yep, yep.

[SD] In fact, you could really consider Perry as the main character in that book.

[KS] Yeah. Do you have favorites?

[SD] Oh, yeah, definitely.

[KS] Which ones are your favorites?

[SD] I really like *Looking for Normal*, with Addie, Addison, is the main character.

[KS] Mmhm.

[SD] Ah, even though I know that there may be too many convenient loose ends wrapped up by the end of that story...I just loved that character.

[KS] Hm.

[SD] I'm a character reader, so, I can read that one over and over again. And, let's see... I also really liked last year's *As Brave as You*.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] I enjoyed that story.

[KS] Yep.

[SD] I've only read that the one time, so far. And um...

[KS] That one's got some depth to it.

[SD] Yes. Yes, it does.

[SD] And I got see Jason Reynolds {author of *As Brave As You*} then, also, at a teen book fair in Irving... {North Texas Teen Book Festival in Irving, TX}

[KS] Oh!

[SD] ...a couple months after I'd read that. So, that was neat. And then, let's see...what other ones did I really like...I'm trying to think of the picture books that I liked...those have all been very good. Oh, uh, Naomi Leon, I liked...

[KS] Oh yeah!

[SD] ...*Becoming Naomi León*.

[KS] Yep, yep.

[SD] There really hasn't been one that I didn't like, although there have been a couple that I liked better the second time that I read them.

[KS] Hm.

[SD] *Hurt Go Happy*...I don't know why...I just...I liked it OK the first time, I wasn't especially looking forward to re-reading it, but when I did, I liked it a lot better that second time around.

[SD] How about you? Other than *Looking Out for Sarah*, what are some of your other favorites?

[KS] Well, *The Thirteenth*... Was it Thirteenth Winter or Thirteenth Year?

[SD] Oh, yes! Um, *My Thirteenth Winter*, I think.

[KS] Winter, yeah.

[SD] Yes.

[KS] I give those two my top...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And *Wonderstruck* my bottom, and all the rest are... good! (laughs)



[SD] Mmhm. Any trends or changes in winning titles you've kind of noticed, over the years?

[KS] Ah... more hidden disabilities over the years.

[SD] More hidden?

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] Ok.

[KS] Like invisible disabilities.

[SD] Mmhm.

[SD] Any other impressions of the selections, or any particular selection?

[KS] No.

[SD] Other than *Wonderstruck*, has there been another title that was especially hard to locate in an accessible format?

[KS] No.

[SD] Everything else...

[KS] No, some of them just aren't...for a while. Now, National Library Service makes great effort to make them accessible and they had to do some serious thinking about what they were going to do about *Wonderstruck*.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Which I think was good, that that happened...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] ...and it got pushed.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] So, that was a good outcome.

[KS] And, I did read it. When they recorded it.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And their person did an excellent job, I guess, of describing the big chunks that were pictures.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] But, it... you could tell, it would have been a whole lot better book if you could see it.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] I don't know if there's any way for you, and maybe you've got friends in the library community who get that recording for you to listen to?

[SD] I probably can figure out a way to get it, yeah.

[KS] Because I think that would be interesting for you to see how they negotiated that.

[SD] I think it would, yes.

[KS] You probably know that nowadays there are some movies that are audio described?

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Yeah, it's kind of like...that.

[SD] Uh huh.

[KS] How do ya... And everybody would do it differently!

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] Heh.

[SD] Yeah. It would be interesting to try to describe *Wonderstruck*, some of the illustrated parts, myself, and then go and listen to how they did it. And see if it's just completely different or not.

[KS] Yep.

[SD] So, some of [the Schneider Family Book Award winners] take a while for you to find, but...

[KS] Yeah, it might be six months before they come out in accessible format.

[SD] Ok.

[KS] With the advent of Bookshare - I don't know if you're familiar with that.

[SD] Rings a bell...

[KS] That's a huge step forward for blind and visually-impaired [readers]. They have like five hundred thousand books.

[SD] Wow.

[KS] And they're downloadable, audio-read, you know, by the computer.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] So, it's not narrated by {unintelligible} your favorite narrator.

[SD] Uh-huh.

[KS] It's just... Have you heard computers for the blind talk?

[SD] No.

[KS] Kind of machine speech.

[SD] No, I haven't.

[KS] ...we'll go, we'll go sometime after...

[SD] Ok.

[KS] ...lunch or something, we'll go listen to my computer and see how that all works. But that's...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] They...they have contracts to provide schoolbooks and all in audio format, so they get best-sellers when they're best-sellers.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Uh, National Library Service, that used to record most of their own, now they're starting to use...they're starting to buy books from audio-book sellers.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] So, they're starting to get more current stuff, but that...once Bookshare got started...it's [bookshare.org](http://bookshare.org)...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] ...and once they got started, I would usually find two out of three [Schneider Family Book Award winners] were available from Bookshare in January. And then, the other ones as time went on from National Library Service. And I think they almost have somebody on the committee that's from National Library Service...

[SD] Ok.

[KS] So they're aware, early, so they can put the book in the queue. And I think they're pretty committed to providing them all.

[SD] Mmhm.

[SD] Do they give any preference to books that have won an award?

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] They do, ok.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] If they don't already have it, and it wins an award, it kind of goes to the top of the list?

[KS] I think so.

[SD] Ok. That would be something I could double check on also.

[SD] Regarding *Wonderstruck*, I read your thoughts on that in *Occupying Aging*. You didn't mention it by name, but I deduced that that was probably the title that you were referring to. Can you tell me a little bit about interactions with ALA? How did ALA or the committee respond to criticism, or, perhaps that's not the right word... to your thoughts on this title? [editor's note – in later chapters of *Occupying Aging*, *Wonderstruck* was mentioned by name]

[KS] Ahh... They were professional, I was professional... Um. I don't know that they got what a gut punch that was.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] I think they got "there's a problem" because if it's assigned in 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading class, what's the blind kid in the class going to do?

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] They got that kind of a...they got that kind of feel.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And, I don't think they took very seriously my solution, which was making the award "pending" or if you can't make it pending, make a strong case to the author, that, OK, you know, *you* know what you meant! *You* describe [the visual parts of the book] and, make that available on your website or whatever for blind kids to be able to go out there and get that.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And then, there would be a "cool factor" to it, because the blind kids would have something extra.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] Instead of, "Oh, *God*, somebody's going to have to describe it..." kind of a thing.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] (scoffs)

[SD] That would be neat, to have the author, himself, describing it. Something I would be interested in.

[KS] Yeah! But, that made...that made too much sense to ever have happen.

[SD] Do you know if they ever talked to him about that?

[KS] I think even I may have...

[SD] Oh?

[KS] ...e-mailed him or something about... Very...professionally, I hope, that “I’m concerned for blind kids” da da da da da...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] NOT my “gut punch” reaction.

[SD] Mmhm. Did you hear back from Mr. Selznick?

[KS] Ah, it seems like somebody said, or he said, “Oh, that’s an interesting idea” or something like that.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] (laughs) As in, “Is never good for you? Never’s good for me!”

[SD] Ah, ok. When I looked on the website, for *Wonderstruck*, it does not list the Schneider Family Book Award as one of the accolades for *Wonderstruck*, [though] it lists several other...

[KS] Really?

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Well.

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Well, ain’t that interesting. If he’s not proud of it, he could give it back, ah...

[SD] I don’t know.

[KS] Hm!

[SD] {unintelligible} ...wasn’t sure about...

[KS] That would be an interesting thing to... You could almost sample a couple different authors, and say, you know, “what has the award meant to you?”

[SD] That would be interesting to know.

[KS] And he could be one...

[SD] (laughs)

[KS] ...that you sample, just sort of random, you know.

[SD] Yeah. Alright... So... Many of the books, are not narrated, then? But, you read them, through the National Library Service? Or is it Bookshare?

[KS] National Library Service uses narrators, either they buy the book from...

[SD] Ok.

[KS] ...Random House already audioed, or they hire their own narrator to narrate it. So those ones are pleasant to listen to. Bookshare...it's just like Hal the computer reading to you.

[SD] Ok.

[KS] I actually most of the time prefer Bookshare.

[SD] Uh-huh.

[KS] Because, you can speed it up and it doesn't sound like Donald Duck.

[SD] Ah, Ok. Gotcha.

[KS] And, so many books, so little time...

[SD] Mmhm, mmhm.

[KS] But some things, like poetry?

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Really, you need it read aloud by a human.

[SD] Yes, I can imagine that's a little more, um... Of course, you would get that human's, potentially, personal interpretation, on the poetry.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] So, that could be read many ways, perhaps.

[KS] They haven't picked any poetry.

[SD] No, I don't believe that is a genre that has been picked.

[KS] It seems like, and it kind of surprises me, it seems like they haven't done many non-fiction?

[SD] Not many, and the non-fiction they have are pretty much all picture books. It's all picture book biographies.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] And then the middle grades and the teen winners are mostly realistic fiction.

{Recording stops for Dr. Schneider to take a phone call.}

{2<sup>nd</sup> recording begins}

[SD] Ok, the recording is back on. You mentioned no poetry, so far... We were kind of talking about genre.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] One of the variables for my content analysis is genre.

[KS] Hm.

[SD] There was one [winner] that was free verse, which some people consider poetry.

[KS] Which one?

[SD] And now I'm trying to think of which one that was... It was one of the middle grades, a few years back, it was about a character with cerebral palsy, a girl...and she has a neighbor move in, and she befriends this young neighbor boy, and her mother is going to school, and she lives with her mother and grandmother...

[KS] Mmmm...yeah...

[SD] And I can, um...

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] ...see and...

[KS] Huh!



[SD] ...feel the book... (laughs)

[KS] (laughs)

[SD] And I cannot think of the title!

[KS] Yeah! Yeah.

[SD] Or the name of that character.

[KS] Huh. Boy, that was free verse, huh?

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] OK. When I read it, however I read it, I was not aware of that. I just thought it was a book.

[SD] Some free verse is...eh...

[KS] You can't tell.

[SD] {unintelligible} You can't tell, when you read it out loud. Yes, exactly.

[KS] What are your other variables? Or...after you get done with your questions, can you tell me? Cause that might that might spark some thought.

[SD] Oh, sure! Ah, let's see... I'm also looking at ethnicity, of...

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] ...of the protagonists.

[KS] That's gotten a little more representative over the years, I would say.

[SD] Probably so, yes. And, also the type, or the kind, of disability. The award criteria mentions mental or emotional or physical disabilities, so I thought I would look at that, just to see if there's a certain type or kind...

[KS] I wonder if they stay away from cognitive, because there is the Gray Award. Because they don't have too many of those.

[SD] There have been a few with characters with autism.

[KS] Well, autism's hot.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] I wonder what the next hot thing is gonna be... (laughs)

[SD] (laughs)

[KS] You know, nowadays if you don't have an autistic person in it, whether it's a miniseries or whatever, you're just not living...

[SD] I don't know, that's interesting. I guess you can't tell what...

[KS] What's going to be next?

[SD] What's going to be next. Yep. Um...other variables...I thought about looking at socioeconomic levels, [but] that's hard to nail down.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] So that may or may not make the final cut. Um, uh, let's see...I have age on there, but that's not really a variable, that's just to keep, for myself, in mind, the age of the protagonist, or, um...

[KS] Is that still rule of thumb, that's...the age of the protagonist might be one or two years older than the age of the reader?

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] Yeah, yeah. General rule of thumb. Um, obviously not (laughs)...you know. But, yeah, kids tend to like to read about somebody a little bit older than they are...

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] ...versus their age or a little bit younger. And gender as well. And then while my proposal had, uh, gender and, uh, ethnicity, and uh, type of disability of the protagonist, I'm starting to think maybe it should be of the character or characters with the disability in the...in the story, although there's a lot of overlap there...

[KS] Yeah...

[SD] It's usually the protagonist, but not always.

[KS] Well, but like that one this year where the grandpa was...

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] ...blind. Do you call him the protagonist? Or...

[SD] I don't think he was. I think [the protagonist] was the grandson, the narrator.

[KS] Yeah. Are you doing anything with the author?

[SD] No, not this time.

[KS] As far as disability status, or...?

[SD] No. But that would potentially be an easy one to add. It's just a yes or no column, so... (laughs) But that's possible, and a good venue of inquiry also.

[KS] Well, at the last chapter of a dissertation, you always write about "Further Research."

[SD] Yes, that's true.

[KS] That may go into the further research chapter.

[SD] Yep. Overall, I've enjoyed the books. I've found the quality to be improving, through the years.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] Not that they were terrible at the beginning, not at all. They were always good books.

[KS] Well, I think they represented the field.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Which is why I'm so pleased with the award, because it did what I wanted it to do. It helped make things better.

[SD] Yes. I agree.

[KS] And I'm so pleased with it, that I started the same thing with journalism.

[SD] Yes, I saw that. Just a couple years ago, wasn't it?

[KS] Yep...yep.

[SD] 2014 or so...

[KS] And they're going through some of the same...stuff...

[SD] Mmhm?

[KS] Like, "Ok, when you have this award winner come and give a speech..."

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] "...you're going to both interpret it and caption it, *right?*"

[SD] Mmhm, mmhm.

[KS] And...yeah, eventually they got that.

[SD] Ok, mmhm.

[KS] And, no, I don't think, you know, I don't...I don't want to go up on a...even just one step, not to give the award. Not because I can't...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] ...'cause I can!

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] But I don't...I don't like that.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] It's not right.

[SD] So these awards have been a learning process for the people who award them?

[KS] Yep. And there again, I'm not on the committee.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] That one, I've been to every time so far, I think we're on year four or five...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And, I go out and spend the day talking to journalism classes...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] ...at Arizona State, and that's a ball. 'Cause if you get to the young journalists about how to write well, then, maybe...making something for the future.

[SD] Yeah. Yeah.

[SD] Genre...was also another...I knew there was another big variable, and...and that was it.

[KS] Ok.

[SD] Genre. So...so far it seems like the, ah...ah, the...

[KS] So what do you have to do? You know, ok, you got the background, and...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Do you have to compare it to other awards, or...?

[SD] No, I am, um, just looking at destri...descriptive statistics for the award as a whole, um, as far as which genres or, and ethnicities, and uh, genders are represented, um, and then looking at the different age ranges, uh, so looking at the three, um, and comparing them to each other. So, making comparisons within the award. And so far it seems like there's a lot of variability in genre and ethnicity within the younger children's books, but then when you get into the middle grades and teens, its mostly realistic fiction and, mostly, but not all, white or, Caucasian characters.

[KS] Mmhm. Are you familiar with that whole "We Need Diverse Books" movement?

[SD] Yes. I follow them on Twitter.

[KS] Yeah. Me too.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] They need a little more disability, too.

[SD] Probably so.

[KS] You could always...bug them about that...

[SD] (laughs)

[KS] ...being as how you're a librarian.

[SD] Yeah.

[SD] Well, those are, um, the entirety of my questions...

[KS] Are you...considering disability as diversity?

[SD] Well, I'm considering it as a piece of diversity.

[KS] Mmhm. Yeah...

[SD] Um...

[KS] One kind of...

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] Yes.

[KS] 'Cause that's a...kind of a...at least at universities that's kind of a political football, whether it's really...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] ...diversity, or whether diversity just is race.

[SD] Mmhm, mmhm.

[KS] But maybe in...literature it isn't that...big a deal.

[SD] Yeah. Well, I think when I first started as a librarian, and in classes, I think probably diversity really did mean, mostly, racial or ethnic diversity. But, certainly in the last...

[KS] I looked at...

[SD] ...ten years, I think...

[KS] ...textbooks...

[SD] Uh-huh.

[KS] ...'cause I got to go talk to a couple of kiddie-lit classes here. And, I looked at their textbooks?

[SD] Mmhm?

[KS] And, if you got a paragraph about disability...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] You...that was a more modern textbook...

[SD] Ah, yeah.

[KS] Most of 'em, still, don't mention it in the textbooks.

[SD] Ok. That's, ah...

[KS] Which is, an area for future development of librarians.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] 'Cause, logically, you don't...you don't know any more than the average person about something...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Unless you learn about it in school.

[SD] Right, right.

[KS] So what you know about disability, is probably pretty little, other than your personal experience, right?

[SD] Yes.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] Yes.

[KS] You didn't have it in your history classes...

[SD] No.

[KS] Your literature class...

{bells chime}

[KS] Which, is kind of a problem, and I haven't figured out how to fix that one yet.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Heh.

[SD] Hm.

[KS] As far as how to get it into the curriculum.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Because it...you know, it seeps out in all sorts of ways, not only whether you recommend a book, that disabled people consider inappropriate.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Or...whether you even think about, Ok, if our young adult book club's going to be reading a graphic novel...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] ...what are we gonna do for the blind kid? (scoffs)

[SD] Mmhm. Mmhm.

[SD] Important questions. And I think that there's more attention being paid, perhaps, to that. When I hear about diversity, more and more, there's a broader definition of diversity than there used to be.

[KS] Yeah.

[SD] So. So tha—uh. Perhaps is a little bit of progress. But I'm sure that there's more to be made.

[KS] Hm.



[SD] I know that even when I taught a couple of Library Materials for Children courses, to preservice teachers, at TWU, that I tried to pay attention to diversity as much as I could, and I look back and think, well there was that I could have done, and more that I will do if I ever teach that course again.

[KS] Yep.

[SD] (laughs)

[KS] Yep. I bet disability will be a piece of that now.

[SD] Oh yeah, definitely. There are kind of easy ways to slip that into the curriculum, without making real big changes.

[KS] Yeah. Are you getting at all into...how do you know those are good depictions? Accurate and fair depictions?

[SD] No, I have not gotten that.

[KS] Because, that'd be tough.

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] To quantify, I think.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] I've got one!

[SD] Yeah?

[KS] One approach.

[KS] Read a review, by a person with that disability.

[SD] Yes?

[KS] And if you can't find one, what does that say?

[SD] Well, that's true. The trick is finding that review.

[KS] For example... [The book] *All the Light We Cannot See*, that...you probably read my rants on my blog about that book.

[SD] That's not ringing a bell, although I do read your blog, so...

[KS] Oh, ok. Do you know that [book]?

[SD] I don't, know that [book].

[KS] Ok. It's a novel, adult novel about young people in World War II, France. One of them is a blind young woman, and [the author is] Anthony Doerr, and [the book] has gotten a whole lot of critical acclaim.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] NO reviews by blind people! Now, blind people on our own list serves and all have plenty to say about it.

[SD] Ok.

[KS] Mostly negative... Little bit of positive, but mostly negative. And, finally I got so fired up that I wrote a review and I got it in the Madison paper, that was as big as I could get.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] But, it actually came back to me, so now in my book clubs when I'm reading a book about, like Henrietta Lacks, or you know, something like that, I go looking for reviews by Black reviewers.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] It's interesting how few people do that. Because, [thinking] "oh, it won an award..."

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] Or, "oh, it's on the bestseller list..."

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And civilians think that means it's accurate and fair, and...

[SD] Yeah.

[KS] ...not necessarily.

[SD] Yeah.

[SD] Ah, one other question that just occurred to me... Have there been any books that you read, that you thought, "oh, I hope that wins the Schneider this year..." and then it didn't? Or think, you know, "I would have put that really close to the top of the list?"

[KS] Yeah! Uh...Harriet McBryde Johnson...

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And I'm not thinking of the title right now, but she wrote one about, I think it was a bunch of kids at a summer camp. It was a young adult novel.

[SD] Mmhm.

[KS] And, I remember hearing one committee member, somewhere, when I was at one of the meetings that I attended, said something about, well, it wasn't well written, or some throw away, personal comment, and I thought, I think it was better written than whatever you picked that year, honey, but you know...I didn't say that... But, she [Harriet McBryde Johnson] is an author with a disability, and she got the interpersonal stuff right.

[SD] OK. I will try to find that book.

[KS] Oh golly, I tell you what, we'll go look it up, and that way you'll get to see the computer in action. And all that stuff.

[SD] Alright, excellent. I'm going to turn off the recording.

(end)