

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of Education

PLAY AND SELF-REGULATION DEPICTED IN PICTURE BOOKS

A Dissertation in

Curriculum and Instruction

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2010

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ABSTRACT

Today's emphasis on test scores has relegated children's literature to a marginalized position in pre-primary and primary schools. Literature is used less frequently in classrooms now, and even when used, it is a tool to promote literacy or other measurable skills. Storybooks are losing their historical role in "helping children navigate the intellectual, social, and emotional terrains of childhood (Cooper, 2007, p.315). Play, as children's leading activity (Vygotsky, 1967), is experiencing the same downward trend. This thesis is an attempt to reveal the potential effects of both children's literature and play on children's social and emotional development. Specifically, it examines play activities depicted in picture books and analyzes the self-regulatory behaviors of child characters operating during the play process. Forty picture books are selected for this study. They include books depicting children's relationships with adult family members, with siblings, with adults outside the family, as well as children's relationships with their peers. The theoretical guidance for the study is Vygotsky's social learning theory and his notion of the psychology of play. The analysis of the books focuses on how they depict play and self-regulation, and how play is related to the development of self-regulation. The findings show that in these picture books, play is depicted as helping children learn self-regulation. Some of the functions are as follows: to some child characters, play is a culturally acceptable way of expressing and releasing feelings; some child characters achieve emotional self-regulation by deriving a sense of autonomy from play activities; play also makes egocentric, dominant children abide by the rules of sharing or mutual respect and motivates submissive, weak children to stand

up for themselves. In addition, play is a training ground where children can safely make and learn to correct their mistakes. The role of other people (family members, other adults, or peers) is also analyzed as a possible factor in children's mastery of self-regulation. The findings show that other people may serve as the more knowledgeable others who guide children to achieve self-regulation; they may also simply be playmates who monitor the child characters' behaviors. Based on the findings, this study advocates using selected picture books in classrooms to help children learn self-regulation.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Dan Hade for his continuous support as a professor and mentor during the writing of this dissertation. His encouragement and inspirations allow me to work with passion; his valuable suggestions illuminate the direction of the study. I would also like to offer my appreciation to Dr. Vivian Yenika – Agbow, who has given insightful comments and detailed suggestions during the planning and writing of the dissertation. Special thanks go to Dr. James Johnson who leads me to the fascinating world of play studies. This study would be impossible without his patient guidance and kind help. I would also like to thank Dr. Richard Fiene for his warm encouragement and insightful suggestions.

Moreover, I would like to extend my appreciation to the librarians in Pattee Library at Penn State and New York City Public Library. Their help makes the book selection process a lot easier.

I also owe a debt to my helpful friends at State College. They offered great assistance to me when I was away from the campus and gave me great spiritual support when I was in the most difficult time in my life. Finally, my thanks go to my dear parents and my husband. Thank you for all your support and encouragement that make this dissertation possible.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the problem

When I taught the online course LLED 497 E, “The Art of Picturebook”, I noticed that the students, who were mostly primary school teachers, were enthusiastic when relating picture books to teaching reading and writing skills; however, they demonstrated less interest in discussing the books and their relationship to children's social and emotional worlds. To present a typical example, most of them expressed their dislike and puzzlement towards the book *Come away from the Water, Shirley* (Burningham, 1983), which featured a theme of a child-adult relationship and looked at a child's inner world. This response reminded me of the complaints by classmates I have often heard in class discussions. As in-position primary or early childhood educators, they expressed the pressure they experienced to cut back on free, spontaneous activities based on children's literature. Reading aloud, book discussions, and dramatic play are giving way to instruction in spelling and comprehension.

A review of the research on using children's literature in classrooms strengthens my concern. After examining 168 articles related to children's literature in classroom instruction, Scharer and her colleagues (Scharer, Freeman, & Lehman, 2008) found that children's literature is marginal in today's elementary classrooms. Under the pressure of No Child Left Behind and other relevant policies, the traditional approach of teaching

literature “is being shattered by frenzied responses to national mandates” (p. xi).

Teachers always express their tension about the lack of time and support for including children’s literature in classroom instruction (Lehman, 2009). Even with the limited use of children’s books, they are often used as a tool to teach literacy skills such as phonics and vocabulary (Neumann & Roskos, 2005). As Cooper (2007) writes, “today’s emphasis on using children’s literature as a tool to teach reading and writing subskills distracts teachers’ attention from looking to books for their historical role in helping navigate the intellectual, social, and emotional terrains of childhood” (p.1). It is ironic that educators are still focusing on literary comprehension nearly three decades after Rosenblatt’s (1982) call for the maintenance of the aesthetic stance throughout elementary school and the early years: “the notion that first the child must ‘understand’ the text cognitively, efferently, before it can be responded to aesthetically is a rationalization that must be rejected ... The child may listen to the sound, hear the narrative ‘voice,’ evoke characters and actions, feel the quality of the event, without being able to analyze or name it” (p.80).

In response to the decreasing value of children’s literature in early education settings, this study proposes using children’s books to help the social and emotional development of children. Specifically, it examines the self-regulation strategies involved in the play activities of child characters in picture books, and suggests using such books to teach children self-regulation. Self-regulation has a great impact on how well children do in school and later in life (Leong & Bodrova, 2006). For example, self-regulation is ranked as the most important factor for school readiness by kindergarten teachers (Rimm-Kaugman, Pianta, & Cox, 2001). There is also evidence supporting a link between preschoolers’ self-regulation and their cognitive and coping competence in adolescence

(Eigsti et al., 2006). However, growing evidence shows that many children start school lacking the self-regulation needed for a successful school life (Raver & Knitzer, 2002). When they reach school age, children are expected to have a proper level of self-regulation. They need to control their emotional outbursts and aggressive behaviors, and they need to be able to cooperatively get along with other children. Positive strategies for interaction with others are related to peer acceptance (Katz & McClellan, 1997). Self-regulation also allows children to positively comply with rules and form appropriate relationships with adults. From a cognitive perspective, children with stronger self-regulatory abilities do better in attention controlling, setting plans, and problem-solving (Bronson, 2001).

In this study, play is examined as a means for teaching and learning self-regulation. Vygotsky (1978) argued that before children master the ability to self-regulate, they need to regulate others and be regulated, or “other-regulation” (Leong & Bodrova, 2006, p. 35). Play provides an ideal context for such practice because in play, children monitor other children to see if they are following the rules. At the same time, they know they have to abide by the rules because others are monitoring them. This process enhances children’s awareness of compliance with rules. In addition, play helps children develop the cultural tools they need for self-regulation. An example of such cultural tools is the private speech often seen in children’s play. Studies have found that private speech has a direct link with the self-regulatory abilities of children (Burk & Spuhl, 1995). As the leading activity of children, play enables children to learn more efficiently. “Play is a source of development and creates the zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 74).

In addition to self-regulation, play is considered to have a positive role in promoting children's overall development. For example, Sandra Russ (1999) asserts that because affective and cognitive components are intertwined in play and creativity, play can help children to cope and to be resilient. Galyer and Evans (2001) found that children who engaged more frequently in imaginative play had significantly higher ratings of emotional regulation than those who did not. Regarding cognitive tasks, Nelson and Seidman (1984) found that when children engaged in imaginative play, their conversations were longer and more coherent. Rowe's (1998) ethnographic study found that book-related play promotes young children's reading comprehension. Although play is seen as having a positive impact on child development, it is "shunted aside in early childhood programs" in favor of more direct instruction focusing on literacy or numeric skills (Christie & Roskos, 2006, p. 57). As David Elkind (2007) writes in *The Power of Play*, "over the past two decades, children have lost twelve hours of free time a week, including eight hours of unstructured play and outdoor activities," and this decrease of play time has led to "negative physical and psychological consequences" (p. x).

Due to the decreasing status of play in the educational field, this study is a call for the maintenance of play in young children's school lives. It is also a call for resuming children's literature in curriculums and a reminder that storybooks are not only related to literacy, they also affect children socially and emotionally. This study is a theoretical-oriented study. It uses textual analysis examining behaviors of child characters in the selected book and bases its implications on reader-response theories. This may serve as a guide as well as a beginning part of other studies that are held in classroom settings.

Purpose statement

This study analyzes how play and self-regulation are depicted in forty selected picture books. All of the child characters are preschool or first grade children. The stories portray children's relationships with parents, other adults in their lives, siblings, and peers. The intended audience of the study is pre-service and in-position teachers for pre-primary schools and the first grade.

By examining the play activities and self-regulatory behaviors of child characters in picture books, this study aims to explore how play is related to the development of self-regulation. It also attempts to pinpoint the possible social or contextual factors affecting the relationships between play and self-regulation. Guided by Vygotsky's social learning theory and his concept of the psychology of play, this study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What self-regulatory behaviors and play activities of children are depicted in the picture books? How are they presented in the picture books?
2. What relationship does play have with self-regulation on the part of the child characters? What role does play assume in children learning self-regulation?
3. What other social factors, such as the presence of a parent, may affect the relationships between play and the self-regulatory behaviors of a child character?

Rational for the study

This research is a response to the current trend in early childhood education and primary education that undervalues the impact of children's literature on young children's psychosocial development. As Cooper (2007) writes, "over the last decade or more, story time, even at the pre-k level, has steadily been replaced by the use of children's books to teach literacy subskills, from letter sounds to vocabulary to comprehension" (p. 316). The emphasis upon literacy can be traced to the 1970s, when the practice of decoding dominated early literacy research and as a result, basal readers such as the *Dick and Jane* series were widely introduced into the lower grades. In the 1980s, the "whole language" movement came into being, and the application of psycholinguistic theory to recoding instruction came to prominence (Goodman, 1989). According to the whole language approach, contextualized learning should be encouraged because it stimulates children's engagement with reading. One of the important outcomes of this approach is that authentic children's literature was largely used across the curriculum. This trend lost its ground in the late 1990s partly due to others' loyalty towards decoding methods, and partly because it was accused of causing lower reading scores.

A call for reading strategy instruction particularly targeted at pre-primary and primary grades came into being, and consequently the last decade of the last century saw a boom of various Readers Workshops, which were primary grades and focused on teaching comprehension through children's literature that often utilized metacognitive techniques (Calkins, 2000; Collins, 2004). Going further than promoting reading

instruction, recent years have seen increasing efforts focused on prevailing reading difficulties. The use of children's literature now has to follow this guiding light. To a large degree, this trend can be attributed to the 2001 federal government's No Child Left Behind Act. Specifically, the use of children's literature for reading instruction and reading difficulty prevention is represented in the following two approaches. The first approach is less child-centered. It places great emphasis on the instruction of basic literacy skills from phonemic awareness to comprehension. A piece of curricular evidence for this approach is "Put Reading First" issued by the National Reading Panel in 2003 (Adler). The second approach is seemingly more balanced. It includes more holistic literacy practices such as children's literature-inspired activities. However, the focus of this educational approach is still on "direct instruction of all skills, including reading strategies through children's literature" (Cooper, 2009, p. 183). A sad story manifest in these approaches is that even as instructional tools, children's books are losing ground in classrooms. There is a "steady, worrying strain of tension" that many teachers have expressed about "lack of time and support for the inclusion of children's literature in classroom instruction" (Lehman, 2009, p. 196). This is mainly due to political pressure that values more "scientific", efficient literacy-improving skills. The situation is worsened by the fact that many teacher preparation programs no longer require or include children's literature courses (Hoewisch, 2000).

Overall, these two approaches shape the dominant climate for the use of children's literature in classrooms. In this educational climate, children's literature may be reduced to an instructional device used to teach children how to secure higher scores on standardized tests (Serafini, 2003). Therefore, this research is a call for a holistic

employment of children's books in early childhood education; it is a reminder of the role of children's literature in helping children develop not only cognitively, but also socially and emotionally (Russell, 2005).

This research also responds to the rapid decrease of play in kindergarten and early education as a whole. There are numerous existing studies supporting the role of play as having a positive impact on development. Play is regarded as enhancing the brain development of young children. As Sutton-Smith (1998) has commented, "as the brain begins in a state of high potentiality, so does play. Play's function in the early stage might be to assist the actualization of the brain potentiality to save in both brain and behavior more of the variability that is potentially there than would otherwise be saved if there was no play" (p. 333). Specifically, play serves as a mediator of sensorimotor, social, affective, and cognitive systems because of its intermodal qualities and because the child is intensely active when at play (Bergen and Coscia, 2001). Moreover, children's play is intrinsically motivated for pleasure and enjoyment; it has developed into an independent motivational/behavioral system by which children can learn from relationships with others and develop skills needed in later life (Power, 2000).

Enhancing brain development is regarded as an impact of play that is universal to children worldwide. Play is also considered culturally specific, and it promotes cultural learning because "playing reflects and expresses their cultural knowledge" (Johnson, Christie, & Wardle, 2005, p. 132). Haight (1999) and Haight and Black (2001) also provide empirical support for the view that play has both universal and culturally specific developmental functions in cultural understanding. For instance, children in all cultures

engage in pretend play, peek-a-boo, or other types of play such as hopscotch, but the specific rules of the play may vary from culture to culture. In any particular cultural context, these play activities help children acquire an understanding of their culture and help them form cultural models of what things are and should be in their cultural context.

There is strong theoretical and empirical evidence in support of play's positive impact on the cognitive dimension of child development. One of the pioneers in relating play to cognitive development is Piaget. For Piaget (1963), play serves as a means by which children practice and refine newly acquired skills; furthermore, this process prepares children for learning new skills. Another leading figure in this approach is Vygotsky (1976), who believed that play helps children develop abstract thinking because they project new, symbolic meanings to objects at hand. An example is when children use cards as money when they do a play episode concerning shopping. Vygotsky (1978) also viewed play as a context in which children learn socially; in particular, a child can learn from the more capable others and reach a level usually beyond his own thinking capacity. There is a huge body of more recent studies linking play and cognitive strategies. Wyver and Spence (1999) conducted a series of studies exploring the link between play and problem solving ability. Their results support "a complex reciprocal causality model in which the development of divergent problem solving skills facilitates the development of play skills and vice versa (p. 419). Lloyd and Howe (2003) conducted a study on solitary play and found a positive link between different forms of solitary play and divergent thinking ability in preschool children. Specifically, they found that active solitary active players performed well in tests of divergent thinking.

Play is also regarded as connected with children's language and literacy development. First, play enhances infants' and toddlers oral language acquisition (Davidson, 1998). Play also provides a context in which children use their maximum language abilities. As Bruner (1983) argues, “the most complicated grammatical and pragmatic forms of language appear first in play activity” (p. 65). One of the most powerful arguments by play advocates in the educational field is that play promotes reading and writing abilities. There is much empirical evidence for this argument. For example, Neuman and Roskos (1990) found that preschoolers who always play in literacy-rich play contexts experience a significant gain in test scores for printed literacy. A more recent study by Dyson (2001) reiterates the importance of play to children’s writing skills. Examining the words children created within their play, she concludes, “playing children can rename the mundane and organize their behavior according to a pretend situation that they have willed into existence” (p. 169).

Play is also widely recognized as having positive effects on children's social and emotional development. This aspect of play is also one of the foundations of this study. Play is an effective means for children to develop self-regulation because first, nearly all play is rule-governed, even a game as simple as peek-a-boo. Therefore, play requires children's self-control and adherence to rules. Vygotsky argued that all imaginative play involves following the social rules of an imagined situation (Vygotsky, 1967). Besides, within play children need to control their own impulses and emotions to be accepted by other children. On the basis of a short-term longitudinal study on social-dramatic play, Elias and Berk (2002) concluded that complex sociodramatic play predicted self-regulation, especially for children who were temperamentally high in impulsivity. Galyer

and Evans (2001) found that children who engaged frequently in imaginative play had significantly higher ratings of emotional regulation than those who did not. Theorists also maintain that play helps children develop coping skills. A case study by David Crenshaw (2008) found that trauma-stricken children could regain a sense of control and safety if they were given play therapy. Dorothy and Jerome Singer (1990) concluded “pretending provides children with opportunities for expressing their puzzlement, psychic bruising, and terror” (p. 119).

Despite the ample evidence supporting the critical importance of play in children’s lives, play is rapidly disappearing from kindergarten and early education as a whole because of the “increasing emphasis at school on developing academic skills in children at younger and younger ages” (Bodrova & Leong, 2005, p. 1). On the basis of nine studies done in 254 kindergartens in New York City and Los Angeles, Miller and Almon (2009) reported that “play in all its forms but especially open-ended child-initiated play, is now a minority activity, if not completely eliminated in the kindergartens assessed” (p. 18). They also reported that a majority of teachers said they spent two to three hours each day in literacy, math, and test prep – and that children have even less than half a hour each day for play or “choice time”. This discouraging trend is a national phenomenon (Elkind, 2007). The decrease of playtime is largely attributed to the pressure early child educators are facing to meet the expectations for academic performance. Many teachers express that they are pressured to cut down open-ended, spontaneous time for children in favor of “formalized structures, tight fitting programs with predetermined outcomes, constant adult interaction, and strong, too often scripted directions” (Chenfeld, 2006, p. 35). The pressure upon educators results from the notions

of education policymakers who believe that the best way to improve schools is to continually measure children's knowledge through standardized tests (Miller & Almon, 2009, p. 39). An example is an announcement made by New York City school officials in 2007, which suggested that all kindergarten children in the city's public schools would be given a standardized I.Q. test to evaluate whether they were qualified for gifted and talented classes (Gootman, 2007).

The stress on academic excellence not only affects practices in early childhood education, it also determines how parents regard their children and their children's education. An increasing number of parents are expressing their concern about their children's scores. They are worried that their children are wasting precious learning time for "meaningless games and play". They believe that high scores are the best weapons their children need to succeed in a super-competitive, technological society. For middle-class parents, they want their children to excel. For parents at lower socio-economic levels, they don't want their children to fall behind, or they hope their children can climb higher up the social ladder. Both of these groups place pressure on teachers: my child needs high scores. A result is the decreasing amount of play and the increased load of academic learning. As Vivian Gussin Paley (2004) describes the present situation in early childhood education:

One began to hear the word "boredom" attached to play, probably for the first time in human history. It was an odd concept to tag on to the single activity children loved best... The "academic kindergarten" was offered as the antidote to boredom and, further confusing our logic and common sense, children labeled "at risk", who often had less opportunity for play and talk at home, were allowed less time for these activities at school as well (p. 45).

Although the curriculum is to a large degree academics-oriented, many researchers have found that such a curriculum may not boost children's performance in academic skills. An example is a study by IES of Reading First, a federal program aiming to improve the literacy level of children from low-income families through intensive reading comprehension instruction. The results of the study show that students participating in the program did not show better reading proficiency than other children, even after several years with the extended instruction (Manzo, 2008).

Another issue arising from the lack of play is the rise of mental health problems among children, which is also a concern of this study. Reduced playtime means fewer opportunities to play and interact with each other and to practice self-regulation, and less chance for relieving pressure, which contributes to rising rates of depression, aggression, and other behavioral problems among children.

To sum up, despite ample evidence supporting picture books and play as beneficial to children's overall development, there is a gap between the theoretical support and real practices in education. Picture books and play are losing ground in early childhood school curriculums. Even when they are used, they are used to facilitate literacy or other measurable academic skills. Their role as a booster to social emotional development is to a large degree undervalued and ignored.

Theoretical framework

Social learning theory

Given the interdisciplinary features of the issues discussed here, this research is framed by the intersection of different theoretical approaches. Vygotsky's social learning theory serves as the first theoretical guidance. This theory argues that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of learning. As Vygotsky (1978) stated, "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 57). This argument states the importance to children of learning socialization and self-regulation. It also reveals that children learn best when they interact with others, or with a more knowledgeable other. Teachers and parents are regarded as the more knowledgeable others or "MKO" by Vygotsky because they have a better understanding or a higher level of ability than the learner. Other children such as siblings and peers can also serve as the more knowledgeable others if they possess better knowledge, understanding or skills in a certain field.

Although acknowledging the role of other people, Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory emphasizes the active role of children. It argues that with proper guidance or collaboration, children are able to achieve a task they may fail to achieve independently. This is what Vygotsky named "the zone of proximal development" or ZPD. ZPD was described as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as

determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). To apply these ideas to this study, various forms of guidance or suggestions from other people will be analyzed to see if they help children master self-regulatory skills they fail to understand when they are alone. The role of the child characters in the literature will also be studied to see if they take an active part in becoming more self-regulatory.

Psychology of play

A primary goal of this study concerns the connection between children's self-regulation and play. Vygotsky's psychology of play serves as the theoretical basis for this discussion. According to Vygotsky (1978), play helps children develop self-regulation for the following two reasons. First, play provides children with contexts responsible for creating the “zone of proximal development”:

In play the child is always behaving beyond his age, above his usual everyday behavior, in play he is, as it were, a head above himself. Play contains a concentrated form, as in the focus of a magnifying glass, all developmental tendencies; it is as if the child tries to jump above his usual level. The relationship of play to development should be compared to the relationship between instruction and development. . . Play is a source of development and creates the zone of proximal development (p. 74).

This view suggests that children demonstrate better ability and skills in play than what they can achieve outside a play context. Such ability and skills include self-regulation, an important component in children's social and emotional development. A frequently cited example is that when a boy was playing as a lookout in a pretend play episode, he was able to stand still at his post for a longer period than he could when he

was asked to stand in the same position in a laboratory setting. Another reason that play promotes self-regulation is because play involves implicit and explicit rules, which require children to withhold their own desires and impulsiveness. As D. B. Elkonin (2005) states, “play continually creates situations requiring the child to perform actions that are not based on immediate impulses, but rather follow the course of great resistance” (p.83).

Explicit rules are always overtly stated before a play episode; for example, before children start “restaurant play”, there is role assignment as to who will be the waiter and who will be the customer. The implicit rules are not formulated in advance, but they operate during the process, stemming ultimately from children's knowledge of social rules. In the instance of the restaurant play, one implicit rule children abide by is that the customer is the one who eats and pays, and the waiter is the one who serves. The development of self-regulation in play is made possible by the inherent relationship between rules a child needs to follow and rules he expects others to follow. This relationship requires children “to practice self-regulation both in its shared and its individual form” (Bodrova, 2008, p. 361). Specifically, within play children not only need to monitor whether their play partners are following the rules, they also need to make sure they are following rules issued by their play partners. The process ultimately allows children to develop awareness of rules; also, the process helps children develop gratification-delaying and impulse-controlling abilities. Abiding by rules does not decrease the pleasure of play; actually, children voluntarily obey and passionately formulate rules. As Vygotsky (1967) stated, “ordinarily a child experiences subordination to a rule in the renunciation of something he wants, but here subordination to a rule and renunciation of acting on immediate impulse are the means to maximum pleasure” (p.10).

This research is in accordance with Vygotsky's perspective on play, for it stresses the social aspects of self-regulation. However, the scope of play in this study is broader than Vygotsky's description of play as child behavior occurring in an imaginary situation. Besides imagination, the research discusses that self-regulation also evolves in other types of play such as physical play. Even solitary play, which seemingly does not involve social interaction, is rule-governed to some degree and fosters self-regulation within children.

How picture books work

Since the content of picture books is the data for this study, Nodelman's notions about how picture books work serves as a guide for the analysis. The value of illustrations in picture books is emphasized in his explanation:

As illustrations, in fact, everything in such pictures is less important as a source of aesthetic delight than as a source of information about a story. However pleasing they are, their shape, their style, their composition are also means of conveying information about how viewers are being invited to respond to the story. (Nodelman, 2001, p. 278)

For example, one of the specific guidelines for studying illustrations is that illustrations of more saturated color seem more vibrant, and less saturated ones seem more gentle (Nodelman, 2001, p. 281).

Molly Bang (2000) introduces principles of how pictures work in her text *Picture This*. One of her arguments is that smooth, horizontal shapes offer a sense of calm, while vertical shapes offer a sense of excitement (p.42-44). In short, besides the storyline, the

artistic elements of a picture book such as the font of the text and the illustrations will be analyzed because they also tell stories.

One fundamental assumption of this study is that the intended audience or the teachers will focus on play and self-regulation depicted in books in the process of reading. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional reader's response theory is adopted to support the assumption, which asserts that the reader makes out the meaning of a text regardless of the author's intentions. As Rosenblatt (1938) wrote,

The special meaning, and more particularly, the submerged associations that their words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text". (p. 30-31)

This argument justifies the fundamental assumption of this study, which holds that regardless of the author's intentions, the intended audience or the teachers can interpret the texts in relation to the play activities and self-regulation skills of young children.

Definition of key terms

Play

Play can be very hard to define because of its fluidity and its multiplicity of meanings. A majority of play theories resort to describing play rather than providing a

fixed definition. Sutton-Smith (1998) provides a multi-perspective description of play in *The Ambiguity of Play*, which summarizes the existing definitions or descriptions of play given by theorists from different disciplines. For Sutton-Smith, the diversity of play forms and experiences determines the multiple meanings of play. He describes play from seven perspectives. First, “the rhetoric of play as progress” (p. 9), which is similar to the view in child development that play promotes children’s overall growth. Second, “the rhetoric of play as fate” (p. 10), which refers to how play involves chance taking such as gambling. Sports and contests are categorized as “play as power” (p. 10), and traditional, community celebrations are regarded as “play as identity” (p. 10) because they enhance the identities of the players. Pretend play along with other activities involving imagination and creativity are considered “play as the imaginary” (p. 11). He categorizes solitary activities and high-risk activities the “rhetoric of the self” (p. 11) and idle activities as “play as frivolous” (p. 11). Sutton-Smith points out that play activities usually cover plural forms of rhetoric. In other words, more often than not, play refers to more than one category of his descriptions.

For this study, I use the term play to mean activities deemed happy and enjoyable by children. The activities may be freely chosen and directed by children, or they may be suggested by others. The essence of the definition is that whether self-initiated or suggested by others, these activities are intrinsically motivated, and children derive pleasure from the process. Within this definition are many different types of play, including imaginative play, physical play, sand and water play, art activities, playing with toys, and so on. This definition is similar to Catherine Garvey’s (1990) description of play as pleasurable and enjoyable regardless of extrinsic goals.

Rooted in Vygotsky's theory of play, this study adopts a much broader definition of play than Vygotsky's, for which the three components of play are:

- Children create an imaginary situation
- Take on and act out roles
- Follow a set of rules determined by specific roles

In other words, his definition excludes activities such as movement play, object manipulations, and outdoor explorations. However, this study keeps Vygotsky's (1967) view that imagination is "play without action" (p. 2), which means a child's imagination is also a type of play.

In short, in this study, play is broad and encompasses any activities children regard as happy, enjoyable, and that they are self-motivated to engage in. In this study play includes pretend play, imagination, physical play, and even short episodes such as impulsively playing with an object like a fan or a pen, and so on. The definition of play in this paper focuses on children's perspective. What counts is children's mental and emotional experience. As Bruner (1986) stressed, "main characteristics of play – whether child or adult – is not its content but its mode. Play is an approach to action, not a form of activity" (p. v).

Self-regulation

When applied to young children, the term "self-regulation" is defined and described in a variety of ways. In the domain of psychoanalysis, Freud viewed the development of self-regulation as an outgrowth of emotional needs. Self-regulation

grows in children when they develop a strong ego through successfully coping with external reality and satisfying id drives in the real world (Bronson, 2001, p. 13). The behavioral perspective views self-regulation as learned self-control, which requires children to learn to assess the relative value of rewards, control their impulsivity, and use strategies to obtain the rewards (Siegman, 1961). This learning takes place through children's daily experience (Eisenberger & Adornetto, 1986). Children can also be taught strategies to control their own behavior (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989). Social cognitive theorists believe that self-regulation is largely determined by an individual's self-esteem (Bandura, 1977). High self-esteem results in feelings of control, which enables children to set realistic goals, plan actions, and assess their progress towards the goals (deCharms, 1976). Piaget (1967) viewed self-regulation as "an innate property in human adaptation" (as cited in Bronson, 2001, p. 29), which evolves with the development of thinking as the child grows. As their thinking capacity reaches a higher developmental level, their self-regulation develops too.

An examination of existing views of self-regulation reveals that researchers tend to focus on either cognitive or social and emotional aspect of self-regulation. In this study, the definition of self-regulation is broadened to encompass both emotional regulation and the ability to regulate thinking and behaviors. Berk (2005) defines emotional self-regulation as "the strategies we use to adjust our emotional state to a comfortable level of intensity so we can accomplish our goals" (p. 256). Adapting this definition, in this study self-regulation refers to the ability and strategies children use to control and adjust their emotions, thinking, and behaviors so that they can achieve their goals. It includes

controlling and manipulating emotions, delaying gratification, the ability to shift to different tasks, and so on.

Built upon Vygotsky's social learning theory and psychology of play, this study adopts Vygotsky's perspective on self-regulation as "deliberate, intentional, or volitional behaviors, as something that humans have control of" (Leong & Bodrova, 2006, p. 34). It may include self-control and self-adjustment; it may also include making efforts to start or initiate something. For Vygotsky (1978), self-regulation allows children to shift from being slaves to the environment to masters of their own behavior. This argument informs this study because I will analyze children's active roles in self-regulation when they play. This analysis applies to both child characters in selected picture books and child students of the teachers who are intended, potential readers of the study.

For Vygotsky (1978), children's self-regulatory abilities are higher mental functions originating in social interactions, which later become internalized and independently used by children. Parents, teachers, siblings and peer groups all provide the social context for learning self-regulation. Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning self-regulation is possible through social contexts for the two following reasons. First, social interaction with others, such as parents, teaches children the cultural tools for self-regulation. Language and art are examples of such cultural tools. Second, play equips children with self-regulatory abilities because during play, children experience other regulation, which means that children need to regulate both their own behavior and also others' behavior (Leong & Bodrova, 2006), as is always seen in play activities by peer groups. Play is also an ideal context for learning self-regulation because within play, a child "stands a head taller than himself" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.74) and learns more

efficiently than he usually does. This study not only examines the play activities and self-regulatory strategies of child characters in the books, it also analyzes how they use cultural tools during play to regulate their thinking, emotion, and behavior.

Book collection

Forty picture books are selected for this study, and their themes are a major criterion. All forty books selected include the following two themes: the first theme is that the books depict children's social relations with other people. Ten of the books are about relationships with adults within the family, specifically parents or other relatives; ten of the books portray children's relationships with siblings. The other twenty books depict children's relationships with people outside the family. Among them, ten books describe relationships with adults outside the family, such as teachers, doctors or librarians, and the other ten portray interactions with peers, including friends. The second theme seen in the selected books is play. In all of these books, play is substantially depicted as a main type of the children's activities. Besides, all the selected books have preschool or first grade children as the targeted readers. The child characters in these books fall in this age range too. To avoid overgeneralization, I only selected books that are published in the United States. This also allows the intended audience to have better access to the books.

Among a variety of genres within children's literature, picture books are selected as the data source in this study for the following two reasons. First, the intended audience for the study is preschool and first grade teachers. Picture books are the major reading

materials for their students. Besides, the child characters in the books are all preschool or first grade children, so the intended audience feels a closer link to the books. The other reason is because the illustrations in picture books provide an explicit visual representation of a child's playworld, which may include imagination or movement.

Picture books are able to present three-dimensional images and movement. The illustrations "are in some form of representational perspective that implies an imaginary three-dimensional space existing on the other side of the surface of the paper" (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 290). Elements such as point of view and focus also create three-dimensional effects.

Although all of the selected books depict social relationships, they have different areas of focus. As stated earlier, each ten out of forty books share one specific theme, which are respectively relationships with adults within the family, relationships with adults outside of the family, and relationships with siblings as well as peers. They are collected from a variety of sources, including libraries, local or online bookstores, as well as professional recommendations. The book selection of the four groups all followed the same procedures. Below is detailed information about the book selection process and criteria.

Library

The major library source serving this study is the Penn State University library. I started searching for the books from the CAT, which is the major online catalogue for the Penn State library. For each group of books, I used a different searching topic or subject

as the keyword. For example, an initial search of “parent” as a topic within the category of juvenile books yielded 557 results. The images of the book covers and the book description provided by the CAT helped me narrow down the selection options. The Google preview for each result further narrowed down the selection because it informed me whether the books might contain the theme of play as well. Play was another keyword I used when searching. It yielded more than one thousand results within the category of juvenile books. However, seeking for the theme of a social relationship in the books helped me narrow down the title list.

New York City Public Library was another book source for this research. Lists of book titles provided by the kind librarian in the Children’s Room were a great assistance in the book search. The book titles were listed according to their themes. For example, one list contained 30 titles of books sharing the theme of friendship.

Professional recommendations

The Horn Book Guide Online is a database providing professional evaluations of picture books. It serves two purposes in the process of book selection. First, it provides information about the age range of the targeted readers of a book. Since the intended audience of this dissertation is preschool and first grade teachers, it is better that the selected picture books target the age range of their students. Second, the guide provides professional ratings and criticism of the books. Such evaluation helps exclude books with bad ratings or negative criticisms from the collection, and ensures that the picture books selected are professionally recognized.

Academic journals are another source for popular or recognized titles. For example, an article (Anonymous, 2006, p. 25) in *Instructor* lists 25 favorite picture books picked by teachers. *Where The Wild Things Are* (Sendack, 1988) and *No, David* (Shannon, 1998) are two of the listed books selected for this study.

Bookstores

Amazon.com is another place where I searched for books. One strength of the online store as a book source for the study is that when a particular title is searched, the site yields a long list of other books sharing a similar theme. This is greatly helpful because the theme is a major criterion for book selection in this study. For instance, when the title *The Recess Queen* (O'Neil, 2002) is searched, other books with a similar theme will appear together. Examples of some other titles are *Worst Best Friend* (O'Neil, 2008), *King of The Playground* (Naylor, 1994) and *Enemy Pie* (King, 2000). I also visited local bookstores such as Barnes & Noble for book selection.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Children's literature in classrooms is now used as a way to promote skill-oriented literacy. As a consequence, holistic teaching approaches like story telling or reading aloud are marginalized and losing their ground in classrooms. Play, as the leading activity of children, is experiencing the same fate as storybooks. This literature review examines present theories and studies that explore how children's books and play work together as a means of teaching in pre-primary and primary schools. The first part of the literature review examines studies and practices focusing "outside of the books". These studies are often based on qualitative research done in classrooms, and they emphasize classroom practice. They do not analyze child characters and basically use the stories only as scripts for play. The second part of this literature review examines studies that focus "inside the books". These studies shift attention to what is written or drawn in the books. The purpose is often to provide inspiration for real readers outside of the books. An examination of studies from both perspectives reveals that the second type of studies is small in number.

Play and children's literature used together in classrooms

Why to combine stories with play

Vygotsky (1978) stated that play is an opportunity for children to learn: "... play creates a zone of proximal development for the child. In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were "a head taller than himself" (p. 102). Hakkarainen (2006) presented reasons why combining a story with play is a good idea:

- a. Its structure is very similar to play.
- b. The content of a really good story deals with universal concepts most of which are already familiar to children.
- c. It is a piece of art and through triggering an aesthetic reaction it is able to involve children emotionally in the process of learning a particular content. It can also create a need to express one's own experiences through creative activities, in other words, to give one's own interpretation of the content. (p. 5)

A major value of creative drama/story reenactment is becoming acquainted with good literature. It is obvious that when children try to act out a story, they have to understand the story well to make out the cause-effect relationships in the story. They should also think about the characters and setting. In short, by making choices about characters, plot, action, and setting, the play activity can enhance children's story comprehension and understanding of relationships in the story (Pellegrini and Galda, 1982).

Story reenactment can also promote development of imagination. "Few activities have greater potential for developing the imagination than playmaking... Once the players have had the fun of seeing, feeling, touching, tasting or smelling something that is not there, they will find that their capacity to imagine grows quickly" (McCaslin, 1987, p. 8-

9). Reading itself stimulates the imagination because children have to visualize the information represented by abstract language symbols. Dramatic play prompts children to use what is at hand by substituting other objects, and thus develops their imagination. Play related to children's literature usually has several players. As social play, it allows children to develop prosocial behavior in several aspects. Schierholt (1994) has discussed the benefits of story reenactment, based on the literature and also on her own study. According to Schierholt (1994), dramatic play based on literary works is a healthy release of emotion. Unable to express themselves, children may hold back negative feelings. This hinders both physical and emotional development. In dramatic play based on children's literature, children can personalize an episode through a feeling similar to his own, thus letting out hidden feelings through the role he is playing. MaCaslin (1987) states, "All persons feel anger, fear, anxiety, jealousy, resentment, and negativism. Through the playing of a part in which these emotions are expressed, the player may release them and so relieve tension" (p.10).

Dramatic play based on children's literature boosts cooperation and independent thinking. Even with the help of the teacher, a group of children have to discuss the plan for the play and contribute their own ideas. They must listen to, appreciate, accept, and even encourage each other. When conflicts arise, they will learn to resolve them by discussing and making compromises. In this highly competitive society, independent thinking and cooperativeness are of great value.

Story reenactment can help children identify different feelings and thus develop empathy. In her study, Schierholt (1994) found that at the beginning, children could only tell simple feelings like sad and happy. While preparing the dramatic play, she helped

students work on identifying the feelings of the characters, and the children ended up knowing more complex feelings like curiosity, jealousy, and surprise. It was clever for her to take advantage of this chance to have the children spell the words for these feelings so that their vocabulary can be enlarged as well.

Dramatic play is an effective way to teach literacy. It improves literacy skills in all respects. Reading precedes playing. To recite the lines, children have to know the words in the lines and pronounce them accurately. Teachers' reading to children is like a read-aloud activity, which enhances children's awareness of sound-word relationships. Furthermore, dramatic play can improve higher levels of literacy skills, such as narrative ability, because it plants in children's minds the concepts of the story plot, sequence of events, and setting, etc.

Another merit of story reenactment is its function in moral education. "Mere instruction in morality is not sufficient to nurture the virtues. It might even backfire, especially when the presentation is heavily exhortative and the pupil's will is coerced" (Guroian, 1998, p.20). "Stories are an irreplaceable medium for this kind of moral education—that is, the education of character" (ibid). El'coninova (2001) supposed that tales and stories are crystallized ideal models of moral behaviors and motives. The heroes want to help others and carry out noble needs. The developmental potential of stories may be increased if children want to repeat their models in play.

Given the importance of dramatic play related to children's literature, it is worthwhile to find better ways of carrying out this type of play. Based on her research, Schierholt (1994) introduces several common elements that help elicit dramatic story reenactment.

Several common elements that help elicit dramatic story reenactment

In the first place, the play will proceed more easily if the teacher chooses a good book or story that is familiar to the children. Stories that are popular and endure the test of time are both approachable and loved by children. With some knowledge of the story line, children can identify with the plot and characters with relative ease. Particularly, Schierholt (1994) recommends the use of fairy tales due to their appeal to children. Fairy tales also carry moral value. As Guroian (1998) explains, “in these stories (fairy tales and fantasy stories) the virtues glimmer as if in a looking glass, and wickedness and deception are unmasked of pretensions to goodness and truth”(p. 20). Second, she encourages adaptation of the stories to the needs of the group. The teacher can adjust the number or gender of the roles according to the size and gender constitution of the class. Some unpleasant scenes can also be changed. For instance, some versions of Little Red Riding Hood have bloody endings. The teacher can make it less bloody to make it more suitable.

Unlike other types of play where teachers are not supposed to be instructive, in dramatic plays related to children’s literature, it will be better if the teacher is initially as directive as is needed. This is mainly because children, especially kindergarteners, are unable to deal with problems like preparing props or arranging settings. In puppet-play, they may not be able to operate puppets. As Williamson and Silver (1986) imply, in order to reach the long-term goal, it is necessary to “train” children in the mechanics until it becomes second nature. However, this does not mean the teacher should just be an outside director all the time. She can get more involved in the play when the basic

preparations are done. Flynn and Carr (1984) suggest that one important strategy for maintaining the focus on the literature and engaging students in action requires the teacher to take an active role in the drama. They also explain how “teaching-in-role” helps the teacher be part of the dramatization, yet not be “in charge”.

Another common feature for good dramatic play is that the teacher is not obsessed with the result of the play. “It seems to be the process of the planning and the informality of the production that lead to increased abilities in the cognitive and social areas, not the repetition of several rehearsals” (William & Silvern, 1985). High expectations from the play lead to repetitive rehearsals, which may exhaust children’s enthusiasm for the play. Most of the time, the teacher should simply regard dramatic play as a part of regular class activities.

Given the merits of this type of play, some educators strive to provide an optimal pedagogy of play related to children’s literature. One of the most well-known pedagogies is playworld practice.

Literature-based dramatic play in education

Playworld by Lindqvist

Playworld was created in Finland by Gunilla Lindqvist in 1995. In her doctorate degree dissertation, she conducted a didactic study of the aesthetics of play and examined connections between play, drama and literature. The aim was to create pedagogy of play for Swedish preschools. She grounded her pedagogy upon Vygotsky's theory amongst

others, that play reflects different aspects of children's development and culture. One of the theoretical bases was Vygotsky's theory of play and fantasy (1982), which holds that pretense is a way to interpret reality and to make it both more manageable and richer. She also developed the approach to play on the basis of Vygotsky's theories of cultural history and drama pedagogy, which recognize a dynamic connection between children's play and the cultural influence of their environment. Teachers with deep-rooted cultural knowledge are one representation of cultural influence, so the playworld cannot be realized without adults' role. In other words, the playworld regards play as "a cultural activity which concerns both adults and children" (Lindqvist, 1995, p. 5).

The project was carried out in a day-care center and lasted for 12 months. The results showed that a common playworld helps develop play in preschools, and that it is created with a cultural context.

To summarize, in her study Lindqvist explored how aesthetic activities can influence children's play and the nature of the connections between play and culture, primarily regarding the aesthetic forms of drama and literature. By testing and developing models for an aesthetic pedagogy of play in preschool, she finally came to a model of pedagogy—playworld. In Lindqvist's own words, the playworld takes the shape of "a meeting between drama, literature and play" (p. 215). As she describes the playworld, "the literature has become contents of a theme, and actions and characters in the contents have been brought to life through drama. Adults and children have 'stepped into' the text and created a fictitious world—a playworld" (ibid). Johnson (2002) states in *Commentary: Play, Literacy and Theories of Instruction* that in playworld, "children and adults co-created a fantasy world based on fables and folk tales and children's literature" (p. 12).

He also emphasizes that in playworld, “for an extended period of time, part of the classroom is turned into an imaginary world with teachers and children role playing characters and commentators” (p. 12). This interpretation reflects two important points about playworld: one is that the play should last for a period of time; the other one is the participation of the adults. Playworld has been adopted and adapted by some educators in classrooms. For example, Lindqvist and her students worked together with 3-to-8-year-old children to create a playworld. They chose a text from children’s literature for the creation of the world and had adults portray characters from the texts, and then children joined these characters to further the plot. The educational practice included pretend play, dramatic performance of a text from children’s literature, and visual art production. They concluded from the work that part of the reasons for children's fascination with playworld consists of the poetic language of the story, and visual allure through costumes, illustrations and props. An experience of a different world may also work as an appeal to young children.

Tyrrel (2001) employed a related technique in her first grade classroom. She successfully used fantasy figures to develop literacy in her students, sustaining over the entire school year an imaginative classroom environment in which literacy learning flourished and children’s imaginations were extended and enriched. She worked on ways to create imaginative environments in the classroom so that the students learn in a “make-believe” setting that they like. For example, she would transform the classrooms into rain forests, deserts or arctic scenes according to what the intended topic was. “These ‘topic-related’ extravaganzas were great fun and very motivating” (Tyrrell, 2001, p. 3).

Narrative learning by Hakkarainen

Hakkarainen (2002) further developed the playworld project. El'konin's cultural-history theory serves as one of the theoretical underpinnings. El'konin (1971) and some other theorists suggested that 5-to-7 year olds experience a developmental crisis as they transition from the leading developmental activity of early childhood play to the leading developmental activity of middle childhood (as cited in Baumer, Ferholt, & Lecusay, 2006, p. 576). Therefore, Hakkarainen sought to create a "transitory activity" that addresses the problem of the developmental crisis. In order to address this crisis, he designed an educational intervention he terms "narrative learning", which supports children during this critical stage by combining pretend play and elements of school learning. He also borrowed the concept of "lived-through" experience to develop "narrative learning" in *Narrative Learning in the Fifth Dimension*. "Lived-through" experience was introduced by Vygotsky (1999) and Stanslavski (1981). It refers to the direct experience of another person's mental state. Originally, it is a method of acting in which the actor is required to think of a moment in her own life when she felt a particular emotion and then relive the emotion while in character. Stanslavski (1981) argued that inner emotions and feelings are aroused by physical action, and that by imitating another's physical actions we are able to experience the emotions of the other because these physical actions stimulate autobiographical emotional memories. Hakkarainen used this concept to discuss the developmental impact of the playworld experience. According to him (2004), it is the lived-through experience with the characters of the story that

enables children to better comprehend the story, and understand the inner world of the characters.

Hakkarainen included playworld practice among different types of narrative learning occurring in imaginary situations. The practice extends for a period of time and aims to develop the imagination and other learning potentials.

Although it has a similar structure of educational practice, in comparison to Lindqvist's playworld, Hakkarainen's narrative learning model touches upon logical or curricular problems by adding math problems to the play, whereas Lindqvist is more interested in supporting children as they work to achieve resolutions to various emotional problems. Her playworld practice combines a child's emotional experience and aesthetic relation to reality. The themes of the play are selected by picking out some central themes from folktales or stories that are important to children's general psychological problems.

A related study in the U.S.

Sonja Baume, Beth Ferholt, and Robert Lecusay (2005) believe that a major reason why playworld practice is not widespread in the US is because it lacks convincing empirical evidence (p.576). Therefore, they conducted a study to provide experimental evidence about the developmental outcomes of the playworld practice, and in particular to investigate the effects of the playworld on narrative competence. On the one hand, they created a playworld practice that incorporated all the essential elements described by Lindqvist and Hakkarainen: joint adult-child dramatization of a text from children's literature, general discussion, drawing, and free play. The text they used is C.S. Lewis's

novel, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. They also created a control intervention that used the same novel but consisted solely of conventional practices that the teachers in this school implemented when reading the text to the whole class. These practices included reading, writing, and group discussion, and occasionally drawing as well. The experimental class and the control class were in the same public elementary school in Southern California.

They contrasted the playworld practice with the control intervention. By analyzing narrative competence in pre- and post-test scores for the experimental and control groups, they found out that significant increases occurred in measures of narrative comprehension, narrative length, and coherence for the experimental group. The conclusion was that the playworld practice promoted the development of narrative competence in at least these three areas.

Vivian Paley's storytelling curriculum

As one of the most respectable educators in the US, Vivian Paley (1981,1990) recommends focusing on a story as a chief part of the language curriculum in kindergartens. Her story-telling curriculum consists of two parts. The first of the two interdependent activities is dictation—story-telling done by students. The second step is to organize children to act the story out. She first described the “story-telling curriculum” in *Wally's Stories: Conversations in the Kindergarten* (1981). The book tells how she learned to stop fighting the fantasies of children and how to take advantage of them in literacy teaching. The process is to let a student tell the story while the teacher is

transcribing it. This is a free-flowing practice, where all children offer information and lessons. She found that children are surprisingly capable of story making. “Amazingly, children are born knowing how to put every thought and feeling into story form” (1990, p. 4). Then comes the story acting part. The teacher first reads the story to alert the audience and actors to the plot. She then reads it aloud again as the children step into their roles. This part best serves young children’s interests when it occurs on the same day as the story is told. However, it does not have to happen immediately. Dramatization can be used as a transition activity during break or before lunch. For the acting, the teacher can work as the director and producer. Usually, the dramatization is a one-time through, no-rehearsal event. Dramatization is not the ultimate goal. “The children like to dramatize books and fairy tales but are not dismayed if there is time only to read them. Acting them out is better, but listening is usually enough. They feel quite differently about their own stories” (1990, p. 25).

Cooper (2005) backs up Paley’s story curriculum in *Literacy Learning and Pedagogical Purpose*. He contends that “while some instruction in literacy sub-skills may prove useful in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, activities embedded in play (including drama) serve young children’s overall needs better” (Cooper, 2005, p. 247). Based on his own experience with teachers and children about story-telling and existing studies, he concluded that storytelling and dramatization promote literacy development in a holistic way, including phonics, awareness of print, sentence structure, and how a story works. However, Cooper does not intend to devalue the function of sub-skill literacy classes; he advocates the coordination of both teaching approaches.

Reading as receptive play

Reading stories to children is also regarded as a popular form of receptive play by some scholars. Marta Blalecka-Pikul (1998) discussed that when listening to stories, children were able to “attribute mental states to characters of stories...” (p.43). This statement suggests that children vicariously experience what the child characters experience and the actions they mentally experience promote story comprehension.

Play as depicted in picture books

A different approach to interdisciplinary studies of play and children’s literature is to give primacy to the people, contexts, or activities involved in the play described in the books. Cooper (2007) has studied the psychosocial development of child characters in *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963) and the David series by David Shannon, and concludes that these books can contribute to early childhood education as materials to teach self-regulation. Her study is based on two earlier theorists: Erickson’s (1950) psychosocial theory of development dominated by eight developmental stages, and Dewey’s (1938) view that children desire to learn for the sake of future learning. Similar to this study, her study uses Rosenblatt’s reader response theory to build a link between the fictional world and the real readers.

In their article, Hansen and Zambo (2005) propose to use picture books as a method to help pre-service teachers “conceptualize the physical, cognitive, and socioemotional growth of children” (p. 39). Specifically, they adopt Piaget’s (1969) theory of developmental stages to analyze Lilly in *Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse* (Henkes,

1996), and they argue that picture books like this can help students in the education field master theories. Their argument is supported by Routman's (1994) and Wilhelm's (1997) views that picture books can work as a cognitive boost not only for children, but also for adult learners.

Such studies have also been conducted in the field of liberal arts. One example is Kelly Mallan's (2003) article *Secret Spaces: Creating an Aesthetic of Imaginative Play in Australian Picture Books*. In the article, Mallan does a textual analysis of secret places depicted in Australian children's books, and comes to the conclusion that Australian readers will be attracted aesthetically by these secret places because of their cultural and emotional connotations. Maria Lassen-Seger (2006) devotes one chapter in her book *Adventures into Otherness* to analyzing how through shape transformation in imaginative role play, the fictive child can build agency and develop a better sense of himself against the world around him. Although these studies only focus on one aspect of imaginative play—the first one is about secret places and the second is about transformation—these two studies are exploratory and courageous endeavors given the extreme paucity of similar studies.

A review of the literature reveals that most studies on the marriage between children's literature and play regard stories as scripts for play. Few studies focus on representations of play and child characters in the books. This study is an attempt to examine the relationships between play and child's development described in picture books. Besides making contributions to the scant number of similar studies, this study also aims to suggest a new way of using picture books for teaching for first-grade and pre-primary teachers.

Chapter3

Books about Children's Relationships with Family Members

Books about children's relationships with adults in the family

Once upon a Saturday

Once upon a Saturday (Lammle, 2009) tells about a girl June's experience on an early Saturday morning. The cover of the book is visually attractive, depicting June flying with her pet dog, carrying letters in her hand. The cover demonstrates June's internal world by means of external visual representation. Perry Nodelman (1988) states that covers of picture books are either chosen from a certain illustration inside the book or may represent pictures that are nowhere to be found in the book. No matter which case, covers are made "to convey the essence of the story inside and thus to set up appropriate expectations for it" (p. 50). This cover is not exactly from the book, but it is similar to one of the illustrations the book contains. It conveys the information that the book will be about imagination, and it suggests a tone of merriness with bright colors, round shapes and energetic diagonal lines. The title page confirms the message that the book will be about imagination by depicting June lying on the wild grassland, looking into the sky and imagining. The story starts with a double-page spread portraying June waking up in her bedroom. The scattered toys on the ground imply that June plays a lot and may have a playful disposition. The theme of imagination is represented by the

window because it is depicted like a magic mirror. The sunlight is a mixture of golden and silver, glorious like the magic light given by fairies in fairy tales, a visual reference that again enhances the message that the book will be about magic and imagination. Consistent with the picture on the cover, this illustration is portrayed from June's perspective. This perspective reveals June's mental activities, which otherwise are invisible to the reader.

The next double-page spread provides an interesting juxtaposition of things June wants to do. All of these things are play. She will “search for wild animals”, “learn how to fly” and “even discover long-lost treasure” (Lammle, 2009, p.3-4). Three illustrations of the things she likes spread nearly over the whole double-page spread. They are portrayed with an irregular oval shape and their boundaries are not clear lines or frames. The vague, irregularly shaped edges seem to extend in all directions, implying freedom and energy in the playworld. In each of these three pictures, June looks energetic and exuberant. In sharp contrast, she is portrayed as crestfallen and dispirited in the small illustration at the right bottom corner. This illustration and the text show that she has one big problem before she can play, which is elaborated through illustrations and text on the following double-page spread. She has to eat breakfast, pick up the mail, sweep the stairs, and clean under the bed. An interesting detail in the series of illustrations portraying the big problem is that the checklist for her assigned tasks becomes increasingly long as June reads, until it reaches the ceiling. This magnification again reflects June's dislike of the listed tasks.

The rest of the book presents a series of events in which June regulates her thinking and behavior to comply with the requests of her mother. The first thing she

confronts is eating lumpy oatmeal, which she dislikes a lot. To finish the oatmeal, she imagines the lumps are animals lying in the bowl trying to get in the way. This imagination arouses her desire to get rid of the lumps because she needs to start the other chores as soon as possible. The illustrations displaying the process of having breakfast become bigger and bigger as June develops her imagination, until it occupies nearly a whole double-page spread. The picture shrinks within a small frame when the perspective shifts away from June and looks at her life through the lens of reality. The next thing June does is to collect the mail. To accomplish this task, she imagines that she flies with a crow and gets to and from the mailbox through a secret shortcut. Similar to the depiction of the breakfast scene, illustrations of picking up the mail follow the pattern of becoming bigger as June's imagination develops. Again, the illustrations resume their small size when depicting objective reality. The text implies that June actually does the chore by running. The same pattern occurs in the portrayal of the other two tasks: sweeping the stairs and cleaning under the bed. The illustrations extend to an overwhelming size when June imagines the wind helps her sweep the stairs and pretends that seeking missing toys under the bed is hunting for monsters.

This book successfully demonstrates the impressive power of imaginative play through the manipulation of perspectives and illustration sizes. The comic strip-like illustrations add happiness and light-heartedness to the overall mood of the story. One nearly forgets that this book writes about work that is demanding of effort, for it seems to be a book about play. June's self-regulation not only saves her from the mental pains of doing chores, but also lightens one's heart when reading the story.

This book sets a positive model for children to regulate their thinking and behavior when it comes to the conflict between work and play. Self-regulation is fulfilled when June successfully abides by her mother's request. It seems that she works before she sets out to play. However, the above analysis of the book reveals that June's play begins as early as she wakes up—from the moment she views the window as a magic mirror. Treating work as play touches upon the issue of children's perception of play. When summing up the relevant literature, Howard, Jenvey and Hill (2004) wrote that "children categorize activities as play according to their enjoyment of the task, the opportunity for pretence, the absence of predetermined goals and the level of control afforded to them during the activity" (p.380-381). To apply this to the book, June does derive great pleasure from her activities, which is explicitly shown by her facial expression and bodily gestures. This information is also conveyed by the merry mood of the whole book. June's activities also include a great deal of pretence and colorful imagination. For example, she pretends to talk with the crow and the wind to ask for help. Vygotsky (1978) also emphasized that imagination is play. As for the level of control, June successfully gains her sense of control by imagining the activities as situations she has mastery over. Her power of control even expands to the crow and the wind. In other words, although the tasks are assigned by her mother, June manages to make the situation under her own control by transforming the tasks into play episodes. One might argue that June's activities have goals because she has to finish them. However, the portrayal of June in the book shows that she does not seem disturbed by the goals. Actually, the requirement that she needs to finish the tasks works more as rules in play than goals for a task. From June's perspective, what counts in the activities is not the final result, but the

process. To take picking up the mail as an example, what June notices is not the fact that she brings the letters home, but the process where she talks and flies with a crow.

Vygotsky (1978) stated that rules exist in all play activities. In June's eyes, to and from the mailbox is a rule of her play, which she is willing to abide by.

In sum, June in *Once upon a Saturday* (Lammle, 2009) complies with her mother's request by transforming tasks into play activities that she enjoys. She successfully achieves self-regulation because "a self-regulated person is one who can comply with a request, to initiate and cease activities according to situational demands..."(Kopp, 1982, p.199-200). The prerequisite to such transformation is a child's ability to perceive work as play, which is built on cognitive and social development, and a disposition for play and imagination.

Now What Can I Do?

The dichotomy of play and work is reflected in another book entitled *Now What Can I Do?* (Bridges, 2001). It tells the story of a little raccoon helping his mother to do housework by transforming boring chores to funny imaginative play. The beginning of the story introduces the background situation where the little raccoon cannot go out to play because it is raining. His mother asks him to do house chores instead, which the little raccoon does not like. The little raccoon is a little younger than June in the previous book. First, he is given easier tasks; second, he is unable to independently transform chores into imaginative play episodes. That means that an adult's help is involved when the raccoon mentally treats work as play.

The first thing his mother asks him to do is to make his bed. He responds with a reluctant face and his answer is “Oh, Mommy – that’s not fun” (Bridges, 2001, p.4). His mother reacts positively and constructively, suggesting that the little raccoon take the bed as a boat. The idea is thrilling to the little raccoon. He enthusiastically responds by imagining himself as an explorer and the bed sheets as the sails, which he folds up on calm days. The ensuing story is constituted by a series of similar scenes: the little raccoon is given a task, he refuses because it is not fun, but then gladly accepts it when he is suggested to view the task as an imaginative play episode. For example, he regards picking up scattered clothes on the floor as digging deep for fossils, and putting socks into dresser is considered doing slam-dunks.

The power of play is reflected well through the illustrations. On the versos depicting scenes in real life, the characters and various objects are juxtaposed together. Lines of text are placed between objects, dividing the pages into different enclosed sections. This creates the feeling of messiness and chaos. Additionally, the background color of the versos remains unchanged as yellow. In contrast, the portrayal of the little raccoon’s imagination is full of changes and possibilities. First of all, the background color of the imaginary world varies. When he imagines himself as an astronaut, the image portrays the dark blue of the sky. When he imagines himself as a fisherman, the backdrop represents the green of the wilderness. Second, the depiction of the imaginary world occupies the whole recto page. The large size of the depicted imaginary world is in sharp contrast with the crowded left pages, implying the vastness of the imagination. Also, the imaginary world spreads over the rectos without any frames. It offers a sense of freedom

compared to the illustrations of the real world, which are sliced into small sections by lines of text.

Like *Once upon a Saturday* (Lammle, 2009), this story also touches upon the dichotomy between play and work. Similar to June, the little raccoon achieves the tasks with pleasure because he imagines the tasks as imaginative play episodes. One might argue whether the little raccoon's experiences can be regarded as play because he is guided to do them. An early study by King (1979) may support this argument by asserting that children categorize activities with adults' absence as play, which means that if an adult is present or provides guidance, children will regard the activity as work. However, Cooney, Gupton, and O' Laughlin (2000) concluded from their more recent study that children describe some activities as both play and work even when adults are there. They also found that to blur the lines between play and work, children need shared control of the activities. In addition, there needs to be spontaneity present in the experiences (p.168). Compared to June, who has almost all control over the situation, the little raccoon has shared control, during which he mentally transforms work into play. Specifically, the shared control is reflected in the process as he voluntarily develops his mother's suggestions into richer, more enjoyable play episodes. It is a constructive process, in which the little raccoon actively contributes his ideas. In other words, although the little raccoon is helped by his mother, his experience is still play because he has shared control during the process. Furthermore, the illustrations of imaginative play in the book indicate that the little raccoon enjoys the process. These illustrations are all portrayed from the perspective of the little raccoon. As discussed earlier, they visually express the otherwise intangible power of play. It offers a sense of happiness, vitality,

and excitement, and implies the limitless possibilities of the imagination. And more importantly, it indicates that the process is regarded as exciting play by the little raccoon.

Compared to *Once upon a Saturday* (Lammle, 2009), this story not only provides a good example for children concerning how they can make themselves enjoy things they dislike, it also presents a model for adults about roles they are supposed to play in such a constructive learning process. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that when a child learns from a more knowledgeable other, adults simply provide scaffolding for the learning process to ensure the active role of children. Ashisbi (2007) provides more specific suggestions for adults' roles in a social constructive learning process in the context of play. He suggests that an adult can be an observer and recorder, stage manager and facilitator, mediator, or participant of play (p. 203). The raccoon mother in the story is close to the role of mediator, as described by Ashisbi. She helps the raccoon's interactions with materials by suggesting that he treat everything as toys, and she also suggests possible roles. She is also an observer of the play process after the little raccoon takes up his mother's idea.

Besides having shared control, the little raccoon also demonstrates great spontaneity and creative imagination when transforming work into play. "The ability to spontaneously shift directions requires a playful disposition in order to imagine other possibilities" (Cooney et al., 2000, p.171). Therefore, another lesson an adult can learn from the book is to equip the child with a playful disposition. In the book, one of the factors giving the little raccoon playfulness is toys. Toys are a noticeable pattern in the book because they appear throughout the book, even on the dust jackets. This detail not only enhances the theme of play, it also implies that the little raccoon plays a lot or has rich, colorful play experiences. It may be such experiences that nurture creativity and

playfulness within the little raccoon. In other words, adults need to encourage and facilitate play behavior in order to foster playful ability and spirit in children. As Singer and Singer (1990) argue, children will still play when adults are not supportive, but “when we add a caring person, a sacred space, and a few props or toys, imagination bursts forth” (p.18).

Where the Wild Things Are

Now What Can I Do? (Bridges, 2001) depicts a parent who encourages and guides her child’s play behavior; however, there are also a great number of books that portray parents trying to intervene or stop their children’s activities because they do not lead to the positive results as shown in *Now What Can I Do?* An example of such a book is *Where the Wild Things Are?* (Sendak, 1963), in which the child protagonist Max is called “wild thing” by his mother due to his maltreatment of toys and pets (p.5). He responds rudely to his mother, saying, “I’ll eat you up” (p.5), which results in being sent to room without dinner by his mother. Max in this story is around 4 or 5 years old. At this age, he is experiencing rapid physical growth and developing advanced motor skills. In his play, “pretend roles are often infused into physical play that includes chasing, throwing, climbing and swinging” (Hansen and Zambo, 2005, p. 43). This physicality is reflected in the book, for the first page depicts Max drilling a hole in the wall to hang a cord between two walls. This activity requires relatively advanced motor skills, but what is more important in the illustration is Max’s mischievous behavior developed out of his physical ability: the cord is used to hang a stuffed dog toy. The left front leg of the toy

dog is held up high by a thread, while his head and other legs are drooping down, and his expression is one of painfulness. This depiction implies that the dog is treated like a criminal or a torture victim. Max's aggressiveness is more noticeably illustrated on the following image, which portrays Max chasing a frightened pet dog waving a fork in his hand. His mischief comes to a climax when he yells, "I'll eat you up" (Sendak, 1963, p. 2) at his mother, for which he is sent to his room without dinner.

The following pages illustrate Max's imaginary trip to the wilderness. Wearing his wolf suit, he looks no less wild than the wild world where he tames fierce monsters and has rumpus parties with them. The illustrations of rumpus scenes are interesting because they contain "secrets". Beneath the happy rumpus hides potential danger. The expressions of the wild monsters reveal their mean-spiritedness and even their desire to hurt Max. A sense of danger is implied by their sharp, spiky claws and teeth, which diminishes the feeling of harmony conveyed by large round shapes used to portray the monsters' heads and bodies. The tension between Max and the animals rises to its utmost when they cry, "Please don't go – we'll eat you up..."(p.30), a parallel to what Max has done and said at the beginning. When tired of the wild world, Max goes back home. The wild story concludes with a peaceful ending: he returns back home to find the warm supper prepared for him by his mother. Max's reconciliation with his mother is reflected by two details in the last illustration: first, his expression turns to gentle smiling, a shift from his angry face at the beginning; second, he takes off the hood of his wolf suit, the sign for his wildness.

There are two layers of tension in this story. The first layer is the tension between Max and his mother, which exists in Max's real life. The other is the tension between

Max and the monster-like animals, which operates in Max's imaginative play world. It is through dealing with these two layers of tension that Max learns to regulate his own emotions and behavior. First, he controls and lets out his resentment caused by the punishment imposed by his mother; second, he stops his rude and mischievous behavior towards others. One might argue that Max is regulated by his mother instead of by himself. He is forced to conform to his mother's expectation or he is deprived of dinner. This view also contends that Max's imagination reflects his thirst for autonomy. As Keeling and Pollard (1999) wrote, *Where the Wild Things Are* is "the story of a little boy sent to his room in punishment who then dreams a self-fulfilling fantasy meant to assuage his frustrations" (p.2). Based on my analysis, the argument in this study is that Max's imagination is not only a self-fulfilling fantasy, it is also a self-teaching and self-regulatory process in which he demonstrates autonomy.

Max's autonomy is fulfilled when he chooses to regulate his emotions through imaginative play. He is not asked to do so by his mother. This is a positive model for self-regulation, because a lot of children will cry, kick, and make scenes when they are sent to their room without dinner. It is true that Max enjoys great autonomy in his imaginary adventure. He tames giant wild animals, rules over them, and has his own say when determining whether to stay or to leave. However, the experience is not to fulfill Max's hunger for power. In fact, Max does not lack a sense of power at all. From the beginning of the book, Max is depicted as a self-confident boy exploring the possibilities of play and manipulating his toys and pets to satisfy his own desire to control and torture.

Playing with forbidden toys like an ax and fork implies that Max is bold enough to challenge his mother. The wild-looking wolf suit that is allowed or even given by his

mother may also indicate that his mother is sometimes tolerant of her son's desire for "wildness". Therefore, his autonomy over the imagined wild animals is just the same as autonomy over Max's other toys. The difference is that the imaginative play not only satisfies his desire for fun, it also enlightens Max that the wild world is not always attractive; his mother and home are things he will also need and miss. This imaginary experience leads Max to voluntarily reconcile with his mother.

Max uses imaginative play to sooth his mood and help adjust his behavior. He displays great autonomy during the self-regulative process. However, this is also a social learning process because his mother gives Max a chance to start the imaginary experience and learn that mother's love cannot be taken for granted. Besides, the monster-like animals as imaginative playmates also make him realize that the wildness he likes may not always be good.

There was controversy when the book was first published about whether to use it for child readers because it contained scary illustrations (Hentoff, 1969). Kaciuba (1998) conducted a reader-response study of the book and found that children liked the story and were not scared at all. A survey of more than 200 teachers and children's authors (2006) found that the book is ranked as the number one book in the top 25 picture books chosen by teachers. This means there is no worry about the acceptability of the illustrations. What is more important is how to read the book. This study suggests a reading approach with a focus on Max's imaginative play and self-regulation. Max is at the age when children tend to "tackle the psychological conflict of "initiative versus guilt" (Erikson, 1950). With a growing sense of autonomy, they feel secure enough to separate from parents and even challenge them. When this desire goes too far, however, they may hurt

others without being aware of it. Imaginative play is a safe land while children learn to respect others' feelings and experience pain, just like the pain Max tastes when his playmates say, "I'll eat you up" to him (Sendak, 1963,p.30). Max's self-regulatory process can be summarized by Maurice Sendak's (1988) words, "... children turn to fantasy: that imagined world where disturbing emotional situations are solved to their satisfaction. Through fantasy, Max, the hero of my book, discharges his anger against his mother, and returns to the real world sleepy, hungry, and at peace with himself" (p. 151).

When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry...

When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry... (Bang, 1999) provides a good example of a child's emotional regulation in relation to conflict with her mother and other family members. Similar to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), the child character in this story experiences a trip away from home before she comes back and reconciles with her family members. The difference is that in this story, the conflict originates with a sibling fight, which leads to Sophie's anger towards her mother.

The story starts with a happy play scene in which Sophie is playing with a stuffed gorilla. The background of the depiction is a soothing green. On the next page, Sophie's sister comes to grab the gorilla because it is her turn to play. Sophie tightly grabs the gorilla too. For this scene, diagonal lines and spiky shapes are used to create a sense of instability and chaos (Nodelman & Reimer, 2002, p.282). The large font and capitalized letters of the words "MY TURN" (Bang, 1999, p.3) indicate that her sister is yelling. The background color of this scene is an overwhelming red. The chaotic scene extends to the

following double-page spread. The verso depicts Sophie and her sister fighting for the gorilla. The text indicates that her mother intervenes, asking Sophie to give the toy to her sister. Sophie's anger is exacerbated by her mother's intervention. Besides the capitalized letters and large font, her answer "NO" (p.4) is exaggeratingly illustrated in a bright yellow color and zigzag shape, framed within red spiky outlines. By creating a visual metaphor comparing her words to flames, this illustration vividly reveals Sophie's rising rage.

Sophie's rage goes up to the utmost when she falls and her toy is snatched away. The following four double-page spreads dramatically expose her emotional world. On the first one, her angry face is placed against an intensely saturated red background. It occupies nearly the whole double-page spread, and her plaits are pointing upwards. "The larger an object is in a picture, the stronger it feels" (Bang, 2000, p. 72). The overwhelming size of Sophie's face creates strong feelings within the reader. The image depicts a sense of tension and pressure. The next double-page spread shows Sophie throwing a tantrum. She is kicking and screaming. Her image is enclosed within red and yellow contours, as if she were in flames. Her shadow is depicted with fully saturated red color. The shape of the shadow looks like a roaring lion. The next two double-page spreads are both dominated by the flame-like colors of yellow and red. She is depicted roaring and kicking like "a volcano ready to explode" (Bang, 1999, p.11).

The following page depicts Sophie running away from home. The illustrations of her outdoor adventure make a sharp contrast with the preceding portrayal of her rage. Soothing colors like green, blue and pink are generously used to create a sense of ease and relaxation. This reflects Sophie's changing mood. In the wild world, she climbs the

trees, listens to the chirping birds, and watches the waves until finally she calms down and goes home. The final page depicting the family reconciliation scene is dominated by round shapes, soft curves, and horizontal lines, offering a sense of harmony. Warm colors like pink and orange also enhance the feelings of coziness.

Sophie in this book is of similar age to Max in *Where The Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963). As preschoolers, children begin to develop autonomy and self-confidence in themselves, but the “self-assurance may come at a cost” when “the feelings of others” are not considered (Hansen and Zambo, 2007, p. 276). Max fails to consider his mother’s feelings, while Sophie ignores the feelings of her sister. Her anger begins to target her mother when she intervenes in Sophie’s fight with her sister. However, she finally manages to regulate her emotions through a proper way of expression and soothes her own feelings.

This book demonstrates how children can express their feelings through imagination and visual images. Horn Book Guide online describes the book as “the rage of a girl...is made manifest by Bang’s shrewd use of intense color, onomatopoeia, and illustrative metaphor...”(Anonymous, 1999). The illustrations portraying Sophie’s anger are done from Sophie’s perspective. They externally demonstrate Sophie’s mental activity as imagining herself roaring like a lion and burning like flames. “Culturally acceptable ways of expressing emotions” are an important factor in emotional self-regulation (Ashiabi, 2007, p. 201). Imagination full of exaggerated visual images is a good way to express her anger because it does not harm others.

Different from Max’s imaginary trip, Sophie calms down herself through a real adventure into the world of wilderness. Her adventure play makes this story stand out

from other selected books because it depicts playing in wilderness and communicating with nature, while most other books focus on indoor play or outdoor play occurring on the playground. In the wild world, Sophie climbs trees, watches waves, and interacts with animals. She shrewdly manipulates the natural world to relieve her resentment. Staying alone in the wildness allows exploration of her environment which “lends itself to learning”, and the time “spent in solitary activities has been found to be healthy” (Luckey and Fabes, 2006, p.69). Specifically, Sophie’s solitary adventure into the wild world allows her to exert autonomy and practice self-reflection, which help her regulate her mood. Sophie’s autonomy is fulfilled when she decides to leave home. It is her own choice. In the wild world, everything seems to be serving her: the bird is chirping for her, the animals are watching her, and the sea is a soothing tool to her. Besides, staying away from the interruption of others allows children to reflect upon their emotions and feelings (Katz and Buchholz, 1999). In Sophie’s case, she thinks about her resentment and her issues with the mother, which leads to the discharge of anger and her willingness to reconcile with family members.

In short, the depiction of Sophie and her play shows how she regulates her emotions when she has conflict with her sister and eventually, her mother. She properly expresses her anger through imaginative play and has her emotions assuaged through a solitary adventure into outdoor world. This book also displays the importance of following rules when playing. Unwillingness to follow the rules of taking turns leads to Sophie’s trouble; one failure in regulating her behavior causes the more unpleasant feelings she has to suffer. However, on the whole Sophie sets a positive example regarding how to regulate bad feelings in relation to a parent and other families.

No, David

All the books analyzed above describe how children regulate themselves through play in relation to their interaction with mothers. A hidden message in these stories is the power struggle with parents. For example, Max's imaginative play is a response to the power exerted upon him by his mother. The child-adult power struggle is more obviously depicted in *No, David* (1998) by David Shannon. This story depicts how the child David, by doing different types of play, exerts his autonomy and challenges his mother's authority. Each double-page spread of *No, David* (1998) depicts a single play episode. Sometimes he is engrossed in imaginative play, for example dressed as a superman or using pans and spoons as musical instruments. Most times he is just doing impulsive play in which everything at hand becomes a toy, such as playing with mud and bath water.

The primary position of David is obvious in this book because he appears on all of the double-page spreads, while his mother only appears on the front-end page and the last page. Even on the pages where the mother is present, only half of her body is shown. David is portrayed as a boy with an exaggeratedly big head, which makes him look not only cute, but also prominent among the brightly colored, crowded objects displayed in the illustrations. On one of the double-page spreads where David is making a doll out of a potato, beans, and chicken legs, the doll and David's head occupy nearly the entire two pages. The mischievous smile on their faces reveals their sense of triumph over his mother.

This book also depicts David's play world in bright colors complemented by diagonal lines and sharp shapes. This is in consonance with the originality,

impulsiveness, and colorfulness of children's play. On the other hand, this style also offers a sense of uncontrollability and chaos. David makes his first appearance on the cover, where he is trying to move a goldfish tank on a rack much taller than him. David, depicted in bright colors, is also placed against a bright-colored backdrop. Even the goldfish tank, which is usually clear and light in color with water, is exaggeratedly painted as thick blue mixed with snow white clouds. In this play world where the fish tank is the toy, the glass tank is falling toward the ground, and the leg of the rack is tilted toward David. David himself, with one foot kicking into the air and the other one tiptoeing on a falling stack of books, forms a triangle with the line of the rack. These straight intersecting lines create a sense of disorder and tension. Adults may exclaim at such a precarious scene; however, David's curiosity and the excitement on his face convey a message of self-confidence and assurance. He seems in control of everything in his play world, even situations viewed as perilous by adults.

In comparison to representations of David's world, the mother's visual representation is of great simplicity. On the front-end page, she is placed against a stagnant gray-yellow wall, yet the same wall on the title page when David appears becomes colorful with drawings and writing. The dynamics between the mother and the son in this book are depicted in quite a subtle way. They are not portrayed confronting each other face to face; instead, the mother's presence is perpetuated by the texts, which actually represents her yelling at David. Although the text is short, each letter of the words is capitalized to imply the mother's anger. The sharp, straight shape of the letters depicts visually the sharpness and high-pitch of a furious woman's screaming voice. The

angry tone is further enhanced by the exclamation mark that follows each remark the mother makes.

A change of power relations occurs near the end of the book, when David is portrayed sitting sadly in the corner for time-out after he breaks a vase. The book ends with a warm hugging scene that indicates reconciliation between the mother and the son. The story is similar to *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), as both portray a mischievous boy enraging their mothers, then the boys reconcile with the adults after they get punished for their misbehavior. The difference is that in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), it is play that places Max in punishment but it is also through play that he regulates his emotions and behavior. In comparison, play doesn't seem to help self-regulation in *No, David* (Shannon, 1998), but is a source for fun and pleasure. Play's function regarding self-regulation is seen in other selected books as making child characters comply willingly with their mothers' requests. As "resistance against adults power and conventions is a hidden transcript of childhood ..." (Sutton-Smith, 1998, p.125), compliance with adults is a part of childhood that children may not like. The other analyzed books show that play seems to offer a zone where children achieve a balance between the obligation to comply and the desire for freedom, autonomy and fun, and this is how self-regulation is achieved with the help of play. Kopp (1982) defines self-regulation as "the ability to comply with a request, to initiate and cease activities according to situational demands..." (p.199-120). David fails to regulate himself and listen to his mother because he does not achieve a balance between compliance and autonomy. A sense of imbalance is conveyed by the illustrations stressing power struggle and tension.

Therefore, different from the other analyzed books, this book does not provide a positive role model for achieving self-regulation through play. It depicts a child's play behavior that drives his mother wild. This is why the book is not recommended for teaching self-regulation, despite its great popularity (Cooper, 2007). However, this study argues that the book can be used for self-regulation because it demonstrates the consequences of failure to follow the rules regarding play. In this book, David is sent to the corner to reflect upon his misbehavior. A child needs to learn the balance between power and obligation, and learn to consider others' feelings when playing. He also needs to realize that to achieve such balance, he has to follow the rules operating in play behaviors. In this book, David needs to realize that play is not just driven by impishness. It has to occur at the right time and in the right place, otherwise it may bring trouble to others and may even hurt himself. This is the rule he has to follow when playing. A punishment, although unpleasant, is what he gets when he repeatedly fails to follow it. Punishment is a way to foster self-regulation within children, because self-regulation is socially learned. Self-regulation develops when children internalize control initially given by others and learn to control themselves (Bronson, 2001, p. 29). Although the punishment is given by others, a child's active role is required in the process because active self-reflection allows the child to internalize regulative behaviors.

It is worth mentioning that the goal of punishment is to help children learn self-regulation, and learning self-regulation is to help children achieve a balance between the desire for autonomy and the obligation to comply. On the part of adults, the punishment should be done with a balance of love and the responsibility to teach. As the reconciliation scene in *No, David* (Shannon, 1998) shows, such balance ensures the

happiness of both the adult and the child and allows for a harmonious relationship between them.

Princess Baby

No, David (Shannon, 1998) depicts a child exerting too much autonomy over his mother, and eventually he brings himself punishment. However, a greater number of children may find themselves controlled because they live in a world dominated by adults. They try to get their voices heard. When they do not have the chance and ability to speak out, they turn to play to express their feelings and alleviate their sadness and disappointment. An example of such children is the little girl in *Princess Baby* (2008) by Karen Katz. The story tells about a girl who dislikes the nicknames imposed upon her by her parents. She enjoys her ruling position in her “kingdom”, the imaginative play world where toys serve as citizens. The story ends with her parents giving up all of the nicknames and acknowledging the autonomy of their daughter.

The first double-page spread of the book displays a sad young baby girl asking herself “why doesn’t anyone ever call me by my REAL name” (Katz, 2008, p.1)? The capitalized letters of the word “real” in bold font emphasize the girl’s eager desire for the name given by herself. The second page shows the girl frolicking in her room; the happy expression sharply contrasts with her earlier sad look. The use of diagonal lines expresses liveliness and vigor in her motions, a foil to the stillness and mildness of the cat depicted lazily cuddling up on a mat. The next double-page spread is a juxtaposition of five transformations of the girl’s body. Framed within a round border, each illustration is

accompanied with a line of text explaining that the transformation is a product of her parents' nicknames. The first illustration depicts the girl transformed into a flower, and the text reads "But I am not a buttercup" (p.3). The second image represents the girl changed into a gosling, with the text "or a giggle goose" (p.3). The other three images show the girl respectively as "a cupcake", "a little lamb" and "Sweet Gumdrop". Despite the variation among the five transformations, they all share one thing in common: the girl looks unhappy, with eyebrows slanted downwards and eyes vacant. Her arms are stretching mechanically in the same posture in all five images, like a puppet tugged into different uniforms. It seems that her spirit and individuality is diminished by the nicknames imposed by her parents.

The next spread, in contrast, displays a brilliant play world. The most eye-catching object on the page is the girl romping forward with dresses and toy necklaces in her hands. The pet cat as a loyal follower is chasing beside her. Similar to the illustration on the first page, the diagonal lines, saturated hues, and multiple colors work together to offer a sense of vibrancy. The following several pages depict an imaginative play episode that the girl initiates. The girl dresses herself as a princess and parades in the room. In comparison to the tiny bed, window, and cat, the girl is a disproportionately large size on the page. The largeness of the girl's body makes her seem overwhelming and powerful, implying her mastery over the whole space. The next double-page spread portrays another play scene, in which the little girl is feeding her subjects—dolls and stuffed animals. All the toys are smiling submissively to the ruler of the kingdom. Even a stuffed lion, which is of similar size to the little girl, is obeying and admiring the girl ruler.

However, the proud, self-assertive look of the girl changes into frustration when her parents come back and call her again by the nicknames “pumpkin, monkey and sweetie pie” (p.26). On the next page, the girl’s body, which takes up larger space on the previous pages, begins to dwindle with the inflow of those names until she finally bursts out her anger.

The last three double-page spreads illustrate well how through imaginative play, the power relations between the girl and her parents begin to change. The text of the first one reads: “I am” (p. 30), which opens a scene where the girl is ready to express her own thoughts. On this page, although the girl is much larger than the stuffed animals in size, she is so small before her parents that her height just reaches their knees. Angrily the girl finally declares that the name she really wants is “Princess Baby”. Each letter of the two words are capitalized and printed in bold font, emphasizing the importance of the name to the girl. The most dramatic change occurs on final double-page spread, in which the parents are serving the girl in her play, holding up the end of her cape, as maids would do to a princess. The girl strides forward with her head up while the parents are lowering their bodies to reach the cape.

Taking the girl’s perspective, the illustrations of the book demonstrate the girl’s identity in relation to her parents and the toys. She feels small before her parents, but big and powerful compared to toys and pets. The names given by her parents are cute, but the girl does not want to be a cutie. Instead, she wants to be a powerful princess. The discrepancy between her parents’ knowledge of her and her own identity makes the girl sad, as displayed by her expression in the illustrations of the nicknames. In this book, play serves two functions in helping the girl’s emotional regulation. First, play allows the

girl to experience the respect and autonomy she cannot obtain from her parents. “The child plays because he enjoys the power of being a cause, or because he doesn’t have power and in play is seeking empowerment as a kind of compensation or wish fulfillment” (Sutton-Smith, 1998, p. 75). The way the girl’s parents name her reveals their love for her, but it is like a doting love to a small pet with no respect for the girl’s independence and dignity as a human being, at least from the girl’s point of view. The parents’ attitude towards the girl shapes her self-esteem before them—she views herself as small and powerless in relation to her parents. This point is manifested by the dramatic change in the depictions of the girl from overwhelming largeness in the play realm to extreme smallness before the parents. The girl’s desire for power is reflected by her wish to be a princess, who is a person of high status and great power. By pretending to be a princess, she practices dominance over small things like the cat, and also feels herself to be important and needed through feeding her toy citizens.

The girl in this story also sets a good example to preschoolers regarding how to express emotions through play. As Saarni (1999) stated, “we are talking about how [children] can respond emotionally, yet simultaneously and strategically apply their knowledge about emotions and their expression to relationships with others, so that they can negotiate interpersonal exchanges and regulate their emotional experience” (p.116). In this story, the girl strategically speaks out her wish for power by pretending to be a princess. The end of the book shows that her parents grant her wish by lowering their body and their status to be equal with the girl. The “interpersonal exchanges” she successfully negotiates is her wish to be regarded as an independent human being, to be treated equally, and to not be called by those pet names. The message she sends through

play is clear and powerful, but not offensive to the parents. This clever way of emotional expression not only wins her respect, it also eliminates her sadness and disappointment caused by her parents' ignorance of her feelings. The girl's parents are portrayed positively as understanding adults at the end of the book. Adults' support is important for a child to develop emotional self-regulative capacities (Bronson, 2001, p. 60). It is imaginable the parents' appreciation of the child's wish will encourage her to actively express herself emotionally in her life.

What's So Bad about Being an Only Child

What's So Bad about Being an Only Child (2007) by Cari Best tells the story of a girl who is unhappy being an only child. Similar to the girl in *Princess Baby* (Katz, 2008), the girl's unhappiness comes from adults' ignorance of her real need. Her parents and other family members all pour out their affection upon her, which she used to enjoy as a baby. However, as she grows older and approaches school age, she feels increasingly lonely. She wants to escape from the continual control of her parents and have good time with siblings. She does not want to be a lonely child any more.

The girl's loneliness is explicitly shown on the first page, where she is depicted playing seesaw with no human playmates but a toy bear. The text provides more information about the girl: she is an only child and she has a weirdly long name. The following double-page spread explains the long name is composed of first names given by her family members. Each part is given by one family member who insists on using the name he or she likes. The illustration recalls the scene of naming the baby – the little

sweetheart is at the center, surrounded by a circle of towering adults. They are either staring at the baby affectionately or shouting at each other, trying to name the baby the way they like. The next double-page spread displays the girl's life as a toddler. It juxtaposes a group of pictures capturing the girl's playtime. The pictures show the girl playing either with adults or alone, echoing the message implied on the first page. The following several double-page spreads display the process as she grows—it is a mixture of happiness and pain. At first, she is happy because she is always the center of attention. As she grows up, however, she wants more freedom from her parents' ever-present care and wants the companionship of other children. Her first rebellion against adults' control is to declare that she doesn't like the long name, which wins her the normal name of Rosemary.

Rosemary's resentment against being an only child intensifies when she reaches school age. This is shown in the illustrations portraying her play activities. One play scene depicts her going to fly a kite with her parents. With her left hand held by the father and right hand held by her mother, she is frowning, with a running nose. The text reveals her psychology as feeling frustrated since she cannot even blow her nose, "this only-child business has got to stop," she thinks (Best, 2007, p.11). The verso of the next double-page spread displays Rosemary telling her wish to her mother. Eager to be respected as an independent being with authority, she stands tall on a stack of books. Her wish is to have siblings now and have many children when grown up, which is also expressed by her pretending to be a mother. In this pretend play, she has three babies (toys) on her back, and another three are waiting for her at home. The recto portrays her interactions with her father. Instead of making herself as tall as the adult, here the father bends down

to please the child. Rosemary's wish for more children is reflected by a row of toy chairs placed in the room.

Rosemary's loneliness comes to a climax when she is left alone by her friends after they go home. She is portrayed desperately leaning against the fence, as if she wants to break the fence between the reality and her dream life, between her loneliness and a big family. The next several double-page spreads depict how she soothes her loneliness through play. An example is an illustration depicting her pretend play with dolls. The illustration depicts Rosemary's point of view. It shows the dolls behaving like real human beings in a sweet, big family where she also belongs. The external representation of her imagination reveals her eagerness for more family members. Another illustration portrays her "adopting" other "only" things so that "they wouldn't feel alone" (p.20). Finally, she begins to adopt "only" animals. The turtle, the cat, the dog, the rabbit, and other animals are good playmates. They make a big difference in Rosemary's life. Rosemary's exuberance is reflected in the illustrations depicting her play. They are dominated by bright colors and many diagonal lines, offering a sense of exuberance and vivacity (Bang, 2000).

Similar to the previous story, play in this story serves as a means to emotional expression, which is of crucial importance to emotional regulation (Ashiabi, 2007, p.201). Rosemary expresses her desire for siblings through pretend play in which she and the dolls constitute a big family. It is also through her play experience that Rosemary satisfies her need to escape from adults' dominance and her loneliness. Eisenberg et al. (2004) defined "emotion-related regulation as the process of initiating, avoiding, inhibiting, maintaining, or modulating the occurrence, form, intensity, or duration of

internal feeling states, emotion-related physiological processes, emotion-related goals, and/or behavioral concomitants of emotion, generally in the service of accomplishing one's goals" (p.206). In relation to this story, Rosemary's goal is to eliminate sense of loneliness and seek companionship from playmates other than her parents. She finally accomplishes this by actively expressing her need to her parents through playing with the "only" animals she adopts.

What distinguishes this story from others is that it emphasizes the child's identity as an only child and focuses on problems an only child faces when she reaches school age. Like all children at this age, Rosemary has a demand for greater autonomy. This is reflected in the illustration displaying her standing on a stack of books to be the same height as her mother. As an only child, she has her unique problems—loneliness and the desire to escape from the continual presence of adults. Rosemary sets a good model for only children regarding how to deal with similar problems. A stereotyped view of the only child is that they are "generally maladjusted, self-centered, self-willed, attention-seeking, dependent on others, temperamental, anxious, generally unhappy and unlikable..."(Thompson, 1974, p.95). This implies that only children are less capable of emotionally related self-regulation. Rosemary, however, displays good self-regulatory skills. She is lonely, but not anxious. Instead, she actively resorts to play to eliminate loneliness and express her wish to her parents. In addition, rather than "self-centered and unlikable", Rosemary is portrayed as enjoying playing and sharing with other children; she is also liked by other children. In other words, Rosemary knows how to regulate her emotions through play. Through play she makes friends with other children, through play

she speaks up to her parents about her needs, and through play she finally finds a solution to her problem, which is to have and play with pets.

Owen

In *What's So Bad About Being an Only Child* (Best, 2007), Rosemary manipulates toys to accomplish her emotional goal. Similarly in *Owen* (Henkes, 1993), the little mouse Owen also resorts to a toy to satisfy his emotional needs. The difference is that in this story, Owen is extremely loyal to one toy—a blanket named Fuzzy he plays with wherever he goes.

The cover of the book depicts Owen holding a blanket inside his family's backyard. Over the fence is a lady introduced as Mrs. Tweeters, who is holding a telescope and casting a stealthy glance at Owen. The cover of the picture book helps establish the mood the rest of the book conveys (Nodelman, 1988, p.50), suggesting that the book will be about dynamics between the child, the blanket and the adults. Specifically, Owen holds his precious blanket, and adults are watching to make sure he is not holding it.

The front end paper and the title page juxtapose pictures portraying Owen playing with the blanket. They reveal that Owen is closely bonded with Fuzzy. The illustration on the first page of the book echoes the cover. It depicts Owen basking in the happiness of playing with the blanket while the neighbor Mrs. Tweezers is stealthily watching him. The text explicitly tells about the relationship between Owen and the blanket. “Owen had a fuzzy yellow blanket. He’d had it since he was a baby. He loved it with all his heart”

(Henkes, 1993, p.1). The next two pages capture several moments of Owen playing with the blanket. The illustrations reiterate the message that Owen is closely attached to the blanket. Adults try to tear Owen from the blanket because they are afraid he'll bring the blanket to school. With the help of Mrs. Tweeters, Owen's parents come up with the idea of the Blanket Fairy, trying to trick Owen to sleep without the blanket. Owen doesn't buy into the idea at all. Not only does he sleep with the blanket, he still continuously plays with it and drags it wherever he goes. Another idea is to dip the favorite corner of the blanket into vinegar, which doesn't bother Owen at all. Finally, both the adults and Owen make compromises. The blanket is snipped and sewn into small handkerchiefs by Owen's mother. Owen can carry a part of Fuzzy anywhere and no one interferes.

Although Owen still carries something, a handkerchief is more acceptable than a blanket. The happiness of adults at separating Owen from Fuzzy is expressed in the illustration by freeing the pictures from frames. Frames are used in all pictures portraying Owen hanging with the blanket, but two illustrations—one portraying Owen's father snipping the blanket, the other portraying Owen playing with a handkerchief, are frameless. Frames around illustrations create a sense of constraint (Nodelman, 1988), and frameless images indicate infinite possibilities. In this sense, the illustrations reflect the perspective of adults: it is not good for a school age boy to carry a blanket, and giving it up is a sign of growth leading to hope and possibilities.

Taking the adults' perspective, the story shows how adults can help children achieve self-regulation during a transitional period. Vygotsky (1967) viewed self-regulatory abilities as originating in social interactions. "Self-regulation is not something that emerges spontaneously as the child matures but is instead taught formally or

informally within the social context” (Leong & Bodrova, 2006, p.34). In this story, Owen seems unable to resist the impulse to hold the blanket. At the beginning, he is unaware it is not good for a child of his age to be still carrying it. It is his parents and the neighbor who teach him to give it up. The book also displays how hard it is for Owen to control his desire. He always comes up with ways to defend against the adults’ attempts. A school-age child like Owen already has enough sense of autonomy and cognitive ability to fight the adults’ tricks. Therefore, adults need more resourcefulness to help children inhibit behaviors or initiate behaviors with willingness. Owen’s mother displays resourcefulness at the end of the story. She makes the blanket into handkerchiefs, which are acceptable for Owen to carry around and like. Although the story takes an adult’s perspective and displays Owen as a child needing help, Owen also takes an active role in learning effortful control of his impulse; that is, he accepts the handkerchiefs as the substitutes for the blanket. Owen may resist this idea if he doesn’t realize he has to make compromises.

In comparison, play activities in other analyzed stories are depicted in a positive light. For example, in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendack, 1963), Max realizes the need for home through imaginative play. In *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry* (Bang, 1999), Sophie soothes her mood through her outdoor adventure. In this story, Owen’s play with his blanket is portrayed as an outward activity, at least in adults’ eyes. From Owen’s point of view, the blanket is a precious companion bringing him happiness and comfort.

The blanket in the story serves Owen as a transitional object that soothes him when he feels lonely. Such a habit may begin in the early years when a child is an infant, as attachment to an object usually develops at that period.

As the infant's increasing size and activity renders the mother incapable of providing the complete sense of physical merging possible with the newborn, the infant begins to associate soothing with the mother's actions and when deprived of her presence, uses his own actions to seek comfort. (Litt, 1986, p. 385)

Holding the blanket is Owen's way to sooth himself; in this sense, the blanket has served positive functions for Owen, although carrying a blanket around is always viewed as a bad habit by adults. Of course, Owen needs to give up the object when he goes to school. He needs to develop attachment to other children and find other ways for self-soothing. Holding a blanket is not considered age-appropriate and may make him a laughingstock in school. However, his play experience with the blanket helps Owen grow to be a child with a playful disposition, which allows him to easily develop friendships in school.

In short, although adults consider carrying a transitional object a bad habit, the blanket serves positive functions for Owen. It comforts him when he is lonely and proves a loyal friend, playing with him whenever he likes. It also helps to shape Owen into a creative child because "the basis for active, creative activity" is the "capacity for existence" (Litt, 1986, p.387). Despite its positive functions during a certain period, a transitional object needs to be given up when a child grows to school age. This requires self-regulatory abilities from the child. Adults' help is also needed in helping children go through this critical stage.

Am I Big or Little?

The child characters in the previous analyzed stories learn or achieve self-regulation through play. Whether they use play to express and sooth their feelings or to

help control unacceptable behaviors, one common trait shared by them is that they are all exerting their autonomy as “big children”. Some children successfully practice autonomy and gain the respect they want and deserve, like Rosemary in *What’s So Bad about Being an Only Child* (Best, 2007) and the girl in *Princess Baby* (Katz, 2008). Some other children improperly exert their autonomy and come to conflict with adults, like Max in *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendack, 1963). There are also picture books that depict a perfect balance between adults’ control and children’s autonomy, and that show positive models of children’s emotional and behavioral self-regulation. *Am I Big or Little?* (Bridges, 2000) is such an example.

By portraying them staying happily together, the cover of the book reveals the essence of the story is a harmonious relationship between a mother and a girl. The title page displays the girl making a big shadow of herself by manipulating the light. It shows her wish to be big. The first three pages of the book portray a morning waking-up scene with the girl, which opens up a conversation between the girl and her mother. The conversation starts when the girl asks her mother if she is big or small. The repeated pattern of the conversation is as follows: her mother states the girl is small for some reason, while the girl argues that she is big. Throughout the book, the argument about “big” or “small” is presented in a cozy atmosphere, which is constituted by warm colors and the soft touch of watercolor. Each double-page spread of the book presents one argument. For example, when the mother says on a verso, “you’re little enough to crawl under your bed” (p.5), the girl on the recto responds “but I am big enough to reach out and tickle you!” (p. 6).

As this double-page spread shows, although the girl disagrees with her mother, the dynamics between the two are characterized by love and light-hearted playfulness. This visual presentation of them is made in warm, bright colors of pink, blue, yellow and green. Other double-page spreads follow a similar pattern. The two are depicted smiling throughout the book, with the mother looking at the girl affectionately. The girl's response to her mother reflects her self-confidence and sense of autonomy as a preschool child. The girl has self-confidence, which the book portrays as largely resulting from her growing competence in play activities. For instance, she proudly declares that she is big because she can hop all the way down the stairs or be the captain of the fleet of boats sharing her bath. At the same time, play activities provide opportunities for her to reinforce her autonomy.

In the play activities depicted in this book, the girl exerts her autonomy in a quite positive way. Her play never brings troubles to adults; instead, some of them demonstrate good self-regulatory skills. For example, one illustration shows the girl playing pretend play with her toys; the text indicates that she feels herself as being big enough "to serve my guests first" (p.17). Another illustration showing her saying "I am big enough to wait for it (cookies)" (p.19). This reflects the girl's self-regulatory skills because self-regulation includes ability of delaying gratification (Leong & Bodrova, 2006, p. 33). Play offers help in the self-regulatory behaviors. This is represented in a pretend play episode, in which she pretends as a hostess and the toys as guests. She is a good hostess, making the guests sit in good order and serving them one by one. This play activity is a good practice for rule compliance. "Development of self-regulation in play becomes possible because of the inherent relationship that exists between roles children play and

rules they need to follow when playing these roles” (Bodrova, 2008, p.359). Self-regulation is developed when the girl plays as the hostess. By having the guests wait for their turn, she internalizes the rules of waiting. As shown in another example, the girl is “big” enough to wait for the cookies although she greatly wants them. Again play makes self-regulation easier because stuffed animals and the cat are good playmates who wait for the cookies together with her.

The theme of play is noticeable in the book as it includes many play episodes and a large variety of toys. The child is a playful child and the mother is a supportive mother. It is imaginable that the girl plays a lot in her life and has benefited from the play activities, including language development. One impressive feature is skillful use of language, which allows her to defend her position as a capable big girl. Vygotsky (1978) views language a powerful cultural tool for self-regulation because it allows culturally acceptable ways of expressing feelings. Preschoolers are learning “to use language more effectively to influence others and to regulate their own behavior (Bronson, 2001, p.198). Compared to Sophie who uses imaginative play and color to express her feelings, this girl sets a good example as to use language for self-expression.

Candy Shop

The child characters in analyzed books all belong to the mainstream white middle class. In comparison, the boy character in *Candy Shop* (Wahl, 2005) represents a boy from ethnic minority groups who live in a community of racial diversity. Despite the racial difference, “play—in a variety of forms and expressions—is one of the

fundamental things all children do...”(Johnson, Christie and Wardle, 2005, p.188). The first page of the book just depicts an imaginative play episode of the black boy—he is holding a hat and riding a broom—in his words, “I am a cowboy, riding my horse through our backyard, chasing buffalo” (Wahl, 2005, p.1). The next several pages show the boy go shopping with his aunt Thelma. The boy never stops pretending as a cowboy on his way to the candy store. One of the double – page spreads of the book portrays a scene in Bon Ton. On the recto, the aunt is portrayed as trying on hats while the verso depicts the boy climbing through a pile of clothes trying to catch a cat. The text explains the boy is pretending to chase “ a fierce mountain lion” (p.7). Another illustration shows the boy yelling at two dogs, just like a cowboy scaring coyotes. The boy thinks himself a cowboy even when he is doing the haircut, “a cowboy doesn’t get his hair cut (p.21), he growls.

So far, the boy is portrayed as a playful child who is eager to reach the candy store. He plays a lot on the way to sooth his impatience, especially when awaiting his aunt. The depiction of him always suggests mobility. For example, the first page shows him waving a hat and holding a broom. He looks like partially anchored to the ground. When he yells at the dogs, he is waving the hat and holding an apple, kicking one leg high up into the sky. His playful activities continue till they approach the candy store, where they see a large crowd. It turns out some one has written insulting words in front of the candy store owned by a Taiwanese woman. In contrast to the energetic joyful child portrayed earlier, the boy now quietly and sympathetically watches her aunt comfort the sad shop owner. Seeing his helpful aunt, the boy also wants to do something. The pretend

play of being a cowboy gives him the heroic courage to help. He tips his hat to the shop owner as a cowboy would do and quickly gets water to scrub the insulting words away.

A turning point in depiction of the boy occurs after he reaches the candy store. The earlier portrayal of him makes one expect him to grab the candies as soon as he sees them. However, when he sees the sad scene in the store, he withholds his hunger for the candies and helps to solve the problem first. A self-regulatory child is able to “control impulses, delay gratification and resist temptation...” (Han & Kemple, 2006, p. 241). In this sense, the self-regulatory behavior of the boy is that he successfully withholds his hunger for candies and sets out to doing the more important thing first. Pretend play helps the boy control his desire because to be a cowboy he needs to be helpful and heroic. Vygotsky (1967) believes that “... at every step the child is faced with a conflict between the rule of the game and what he would do if he could suddenly act spontaneously” (p.10). Self-regulation is learned in this process of overcoming the tendency to act impulsively. As for the boy, he chooses to abide by the rule of being a cowboy and gives up his childish desire for candies. This is a display of his self-regulatory ability and a sign for growth.

Although the boy takes an active role in the self-regulatory process, his aunt’s encouragement cannot be ignored. She is depicted as a supportive adult of the child pretense. For example, when the boy thinks a cowboy does not get his hair cut, she does not argue with the boy directly but says a cowboy also has haircut if she is his aunt. This means she supports the boy’s pretense as a cowboy. Besides, Aunt Thelma’s helpfulness and bravery sets a positive role model for the boy. While all the other people in the crowd are just watching, Mrs. Thelma is the only one standing out. It is no wonder that with

such an adult, the boy dreams of being a cowboy – a representative of courage, power and heroism.

Table 1

Books selected in this section categorized by their function in fostering self-regulation:

	Title	Author
Transforming work to play	<i>Once upon a Saturday</i>	Leslie Lammle
	<i>Now What Can I Do?</i>	Margaret Park Bridges
Giving children autonomy	<i>Where the Wild Things Are</i>	Maurice Sendak
	<i>When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry...</i>	Molly Bang
	<i>No, David</i>	David Shannon

A channel to express feelings	<i>When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really</i> <i>Angry ...</i>	Molly Bang
	<i>Princess Baby</i>	Karen Katz
	<i>What's So Bad about Being an Only Child</i>	Cari Best
Giving children courage and support	<i>Candy Shop</i>	Jan Wahl
	<i>Am I Big or Little</i>	Margaret Park Bridges
	<i>Owen</i>	Kevin Henkes

Books about sibling relationships

Interactions with parents are an important part of children's family life. For children who have siblings, their interplay with sisters or brothers also constitute a part of their domestic life. Most of shared time with siblings involves play activities. Playing with siblings makes their childhood more colorful and enjoyable, but also brings them troubles such as power struggle and sibling conflicts. More often than not, it is in play where the conflicts arise, and it is through play that children learn to control their emotions and behaviors. The next ten picture books exemplify how children through play learn self-regulation and achieve better sibling relations.

Barfburger Baby, I Was Here First

Barfburger Baby, I Was Here First (Danziger, 2007) tells about the sibling jealousy of a boy named Jonathan. The story begins by showing a mother teasing her baby boy while the older son Jonathan feels bad and peeps at them from behind the door. The following several pages confirm the message sent on the first page: the baby boy wins the favor of all family members, and the older boy feels envious. A sequence of imagined play episodes articulate Jonathan's anger and jealousy. One illustrates the two children playing wagon train: Jonathan is driving at a terrifying speed, and he looks back at his baby brother with a proud smile. Another imagined episode portrays them playing pirates; the baby is just a little follower, and Jonathan is the captain. The other two imagined episodes display the baby as either a dart target or a horrified astronaut sent up into the sky in a spaceship. These illustrated imagined situations reveal by taking a

dominant role in play, Jonathan expresses his jealousy against his younger sibling. It also reveals that play is an important medium through which a child discharges his need and satisfies his need for power. Although Jonathan cannot bully his younger brother as he does in the imagined play episodes, he still resorts to play as a way to solve his emotional problems; that is, he starts building a giant wall of blocks between him and the baby brother.

The illustrations skillfully present Jonathan's thoughts by depicting the wall differently on two pages. On the first page, the wall separates the room into two parts — his brother's side and his own. However, the baby's side transforms into woods on the second page, which indicates that Jonathan tries to ignore the occurrences on the baby's side and just imagines it to be part of the backdrop for his fantasy.

Sibling rivalry with his younger brother is not the only problem Jonathan has to face. His cousin Charlie makes him unhappy by calling him nicknames and interrupting his game. Jonathan manages to gain higher status to Charlie by refusing his request to play. The contrast in their position can be seen in two neighboring pages. On the first page, Jonathan lies prone on the ground and is stepped on by Charlie, who is flying his fists excitedly. The dynamics between them change on the following page, when Charlie gets down on his knees to beg Jonathan, who is crouching on the ground and playing.

This story depicts a child's relation with his baby brother and his cousin. His baby brother wins Jonathan over with his young age and cuteness. Out of resistance to his brother and those adults who ignore him, Jonathan builds a big wall using blocks between them and himself so that he can possess a world where he dominates. He also makes his bullying cousin beg him by keeping him out of his play. The story again supports how

play functions as a venue where children adjust their feelings. Although the story is about a child's jealousy, the illustrations of this book are in a comic style and done in bright colors, adding liveliness and vivacity to the book. The style also echoes the play episodes presented many times in the book. The background of muted pink and green adds coziness and warmth to the book, a reminder that this is a children's story about families.

As the story presents, Jonathan is experiencing sibling jealousy after his brother is born. As a complex emotion, jealousy response may include fear for "losing a relationship to another", "the emotional expression of sadness" or anger and "behavioral withdrawal from the beloved" (Volling, McElwain & Miller, 2002, p.582). These features are present in Jonathan's thinking and behavior as depicted in the book. The most obvious one he displays is that he likes distancing him from his beloved parents and other relatives. Jonathan's method to stay away from others is to build walls between him and the adults. He uses play to protect himself and speak up his dissatisfaction. This also reflects his sadness and fear for losing his parents' attention. Visual presentation of Jonathan's imagination also reveals his dislike of the baby. Losing to his brother in the battle for parents' love, poor Jonathan can only discharge his anger to the baby through imaginative play, in which he controls, bullies and dominates over the baby.

Jonathan's moodiness comes from jealousy towards the infant brother; in other words, his problem is caused by the existence of a sibling. Sibling relationships may bring colorfulness and warmth to a child, but it will also bring emotional disturbance like what Jonathan experiences. It is important that a child like Jonathan knows how to achieve emotional self-regulation when their parents are occupied and cannot spare time to comfort him. Proper expression of emotion is one of the factors for successful self-

regulation (Ashiabi, 2007). Jonathan expresses his anger towards his brother and parents through play. In this sense, play helps Jonathan achieve self-regulation by being a channel for self-expression as well as a wonderland where Jonathan forgets about his troubles.

Self-regulation also includes initiating behaviors that emotionally soothing to the child (Kopp, 1982). Playing is a behavior Jonathan conducts to make himself feel better in relation to his newborn brother. It is also the tool he manipulates to defeat the cousin who is arrogant and bossy. Jonathan is annoyed by his cousin's mocking, but he cannot do anything to fight back. It is a clever idea to destroy the cousin's arrogance by attracting him through play, and this idea does give Jonathan advantage in dealing with the cousin. At the end, the bossy cousin becomes polite so that he is allowed in the play.

Julius, the Baby of the World

Similar to *Barfburger Baby, I Was Here First* (Danziger, 2007), this story by Kevin Henkes depicts a child's jealousy towards her new born sibling. The girl mouse Lily in the book is about 5 years old. Lily is the queen of the family before the birth of her baby brother Julius; therefore, she feels jealous and angry when Julius steals away all the care she used to enjoy. Lily's hatred towards Julius is presented on the cover, which has her pretending as a fierce animal and attempting to prowl upon the baby. The cover reveals the essence of the story to be Lily's relations with her brother.

The story starts from the title page that portrays Lily and her parents' interactions when the mother is pregnant. Similar interactions extend to the first page. So far, Lily is

depicted curious and excited about the coming of a new baby in the family. For example, the first page shows her leaning on her mother's stomach to listen to the baby. On the wall, there are pictures of the baby drawn by Lily. The anticipation held by Lily turns dramatically to dislike after Julius comes home. On the second page, Lily is depicted pulling away her toys, pinching Julius' tail and yelling at the baby. An imaginative play scenario has her dressed and marching like a queen. Together with the monologue "I am the queen" (p.2), the depiction of the play reveals Lily's desire for the whole attention from her parents. Taking away the toys also indicates she does not want her status to be threatened.

Lily's feelings towards Julius deteriorate when he ruins her play realm. As the queen, Lily thinks her room is only accessible by members in royalty, but she has to have her "royal palace" shared by Julius. Worse is that Lily can seldom play trumpet or drum because she must keep quiet when Julius is asleep. One of the ways Lily uses to take revenge on Julius is pretense. In one imaginative play episode, she wears a monster mask to scare Julius. In another, she acts as a magician to make Julius disappear. Lily's misbehavior makes her spend more time in the uncooperative chair, which enhances her dislike towards Julius. The illustration following her being punished displays her "torturing" a mouse toy like Julius; the text complements the illustration by showing Lily's monologue "I am the queen. And I hate Julius" (Henkes, 1990, p. 10). The depiction of Lily in the following several pages has her jealous of the praise Julius gets from her parents. She acts as what Julius does but is always blamed. This makes her dislike Julius worse and tells an unfriendly story to Julius when she pretends as a drama actress. As a result, she is sent to the uncooperative chair again. She does not confront

Julius before her parents any more. Instead, she expresses her dislike of the new baby to other people, and also her toys. For example, she holds tea parties with stuffed animals and only Julius is refused to come.

A twist of the story occurs in the family get-together held for Julius. Lily's big cousin criticizes Julius, and Lily defends her younger brother all-heartedly. The last page of the story depicts Lily and Julius play happily together. The hatred seen in earlier now turns to love and care. Different from all earlier pages, the illustration on the last page is not constrained by borders. The happy play scene is placed against a pure white, frameless background, with only the two siblings as the center. This not only makes the two kids eye-catching, but also implies the boundless love between two siblings.

The sibling relationships of young children is always characterized as “emotionally ambivalent”, which means a pair of siblings “will be warm as well as conflicted at times” (Deater-Deckard & Dunn, 2002, p. 572). This story touches upon both warmth and negative feelings a preschool age girl holds for her newborn brother. It starts from Lily looking forward to seeing the baby, and then focuses on describing how her attitude changes when the baby comes. Although it ends with a sweet picture showing Lily happily playing with the baby, the jealousy Lily experiences is hard for her, and will be hard for most preschool children in Lily's situation. Young children are extremely sensitive to the loss of attention from parents, and in jealousy-inducing situations like sibling rivalry, they experience a range of emotions including fear, anger and anxiety (Volling, McElwain & Miller, 2002, p.583). Lily's feelings are made external in the book through illustrations of her fantasy and other play scenarios. In other words, imaginative play is the way Lily resorts to to express her emotions, which is a way to emotional

regulation. To express her need for loyal love and attention, Lily pretends as a queen in a play episode. She marches around Julius's crib with chin up and a contented smile to show her pride and fearlessness, which actually reveals her anxiety for loss of the status in the family. To guard her status in the family, she makes her room the palace accessible only by royal members. This is a way to defend against the trespassing of the baby. Although these measures taken by Lily cannot drive away the baby, it at least expresses her feelings. Imaginative play also brings her hope that she could at least do something to change her situation. For example, she wears a mask to scare Julius or pretends to be a magian to make him disappear.

In accordance with Thompson (1994)'s definition of emotional regulation, Eisenberg et al. (2004) emphasize that emotional regulation involves achievement of certain goals, that is, it involves initiating or avoiding certain inner feelings or emotionally related behaviors (p.260). In Lily's case, when she realizes her situation cannot be changed, she begins to stay away from the baby and her parents and seeks the love she wants from other channels, such as playing with friends and toys. One illustration depicts her sitting with stuffed animals for a pretense party. The play scenario is a comforting land where she savors the feelings she is loved and needed.

Lily's attitude towards Julius changes after the baby is insulted by a cousin. Lily's defense for the baby is normal because sibling relationships include both warmth and conflict. The warm side will take an upper hand when one of the dyad feels the other is hurt by an outsider. The last illustration presents the harmonious relationship between Lily and Julius by showing them play happily. It is through play that Lily wages a battle against the baby, now it is through play that the bond between the two tightens. The book

well illustrates play's function in children's self-regulation regarding their relationships with siblings.

What the No-Good Baby Is Good For

Lily in last story hates her younger brother because he robs away the care she used to enjoy. There are children who dislike a young sibling because the baby always disturbs their play, which in children's eyes is of great importance in their life. John in *What the No-Good Baby Is Good For* (Broach, 2005) is just such a child. The first page of the story displays the preschool age John sitting on the sofa with her toddler sister. The young girl is pinching John's ear while John is playin the ball. Worse is that she messes up the sofa by dropping juice on it. This page not only starts a sequence of similar interactions between the dyad presented in following pages, it also introduces the comic style of the illustration. Although John dislikes the baby and calls her "no good baby", the illustration looks funny. The contours of the objects and human beings in the picture are done with curvy lines, which makes the page mainly constituted by round shapes. These round shapes and the comic style together create the feelings of harmony and happiness, which imply the dynamics between the dyad will be warmth despite John's dislike of his sister.

The next double-page spread juxtaposes several scenes in which the baby is making troubles for John. The verso has the baby placed at the center of the page. She is basked in the excitement of sucking John's toys. The recto presents two episodes of John's interactions with the baby. One of them has John disappointed because he cannot

play drum when the baby is sleeping. As is shown on these illustrations, John's dissatisfaction with the baby largely rests on the fact that she disturbs his play—messing up his toys or preventing him playing certain things he likes. The similar occurrence is displayed on the following two double-page spreads, which shows the baby tear John's cards on the dinner table. John complains about the baby to his mother. To John's happiness, the girl will be sent to the grandmother's house for several days, and it is when John helps packing up that he realizes there are something good about the baby.

The first thing John likes about the baby is that she will throw Cheerios on the floor and make the floor crunchy. Obviously John likes the crunchy floor because it is interesting and stepping on it is like playing. Another thing he likes about the baby is that the baby will squeeze the cat's tail and thus the cat will like him better. This again is related to play. To a child the pet is like a playmate. John likes the baby because she improves his relationships with the playmate. The baby is good in John's eyes also when she makes big noises in the library. This allows John to play and make noises safely in the library because the baby draws all the attention. The final thing John likes about the baby is related to play too. He is happy to see the baby pull Timmy's hair when Timmy won't return his drum. Recalling of these "good deeds" done by the baby brings to John his affection towards the baby. Although the story begins with John's complaints about the baby, it ends with John's kissing her goodbye and worrying she will be away for too long. However, the boy is still happy that he can have sometime spent alone with his mother.

John practises self-regulatory ability when he voluntarily recalls the good things about the baby. This is emotional regulation process in which he modulates his thinking

so that his feelings towards the baby will not be all negative. (Eisenberg et al, 2004, p. 260). For John, interaction with the younger sister works as a social relationship which trains John's self-regulatory capacity, and play serves as a fertile land where the relationship is tested and nurtured. As a preschool child, John values his toys and play activities much; he dislikes the little girl because she ruins his toys and play. However, it is also play that binds the two children together. Specially, John feels warm towards the baby when she provides him with play-related fun like stepping on a crunchy ground or punishing a bad playmate. It is through effortful recalling of these good moments about the baby that John adjusts his thinking and reduces the unpleasant feelings of disliking his sister. In short, John's relationships with the baby is made bad and also good through play-related interactions. Play gives John power when he makes effortful adjustment of his feelings towards his baby sister.

Compared to the adult characters in the first two stories about sibling relationships, the adult character in this book takes a more active role in helping children learn self-regulation. Firstly, the mother is depicted a quite understanding adult in the book. She does not blame John for his dislike of the baby. Nor does she blame John when he tries to drive the baby out of the family. Instead, she understands the boy's need for private time with the mother he used to enjoy. That is why she agrees to send the baby away for one day. She gives John the chance to enjoy the motherly love all to himself, and this helps John to go through the transitional period from an only child to an older brother. Children need help from adults in the process of mastering self-regulatory skills

(Leong & Bodrova, 2006, p.34). Besides being understanding, the mother responds to John positively when he names one good thing about his sister. In this way she skillfully encourages John to transform his negative feelings into love towards the baby.

Mail Harry to the Moon

Mail Harry to the Moon (Harris, 2008) is another story presenting the mixed feelings of jealousy and warmth a boy holds towards his newborn brother. The cover of the book depicts imaginary world of the boy: Harry the baby is in the mailbox and a spaceship is flying to carry him to the moon. The cover builds the expectations that this book contains many of the boy's imaginations. The first page displays a photo-like illustration, in which Harry is beaming broadly with a spaceship toy. The text is the boy's self-introduction: "before Harry was born, there was me!" (p.1). The following double-page spread juxtaposes three separate photo-like illustrations; each has Harry and the baby together. However, the boy is not the center of these photos at all. He is depicted either sad or angry behind Harry, who is sweetly smiling or sleeping. The illustrations reveal the boy's anger towards Harry, and the reason may be that Harry takes away the central position the boy used to enjoy.

The next several double-page spreads provide more specific reasons why the boy dislikes Harry. For example, Harry would scream at night and chew on the nose of the boy's gorilla. Annoyed by his young brother, the boy initiates a succession of imaginations to release his anger. When Harry chews on the gorilla's nose, the boy sticks Harry in the zoo in his imaginary world. When Harry bites the boy's banana, he imagines

Harry to be thrown in the trash. Narrated from the first person point of view, the story is illustrated from the boy's perspective, which makes his feelings and imagination visible to the reader. The last thing the boy can bear is Harry's screaming at night. He is driven crazy and cries out his imagination: mail Harry to the moon.

So far, the boy's imagination is to release his anger towards Harry. The rest part of the story also depicts his imaginary world; however, the function of the imaginative play shifts to express his care and concern for the baby after he finds the baby is missing. In the boy's mind, Harry is not found because he has been sent to the moon. This triggers the boy's imagination: he also goes to the moon to accompany the young baby. The boy's imagination is supported by his toys. The spaceship toy becomes a real flying vehicle, soaring and carrying him to the moon. The depiction shows that the vehicle is imagined extremely powerful discharging flame-like smoke. This not only reveals the richness of a child's imagination, but also shows the magic power of a toy has in a child's eyes. The following double-page spread portrays the boy's imaginary journey on the moon. On the verso is the boy finding his baby brother; on the recto is the boy carrying Harry on the way back. The left-to-right order helps to convey the sense of time and space. On the recto, the smoke left behind the spaceship indicates the movement of the vehicle. Depiction of the two boys on the following double-page spread has them snuggling together and sleeping sweetly. The toys are scattered around them. They are having a good rest after playing. The last illustration echoes the opening pages of the book by having pictures placed in photo-frame like borders. The difference is that in this photo, both boys are happy and are the focus. This shows the colorful life of siblings: it is a mixture of unhappiness and harmony.

“Sibling relationship can be highly emotionally charged and frustrating relationship for children” (Kennedy & Kramer, 2008, p.568). In the boy’s case, his starting relationship with the young brother annoys him because he steals away the attention the boy used to enjoy. Harry also troubles him by ruining his toys or disturbing his sleep. The boy experiences negative feelings like jealousy and anger. Similar to the child characters in analyzed stories, the boy utilises imaginative play as a way to express and release his negative feelings. Sticking Harry in the zoo or sending him to the moon provides the boy with temporary comfort: he can at least have a control of the situation.

Like the child characters in other analyzed stories about sibling relationships, the boy in *Mail Harry to the Moon* (Harris, 2008) holds mixed feelings towards his younger brother. In other words, their relationship are “emotionally ambivalent...warm as well as conflicted sometimes” (Deater-Deckard, Dunn & Lussier, 2002, p.571-590). This means there is a possibility existing for the boy to shift negative feelings to positive feelings, and this possibility allows the boy to achieve emotional self-regulation regarding his feelings towards Harry. Play serves as the catalyst for this shift. When he feels worried that Harry is alone on the moon, he initiates an imaginative play scenario, in which he drives the spaceship to the moon and carries Harry back. The anger and jealousy now turns to care and love. The shift of feelings is not only a sign for good sibling relationships, but also mirrors Harry’s emotional self-regulation process. Specifically, the play episode is a process in which he inhibits negative feelings of anger, and initiates constructive feelings like care and love. The process ultimately makes the boy feel emotionally better.

Seymour and Opal

Seymour and Opal (1996) by Jusek portrays the dynamics of a bunny brother Seymour and his little sister Opal during their play. The front end paper of the book is scattered with toys, implying that play will be a key subject of the story. The theme of play is emphasized on the title page, where a ring made up of toys circles the title of the book. The first page introduces the two bunnies by showing them naughtily reaching their heads out of the windows and looking at each other. Seymour is portrayed with brown hair and a red shirt, and Opal is portrayed wearing a yellow shirt and having pure white hair. The difference between their looks implies different personalities of the siblings. The theme of play is echoed on this page by a sandbox placed on the lawn before the house. The following double-page spread shows the siblings within the house, where the brother bunny is reading in his room and the sister is entering his room while playing with a little train-and-track. The text explains that Opal has to pass Seymour's room in order to enter her own. One noticeable element in this illustration is the train track, which stretches from the door of Seymour's room on the right page far into the left page where the text is placed, breaking the frame of the illustration on the right page and reaching beyond the edge of the left page. The long-stretching track indicates the direction of Opal's movement and also epitomizes the infinite possibilities of children's play world. Seymour is portrayed lying prostrate on his bed, appearing to be reading but actually looking at his sister with a thoughtful but mischievous look, revealing the naughty nature of this bunny. The piggy bank on the floor foreshadows what happens in the following pages of the book.

The following page shows that Seymour charging his sister a toll, and the next page portrays Opal standing in her room with an empty piggy bank. The illustration of Opal with an empty piggy bank is placed on the left page, while the right page portrays her brother walking in his own room with a bored look. Placing the two illustrations on the separate pages indicates the separation of space: the siblings are in their own rooms. The theme of play is sustained because all of these pages display toys as part of the background. Bored by loneliness because Opal does not go into his room, Seymour goes to Opal's room and invites her to play a game of marbles, which Opal flatly rejects. The perspective of this illustration is from inside Opal's room, which makes Opal closer to the reader. The primacy of Opal's status is reinforced by the central spatial position she occupies on the page; her brother is placed at the upper right corner, with most of his body hidden behind the wall. The change in relative position between the siblings from the first page hints that the dominant role of the brother as shown on the preceding pages may change. However, the brother does not give up his pride to his sister so easily. He goes respectively to his father and mother, but both of them are too busy to play. When he has to go back to his sister, the siblings are juxtaposed on a double-page spread. Seymour is depicted within a small rectangular frame on the left page, peeping into Opal's room through the keyhole, while Opal is within a big frame occupying nearly the entire right page, engaged in her play. The binding again works a wall separating them from outside and inside the door. The contrast of the size of the two frames confirms the hint dropped earlier: a change of power relations is occurring as the boy begins to give up his dominance over his sister.

Tired of playing checkers on his own, Seymour knocks at Opal's door, asking her to play with him in the rain. This scene is depicted on a double-page spread where only Seymour appears, followed by a page where only Opal is illustrated. In these illustrations, Seymour's bored look and simple toy is in sharp contrast with Opal's happy look and colorful, diverse toys. Again she turns down his brother; she is the one who has the final say now. The story develops with Seymour continuing to beg Opal to play with him, and of course, continuing to be refused. He offers her one nickel, and is turned down; two nickels, and is turned down again. The proud boy who used to charge a toll now keeps making pleas for someone to play with him. The formerly submissive Opal has now learned to assert herself and asks for something: she requests to borrow her brother's wrist-watch for her expedition to the North Pole on the next day, and the request is granted. The last page depicts Opal exploring in a world of snow, which is Opal's imaginative play world, since it is summer now. Her expression reveals her contentment that has been brought by the play and also by assuming her own power and winning something for herself.

The dynamics depicted in the story are typical of those between siblings. The aggressive and mischievous child dominates over the easy-going and submissive one. A switch between the statuses of the two occurs when Seymour finds no one to play with. Opal is depicted as a child capable of regulating her own behavior and emotions. She does not complain or fight when being taken advantage of by her brother. Instead, she cleverly resorts to play to pass time alone and eventually makes Seymour surrender to her.

“For preschool and school-age children, most conflicts occur in the context of play, and pretense may be an important setting for facilitating constructive conflict strategies” (Howe, Rinaldi, Jennings & Petrakos, 2002, p.1462). In this case of this story, Opal’s resourcefulness in initiating pretense play helps her regulate her emotion and behavior. When her piggy bank is empty, Opal has to stay in her own room. She does not feel bitter about her loneliness but starts enjoying her rich solitary pretense play. Her play scenarios include setting a science lab, preparing a tea party for fairies and making a necklace for the bear. These are so enticing to Seymour that he even offers to give Opal money to join the play. Such resourcefulness allows Opal to positively deal with loneliness and anger caused by his brother. Her anger is discharged when Seymour promises to lend her the toys she wants. This not only wins her equal position with Seymour, but also is a positive way to solve sibling conflict: Opal’s anger is released while Seymour learns to make compromises.

“Strengthening children’s ability to regulate negative affect in the sibling context can be an important mechanism for reducing sibling conflict and enhancing prosocial sibling interaction” (Kennedy & Kramer, 2008, p. 569), and play can be a venue where siblings learn to regulate affect. As the story portrays, this is achieved through negotiating about play scenarios, which involves refusals, denials and suggestions for compromises (Garvey, 1990). By negotiating about play, Opal wins the equal position with Seymour and earns respect from him. As for Seymour, he transforms from a selfish even bullying old brother to a boy who knows to make compromises and share. This means he learns to control his desire for possessions. In contrast to Opal who displays

good self-regulatory ability, Seymour exemplifies children who learn to control his own impulsivity through playing with a sibling.

Sheila Rae, the Brave

Sheila Rae, the Brave (1987) by Kevin Henkes is another book depicting how play impacts power relations between siblings. As in *Seymour and Opal* (Jussek, 1996), the toys illustrated on title page hints at the important role that play assumes in this book. Rae is depicted on the first page as a little mouse full of movement. Her tail, left arm, and left leg are flying up into the air; her whole body is supported by the tiptoe of her left foot. With this hazardous posture, she is trying to kiss a spider hanging from the ceiling. Her facial expression is of enjoyment and contentment, which contrasts with the scared look of her little sister Louise, who is portrayed as small in size, wearing a pink dress and butterfly knot like the toy mouse in the window. The illustration portrays the different personalities of the two siblings: Rae is brave and adventurous like a tomboy, while the younger sister is a timid and cute doll-like baby. Rae is cool, and Louise is in a subordinate position, following and admiring her sister. The difference between their personalities is reinforced on the following several pages, where Rae takes on a variety of dangerous adventures while Louise always hides somewhere to peep at her big sister's missions. One of these illustrations portrays Rae dressed as superman, holding a big stick and bravely walking towards a door. Little Louise is timidly pointing at the door with a scared look. The text reads: "when her sister, Louise, said there was a monster in the closet, Sheila Rae attacked it" (Henkez, 1987, p. 5). Another illustration depicts a play

episode where Rae is riding a bicycle no handed with her eyes closed. Rae again is proud of her adventure like a hero, but little Louise is too scared to open her eyes. A twist of the story occurs when Rae calls Louise “a scaredy-cat” because she is too timid to follow Rae’s exploration of a new way home from school. It is after being called the nickname that Louise utters her first resistance, “Am not” (p. 8), although in a low voice.

A sequence of illustrations track what happens on Rae’s new way home. With her habitual proud and confident smile, she steps on every crack, walks backwards with her eyes closed, growls at stray dogs, climbs up a tree, and even bares her teeth at stray cats. As in some preceding illustrations, little Louise continues to follow her older sister. She is still depicted always hiding somewhere, with only her head, the back, or half of her body visible on the pages, but in this episode she does not hide out of fear. Instead, she hides intentionally to avoid being seen by her sister. They walk and walk until Rae gets lost. Rae's change of expression is presented in a sequence of illustrations, from an anxious look, to a fearful look and even to sobbing and crying. The long ponytail portrayed always flying up towards the sky now droops down like her courage and spirit. Her eyes, which had been curved upward meaning happiness, now turn downward meaning sadness. She cries out when she desperately misses her parents and her sister, while her little sister is actually looking down at her from the branch above her. In the next illustration, Louise announces her presence and jumps down from the tree. For the first time in the book, Rae looks up at her little sister Louise, who is portrayed a creature in movement: one hand holding the branch and the other flying up to sky; her two legs are flying up too like she is swinging on the tree. She also occupies a higher position than

her sister, unlike the lower position in most of previous pages. The change of spatial position and body gesture of the two indicates a change of power of relations.

The next illustration presents a touching hug scene. The younger mouse hugs her older sister with a comforting smile despite her smaller size. The following sequence of illustrations depicts what happens on their way back. This time Louise commits all of the playful adventures that have previously been performed by her sister. She steps on every crack. She walks backwards with her eyes closed. She scares away dogs and cats and even swings back and forth on a branch. In all these events, Rae simply follows her submissively. She is depicted with her head drooping down and walking with low spirits, while Louise's dynamic gestures indicate courage, confidence, and vitality. Rae's spirit returns to her when she sees their familiar neighborhood. Again she resumes her lively manner; she dashes up and grabs her sister Louise, who is flying like a kite in the air with one hand held by Rae. This illustration seemingly implies that Rae has taken back her superiority over her sister again, but the next page reveals that Rae has begun to respect her little sister and treats her equally. Not following Louise nor being followed by her, Rae marches towards home parallel to and hand-in-hand with Louise. She complements her sister by saying, "Louise, you are brave. You are fearless" (p. 31). The last page places the siblings within one oval-shaped frame, in which the two walk side by side calmly through the door of their house. They walk in union, they have the same confident expressions, and their tails are in parallel curves. These images all offer a sense of harmony and softness, which is enhanced by the oval shape of the frame.

The dynamics of the two sisters is built on play and is changed by play. At the beginning, Rae is the dominant one because she is braver in different types of play;

however, her wildly playful heart leads her into trouble and her younger sister saves her. Rae recognizes the courage of her younger sister when she sees that she is able to perform all the same dangerous play activities. A sense of coziness is created by warm colors like pink, purple and yellow, and is enhanced by the use of curvy lines. The irregular shapes and blurry edge of the frames are in consonance with the unpredictability of the children's playfulness and the infiniteness of the children's play realm.

Compared with the previous story, this story focuses more on warmth than conflict in sibling relationships. The first part of the story depicts Rae showing her courage in a variety of adventures while Louise is watching or admiring her. The second part portrays how Louise comforts and helps her sister back home. The warmth between the two sisters is largely attributed to the little sister Louise, who follows her sister anywhere and faithfully admires her even if Rae likes showing off before her. Even when she proves to be more courageous than Rae, she never shows off but just supports and loves her older sister. In this sense, Louise demonstrates better self-regulatory capacity than Rae. "Children with effective emotion regulation competencies are generally able to coordinate their own emotional and social behaviors to meet social expectations" (Kennedy & Kramer, 2008, p. 568). Louise meets the social expectations for a good sister as being supportive, tolerant and loving. She is supportive and loving because she always admires her sister's bravery and follows her in her adventures. She is tolerant because she does not get impatient when Rae continuously shows off her courage. In contrast, Rae is depicted self-centered and impulsive at the beginning. Rae's self-centeredness rests on her enthusiasm in showing off her courage before others, even if some playful adventures are hazardous. Furthermore, she indulges herself in various adventures regardless of the

results; examples can be that she ties up one child in the playground and gets herself lost in the outdoor adventure. However, at the end of the story, Rae learns to share the honor of “being courageous” with her sister. She does not put herself alone at the center, but her sister and she.

It is in play that Rae exposes her weaknesses as being impulsive and self-centered; it is also through play that she learns to control her impulsivity and acknowledges others’ ability and courage. Rae starts the outdoor adventure with a lot of fun but ends up getting lost. She tastes the bitterness of disobeying the rule of play, that is, she should not be too impulsive and should have played in the safe and familiar area. Another lesson she learns is that she cannot always be the center of attention. She needs to appreciate her sister’s ability and courage, and to share the honor with her. “Emotional regulation consists of extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features to accomplish one’s goals” (Thompson, 1994, p.27-28). The process that Rae learns to control her impulsivity and respects her sister is the process she learns to evaluate and modify emotional reactions. Her goal is to be a capable and lovable kid, and she knows showing off or taking risks is not the right way; the right way is to control her impulsivity, to share with and appreciate her younger sister.

Sometimes I’m Bombaloo

In comparison to books analyzed above, *Sometimes I’m Bombaloo* (Vali, 2002) goes into greater profundity in presenting self-regulatory process of the child protagonist

when she gets furious at her younger brother. The cover of the book displays the protagonist Katie with two-fold faces: one face carries a bright beam while the other one is distorted by anger. This foreshadows the story will be about emotional change of the girl. Echoing the broad smile on one of the faces on the cover, the first several double-page spreads depict Katie in bright mood. On the first double-page spread, Katie is portrayed smiling happily. Her smiling face occupies the center of the spread and assumes big size, drawing readers' attention immediately (Bang, 2000). The background of the smiling face include several hugging scenes scattered across the spread, which introduces that Katie is in loving relationship with her parents and her younger brother. The next double-page spread presents two scenes in Katie's daily life: she is brushing her teeth and doing her shoes. The text complements the illustrations by showing Katie's monologue: she brushes her teeth without being reminded much. It seems that Katie is a self-confident girl proud of her ability. The following double-page spread continues to introduce the thing Katie can do independently: she always put her toys back after playing, even though some toys include a lot of pieces. The verso and recto display the toys Katie possesses. All the animal toys are smiling and the bright colors make the tone of the pictures be of merriness. This illustration reiterates the information conveyed by the preceding pages that Katie is a self-confident and happy girl. She demonstrates good self-regulatory capacity because she can sort out her toys independently and brushes her teeth without being reminded. The portrayal of Katie in the next double-page spread again shows her as a self-disciplined, confident girl. She remembers using napkins and magic words during mealtime. The first presentation of interactions between Katie and

her younger brother is made on the following double-page spread. Katie is not so exuberant as the other pages depict. She looks sad because her brother knocks down the beautiful castle she has made. The text tells Katie's feelings as she can still "hold in the tears" and "just say that's ok" (Vali, 2002, p.10).

The book starts portraying the emotional turbulence Katie experiences from the next double-page spread. In contrast to the first page depicting a big beaming face, this spread features a big mouth distorted by anger. Her teeth are shown and she seems yelling. The text explains that although sometimes Katie controls her feelings when her castle is knocked down, in other times she would also burst into rages at the broken castle. Her anger is caused by misbehavior of her younger brother. The next double-page spread provides an external presentation of Katie's inner world by use of color and exaggeratingly made illustrations. The dominant color is fire-like bright yellow. Her hair stands on the end and her eye corners turn upward. Her teeth are gritting like those imaginary monsters scattered across the double-page spread. Katie's rage continues on the following several double-page spreads. She is depicted tossing toys around, roaring like a burning lion, waving her fist and kicking her legs. All the illustrations portray Katie have a distorted face. The pages are dominated either by irregular shaped frames or diagonal lines, offering the sense of disorder and chaos.

Smile resumes on Katie's face when a pair of underpants land on her head as a result of her throwing clothes around. Her outburst now comes to a sudden stop. Like at the beginning of the story, Katie now is a self-disciplined girl who apologizes to her mother and reconciles with the younger brother. The last page depicts her hugging with

the mother and building a castle with her brother. The pages having Katie recover her good mood are all dominated by warm, soothing color like pink and light blue.

This book shares something in common with *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry* (Bang, 1999). Both girl characters get angry when their play is disturbed by a sibling, and both of them resort to imagination to express their anger. Also, visual metaphors are employed to externally present the feelings of the two girls. Sophie imagines herself to be a roaring lion when she is furious. In Katie's imaginary world, she transforms into a monster with gritting teeth and distorted face. Her image is similar to the monster masks scattered across the pages, which indicate these toys may provide her schemata for transforming into a monster. Imagination is one form of play (Vygotsky, 1978) and it is through this type of play Katie expresses her anger. Expressing one's emotions properly is an important factor to achieve emotional regulation (Cole, 2004). Therefore, although it is in play that Katie is thrown into rage (the castle she builds is destroyed by her brother), she is also helped by play to release her anger. Interesting visual metaphors also contribute to presenting the inner world of Katie. For instance, the portrayal of angry Katie has her face red like flame; the background color of the rage scene is also flame-like red, yellow or orange. These images are made from Katie's perspective, which reveal that everything is burning like she is.

Like some other selected books about sibling relationships, the story depicts both warmth and conflicts between Katie and her younger brother. They are portrayed hugging and playing together until Katie gets mad at the boy. The conflict arises after the young boy knocks down the beautiful castle Katie has built. Therefore, in this story, play is the ground where their love grows through cooperation and shared fun; it is also the ground

where their conflicts come into being. Although play fosters conflicts between them, it provides opportunities for Katie to learn proper way of expressing and releasing negative feelings. In one word, play trains Katie to regulate herself emotionally. She tastes fun, pleasure as well as negative feelings like anger in play. She also learns to express herself and reconciles with her sibling through play. As the last page of the book portrays, the two kids reunite to build the castle after Katie calms down. They share stories and kiss each other. The bond between the two is strengthened by the emotional turbulence related to play.

Hello, Twins

In comparison to other siblings, twins will spend more time together. The stereotype of twins is that they look alike and share a lot of other things in common. The book entitled *Hello, Twins* (Voake, 2006) is an exception. It focuses on the differences between the two kids. Specifically, it shows how they are different from each other in daily life, especially in play activities.

The cover of the book presents the essence of the story (Nodelman, 1988). Although the two kids are depicted acting differently in a play episode, the happiness they share is an invisible bond tying the twins together. On the cover, both children are portrayed as creatures on the move. The girl's hair and dress is flying. One of her legs is pointing upward and she seems partially anchored to the ground. In contrast, the boy seems more steadily standing on the ground, but he is standing upside-down with the

hands supporting his body. The impression the cover creates is that the two kids behave differently when playing, but they still enjoy the play process to their heart content.

The two children are introduced on the first double-page spread. The girl Charlotte is placed on the verso. The toy she is holding is a doll with golden hair. On the recto is the boy named Simon. His toy is a yellow bunny. Once again they are different: one plays with a doll and the other's toy is the bunny. Although they are depicted far from each other on the double-page spread, one can still feel the dynamics between the two. The boy is watching the girl affectionately as a brother. They love each other although they like different play activities. The next double-page spread continues to present the difference between the two: one always enjoys his meals and the other is not so interested in the food. Besides this eating scene, most other pages of the book depict their interactions by placing them in play scenarios, where they get along peacefully or sometimes have troubles. The conflict between the two is displayed on the following double-page spread. Like in other spreads, the twins are presented separately on either the verso or the recto. Here the girl is on the verso building a tower while the boy is stealthily touching the bottom of the tower to make it fall down. The boy is smiling stealthily for his trick and the girl is a little surprised. In this play scenario, the two kids are not only portrayed as being engaged in parallel play, they are actually on opposing grounds as one is building and the other is destroying. This is also a common conflict seen in siblings.

Sometimes the two children play together in the same activity as shown by the next illustration. Showing the two playing seesaw, the illustration spreads across the whole double-page spread with one high up on the recto and the other low down on the

verso. Both the picture and the text tell that they are still different although in the same game: they are in different positions.

Depiction of the twins in the following two double-page spreads again places them in parallel play; that is, although they stay close to each other, they are doing different play. There is also the illustration displaying another conflict regarding play: the boy snatches away the stroller from the girl, throws away her doll and puts his bunny in. As a result they show different expressions as one being surprised and the other proud. The book also contains another illustration portraying them playing seesaw. Different from the first seesaw scenario, here they switch the position as the girl is on the downside and the boy is on the higher end.

A twist of the story occurs in the last three double-page spread of the book. Although the twins are still illustrated as being in different activities, their similarity is made explicit by the text: both of them enjoy the fun of play. For example, they enjoy playing seesaw no matter they are on the high or low end. The similarity is emphasized in the illustration on the last page, where they are portrayed doing the same activity- sitting and playing on a beam. An interesting thing is that this illustration is turned upside down, reflecting the playful disposition of children, as the pictures all take a child's perspective. Portrayal of the twins as being similar to each other matches the text on the last page, which points out another important thing they share in common: whether they are alike or not, they like each other as what they are.

“Brothers and sisters are children’s most frequent companions” (Ostrov, Crick & Stauffacher, 2006, p.242), and “sibling relationship is the longest lasting relationship that most of us will have” (Deater-Deckard & Dunn, p. 571). Twin’s relationship is longer as

they accompany each other from the first moment they are born. As the story shows, the twin siblings are together no matter they engage in parallel play or joint play. In parallel play, they are occupied in different activities, but they stay close to each other physically and even occasionally communicate with each other. In the book, depiction of their occasional interactions during parallel play includes both positive communication and conflicts. An example of positive communication is that they would affectionately stare at each other; an instance of conflicts depicted is that the boy would snatch away his sister's toys.

Compared to other books, this book depicts a boy who does not well control himself in the process of play. Vygotsky (1967) viewed play as a venue where children learn self-regulation through social interactions with each other. Specifically, children learn self-regulation through abiding by rules and monitoring others. The boy in the twins sometimes does not follow the rules of play. He snatches his sister's toys and destroys her play. However, the overall tone of the story still stresses the harmonious relationship between the two children, which implies most of time they behave positively to each other. This point is also supported by other illustrations that show the two children happily play together. Therefore, although the book does not explicitly portray how the two reconcile after the boy makes troubles, it is imaginable that the boy apologizes or does other things to please the girl; otherwise they cannot be so happy most of times. This is a process of learning self-regulation as reflecting on and controlling one's behaviors.

Annie and Cousin Precious

Compared with brothers or sisters in the same nuclear family, the relationships between cousins are also fostered through interactions in play activities. Specially, relationships between cousins grow through competing and negotiating process always involved in play. This point is well depicted in the book *Annie and Cousin Precious* (1994) by Chora. Annie is the older between the two girls. She does not like playing with her younger cousin Precious because Precious “ruins everything” (p.1). Therefore, Annie sulks in her bedroom when Precious comes to visit. She does not want Precious to share the playroom. This is the information conveyed by the text on the first double-page spread. The illustrations on the spread provide visual presentation of both Annie and Precious’ activities. On the verso, a small illustration depicts little Precious sobbing sadly. She is unhappy because Annie refuses to play with her. Annie is placed in the large illustration on the recto. She is portrayed sitting angrily among scattered toys. Her head is turned away from his father, who is talking her into playing with Precious. The picture shows that Annie does not want to listen to his father.

The verso of the next double-page spread shows that Annie reluctantly lets Precious enter her room. Annie is not happy while Precious is proud. The younger one’s tippy-tapping gesture offers the feeling that she is exuberant as she wins this battle over Annie. The recto continues to portray the dynamics between the two: Annie dislikes Precious, while Precious pesters Annie to let her use the playhouse. The left page of the following double-page spread shows Annie reluctantly lead the elated Precious to the playhouse because she is afraid of being told on. Depiction of the two doggies reveals

their different internal state. Precious' dress, butterfly knot and tail all fly up. This, together with her brisk steps, shows her being excited and proud of her ability to control Annie. Although the portrayal of Annie only has her back visible to the reader, her drooping tail reveals her reluctance and low spirits. Precious becomes an angrily howling dog on the recto when Annie does not let her in the playhouse. Precious again wins Annie by using her attitude. The eye will be attracted to the inside of the playhouse depicted on the verso of the next double-page spread. Taking a child's perspective, depiction of the playhouse has it set in glorious light like a magic world. The numerous toys are all in bright colors and the stuffed bears and other dolls are smiling friendly. The close-up portrayal of the playhouse has every detail visually noticeable. In contrast, the two doggies standing at the entrance are depicted small and vague. This visual presentation reflects the great significance of play in children's eyes.

The following two double-page spread shows their interactions in the playhouse and how Annie gets impatient with her younger cousin. At the beginning, Precious makes negative comments on Annie's dolls, which displeases Annie. Then she grabs all the stuffed toys and attempts to put them in water to give them a bath. Annie tries to stop her and when Precious dodges Annie, she bumps into the bookcase and all the books fall down the ground. Annie is angry when Precious still dances and spins among the piles of books. She goes out and leaves Precious alone in the playhouse. On the next double-page spread, Precious is portrayed on the verso, reading among the books and toys. Annie is placed on the recto, peeping into the playhouse from the barn. Her leaving does not mean she gives up the battle with Precious. Instead, she finds an alternative to fight with Precious. She is confident she will win, as shown by her triumphant smile. Compared to

the arrogant face she used to have, Precious now seems surprised and scary, looking at the direction of Annie.

It turns out that Annie wants to scare Precious through imaginative play. Standing in the barn, Annie is audible but not visible to Precious. She pretends to be made invisible by a Playhouse Monster, which actually is the pet horse in the barn. On the recto, Annie is scratching the horse to make scary noises. Her manner and expression show her confidence and control. In comparison, Precious is portrayed panicked and running in circles trying to escape. Annie goes to her own room after this. She is happy that Precious is given a lesson. The younger one has to taste the scary feelings for a while because she cannot get out of the playhouse. Annie has locked her inside.

So far the dynamics between the two girls are portrayed closely related to play. Annie dislikes Precious for her bossiness and arrogance in play process. She also makes Precious scary through pretense in imaginative play. Annie likes play so much and after she comes back to her room, she begins to enjoy solitary play without others' disturbance. She plays and plays in her bedroom until she realizes that the playhouse is too quiet. Annie rushes there to see if Precious is all right, but only to find the house empty. The hatred she formerly holds towards Precious now turns into concerns. She is sad that the young cousin disappears. Tears shedding, poor Annie finds her father and tells him about disappearance of Precious. To her gladness, Precious is there. She has been saved out of the playhouse by the father. The last several illustrations portray the happy reconciliation scene between the two children. Negotiating about play takes an important part in the reconciliation process. Annie voluntarily invites Precious to come again for play and Precious begins to love Annie's doll she used to look down upon.

Annie also makes Precious stop being bossy and howling by allowing her to play the horse. The final picture has two children hand in hand dancing and spinning. Their expressions are all happiness.

This story portrays the relationship between the two cousins as shifting between conflicts and mutual love. Similar to other analyzed stories, the characters in the story hate each other because of some conflicts in play, and it is play that helps them learn self-regulation and reconcile with each other. In other words, play is a venue where the children learn self-regulation through social interactions with each other.

Between the two children, the younger one Precious seems have more problems in self-regulation and other aspects of social competence. It is she who provokes the conflicts between her cousin and her. The first part of story portrays her as a bossy, self-centered girl. For example, she makes negative comments on Annie's doll while praising her own dolls. She also insists on putting the toys in water even if Annie does not like the idea. Worse is that she likes to tell on her cousin to achieve her own goals, which displeases Annie much. All these of her behaviors reflect that she is not a girl good at self-regulation, partly attributed to her young age and personality.

Self-regulatory process involves "cognitive control or effortful attention to monitor thinking before acting"(Boyer, 2009, p.176). In relation to Vygotsky's view of self-regulation, the effortful control includes both monitoring and controlling other children's behavior as well as one's own; such "other-regulation" and self-regulation are always operated during children's play process, and this is how children learn self-regulation through social interactions in play activities (Vygotsky, 1967; Bodrova, 2008). In case of little Precious, she lacks the ability to make effortful control of herself in play

process. Meanwhile, she tries to control Annie by imposing her own ideas on her. This behavior breaks the balance between other and self-regulation in play process and eventually enrages Annie, who shuts Precious in the playhouse and scares Precious to discharge her anger. Although the punishment may be harsh for Precious, this interaction between her and Annie does teach her a lesson. She realizes that Annie is not just a submissive girl who listens to her all the time. Precious learns to respect and listen to Annie when they are together later, which prepares her to make further progress in learning self-regulation.

Precious begins to make effortful control of her behavior when she meets Annie again. At that time she realizes that Annie may not like her; therefore, she feels appreciative when Annie invites her to come back. To make Annie happy, Precious also promises to bring her dolls next time. During negotiating process about play, Precious learns to make compromises.

Vygotsky (1967) regarded language as a cultural tool helping children learn self-regulation. The final part of the story portrays how Annie strategically uses language to make peace with Precious. Not only does she reconcile with Precious, she also begins to positively practice her autonomy when being with her. Specifically, she does not blindly give up her position to Precious while making herself unhappy as she used to. Older than Precious, Annie does not have problems of being bossy or self-centered. Her issue is that she is unable to express herself properly. For example, her concerns for the toys are justifiable because Precious is bossy, but she fails to express her concerns properly to her father or asks for suggestions. Properly expressing one's feelings is one important factor in self-regulation. Annie's bad attitude just makes herself misunderstood and worsens her

mood. Fortunately, Annie makes progress at the end of the story. Interactions with Precious teach her that neither blind sacrifice nor mischievous punishing will make herself happy. Only through constructively sharing play can she and Precious both be happy, and to achieve this goal, Annie cleverly uses language as a tool to negotiate with Precious.

The Boy Who Wouldn't Share

Annie in the previous story is reluctant to share her toys because her young cousin is bossy and likes ruining toys. There are children who do not like sharing just because of selfishness. *The Boy Who Wouldn't Share* (Reiss, 2008) depicts a boy Edward who refuses to share any toy with his younger sister merely out of selfish desire for possession. Keeping all toys to himself brings him temporary happiness; however, it also makes him guilty and shamed. To make himself feel better, the boy controls his desire for possession and learns to share. By learning controlling his own desire, the boy improves his self-regulatory capacity.

Edward is introduced for the first time on the cover, where he is portrayed sitting among a pile of various toys. Despite having so many toys, he does not look happy. The title placed just above Edward may partly reveal why he is unhappy: he is a boy who wouldn't share; he might be thinking how to defend his toys against "invaders". The first double-page spread echoes the cover. It shows the boy among the huge pile of toys. The boy is given quite small space on the page compared to the overwhelming size of the toys, which actually spreads across the double page spread. The frameless illustration

creates the effect that the toys are extending infinitely in all direction. As objects illustrated bigger always catch more attention and look more dominant (Bang, 2000), the exaggeratingly illustrated big toys seem much more important than the small boy lost in the toys. This reflects a child's perspective: play and toys are important, valuable and magically powerful, even more powerful than himself.

In comparison to the first picture, Edward is illustrated quite big on the second double-page spread. He is placed on the recto with the wall as a background. His sister Claire is illustrated tiny on the verso. She is looking at Edward from behind. As the text explains, Edward does not like sharing toys with his sister. The illustration just captures a moment when Edward turns his back to his sister, who is pleading to play his toys. An interesting point is that although Edward is so small before his toys, he is so powerful before his younger sister, mainly due to his possession of the toys.

The following several double-page spread displays a succession of scenarios where the boy refuses to share his toys with Claire. The first scenario is about a rocking horse. On the verso of the double-page spread, the poor girl is trying to get a stair to climb onto the horse; the recto shows just before she rides the rocking horse, Edward gets on it and stares at his sister angrily, "This is mine; not yours, of course" (Reiss, 2008, p.6). Like the previous double-page spreads, the illustration here also presents the contrast of sizes between the toys, the boy and the little girl. The rocking horse is huge and unreachable to the young girl; it is big to Edward too; Edward assumes absolute power and bigger size before his weak younger sister. Juxtaposition of the siblings and the toys continues on the following pages. For example, the boy is portrayed snatching away the wizard hat from his sister, or he asks her to stay away from his slink. On each

page, the text shows the boy's words are "it is mine". The tone of his words is made visible by increasing font of the letters. It reveals the boy is getting increasingly angry as his sister touches more of his toys. He takes back his toys and puts them around him, which gradually accumulates to a huge pile, hiding the tiny boy within.

The emotional transformation occurs when Edward buries himself in the toys and sees his sister share fudge with his little bear. At this moment, he feels bad about himself. Firstly, he wants to have a share of the food too. Secondly, he feels ashamed of his selfishness seeing his sister share with others. The text reveals Edward feelings: Edward knew that he'd been crabby, grouchy, grumbly, greedy, grabby" (Reiss, 2008, p.24). Her sister's sharing with others stimulates him to reflect upon his own behavior. This is a step towards self-regulation. He then goes further to apologize and share his toys with his sister. The story ends with the sibling play happily together.

In this story, the boy's self-regulation is practiced in the process of self-reflection, controlling his desire for possession and initiating action for sharing. Eisenberg (2004) defines emotionally related self-regulation as including the process of "initiating, avoiding, inhibiting" emotionally related goals or behaviors. According to him, the process is conducted to fulfill certain emotional goals. In relation to this story, Edward's emotional goal is to make himself feel better. To achieve this goal, he gives up his possession of the toys and lets his sister play them. He also apologizes to Claire.

Vygotsky (1967) believed play a rich venue to learn self-regulation because in play, a child behaves better than usual and also learn from social interactions with others. Claire proves herself a generous, sharing girl through an imaginative play episode with Teddy bear. It is when observing her sister's play that Edward realizes the goodness of

Clair and his selfishness. In other words, play is a context where Claire displays her positive side while Edward sees his own faults. The actions Edward takes to correct the faults is also associated with play; that is, to share toys and play together with Claire. The story exemplifies the function of play regarding learning self-regulation: play is a land where the child realizes his own problems and learn from others; it is also a training ground where the child makes mistakes and correct themselves.

Table 2

Books selected in this section categorized by their function in fostering self-regulation:

Function	Title	Author
A channel for releasing feelings	<i>Barfburger Baby, I Was Here First</i>	Paula Danziger
	<i>Julius, the Baby of the World</i>	Kevin Henkes
	<i>Mail Harry to the Moon</i>	Robie H. Harris
	<i>Sometimes, I'm a Bombaloo</i>	Rachel Vail
A cradle fostering sibling affection	<i>Hello Twins</i>	Charlotte Voake
	<i>What the No Good Baby Is Good For</i>	Elise Broach
	<i>The Boy Who Wouldn't Share</i>	Mike Reiss
Balancing power relations	<i>Annie and Cousin Precious</i>	Kay Choroa
	<i>Sheila Rae, the Brave</i>	Kevin Henkes
	<i>Seymour and Opal</i>	Nicole Jussek

Chapter 4

Books about Children's Relationships with People outside the Family

Books about children's relationships with adults outside their family

This Is a Hospital, Not a Zoo

The first chapter contains an analysis of books that depict children's relationships with adults within their family. Family members are not the only adults with whom children interact socially; children's interplay with other adults such as teachers and neighbors is also mirrored in picture books. *This Is a Hospital, Not a Zoo* (1998), authored by Roberta Karim and illustrated by Sue Truesdell, is a picture book that centers on Filbert, a hospitalized boy who resorts to imaginative play to outwit the nurses and thus escape needles and pills. The illustrations in this book are done in watercolor, and its cartoon-like style is hilarious. This book differs from the books examined earlier in having adult characters who are not serious—they leap and run around like children. The depictions of adults, children, and animals are offered in diagonal lines and irregular shapes, which suggests a sense of disorder as well as liveliness.

The child character Filbert does not appear on the first page. Instead, the page displays two adults: one is a deliveryman who is blowing a bugle announcing the arrival of a new parcel and the other is the receptionist in the hospital who is startled by the bugle's sound. The flying pen and papers together with the receptionist's hair standing on

end indicate the unbearable loudness of the deliveryman. Irregular shapes and zigzag lines offer a sense of chaos and tension. The disorder extends to the second page, where Filbert is leaping on the bed with outstretched arms while two furious nurses yell at him. The text reads “No more horseplay”, “Stop monkeying around” (Truesdell, 1998, p. 2), indicating that the boy is engaging in imaginative play while the two nurses order him to settle down for bed rest. In addition to the boy behaving like a monkey, the two nurses also look wild. The fat, middle-aged female nurse on the right is depicted with her mouth wide open, like a roaring lion. On this page, it is the adults who hold the dominant position over the boy, urging the boy to do something he does not like or want to do.

The third page depicts the child eating animal crackers from a parcel that has been delivered. His grinning face reveals that something will happen because of the “animal crackers”, which turn out to be the inspiration for imaginative play as the boy transforms into a range of animals. The first animal is a rhino, whose thick skin is a good defense against the needle. The giant size of the rhino scares Nurse Skeeter, who calls for Nurse Beluga, the fat middle-aged nurse, for help. The battle between Nurse Beluga and the rhino is amusing. Both are large and look powerful on the page. The text echoes the notion of “bigness” when Nurse Beluga says, “a big problem, you say? I am bigger than problems. I am bigger than a hospital bed” (p. 8). Eventually Filbert gets his shot, but his transformation poses big trouble for the adult nurses.

In Filbert's next transformation he becomes a penguin because he feels the wheelchair carrying him to the X-ray room is too cold. The ruffled feathers of a penguin serve as a cushion against coldness and a shield against the X-rays. The X-ray room is illustrated from the point of view of a child; photos of horrible skulls and skeletons are

hanging on the walls. The penguin looks small and helpless amid the juxtaposition of towering equipment and the “fierce” doctor and nurse. Again, Filbert’s trick does not win. He ends up being x-rayed with great reluctance. The failure of his first two attempts does not extinguish Filbert’s morale to rebel; instead, his determination increases due to his accumulating resentment.

His next trial is to take medicine. To avoid the medicine spoon, as Nurse Wellington reaches toward his mouth the sulky boy changes into a tall giraffe, and the frightened nurse calls for Nurse Beluga for help. Placed on a double-page spread, the length of the giraffe’s neck is obvious, depicted as parallel to the diagonal line of the spread. The illustration on this page offers a perspective of the entire length of the giraffe and the dwarf-like nurse Wellington. The next illustration is displayed on an entire vertical page to reinforce the tallness of the giraffe. This effect of vertical tallness is further enhanced by a ladder used by Nurse Beluga to reach him. Both the ladder and the giraffe are thin and tall. In contrast, Nurse Beluga, who is climbing up the ladder, is amusingly short and round-shaped. The giraffe and the nurse finally confront each other when she climbs to the top. Nurse Beluga’s round-shaped body is supported by a thin, sharp, triangular ladder top, offering a sense of tension: either she is going to fall or the ladder is going to collapse. Only the head and a part of the giraffe’s neck are shown, which is horizontally stretching towards the furious Nurse Beluga. In comparison to the tension created by the portrayal of Nurse Beluga, the horizontally stretching head and neck of the giraffe renders a sense of stability and peacefulness; this contrast is reinforced by Nurse Beluga’s angry expression and the giraffe’s smiling face. The text on the page indicates that when the nurse is exerting all her strength to ask the boy to behave, the boy,

in the form of a giraffe, just kisses her, and on the next page, changes into a grizzly bear. The hierarchical order of adults having power over children is reversed on the two pages where Filbert assumes the form of a bear. One page portrays a doctor flinching and a nurse running away before the giant bear; the other page depicts Nurse Beluga still swaying helplessly at the top of the ladder while Filbert, in the form of a bear, is snuggled under the covers.

The next two pages present a sequence of two dramatic scenes in which the bear and Nurse Beluga fight each other. On the left page, the nurse tries to feel the pulse of the bear, while the boy resists by pretending to be hibernating. The right page shows the nurse throwing the covers off the bear to prevent him from sleeping. The nurse and the bear are the same size on the page, and they are positioned at about the same height, which implies that they are similarly powerful and have equally high morale. Tired of the adults, the bear then becomes an orangutan. Different from the other animals who either escape or fight, this orangutan puts on a sad face to express his resistance to the dominant nurses' orders. Communication is only made possible when Dr. Kebob gives up his higher position as an adult. By crouching as low as Filbert, he is welcomed by the orangutan to be an orangutan and join Filbert's imaginative play. The two orangutans play ecstatically, throwing sheets and covers, swinging above the bed and tossing toys. Vertical, diagonal lines and sharp-shaped objects dominate these two pages and are expressive of rapid motion and wildness (Bang, 2000). This image overturns the common assumption of a doctor being sober and serious. The upsetting of the conventional hierarchical order continues further when Filbert, as an orangutan, still wears pajamas while the doctor as an orangutan is naked—a switch between the conventional images of

a child and an adult. The shared play enables Filbert to accept Dr. Kebob as a friend, and he willingly accepts the diagnosis from his playmate. The diagnosis is that Filbert has made a full recovery and sets him free from the hospital.

In the story, although Filbert as a patient has to be treated by nurses and doctors, his conflict with them via imaginative play brings him understanding and respect from those adults who impose orders on him regardless of his own feelings. Doctors and nurses are adults most children need to face at one point or another in their lives. Children's experiences with these adults may not be happy because their presence is closely linked to bad things like injections, pills or loss of freedom. Time spent in the hospital always includes much loneliness and anxiety. Therefore, when nurses or doctors are unable to understand children's pains, they will be resisted by children, as depicted in the story.

Children identify communication "as a vital component of the good nurse's attributes" (Brady, 2009, p. 548). When they meet nurses who do not communicate well, imaginative play is one way to express their feelings. One thing Filbert wants to express is his fear of his medical treatment. When he is afraid of the injection, he transforms into a rhino, because the imaginary thick skin can protect him from the needle. When he is on the wheelchair, he becomes a penguin, because a penguin is not concerned about the coldness of the chair. In imaginary situations, Filbert is immune to the pain caused by treatment. Filbert also uses his imagination to express his desire for autonomy. As a preschool child, Filbert developed a sense of autonomy that gave him self-confidence and courage. However, his autonomy is lessened when he is forced to take injections or pills

or be x-rayed without being asked. The loss of autonomy worsens his sense of loneliness and anxiety—negative feelings Filbert has to deal with.

As the book shows, Filbert manages to regulate his emotions through imaginative play. His self-regulation is realized by successfully discharging and expressing his anger. In other words, Filbert is too young to verbally express his emotional problems. The nurses' impatience worsens Filbert's anxiety. The little boy has to use imaginative play to sooth himself and speak to others. His self-regulation is not used to control his feelings or behaviors, but to release his feelings. Adults' support is also helpful in Filbert's self-regulation. Although he meets some impatient nurses and doctors, he is lucky to be understood by a doctor by the end of the story. The doctor's patience and understanding make Filbert feel comforted and happy. However, Filbert needs to ensure that the doctor will aid him, and this sometimes includes fighting with the doctor to ensure benefits. The ultimate reason for Filbert's happiness by the end of the story is his own effortful self-regulation through play.

David Goes to School

David Shannon has written a series of books that focus on a character named David. *David Goes to School* (1999) is a book in that series. This book depicts David's interaction with his teacher. David displeases the teacher with his illicit play; when he is punished, he does not take it seriously. Similar to *No, David* (1998), the presence of the adult character is mainly reflected through the text, which represents what she says to David. The adult in this story is David's teacher, who appears on the title page, where she

is depicted with arms folded. This is a typical image of a teacher exerting authority and power. David engages in a series of naughty behaviors that force the teacher to intervene; among these naughty behaviors, some are play episodes that occur at inappropriate times in classrooms.

One such episode is illustrated on a double-page spread. David is portrayed cavorting around the classroom with chalk, happily enjoying himself. In the interchange between the teacher and David, the teacher tries to stop him by saying “sit down, David” (Shannon, 1999, p.3-4). The book does not show whether David sits down eventually, but we can imagine that given his light-hearted personality, his mood will not be disturbed by this intervention, no matter whether he sits down or not. The ensuing double-page spread depicts another illicit play episode in which David is playing with a bubble made out of chewing gum. Again, David’s joyfulness stands in sharp contrast with the teacher’s clichéd intervention: “don’t chew gum in class (p.5-6).” David is not disciplined by his teacher. He continues to play in class, as illustrated in one of the following double-page spreads, where he is portrayed playing with a girl’s pony tail with a hand full of paint used in the class activity. The text again indicates the teacher’s attempt to stop David. However, the text printed on scraps of paper looks weak in comparison to the eye-catching image of David and his exaggeratedly proud smile. In the following pages of the book, David continues to position himself against the teacher’s expectations. He is depicted playing on the playground after recess and using a book as a drum and pencils as drumsticks. David’s expression continues to reveal satisfaction and a sense of freedom, while the text indicates the frustration of the teacher. She can do nothing but passively remind David what to do and what not to do. The greatest confrontation between the

child and the teacher arises after David draws pictures on the desk. He is told to stay after school and clean the desks. It seems that the child is in a weaker position than the teacher because he is subjected to the teacher's penalty. However, David is not disturbed by the punishment. The illustration portrays him joyfully cleaning all the desks as if it were a play episode. By treating work as play, David does not resent the punishment. Instead, he exerts his will even though he is doing something other people ask him to do.

Similar to *No, David* (1998), this book is illustrated in cartoon style with bright colors. The funny images of David dominate nearly all of the double-page spreads, while the teacher is made nearly invisible, appearing only via dialogue in the text. The teacher is shown to be powerless and frustrated in comparison to the active, happy David.

David in the story is caught between his desire for power and the need to regulate his behaviors. King (1982) argued that illicit play in the classroom is a way to resist teachers as well as other forms of authority. However, these types of resistance are always against the rules in classrooms. As the story shows, they even can result in the children being punished. Therefore, illicit play is a context in which children learn to regulate themselves to attain a balance between their internal desire and the external rules they have to follow.

In the specific case of David, his play includes whispering in class and self-initiated play activities at improper times and places. The depiction of David indicates that he derives much happiness from such activities although he is always criticized by the teacher. However, David has to follow the school rules. His behavior eventually sends him to be punished. David's experience exemplifies the necessity for self-regulation. A child cannot do everything he wants to do. Although he wants freedom and power, he

still needs to abide by the rules and expectations assigned by adults, especially when these rules in the long term benefit the child.

Therefore, although David is not a positive example of self-regulation, his story reveals the necessity of helping children to develop self-regulatory skills. Illicit play, which is disliked by teachers, can be a context in which children see the necessity for self-control. Vygotsky (1978) believed that self-regulatory ability comes from social interactions and later is internalized by children. Classrooms in which illicit play occurs become social environments in which children learn self-regulation. Specifically, by engaging in a power struggle with the teacher about their ill-timed play, they gradually learn that such activities may not be good weapons in building autonomy. They learn about and follow the rules and regulations so that they may be considered good students; then they will have more freedom to express their own ideas and wishes.

Miss Nelson Is Missing

Similar to *David Goes to School* (Shannon, 1999), *Miss Nelson Is Missing* (1977) by Harry Allard and James Marshall depicts illicit play in a classroom setting. The first illustration on the first page displays a view of the entire classroom, which shows all of the students engaging in illicit activities while the teacher worries. Lots of diagonal lines are used to convey the sense of chaos. The next double-page spreads juxtapose close-up illustrations of individual students' activities and the teacher—Miss Nelson's response. Each framed small picture has one or two kids engaging in a type of play. For example, two girls are playing with a paper plane; two boys are whispering and giggling; one boy

is making faces and one girl is doing handstands during story time. Despite the large variety of activities, the kids share one thing in common: they are all smiling or squirming proudly, like they have won a great battle. Miss Nelson is depicted as having a sweet voice. She looks sweet, too, with her blonde hair and pink dress. However, her expression is of frustration and helplessness due to the misbehavior of the children.

The twist in the story involves the arrival of Miss Viola Swamp, who is depicted as being evil-looking with a sharp, long nose and a crooked jaw. Her dark robe and long sharp nails make her look like a witch. Her behavior seems even more terrible. She speaks sternly to the kids and gives them a heavy workload. A close-up depiction of the children shows them to be crestfallen and scared—a sharp contrast to the lively, mischievous children when Miss Nelson is there.

To end their nightmare, children seek help from a detective, asking him to find Miss Nelson and bring her back. They also imagine several possibilities for Miss Nelson's whereabouts. Their imagination is like fantasy play. For instance, they imagine that Miss Nelson has gone to Mars or that Miss Nelson's car has been carried off by butterflies. Although the guessing sounds absurd, these possibilities give the children the feeling that they can at least make sense of the situation.

The next twist in the story occurs when Miss Nelson comes back. Her round-shaped face, blonde hair and pink dress look soothing both to the child characters as well as to the reader. The contrast is not only between the two teachers; the students have changed a lot, too. This time they do not misbehave around Miss Nelson, they sit quietly and listen to her with great attention. The formerly chaotic classroom now is in good order. By the end of the book, a hint is dropped to explain Miss Nelson's departure. The

ugly dark robe in Miss Nelson's closet reveals that Miss Swamp is Miss Nelson in disguise. It is interesting that as the children frustrate Miss Nelson with their illicit play, Miss Nelson teaches children a lesson with pretense play. Her pretense about being a witch-like teacher makes the children realize her goodness and correct their behavior.

Like David in *David Goes to School* (1999), the children in this book tend to engage in illicit play in the classroom. There is a greater variety of illicit play in this story, in part due to the larger number of students depicted. In one word, whether it is girls or boys, in story time or lecturing time, children will engage in play activities that disturb the class's progress. King (1982) believes that illicit play is a way for children to resist authority. Although Miss Nelson is a sweet teacher, she is regarded as representing authority because she still has to make the children follow school routines and regulations. Children's disobedient activities may not be targeted toward Miss Nelson—they may indicate resistance to the school order in general. Ironically, children are obedient in Miss Swamp's presence, which is depicted as a much more imposing, authoritative character than Miss Nelson. However, a closer examination reveals that the children's attention to Miss Swamp does not mean they are really willing to obey her. Although the young students inhibit their play activities out of fear, their resistance is reflected in their view of Miss Swamp as a witch.

In the story, the children's behavior pattern changes with the change in teacher. With Miss Nelson, the children misbehave a lot; with Miss Swamp, the children behave well but are reluctant to do so; finally when Miss Nelson returns, the children behave well and are willing to do so. The changes in behavior and attitude indicate a process in which children reflect upon themselves and learn to control their own behaviors. What

ignite the changes are the students' illicit play activities; it is also through play that children see their faults and learn self-regulation. However, the play episode is not initiated by the children—it is initiated by Miss Nelson.

The book contains some hints that Miss Swamp is Miss Nelson in disguise. Miss Nelson pretends to be a witch to teach the students a lesson. This reminds the children of Miss Nelson's goodness, and helps children realize the need to cherish the sweet teacher they have. Eventually children learn to regulate their behavior in the classroom with the help of the teacher. Vygostky (1978) believed that children learn better in social interactions with more knowledgeable others. In this story, the social interactions operate between the children and Miss Nelson, who disguises herself as a witch and uses harshness to show children Miss Nelson's sweetness. The story also reflects how play can serve as a context for children's learning of self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1978). When children are with Miss Swamp, the classroom seems a scary imaginary place where they are watched by the witch. If they do not listen, they will be punished, reminiscent of children's peril at the hands of witches in fairytales. The imaginative play, despite its scariness, prepares children to self-regulate when Miss Nelson returns.

The School Trip

The School Trip (1997) by Veldcamp also depicts a child-teacher power struggle. The book begins with the boy Davy waving goodbye to his mother on his first day of school. The theme of play is implied on this starting page by the toys scattered around. On his way to school, the boy hangs his head because he is fearful of school after he

hears stories about the stern teacher and sees the reluctance of other children walking towards school. However, the boy has his own way of tackling the situation. Since he is creative, he builds a big toy wagon and uses it as his school. The illustration depicts the boy happily collecting materials and building a big wagon that looks like Santa Claus's sleigh. Toys and a clock are his classmates, and a picture of a man serves as the teacher. The boy happily drives his "school" around without knowing that he is driving towards Mr. Stern's classroom. Mr. Stern's classroom is portrayed in sharp contrast to Davy's self-made school. In addition to the black-and-white background, the students are all wearing dull-looking gray uniforms, as is Mr. Stern. The children's expressions show no liveliness or happiness. Many straight lines are utilized to indicate order and formality. In contrast, Davy's wagon is illustrated in bright colors, particularly red and orange. Davy himself is depicted wearing a red shirt. In addition, the wagon illustration is mainly constituted by round shapes and curvy lines, which lends energy and vivacity to Davy and his "school".

Davy and Mr. Stern are juxtaposed on an illustration confined within a rectangular shape after Davy's wagon crashes into Mr. Stern's classroom. Davy is depicted at the top left corner looking innocently at Mr. Stern, who stares at Davy furiously. This illustration does not indicate who wins over whom; however, the following illustration reveals Mr. Stern's dominance over the children by showing the punishment of one child. This illustration also displays Davy sitting in the classroom. His red shirt makes him unique and thus attracts the interest of the other kids. Asking Davy about his wagon school during recess stirs the children's creativity and desire for play. Together they start a play episode in which they make the school building into a huge

wagon. When the huge wagon is built, all the children stand on the moving building waving flags like heroes on a castle. They are transformed from the slaves to the masters of the school. Mr. Stern is also included in these illustrations. The transformation of his expression is interesting. At the beginning, he has a serious face as usual. Then when he sees that the school building is moving, he reveals mixed feelings of anger and surprise. The last illustration shows him angrily but helplessly rowing a small boat on a river, where by contrast the school building moves freely and easily, ridden by the happy children. Mr. Stern loses to the children who through play perform something impossible—changing the school into their big toy castle.

The power struggle experienced by Davy and the other children is a type of emotional regulation, which relaxes children's fear of the school and the stern teacher. The illustrations from a child's perspective show how the teacher evolves from an imposing authority to a panicked old man, which exemplifies the view that children tend to "challenge and even mock adult authority" in or through play (Corsaro, 2005, p. 149). In the story, the teacher is first portrayed as a steady, stern-looking man who makes the classroom prison-like, and then as a man who runs, chases and cries. Davy's creativity in play is beyond the control of the stern teacher, whose authority is completely destroyed when his steadiness turns into fury.

The goal in challenging Mr. Stern is actually to relieve the child's anxiety and fear about school. "Children who are stressed about school on a daily basis become anxious" (Mayer, 2008, p. 1). The students' anxiety is depicted in the illustrations, which portray the classroom as being gray and dark like a prison. Actually all the other students as well as the teacher are depicted in gray and dark tones, too. The atmosphere is of

pressure, gloominess and sternness. The fact that a boy is punished also reinforces the message that the school is a frightening and stressful place. Given that the school is such an unpleasant place, it is understandable that Davy tries to avoid it and builds his own school. Creativity and a playful disposition allow him to successfully build and enjoy his own imaginary school, which turns out to be an effective method of self-regulation. As shown in the illustrations, while all the other children are portrayed in dark colors, Davy himself is in bright colors. This implies that Davy is still able to rescue himself from the gloomy, boring school life through his creativity, while the other children have been tamed by the stern teacher. Fortunately, these children are brought to life again by Davy's imaginative play. They recover their vivacity and playfulness as children. Therefore, imaginative play not only saves Davy from school anxiety, but it also helps other children to find happiness and courage.

My Name Is Yoon

The School Trip (Veldcamp, 1997) depicts the anxiety about school experienced by a child when he starts school; children who transfer to a different school are also likely to suffer school anxiety. *My Name Is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2004) depicts a Korean girl's experience in a new school after she moves to America from her native country Korea; in particular, it portrays her interactions with the teacher in the new school.

When the teacher asks Yoon to write her name in English, she writes down the few English words she uses to identify herself. These names are related to imaginative play episodes that express Yoon's fear, loneliness, and homesickness. The text on the

next several pages introduces Yoon's background. Meanwhile, the illustrations reveal her loneliness in a new environment by placing her either in vast farmland or in an empty, spacious house, both of which render her weak and small. Her expression articulates her sense of helplessness. On the first day to new school, Yoon learns the word "cat". She writes down "cat" as her name. The ensuing imaginative play allows Yoon to imagine herself as a cat that can hide and seek comfort. The text reads, "I wanted to be CAT. I wanted to hide in a corner. My mother would find me and cuddle up close to me. I would close my eyes and mew quietly" (p. 11). The next imaginative play occurs after Yoon writes down another word she learns: "bird". She imagines herself to be a bird that can fly back to Korea. "I would fly to my nest, and I would tuck my head under my little brown wing" (p. 16). These play episodes reveal Yoon's lack of a sense of belonging and security. Furthermore, this is her method of communication with the teacher, since Yoon does not speak English. After receiving a cupcake, Yoon imagines herself to be a cupcake flying over other children, while they cheer the cupcake. The flying cupcake laughs heartily. This shows that Yoon has begun to want others' love and attention after initially hoping only to escape and hide. The next day, Yoon writes "Yoon" when the teacher asks her to write her name. Yoon begins to accept her new name, new identity and new life.

Although the story is about children's anxiety, the illustrations are primarily composed of round shapes, which offer a sense of peacefulness. The soft water color enhances the soothing feeling of the images. Thus, the story goes beyond portraying a child's anxiety by suggesting the warmth between her and the people around her, including the teacher. The imaginative play episodes serve two functions in this book. First, by writing down the things she wants to be, she expresses her fear and anxiety,

which is a good way to communicate with the teacher. The teacher's understanding in turn gives Yoon the courage to adapt to a new place. Second, these imaginative play episodes provide opportunities for Yoon to experience emotions. For example, being a cat makes her feel loved; being a bird brings her to her native country and its security; and being a cupcake brings her admiration and acceptance from her peers. The vicariously experienced comfort helps Yoon change from a sad and lonely child to a happy and confident girl.

The primary reason for Yoon's successful adaptation to the new environment is her playful disposition, which allows her to use imaginative play to express herself as well as sooth her mood. Unable to speak English, Yoon writes down the animals she wants to transform into, and thus the teacher understands the girl's feelings. In Yoon's mind, the cat represents the feeling of being loved and cuddled. Being a cat provides her with sense of warmth and security. Yoon also hopes to be a bird, because a bird can fly wherever it wants. This indicates freedom and autonomy. Identifying herself with these animals is also her way of speaking with the teacher. Properly expressing oneself is of great importance when it comes to emotional regulation (Ashiabi, 2007). By showing her internal world to the teacher, Yoon is understood and gains emotional comfort from the teacher.

The teacher's positive response to Yoon's imagination is another factor in the girl's self-regulation during a transitional period. Vygotsky (1978) stressed the importance of adults' support in learning self-regulation. He believed that adults are the more knowledgeable others who provide valuable guidance to children. In the case of the teacher, although she does not provide direct guidance, her encouragement of Yoon's

imagination definitely lends Yoon power and courage. Her positive attitude also comforts Yoon, who then feels loved and understood by the teacher.

In short, the story depicts a positive student-teacher relationship. Although they do not have much verbal communication, the visual representation of Yoon's imagination builds a bridge between her and the teacher. With supportive adults and her own creativity, Yoon quickly overcomes her negative feelings towards her environment. Imaginative play empowers Yoon in a transitional period and helps her merge into her new life.

First Grade Stinks

Like Yoon in *My Name Is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2004), Haley in *First Grade Stinks* (Rodman, 2006) cannot get used to the new teacher and new school life. Everything is different in the first grade; worst of all, her playful disposition does not seem to fit expectations for a first-grade child. The protagonist Harley is introduced on the first page, as she and her friends happily enter the school. The text tells it is their first day for the first grade and they are looking forward to it. Rather than portraying the first-grade classroom, the next double-page spread depicts the kindergarten room as Harley and her friend pass by. The room is depicted as being colorful with toys hanging on the wall. The image of lively children and a nice teacher also inform the reader that the kindergarten is a lovable place, at least in Harley's eyes. This message is confirmed by the text, which indicates that Harley loves the kindergarten teacher a lot.

The first-grade classroom is portrayed on the next double-page spread. In comparison to the kindergarten, the room is illustrated with more vertical and horizontal lines, creating the feeling of order and neatness. However, it shows less vivacity and colorfulness from a child's perspective. Compared to the broadly smiling kindergarten teacher, the new teacher Mrs. Gray's "tiny smile" disappoints Harley. In Harley's eyes, even the way Mrs. Gray dresses herself is not as attractive as the kindergarten, mainly because it is not as colorful and fancy. Harley's disappointment worsens when she sees that there is no trace of "playfulness" in the classroom at all. Specifically, there is no kite or colorful decorations. In her words, "no fun" (p. 5).

Harley's dislike of the teacher increases when the teacher does not seem to approve of her putting an orange sky in her drawing. She feels her creative idea is not understood. If there is one thing Harley likes about the first grade, it is the "no naptime", which means she will have more time to play. Harley yells when she is caught whispering during story time, "first grade stinks" (p.20). The illustration offers a close-up depiction of the face. Her face is somewhat distorted with an exaggerated, large mouth. This offers a feeling of tension, allowing the reader to experience her emotional turbulence vicariously. Although yelling is a disagreeable method of self-expression, it does show Mrs. Gray Harley's feelings. Mrs. Gray's patience comforts Harley, but what most brightens Harley's mood is her belief that Mr. Gray will eventually love her orange sky. In other words, she realizes that Mrs. Gray the first-grade teacher will also appreciate her playfulness and creativity.

As revealed in the book, Harley's problem is that she is having difficulty adjusting to the first grade. Sink, Edwards and Weir argue that the transition to first grade

is highly demanding. “For most students, going to first grade means graduating from a typically warm, child-centered classroom to an environment imposing considerably more rigid social and instructional requirements” (as cited in Ponitz, Rimm-Kaufman, Brock & Nathanson, 2009, p. 143). This is exactly the case with Harley. She prefers kindergarten because everything there is tailored to satisfy children’s craving for fun and playfulness, and because everything is familiar and therefore “safe”. Examples of kindergarten-related playfulness include the presence of colorful dragon kite and wall decorations. The kindergarten teacher also takes a more child-centered approach, as exemplified by Mrs. Lacy who respects Harley’s orange sky. In comparison, the first grade holds more expectations. They have more rigid standards to follow. In students’ eyes, the teacher imposes the standards. That’s why Harley dislikes Mrs. Gray.

Although children’s temporary dislike of the first grade is understandable, they need to go through the process because successful adjustment to primary school is one of the key factors determining children’s achievement (Ponitz et al., 2009). Self-regulatory ability helps children navigate the period by allowing them to learn to control their own impulsivity and abide by school regulations. Harley’s yelling in the classroom may not show her to be a perfect model of self-regulation, but she quickly adjusts after the event, enabling her to merge into the new school life happily. Her playful disposition helps her to adjust. Although the new classroom looks like less fun than the kindergarten, the fact that there is no naptime in the first grade pleases Harley. There’s more time to play. Imaginativeness also allows Harley to enjoy the new school life. When Mrs. Gray tells her about the good things to expect in the first grade, Harley’s imagination helps her to visualize the happy moments she will have in the near future. More importantly, Harley

begins to like Mrs. Gray because she believes the patient teacher will soon accept her orange sky; that is, her creativity will still be acknowledged in the first grade.

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse

Some of the analyzed stories, such as *The School Trip* (Veldcamp, 1997) and *My Name Is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2004), depict children who are unwilling to attend school. In contrast, Lilly in *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* (1996) by Kenvin Henkes is about a little mouse that enjoys school life. One of the main reasons is that she admires her teacher Mr. Slinger. Several moments in Lilly's life are captured. The first several pages display Lilly's feelings of friendship for Mr. Slinger. For example, she pretends to be a teacher at home. The depiction of the play scenario has Lilly dressed and talking like Mr. Slinger. However, her own creative ideas about wearing a crown and holding a wand reveal that she regards teachers to be as powerful as kings.

Lilly's happy school life continues until one day when she brings a purple plastic purse to school. The brand new purse plays a jaunty tune when it is opened. The illustration shows her enjoyment of this toy-like purse. She wears her new sunglasses, opens the bag to play the tune, leaping and hopping to the school. The following double-page spread juxtaposes several small illustrations which show Lilly playing the purse in class. She plays it during story time and in English class and shows it to everyone. Her behavior disturbs the class, and Mr. Slinger takes the purse away to keep the class in order. A sequence of illustrations displays Lilly's emotional reaction to confiscation of her purse. At the very beginning, she is sad. Her eyebrows droop and tears are shed.

Gradually, sadness turns to anger. Her eyebrows twist into a triangular shape; her eyes are flaming. Little Lilly finally draws a picture to release her anger. The picture portrays Mr. Slinger as big and fat and wanted by F.B.I.

Lilly experiences another emotional change after the school. When Mr. Slinger returns Lilly's purse, he also gives her some snacks and an encouraging note that says "Today was a difficult day. Tomorrow will be better" (Henkes, 1996, p. 18). Such nice treatment moves Lilly to tears. She also feels awfully guilty for what she has done. To punish herself she puts herself down on the uncooperative chair as soon as she gets home. Lilly recovers her love for school the next day. She brings snacks to school as an apology. More importantly, she does not disturb the class with her purse any more. She only shows and shares her toy during recess time.

Although the story contains sadness and tears, it is a happy story with bright colors, lots of movement, and a comic-like style. The story depicts the ups and downs of a child-teacher relationship, and the state of the relationship is closely linked to play. Play provides children the chance to express their internal world (D. Singer & J. Singer, 1990). A big fan of Mr. Slinger, she imitates him in imaginative play. This is her way of enjoying being a person as "great" as Mr. Slinger.

Play in the story provides Lilly with a chance to learn self-regulation. At the beginning, she cannot control her desire to play with the new purse. She also disturbs the class by showing it to other students. Vygotsky (1978) argued that play is a context which nurtures self-regulation development because it requires children to follow rules. In Lilly's case, she is punished by Mr. Slinger because she violates the rule of play in the school setting: one should play at the right time and in the right place. Although illicit

play leads to punishment, she also experiences the negative results of rule breaking. More importantly, it stimulates her to reflect upon herself and later correct her behavior.

Adults' supportive role is also important for Lilly's development of self-regulation. Without Mr. Slinger's encouraging note, Lilly may still dwell in anger and self-pity. His encouragement moves Lilly and motivates her to think about herself. Lilly is even inspired to achieve a task demanding effortful self-control: to sit in the uncooperative chair. The illustration reveals that despite her naughtiness, Lilly is equipped with self-regulatory ability; the ability allows her to behave well in school on the following day. Not only does she do self-reflection, Lilly also makes efforts to keep herself on the chair until she counts to one thousand. Her parents also play a positive role in promoting Lilly's self-regulatory skills. Agreeing on what Mr. Slinger does, they help Lilly realize that she does make a mistake. Moreover, they offer constructive advice on what Lilly can do to compensate for what she does; that is, to bring snacks to show her apology and determination to behave better.

Lilly's Big Day

Lilly's Big Day (2006) is another story in the Lilly series created by Kevin Henkes. By showing Lilly pretending to be a flower girl, the cover of the book reveals the content of the story as involving a wedding and imaginative play. As expected, the story starts with the announcement of an approaching wedding: Mr. Slinger is going to get married soon. Doubtlessly, the news is exciting, but it is most exciting to Lilly because she thinks she will be the flower girl at the wedding.

The second and third pages form a double-page spread, which juxtaposes a sequence of images showing the process of Lilly pretending to be a flower girl. Each image vividly displays a different gesture of Lilly's motion, but all the images have her basked in the happiness of being a flower girl. By showing the variety of Lilly's motions, the illustration reveals Lilly's strong longing. However, when Lilly goes to school the next day, Mr. Slinger tells her she only be the assistant to Ginger, his niece, who will be the flower girl. The news disappoints Lilly, but being an assistant to some degree comforts her. Her mixed feelings towards being the assistant are made visually explicit by the illustrations on the following pages.

Trying to get excited about being an assistant, Lilly initiates some play scenarios where she plays as the assistant. In one episode, she is a professional consultant giving flower girl advice to her stuffed animals. Another illustration portrays her training her little brother. The text reads, "Wedding wouldn't even exist without flower girl assistants" (Henkes, 2006, p. 12), revealing Lilly's desire to feel important in the wedding. The following illustration confirms this message by showing her telling everyone the importance of a flower girl assistant. Although Lilly tries to convince herself of the significance of her responsibility, she is still disappointed. To discharge her anger towards Mr. Slinger, she lets him sit in the Uncooperative Chair. The illustration portrays her dressing the Teddy Bear like Mr. Slinger, wearing a pair of glasses and a green tie. Lilly's anger is obvious in the depiction of her expression, which displays harshness towards "Mr. Slinger". In addition she resorts to another form of imaginative play to satisfy her wish; that is, she still engages in the pretense depicted at the beginning of the book. Similar to that illustration, this one juxtaposes a long sequence of various

Lilly's motions. All the individual images show her happy and contented. Lilly enjoys the pleasure of being a flower girl through imaginative play.

Lilly's pretense not only relieves her disappointment but it also prepares her to be a qualified flower girl. We find out that her responsibility as the assistant is of great importance when she encourages and guides the scared flower girl to achieve her task. She even accompanies the girl down the aisle. The experience, of course, is no less exciting than being a real flower girl.

Similar to *Lilly's Big Purple Plastic Purse* (Henkes, 1996), this story revolves around the relationship between Lilly and her teacher Mr. Slinger. Children's relationship with their teacher is important "because of its implications it has for children's school-related outcomes" (Blankemayer, Flanery & Vazsonyi, 2002, p. 1). Both *Lilly's Big Purple Plastic Purse* (Henkes, 1996) and this story demonstrate the importance of having a positive relationship with a teacher. In this case, Lilly likes Mr. Slinger and looks forward to playing an important role in his wedding. Like the other story, Lilly's feelings are disturbed by an accident. In this story, she is not asked to be the flower girl, which disappoints her to a large degree. However, compared to the other book, this time Lilly displays better self-regulatory ability. She does not experience dramatic emotional downs after being rejected; instead, she resorts to imaginative play to comfort herself.

Four imaginative play episodes illustrate Lilly's self-regulatory process. The first has her working as an authoritative consultant, talking to her clients who are being played by stuffed animals; the second one portrays her as the assistant who criticizes her disobedient client, portrayed by little brother Julius. To give herself a greater sense of importance, in these episodes she wears glasses and holds a wand, like a real professional

consultant. By engaging in imaginative play, Lilly tries to convince herself that an assistant to the flower girl is important, too. It is even more important because this person has power over the flower girl. Another play episode shows Lilly putting the stuffed bear—the substitute for Mr. Slinger—onto the Uncooperative Chair. This reveals her anger at Mr. Slinger. She is still disappointed despite the position of being the assistant. The other episode in which she is pretending to be the flower girl confirms that Lilly's true desire is to be the flower girl, not the assistant.

Lilly's self-regulatory ability lies in the fact that she does not discharge her anger in a negative manner, like complaining or crying. She constructively comforts herself by giving herself a sense of importance in imaginative play. She also releases her anger through play activities. Furthermore, by playing the follower girl, she not only experiences the pleasure she seeks, but also equips herself with the skills and confidence needed in the wedding. This allows her to eventually achieve her desires. The self-regulatory ability facilitated by imaginative play helps Lilly endure a sad period and eventually brings her happiness. Adults' supportive role in the process is also worth mentioning. Lilly would feel much worse if Mr. Slinger turned down her request. As a considerate teacher, he cheers Lilly up by giving her the responsibility of being the assistant. The new task may not be as good as being the flower girl, but at least comforts Lilly and gives her much space for self-regulation.

The Librarian from the Black Lagoon

Teachers are not the only adults children get along with at school—school librarians are also adults with whom children interact, whether they like them or not. *The Librarian from the Black Lagoon* (1997) by Mike Thaler depicts children's relationship with a school librarian both in children's imagination and in real life.

The cover of the book depicts a boy scared to be in the library. The illustration does not explicitly show what frightens him, but a big black monster-like shadow tells the reader there is a huge, threatening creature approaching the boy. With the apparent stacks of book, the illustration is clearly set in a library. The connection between terror and a library is built up on the cover, dropping implications for what will happen in the book. The title page echoes the cover. By showing a black cat leering from behind a book, it again links the library with scariness.

The illustration on the first page is set in a classroom. An announcement on the blackboard tells the students they will be visiting the school library that day. The children are shown not reacting well to the news. From the second page the book begins to portray students' imagination about the library. Everything about the library, the building, the librarian and the librarian's assistant are illustrated from the children's point-of-view. From children's imaginative view, the building in which the library is located is a gray ugly building like a witch's workplace. The portrayal of the librarian, Mrs. Beamster, proves that it is her shadow that is seen on the cover. In the children's eyes, Mrs. Beamster is huge. She is shaped like a monster with hairy arms, sharp nails and long spiky teeth. The kids name her "the laminator" because they believe she will laminate

them if they are caught talking in the library. The next illustration depicts this aspect of children's imaginary concern: a poor boy is laminated into a thin card. Not only does Mrs. Beamster look like a monster, her assistant is also imagined to be a wild creature. He is made to look like a lizard; his ugly mouth is watering.

The book continues to present children's imaginary tour of the library. Everywhere they are watched by Mrs. Beamster's followers—various animals that include lizards, mice, snakes and so on. The walls of the entrance are old, lighted by oddly shaped candles. Terrifying warnings cover the walls. Another illustration shows them being decontaminated in a cruel way before they are allowed into the library room. The children even believe the shelves in the library are electrified to harm the poor kids. Worst of all is the librarian Mrs. Beamster. The monster-like woman is depicted as forcing children to listen to her reading boring book catalogues. There is a close-up illustration of Mrs. Beamster reciting the Dewey decimal system. It shows her eyes looking upward at her sharp ears. Together with her teeth and nails, the eyes make Mrs. Beamster look quite evil. This again reflects children's view of the librarian.

A story twist occurs in the last couple pages, where the focus of the illustrations shifts from the imaginary world of children to their real tour of the library. The illustrations depicting their imagination are dominated by crooked lines and sharp, irregular shapes, offering a sense of tension and chaos. In comparison, the depiction of the real tour provides a feeling of peacefulness. The real Mrs. Beamster does not look terrible at all. She is a nice middle-aged lady with a chubby face and broad smile. In the neat and comfortable library, the lady is kindly helping children. The imaginary and real

relationship between the children and the librarian is made impressive by the sharp contrast between the different styles of illustrations.

As analyzed above, the majority of the book depicts the imaginary world of the children. Their imaginary trip to the library is characterized by horror, caused largely by their fear of the librarian, Mrs. Beamster. For some reason, the children held negative stereotypes of the librarian; this also indicates that from a child's perspective, their relationship with Mrs. Beamster is definitely not positive.

The imagined horrors of this relationship cause the children to be scared to go to the library. One distinction of this story from other stories is that although the book offers more such depictions of one of the boys, it portrays the psychology of the other children too. The depicted imagination is the shared experience of all children. By exchanging their feelings and imaginations, all children contribute to the imaginative play. The sharing experience provides children with an opportunity to express their fear to each other. This process relieves children's anxiety because expressing negative feelings is one of the primary factors in emotional regulation (Ashiabi, 2007). Communicating with each other also lets children know that they are not alone in the terrifying task.

The content of the imaginative play, although unpleasant, prepares children for the worst. The imaginary world is a training ground for children. As they have already experienced the terrible things in their imagination, they are ready to face what will happen in the library. In other words, experience in the imaginative play gives them confidence that they can handle Mrs. Beamster and the bad situation, and thus builds within them the courage for the real tour. As the final pages of the book illustrate, the children do a good job in the real tour. After being prepared for the worst, they find the

library an interesting place; most important of all, Mrs. Beamster is a nice lady with whom they want to have good relationship.

How I Became a Pirate

In *How I Became a Pirate* (2003), a hilarious book illustrated by David Shannon, the adult-child relationship is of greater complexity due to the interactions of a child with his parents and with other adults. The protagonist Jacob makes his first appearance on the cover page of the book, where he is riding on a pirate's back. Both are laughing heartily. This cover goes against the stereotype of a pirate being cruel to a child. Instead, the dynamics between the two include friendliness and harmony. The illustration on the first double-page spread is set against the seashore. Jacob is building a castle out of sand when he sees a pirate ship approaching. The second double-page spread displays Jacob trying to tell his parents about the pirates. However, his parents are busy with other things and just ignore him. The status of Jacob as a human being is different on these two pages. On the first page, he and the castle occupy a large space on the double-page spread, looking like a king in a play kingdom. On the second double-page spread, he is small in size and located at the left bottom corner of the book, looking unimportant and powerless. The dramatic meeting of the pirates and the boy begins on the third double-page spread and continues on to near the end of the book. In contrast to his parents' ignoring him, the pirates show great respect for Jacob due to the good sand castle he has built. However, Jacob does not gain this honor immediately after their meeting. The depiction of their first encounter takes a high perspective parallel to the pirate leader's height, offering a

sense of superiority over the boy. The following page takes a low perspective from the height of the boy, which makes the pirate leader look threatening and dominant. The dynamics so far depict the child in a subordinate position and the pirate leader in a dominant position. This hierarchical order begins to change when some pirates see Jacob's sand castle. They are portrayed marveling at the castle like kids, which reduces their dominance as adults and brings them closer to the child's character. The text indicates that they are impressed by the boy's digging skills. On the recto of the following double-page spread, the pirate leader is holding Jacob up in his right arm. This sense of equality is enhanced by a point-of-view parallel to the two characters.

The following several double-page spreads present a succession of Jacob's experiences after he is invited to be a pirate. All of these illustrations demonstrate that Jacob has an important position in this group of pirates. For example, when they are on a sailing ship, the pirate leader is seated on the bow and the boy is on the stern. These seats are superior to the middle part of the ship where all pirates sit and pull the oars. The playful and easy manner of the boy contrasts to the clumsiness of the pirates. Jacob earns his status by his skills in play. Another funny example occurs when Jacob teaches the pirates to play soccer after dinner. The pirates are depicted as clumsy with the ball, which again is a foil to Jacob's adeptness. Jacob's high position is strengthened when they meet bad weather and need to find a place to hide the treasure. As a good digger and an outdoor player who knows many places nearby, Jacob proudly leads the group to find a place and bury the treasure. In this illustration, Jacob's easy proud manners again make the pirates look stupid and clumsy. After saying goodbye to the pirates in a loving

manner, Jacob goes back to his regular life. He practices soccer as he had planned to do before the trip.

Although parents also appear in this book, many more pages are devoted to depicting the interplay between the boy protagonist and the pirates. With his amazing play skills, Jacob wins respect and recognition from a group of pirates, who are usually regarded as fierce and powerful. To the pirate leader, Jacob goes from being a little boy to a capable digger and worthy buddy. To all the other pirates, Jacob finally becomes a leader too.

Different than the other books analyzed in this part, this story depicts a child's relationship with a stranger. According to Greenberg and Marvin (1982), a majority of preschool children will exhibit social behaviors when interacting with strangers. Specifically, the behaviors will “function to promote or maintain proximity or interaction” (p. 483), including smiling, positive conversations, showing toys and so on. In relation to Jacob, who is about 5 years old, his social behavior towards the pirates lies in his demonstrated play ability. By showing his extraordinary skills in building castles and digging holes, the boy establishes a positive relationship with the pirates. Pirates are usually regarded as dangerous and rude, but they show tremendous admiration and respect to Jacob. Play not only wins Jacob some adult friends, but also brings Jacob the attention he fails to get from his parents. In other words, Jacob is emotionally comforted by the supportive pirates, whom he wins over as followers through play activities.

Jacob's desire for attention is portrayed in the starting pages of the book, which show him trying to communicate with his parents about his play, but being ignored and left alone. He has to engage in solitary activity—no one shares his zeal. The pirates'

enthusiasm for his playful disposition is in sharp contrast with his parents' indifference. By reacting actively to the pirates' wonder at his play skills, Jacob overcomes the sense of loss and loneliness caused by his parents. In an enjoyable process of revealing play skills, Jacob's experience with the pirates also actively shows emotional self-regulation.

The depiction of the child-pirate relationship in the book is characterized by idealistic harmony and a sense of humor. However, in real life children's encounters with strangers may not always be pleasant. The ironic thing is that although parents are concerned about their children's interaction with strangers, they sometimes push the children toward strangers by their impatience or indifference, especially their indifference to children's play. In contrast, strangers like pirates will give children the attention and respect they want. The story not only shows how positive a child-stranger relationship can be—more importantly, it reflects the power of play in determining children's social relationship and affecting children's mood.

Table 3

Books selected in this section categorized by their function in fostering self-regulation:

Function	Title	Author
A way of communication	<i>This Is a Hospital, Not a Zoo</i>	Roberta Karim
	<i>My Name Is Yoon</i>	Helen Recorvits
	<i>The School Trip</i>	Veldcamp, T.
	<i>First Grade Stinks</i>	Mary Ann Rodman
	<i>The Librarian from the Black Lagoon</i>	Mike Thaler
A tool for power struggle	<i>Lilly's Big Day</i>	Kevin Henkes
	<i>How I Became a Pirate</i>	Melinda Long
A safe land to make mistakes and learn	<i>Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse</i>	Kevin Henkes
	<i>Miss Nelson Is Missing</i>	Harry Allard
	<i>David Goes to School</i>	David Shannon

Books about peer relationships

The first part of this chapter analyzes the relationship between play and self-regulation as shown in the depictions of child characters in selected books. The books focus on the problems children may run into when they interact with adults other than their families. The adults include teachers, librarians, doctors and even strangers, whom young children tend to encounter on their way toward development.

Peers are another group of people young children are likely to interact with outside their family. A children's peer group as a social agency is "made up of members who have approximately the same age status or are within a limited age range and who decide whether a particular child is too young or too old to belong" (Handel, Cahill, & Elkin, 2006, p. 183). One of the distinctive features of a peer group is that within it children have different degrees of prestige and power (Handel et al., 2006). A child's status within a peer group is largely determined by their play ability, which in turn affects children's self-esteem and mood. Self-regulatory ability again comes into play in helping children overcome difficulties they encounter when they interact with peers. Such dynamics among children may also be found in picture books. The following analysis concerns an examination of ten such picture books and explores the interplay among play, self-regulation and children's relationships with one another.

The Recess Queen

The Recess Queen (O'Neill, 2002) is a picture book depicting the dynamics between children when they are on the playground. The protagonist of the book, Mean Jean, makes her first appearance on the cover. She is portrayed with flying hair and dancing fists, like she is going to beat up some one. Around her are scared children who flee in all directions. In terms of spatial positions, Mean Jean is placed at the center of the cover, occupying an enormous portion of the page. The other children are scattered around the edges and corners of the cover and even on the inside flap of the dust jacket. With only the backs or the sides of their bodies visible, the other children seem to be running desperately, horrified by her presence. The powerful status of Mean Jean is enhanced by the way her eyes are illustrated—they stare at the reader, appearing threatening and dominating. The use of vertical, diagonal, and zigzag lines also offers a sense of disorder and tension. The title page confirms Jean's primary position among her classmates by portraying her as smirking and cleaning her queen crown, a symbol of her status. However, a hint is dropped on the copyright page, where Jean is illustrated kicking out with her teeth gritted while another girl is easily and skillfully defending herself against Jean. This suggests a power struggle and that change will occur later in the book.

The first double-page spread juxtaposes Jean with a group of other children in the setting of a school playground. The humorous illustration places Jean on the left side of the page, where she assumes nearly all of the space on the page, and her expression seems to claim the entire playground as her own. All the other children are clustered on the right side of the page, standing at the other side of the playground and looking up at

Jean with scared expressions. The power relations at work among the children are obvious: Jean is a big bully dominating all the other children, and the others are powerless victims. The next double-page spread captures a moment on the playground when Jean is bullying the other children. Stepping on one end of the seesaw, she sends the girl on the other end soaring up to the sky, while exaggeratedly holding the boy on her end in her arms like a baby toy. Other children are fleeing in all directions. As on the cover, here Jean is portrayed with her teeth gritted and face twisted, smiling a proud and vicious smile towards her horrified peers. This intimidating image is repeated on the following double-page spread, where Jean is portrayed standing on top of a slide and growling at the children below her. Her large size and towering position contrast sharply with the other children, whose little images scatter here and there. One interesting detail, however, is a girl hiding below the slide reading a book entitled *The Art of Defense*, an ironic foil to Jean's offensive manners. These illustrations shape Mean Jean as a dominant bullying figure, and the other children as weak and powerless. Depiction of the weakness of the other children is in sharp contrast with another character, brave Katie Sue.

Katie Sue makes her first appearance on the ensuing double-page spread. She is the newcomer to the class. Although she is depicted as small and weak, the central position she is given on this page suggests the importance of her role in the next part of the story. The story moves back to the playground on the next double-page spread, which captures several of Katie Sue's playful moments. Not knowing that Mean Jean is the queen of the playground, Katie plays to her heart's content, playing baseball and soccer, and on the trampoline. This differs totally from the depiction of the other children, with

the exception of Mean Jean. The next double-page spread portrays what is happening on another part of the playground: Mean Jean is bullying the other children again, and they have either fallen on the ground or been tied up by Jean. The left page of the double-page spread features a boy dizzy after being pushed down. His defeated image is a sharp contrast to Katie's happy image on the previous page. The next double-page spread juxtaposes Katie Sue and Mean Jean on the same illustration. Katie is a smaller size on the left page, while Jean is a domineering size on the right page. She is grabbing Katie by the collar, and the text shows that she is teaching the playground rules to Katie: Jean is the recess queen, and nobody plays with any toy until she plays with it first. The illustrator cleverly puts two whirls of smoke beside Jean's cheeks, which not only makes the illustration funny, but also highlights the sharp tone and hot temper of Jean, which is difficult to show in two-dimensional pictures.

Unexpectedly, Katie does not wince at Jean's threats. The text on the left page of next double-page spread states that Katie argues back, saying that Jean is being bossy. She will not give up her play. On the right page of this double-page spread, Katie is depicted surrounded by a variety of toys. Her adeptness at play and her confident expression reveal her self-assertion and courage before the threat. The curving track of the bouncy soccer ball on the left page offers a sense of freedom and liveliness. The next spread again portrays Jean as the focus. Occupying the whole left page, she is depicted running furiously, kicking balls on her way to catch the "untamed" Katie. Jean's extreme anger is emphasized by one ball that is portrayed as being deflated by her strenuous kick. The right page again features some children clustering together and watching Jean with fearful eyes. On the following page, the two girls confront each other. Jean is depicted

akimbo, demonstrating her power, but Katie fearlessly invites Jean to play with her. The confrontation continues on the next double-page spread, which shows Jean standing dumbfounded because she never expected the invitation. On the other hand, Katie is playing with the jump rope joyfully while singing a rhyme in which she is inviting Jean to play. This time the illustration portrays Jean's surprise by depicting her bulging eyes—her eyes are protruding in surprise and nearly fall out of her face. Jean joins Katie on the next page, either out of her own desire to play or encouraged by another boy. They play and smile until caught by the rope on the next page, but they laugh like good friends.

Depicting all the children playing during recess time, the next double-page spread is like an echo of the first page, but the dynamics among the children have been transformed. In contrast to the tension on the first page, the illustration on this spread conveys a message of harmony, love, and friendship. Jean's image is not domineering; instead, she is playing harmoniously with the other children. The final page differs from the other pages because the illustration is placed within a frame in which the two protagonists are jumping rope. The tracks of the swinging rope form the petals of a beautiful flower that break the frame of the illustration, implying the beauty and strong power of the children's relationship.

Although this book involves a serious issue—the playground “bully”—the overall tone of the book is humorous and joyful, offering a sense of hope and happiness. Contrasting Katie Sue with other children demonstrates how self-regulatory ability can affect children's emotions and interpersonal relationships.

Katie Sue's self-regulatory skills lie in her ability to control fear and screw up the courage to face Jean. Eisenberg, Spinrad and Smith argued that, “At a broad level,

emotion-related regulation can include attentional, cognitive, or behavioral attempts to manage internal states or the external expression of emotion” (as cited in Trentacosta & Shaw, 2009, p. 356–365). In Katie’s case, she is able to manipulate her own feelings so that she does not wince at Jean’s threat. As the other children showed, wincing at Jean’s threat only makes the situation worse. Specifically, the kids who give up their position throw themselves into a vicious cycle: they have to give up again and again or they will be punished. In comparison, Katie knows she has to stand up to Jean; her self-regulatory ability gives her the ability to be courageous rather than scared.

Katie is also capable of working out constructive strategies for dealing with the bullying Jean; the strategy, as the book shows, is an invitation to play. Although Jean dominates the other children, she is a lonely child because no one really respects or likes her. Keane and Calkins (2004) argued that aggressive children are not liked by other kids in preschool settings. The children’s attitude toward Jean is a very negative one—they just try to stay as far as possible from her. Therefore, although Jean keeps all the school toys to herself, she can only play by herself, with no one sharing the fun. She longs for the companionship of others. When Katie invites her to play, she is surprised but accepts quickly. She is also illustrated as laughing happily when playing with Katie rather than smirking as she used to do. Katie’s invitation to play actually is an invitation to share. Sharing is one rule with which Jean does not appear familiar. By engaging in play with Jean, Katie shows her the rules of joint play. For Katie, regulating Jean promotes her own self-regulatory skills (Vygotsky, 1978). For Jean, in being regulated she also learns to regulate herself and thus gains the ability to self-regulate.

King of the Playground

King of the Playground (1994) by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor could be paired with *The Recess Queen* (O’Neill, 2002). The book cover suggests the story’s plot by portraying a playground with a slide on which two boys are confronting each other. One of the boys is threatening the other with his waving fist and fierce look. The other boy is shrinking out of fear. On the first page of the book, the boy Kevin, who is scared, is dressing himself before going to the playground. He puts on his Spiderman T-shirt and Batman underpants, which as the text explains is to give him courage. The illustration and text on this page work together to build suspense: why is Kevin so scared to go to the playground? The physical objects illustrated on this page help to explain part of Kevin’s personality—he is shown as a boy who likes to play as revealed, for example, by the table lamp and telephone in his room, which are shaped like toys. The text on the next page explains why Kevin is so scared. He is afraid of a boy named Sammy. The next illustration then juxtaposes the two boys together. In front of the slide on the playground, Sammy uses his arm to keep Kevin away while saying, “You can’t come in! I am King of the Playground” (p. 3), and Kevin draws back with a fearful look, as on the cover page. The setting moves back to Kevin’s house, where he tells his father what happens between Sammy and him. The illustration on the next page demonstrates that Sammy threatens to tie Kevin up if Kevin plays on the slide. Compared to the other illustrations, this one uses muted lines of wash with bland colors, indicating that it is just a mental image built in Kevin’s mind after he is threatened. A blurry frame line encircling this illustration also distinguishes what is imagined from real happenings. The conversation between the

father and the son continues on the next page, where the boy is taught to struggle and fight if he is being tied up. The story develops in a couple of rounds that show Kevin going to the playground and coming back after being threatened by Sammy. Each time, he is taught a way to defend himself by his father. The twist in the story occurs when Kevin dresses himself as Spiderman and marches to the playground where Sammy is playing in the sandbox. As usual, Sammy tries to scare Kevin away. He says that he will put Kevin in a cage with bears if Kevin approaches. However, Kevin demonstrates his courage by saying that he would then ride on the bears. The two boys continue fighting verbally, with Sammy making threats and Kevin defending himself until Kevin becomes the more challenging one. When Sammy threatens to drive a tank to chase Kevin, Kevin says, “try it” (p. 27) and surprises Sammy. The conflict ends with the two boys playing separately in the same sandbox. The previously timid, trembling Kevin now is confident, sitting parallel to Sammy and exhibiting self-assertion. The story then shows how the two boys bump each other’s heads and laugh. Friendship begins when they talk about their play and then play together.

As in the *Recess Queen* (2002), the bullied one on the playground wins the friendship and respect of a bully by demonstrating courage, friendliness, and competence in play. The theme of play pervades the book. Not only are many illustrations set against the playground, but also some illustrations are portrayed in a hilarious comic-style to reveal the imaginations of Kevin and Sammy. Although the book touches upon unpleasant issues like bullying and conflicts, on the whole the story is light-hearted in tone and features the colorfulness of children’s play world.

The story depicts the self-regulatory process of both children. Kevin needs to overcome his fear. He also needs to work out positive ways to deal with the situation rather than escaping from it. Imagination helps him to achieve these tasks. Through his imagination, Kevin visualizes a situation in which he courageously fights Sammy's bullying. In the imaginary world he can also experience the pleasure of winning against the "invincible" Sammy. The imaginary experience prepares Kevin for confrontation with Sammy in real life. Not only does it allow Kevin to practice how to deal with Sammy, but it also encourages Kevin by showing him that he can fight with Sammy.

The guidance of Kevin's father is also important to Kevin's development of self-regulatory ability. The more knowledgeable others play an important role in helping children acquire self-regulatory skills (Vygotsky, 1978). Kevin's father encourages Kevin to defend and even fight for himself when being bullied. He inspires Kevin to imagine various situations of self-defense, giving Kevin courage as well as the ability to protect himself from dominant children. The father's support of his son's imaginativeness and participation in play activities provides Kevin with a positive social context in which to learn self-regulation.

Compared with Kevin, there is less detail about Sammy. He only appears on the playground. Like many other dominant children, on the playground he keeps all the toys for himself and makes threats to scare away other children. In doing so he seems to have a higher status than other kids. Play ability is an important factor in children's status among peers (P.A. Adler & P. Adler, 1998). Sammy establishes his status by keeping all toys for himself, but at the end of the book Kevin wins his status by showing his play ability too. Attracted by Kevin's ability in play, Sammy has to please Kevin to let him

join in, which requires him to control his selfishness and be polite and friendly. In this sense, play not only wins Kevin a deserving status between the two kids but it also teaches Sammy to control his own dominance and be friendly to others.

Enemy Pie

The peer relationship is important to the overall development of young children; failure to handle peer rejection has a deleterious affect on children's development even into adolescence (Kean & Calkins, 2004). In *King of the Playground* (Naylor, 1994), Kevin positively solves the problem of being rejected with the help of imagination and his father. *Enemy Pie* (Munson, 2000) tells another story about how a boy deals with peer rejection with the help of play and an adult.

Compared to Kevin, the male character in *Enemy Pie* is facing a more difficult situation. As the only child uninvited to Jeremy's trampoline party, the boy risks being excluded by all children in the neighborhood. That's why the boy hates the newcomer Jeremy so much that he lists him as his enemy Number 1. By showing the boy happily playing baseball with other boys, the first double-page spread informs the reader that the boy is a group play lover. This further explains why he feels so sad when he is the only one excluded from the trampoline party. Fortunately, the boy has good communicative skills as well as an understanding father. The father promises to help the boy beat Jeremy by using an "enemy cake" he makes, but an indispensable part of the recipe is that the boy needs to play with Jeremy for one day, and he should be nice to his enemy too during this day.

His father's purpose, of course, is to ask his boy to take a positive role in starting a friendship with Jeremy. The enemy cake is a placebo to soothe the boy's fear. However, the boy is still hesitant about going to Jeremy. The illustration shows a close-up of his long gloomy face, which together with the text indicates his uneasiness. The reader feels relieved when Jeremy makes his first appearance in the book. Standing face to face at the door with the boy, he does not look like a mean boy at all. To the protagonist's surprise, not only is Jeremy willing to play with him, but he also generously shares his toys such as trampolines and balloons. The depiction shows them playing happily together like good friends. Jeremy is not an enemy anymore.

In return, the protagonist leads Jeremy to his home too. To thank Jeremy for his generosity, he even shares his most precious toys with him, which he won't even share with his sister and father. This again indicates that Jeremy is no longer an enemy. The boy's changed attitude towards Jeremy is explicitly shown when he tries to stop the little guest from eating the enemy cake, which he thinks will harm Jeremy. However, the cake turns out to be delicious and fine. He is finally invited to Jeremy's trampoline party. Whether or not the cake is just a trick, he uses his courage and friendliness to win a new good friend, and more importantly, gains experience in dealing with peer relationships.

As the story shows, the fertile ground for fostering friendships between children is play, even when the relationship starts negatively with exclusion or rejection. The reason that the protagonist feels rejected at the beginning is because he is not invited to a trampoline party. As "play creates a small social organization of children who cooperate to achieve common goals (Berk, 2005, p. 358)," to the boy the trampoline party is not just

an interesting play activity; it shapes a small society where he wants to belong. He wants to beat not for the sake of the trampoline, but to win him a position among all the peers.

The desire to belong empowers the boy to go out for Jeremy as his father asks him to do. However, to him going to invite Jeremy for play is not a gesture of friendliness, but a part of the recipe for enemy cake. To his surprise, Jeremy is not a terrible enemy, but a boy who likes playing and sharing. The playtime they spent together, although meant to be a strategy at first, eliminates the barrier and even fosters friendship between the two boys.

For the boy, overcoming fear and embarrassment about facing Jeremy requires good self-regulatory skills, which may be beyond his capacity. His father as the more knowledgeable other plays a positive role in helping the boy achieve needed self-regulatory ability. Specifically, he does not explicitly ask the boy to be brave or positive, which may be a burden to his son. Instead, he makes self-regulation a part of the recipe for enemy cake and easily motivates the boy to achieve the task. In other words, the idea of an enemy cake helps the boy to “manage internal state or external expression of emotion” (Trentacosta & Shaw, 2009, p. 359), which eventually eliminates misunderstanding between the children. The father is also clever in using play as the land for his boy to practice self-regulation. As shown in the story, play enables Jeremy to respond positively to the boy’s visit, which no doubt is comforting and encouraging.

A Weekend with Wendell

A Weekend with Wendell (Henkes, 1995) tells a story about a friendship between two little mice, Wendell and Sophie. Wendell spends a weekend with Sophie's family. The illustration on the first page displays the contrast between Wendell and Sophie. Wendell, who looks older, is happy and self-confident with Sophie and her mother, even though he is a guest, while Sophie hides behind her mother, shy and scared. Wendell is depicted waving his arms out of excitement, and the bag held in his right hand extends beyond the frame of the illustration. This body language enhances the impression that Wendell is a happy and active boy who may be egocentric and does not care how others think of him. The second illustration confirms the image on the first page. Wendell is portrayed marching proudly up the stairs to his room, while poor Sophie unwillingly carries the suitcase and quilt for him. To supplement the illustration, the text explains that Wendell has suggested that they engage in play. Not only does he laugh at Sophie's toys, but he also acts as the leader who makes up the play rules. The next four illustrations depict three play episodes. In the first illustration, Wendell is shown taking the central position and keeping all the toys for himself, while Sophie sits sulking in a corner because, as the text explains, she has been asked to play the dog while Wendell plays the father, the mother, and the kids. The dynamics between the two are demonstrated as one being dominant over the other, with Sophie sadly swallowing her bitterness. These dynamics can be seen in the next illustration, where Wendell plays the doctor, nurse, and patient, while Sophie is asked to be a small clerk. Again, Wendell is depicted happily keeping everything for himself while Sophie sits frustrated in a corner. In the next

illustration, Wendell plays a baker, and Sophie a poor sweet roll. This time Wendell is still happy and proud, but Sophie's bitterness worsens—she sits on a chair in the corner and turns her back to Wendell. After these three play episodes, Wendell strengthens his dominant position in relation to Sophie.

On the other hand, although Sophie is the passive one who tolerates Wendell's behavior, her resentment of Wendell grows as time goes on. Their conflict becomes increasingly serious as Wendell continues to be selfish and bossy. The following pages show him stealing Sophie's cream and scaring her at night. With rising anger, Sophie transforms from passively tolerating Wendell to actively confronting him. For the first time, she initiates an idea to play fire fighter and makes herself the rule-maker. The illustrations display Sophie playing the firefighter and hosing Wendell down. It is Wendell who is in a weak and passive position this time. The story ends with the two becoming good friends. By taking the initiative in play, Sophie wins back her equal rights from a selfish buddy, and also wins a sweet friendship.

The story typifies the hidden power struggle that operates in peer play activities. In a playgroup constituted by peers, "children frequently compete with and attempt to control one another using a wide range of interpersonal and communicative skills, and status hierarchies are often fluid and constantly changing" (Corsaro, 2005, p. 181). In relation to the story, both Wendell and Sophie use communication skills to gain control over each other. Wendell brings up ideas about games to play and tries to take the more desirable position in the imaginative play. He also makes himself superior by criticizing Sophie's toys. Sophie fights back using the same strategy and wins herself a higher status in relation to Wendell.

Not only do communication skills used in play situations change the power relations between the two kids, they are also part of the self-regulation learning process. Sophie fights back because she is tired of being oppressed by Wendell in imaginative play, forced into a subordinate position she does not like. To make herself feel better, she stops being tolerant. She needs to be more assertive and learn to take the initiative in play. As for Wendell, Sophie's fighting back teaches him to consider others' feelings. He realizes that Sophie can take the upper hand in play too. Furthermore, he must withhold his own demand for power so that he may be accepted by Sophie in her play.

Connie Came to Play

Connie Came to Play (Walsh, 1995) also exemplifies how power struggles between children relate to play. In the book, a boy named Connie comes to Robert's house to play, but Robert is not willing to share his toys with Connie. Connie is not disturbed by the situation but resorts to solitary imaginative play. To Robert's surprise, Connie plays more happily than he does. Besides the text of their conversation, the layout and illustrations of the book demonstrate the dynamics between the two boys. Although in the same house, the two boys are placed separately on a series of double-page spreads. Robert is depicted on the versos, with each illustration of him depicting him as engrossed in different, colorful toys; Connie is left without toys on the right pages. However, being without toys does not mean Connie's world is boring. Each such double-page spread juxtaposing the two boys is followed with another double-page spread depicting the imaginative play world of Connie.

On the pages on which Robert is depicted, the illustrations are simple with the boy placed against a blank background, offering a sense of loneliness. In contrast, the double-page spread depicting Connie's imaginative play is full of color and liveliness. For example, one double-page spread has Robert on the left page keeping a toy train all to himself. Connie is sitting alone on the right page. They are placed against a blank, dull backdrop. In comparison, the illustrations on the following double-page spread are colorful with yellow blossoms and blue sky. The running train, the sun, the followers and the leaping crows lend vivacity to the page; it also offers better visual appeal. Seeing Connie having more fun, Robert says, ". . . everything is mine. You can't share with me then" (Walsh, 1995, p. 26). By reminding Connie that he has no toys, Robert aims to put Connie in an inferior position. To Robert's surprise, Connie is not affected by his words at all. Instead, to prove that he can still share, he describes to Robert an interesting episode of imaginative play in which both the boys are playing together. Connie's excellent communication skills win him a more respectable position between the two; more importantly, they finally change Robert's mind. Either moved by Connie's friendliness or attracted by the interesting play, Connie gives up his selfishness and offers to play with Connie.

The book depicts power relations between the two boys by illustrating their play world. Although Robert possesses a large variety of toys, his play world is portrayed as being less colorful, offering a sense of dullness. Connie's imaginative play world, in comparison, is composed of various shapes and colors, indicating the wonderfulness of his play. Obviously Connie wins the invisible competition between the two boys. One of the reasons for Connie's winning is his creativity, which makes him a good player.

Playing ability always makes a child charming to peers. Another important reason is his good self-regulatory skills. Connie's self-regulation is both emotional and behavioral. Emotionally, Connie is not bitter about peer rejection. He shows no self-pity or anger. Behaviorally, he does not engage in negative behavior toward Robert. Instead, he resolves the situation quite positively by initiating solitary play activities. Connie also demonstrates the good communication skills needed for conflict solution.

Connie's self-regulatory skills not only save him from a negative mood, but also help Robert to learn self-control. Compared to Connie, Robert displays an inferior ability to self-regulate. He fails to control his selfish desire for the toys that will ultimately make him an unlikable child among peers (Ponitz, Rimm-Kaufman & Nathanson, 2009). Connie's existence provides Robert with a social context in which he sees others' positive behavior and eventually corrects his own manners. In other words, Connie's self-regulatory skills makes him a more knowledgeable other. By socially interacting with him through play, Robert improves his own self-regulatory ability. In addition, the power of play to affect children's learning is reflected in the story. It is Connie's intriguing imaginative play that attracts Robert's attention, finally enabling him to control his own selfishness and learn to share with others.

Hunter's Best Friend at School

As demonstrated in the stories analyzed in this section, play nurtures friendship. This is also illustrated in the book *Hunter's Best Friend at School* (Elliott, 2002). The cover of the book shows two little raccoons standing arm-in-arm happily. The initial

letters on their T-shirts tell us that the one wearing H is Hunter and the other one with S is Stripe. The first page of the book focuses on depicting their friendship by showing the two boy raccoons walking shoulder to shoulder towards school; several moments of their school life are juxtaposed on the following pages. The depiction of their school life captures moments when they are eating and reading. They like to have the same or similar things: similar favorite sweater, similar favorite lunch; but most important of all, similar play activities. A majority of the illustrations about their school life depict their play moments. They always engage in the same play, one following the other. The play scenes are portrayed in vertical and diagonal lines, offering a sense of excitement and vivacity (Bang, 2000).

Since the common interest in play bonds the two boys together, discrepancies between them may bring challenges to their friendship. In class and during lunchtime, Stripe always attempts to involve Hunter in illicit play, which leads them to be separated by the teacher. Despite sitting at different tables in art class, Stripe still tries to lure Hunter into illicit play. He cuts his paper frog into pieces, throws it all over the ground and asks Hunter to do the same thing. Hunter loves his paper frog. However, to prove he is a good friend, he reluctantly does what Stripe asks him to do. The misbehavior makes Hunter unhappy; worse yet, Stripe is angry with him because he admits to the teacher he did not want to cut up the frog. The sad situation is that, on the one hand, he engages in some types of misbehavior reluctantly to please his friend. On the other hand, his friend is angry with him. While play is the happy ground that nourishes their friendship, illicit play makes both of them unhappy.

Adults' help again comes into play. Hunter's mother teaches him that being a friend does not mean following Stripe in everything; instead, he should help Stripe do the right thing. The next day in the school, Hunter does not become involved in illicit play initiated by Stripe. He concentrates on things he thinks are worth doing. The result is that Stripe begins to follow him and stops his mischief. Their friendship resumes and they again play together, but only play at the right time and in the right place.

One point evident in the story is that although play fosters friendship, illicit play sometimes negatively affects peer relationships. As shown in the story, when the two little ones play during recess, they both enjoy the same activities very much. Both can adjust to please the other and maintain their friendship. Just as Wohlwend (2005) stated, "on the playground, the relative freedom of recess play and its uniquely autonomous zone of proximal development affords children the time and space to work through issues of friendship" (p. 78). In contrast, the context of illicit play may be deleterious to peer relationships. First, the significance of illicit play to children is that they can get a sense of autonomy from it (King, 1982). If they become involved in such play reluctantly, as Hunter does, the pleasure diminishes; worse, he feels bad when he is blamed for some misdeed in which he involuntarily engaged. Second, children may have different views of illicit play. Like Stripe and Hunter, one likes it while the other does not; the context of illicit play does not allow them to communicate with each other and therefore the small discrepancy leads to a bigger misunderstanding.

When the friendship is called into question, self-regulatory skills are needed to resolve problems between children. One way in which children learn self-regulation is to learn it socially from more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). In the story, the

more knowledgeable other is Hunter's mother, who teaches Hunter that being a friend does not mean following blindly; instead, he can be a positive role model and help Stripe stop engaging in illicit play. The mother's guidance saves the boy from bad feelings about being misunderstood despite his efforts to please his friend. Hunter himself also demonstrates good self-regulatory ability. He controls the impulse to follow Stripe again and again and eventually gets Stripe to follow him. Fortunately, the efforts toward self-regulation are beneficial. Hunter not only controls his behavior, but also helps Stripe gain a greater ability to self-regulate. This is how positive friendships develop.

Big Little Elephant

Although they may have disagreements or even fight, Hunter and Stripe are lucky because they are friends. Some have no friends at all; one such individual is the little elephant in the book *Big Little Elephant* (Gorbachev, 2005). The title introduces the characteristics of the elephant as both big and little. "Big" refers to his big size, which makes him different from most other animals and also causes his loneliness. "Little" means that the elephant is still young—just about of preschool age. Like all kids in this age range, he likes to play, have fun, and wants to have friends.

The first double-page spread shows the little elephant hiding behind the fence at his family's home. Toys are scattered everywhere. The rich colors and motion indicating vertical and diagonal lines within the illustrations offer a sense of liveliness and happiness. However, the expression of the elephant shows him to be in low spirits. The

text tells us that although the little elephant has good toys and caring parents, he is not happy because he has no friends. After presenting a solitary play scene on the second double-page spread, the third one shows the little elephant setting out on a journey to look for friends. As play is a major way to foster friendship among preschool children (Berk, 2005), the little elephant tries to join in other animals' play to make friends with them. The other animals, the frogs, the tortoise and the bird, are glad to accept him. However, a sequence of illustrations demonstrates the little elephant's failure to perform well in all types of play activities, including splashing in water, rope jumping and hopscotch. This is due to his large size. As a result, the little elephant has to be left out of play activities, which makes him sad and disappointed. The sadness is conveyed in the illustration, which does not show a gloomy face but an image of him from behind. Compared to other animals in the group, the image of the little elephant walking away captured from behind seems to indicate more about his emotions than a sad face. Fortunately, the little elephant has caring parents. They encourage him to think positively; that is, he can still engage in other activities with friends. Their encouragement motivates the little elephant to go out again to look for friends. His parents' words turn out to be right. This time the little elephant is hailed as a lovable friend because of his special play skills: he can blow the kite up into the air, for example. Once merged into one peer group, the young animals create a variety of play activities in which the elephant can participate. A sequence of illustrations portrays them playing happily together in different episodes. The little elephant now is a good friend who is accepted for his "bigness".

“Friends provide children with a means of entertainment, a source of feedback, a feeling of belonging, and a foundation of identity” (P. A. Adler & P. Adler, 2001, p. 117).

Maybe this explains why the little elephant desires friends so much even if he has toys and caring parents. Although he knows to use play as a way to make friends, his big size distances him from other child animals. It also prevents him from playing with other children. As Wohlwend (2004) states, "...children may suffer peer rejection or lags in social development as a result of ineffective play behaviors" (p. 77); the little elephant's poor performance during play causes him to be excluded from the playgroup, although in quite a polite way. Being rejected also makes the little elephant quite sad, as the book portrays. Therefore, self-regulatory ability is needed to help the little elephant overcome his sadness and rebuild friendships.

Parents as the more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978) help little ones to go through critical periods. Specifically, they not only provide emotional comfort but also make constructive suggestions about courses of action. Their suggestions reflect their wisdom as parents: they are supportive of the child's playful disposition and encourage his play activities with other children. They know that play is a fertile ground for fostering friendships between children, and also acts as a training ground for their son as he practices self-regulation.

As his parents expect, the young elephant sets out again to find friends. The fact that he goes to the same group who rejected him demonstrates his efforts to achieve self-regulatory abilities. Specifically, he tries to overcome fears of rejection. This is also an opportunity to test out his parents' suggestions. Finding that he can be an important part of other forms of play such as kite flying, he realizes that he can be a good player whom everyone loves. His self-regulatory skills are also reflected in his learning to initiate play scenarios to guarantee his position within the group. Vygotsky (1978) believed that

children learn self-regulation through play because they learn to recognize and follow the rules in the play context. As the illustrations depict, the activities initiated by the little elephant are those in which he can play an important part. This indicates his acknowledgment of the rules that operate within play; he knows he has to choose types of play whose rules allow for his huge size.

Harry and Willy and Carrothead

At school, children tend to be singled by the distinctive features that differentiate them from others. They may be laughed at or even excluded for such differences. The picture book *Harry and Willy and Carrothead* (Caseley, 1991) depicts how two children regarded as different by others win respect and friendship through self-regulatory ability as well as impressive play skills.

The title of the book contains the names of three boys. They are portrayed standing shoulder to shoulder as friends. As classmates in school, they are all five years old. However, their relationship is not great at the beginning. Harry and Carrothead are excluded by others. The book begins by introducing Harry as the protagonist of the story. Harry has been born without a left hand. A sequence of illustrations on the first several pages presents the process of his growth to five years of age. These illustrations together with text indicate that Harry is born a capable, self-confident boy despite his handicap. His capability is shown in the illustrations, which portray him as a good player in various types of play. The bright colors and round shapes used in these illustrations offer a sense of happiness, echoing the message sent by the text.

At school, children are curious about Harry's prosthesis. Harry demonstrates good self-regulatory ability and is never disturbed by their curiosity and questions. At lunchtime, he eats naturally while all the other kids are watching him. His calm manners attract a boy named Oscar. The boy is nicknamed Carrothead for his red hair. They start talking and playing together. Several illustrations depict two play episodes, which show how play bonds the two boys together. One play episode portrays their illicit play in the class. Although Harry is punished, Oscar stands with him and thus their bond is tightened. The other illustration shows him playing football on the playground. Oscar knows Harry better through playing baseball. He sees his friend's play skills as well as self-confidence.

The third boy Willy makes his appearance within the book on Harry's first day to school. He is portrayed as a mischievous boy who calls Oscar Carrothead. His second appearance is at the Halloween party. Again he makes fun of Oscar's red hair. This time Harry stands up for Oscar. He asks Willy to call Oscar by his name. When Willy threatens him with his fists, Harry does not wince; instead, he confronts him with a fist too. Harry's courage astonishes Willy. He gives up and tries to become friends with Oscar and Harry. One of the last illustrations shows how the three boys' friendship nourishes on the playground while playing baseball together.

One would assume that a boy like Harry would have low self-esteem and difficulty adapting to school life. However, Harry demonstrates good self-regulatory skills. The process of his growth depicted in the book largely explains how he comes to possess self-regulatory ability; that is, he learns it from observing and interacting with his parents. Despite Harry's handicap, his parents treat him like a regular kid. For example, they do not sympathize with him; rather, they think highly of him as a wonderful child.

The optimism plants the seed of positive thinking within the heart of the boy.

Furthermore, the parents encourage their son to engage in a variety of play activities.

Their encouragement and the resulting self-confidence in the child allow him to perform well in many games, which in turn boost the boy's self-esteem.

As Vygotsky (1978) asserted, children learn self-regulation through social interaction with others, especially the more knowledgeable others like parents or more capable peers. Harry benefits from a pair of optimistic, play-encouraging parents and develops good self-regulatory skills. His friend Oscar, in turn, learns from Harry and improves his self-regulatory ability. Most mutual interactions between the two boys occur during the play process. When Harry is punished for playing in class, Oscar stands with him to be punished together. This lets Harry see Oscar's good heart as a friend. When playing baseball together, Oscar not only sees Harry's impressive playing skills, but also feels and learns from his self-assertiveness. It is also in the play process, the Halloween party, when Harry shows Oscar how to use courage to fight for himself. The process helps Oscar to make efforts to overcome his weakness and timidity. In addition, Willy the bullying boy also learns to control himself through his interactions with Harry. Harry's confrontation with him at the party teaches him to respect and be friendly to others. As the end of the book shows, when Harry, Oscar and Willy come together, all knowing how to control their weaknesses, the friendship flourishes on the field on which friendship and self-regulation are nurtured—the playground.

Jessica

The previous story shows that children can learn self-regulation by interacting with each other. These stories indicate that even imaginary companions can help children master self-adjustment skills. Learning from imaginative playmates is possible because children with imaginary companions appear to conceptualize their imaginary friends as real partners. By treating the imaginary ones as real ones, they rehearse the social skills needed in real friendship (Gleason, 2002).

Targeted at children from 3 to 8 years old, *Jessica* (1998) by Kevin Henkes is a book depicting a lonely five-year-old girl named Ruthie who has an imaginary companion. The title page illustrates Ruthie playing with toys on her own, but the text reveals that when she is playing, Ruthie is talking to an invisible friend named Jessica. Ruthie is lonely because she is the only child in the family. The illustration on the book's first page displays her in an imaginative play episode, pretending to talk to an invisible person on the chair. Although present throughout the book, the imaginary Jessica is not illustrated at all. Her presence is indicated only through Jessica's monologue during play. The following pages capture moments when Ruthie is playing with Jessica in different contexts—on the playground, in the yard, or at home. It seems that Jessica is with her wherever she goes.

Not only does Jessica save Ruthie from loneliness, but she also helps her overcome the fear of going to kindergarten. Although Ruthie's parents ask her to leave Jessica at home when she goes to kindergarten, Ruthie takes Jessica with her. In the new

environment, she talks to Jessica when no one talks to her and plays with Jessica when no one plays with her, until a classmate named Jessica asks Ruthie if they can play together.

As an only child, Ruthie does not have much experience in getting along with another child. Imaginary friend Jessica provides Ruthie with opportunities to practice interpersonal skills so that when a real Jessica comes to her, Ruthie can quickly adapt to the new friendship. "... Children with imaginary companions are particularly adept at forming and maintaining peer relationships in comparison to other children" because of "the extra rehearsal" of interpersonal skills (Gleason, 2004, p. 205). As the book reveals, the stage for the rehearsal is play, and one thing she learns from the "rehearsal" is self-regulation. Specifically, she learns self-regulation by negotiating and making compromises during the play process.

The self-regulatory skills Ruthie learns from Jessica help her endure the difficult introduction to the school. According to Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta and Cox, "self-regulation is ranked as the most important characteristic necessary for school readiness by kindergarten teachers" (as cited in Leong & Bodrova, 2006, p. 33). This is because self-regulatory ability not only affects academic achievement, but also peer relationships. The imaginary Jessica helps Ruthie regulate herself in a new environment. For instance, when Ruthie leaves home for school, she tells Jessica that she will be okay. That means she believes Jessica is supporting and caring about her. Such support and care give her courage to face the strange school. In school, Ruthie overcomes her fear and loneliness and becomes active via the companionship of the imaginary Jessica. More importantly, interactions with the imaginary Jessica train Ruthie to be able to get along with a peer, which is why she can readily befriend a real Jessica she meets at school.

Leon and Bob

Leon and Bob (1997) by Simon James is another book depicting how an imaginary companion helps children develop the self-regulation needed to maintain friendships. The cover of the book depicts two boys sitting together in the doorway holding a football. The illustration on the cover reveals that the essence of the story (Nodelman, 1988) may be about friendship and play. The cover also builds the expectation that the two boys' names will be Bob and Leon. One of the boys—Leon—is introduced on the first page. He has just moved into a new place with his mom. The text indicates that he shares the room with a friend called Bob. However, the illustration shows no boy in the room. The discrepancy between the illustration and text begs the question: where is Bob?

The depiction of the interactions between Leon and Bob on the following pages reveals that Bob actually is an imaginary companion. Bob is never visible on the pages. His existence is indicated in the depictions of Leon, when it appears that he is walking, talking or playing with someone. One interesting feature of the illustrations is that the shadows are as noticeable as real objects, which may imply that from Leon's perspective, everything, a shadow and even an imagination, is as important as human beings.

So far, it is only the imaginary Bob who has been mentioned in the book. The real Bob, who is illustrated on the cover, makes his first appearance on page 11. He is shown waving at Leon as a newcomer to the neighborhood. Leon waves back while looking down at Bob through the window of his room upstairs. The new neighbor boy's friendliness impresses Leon. The next morning Leon wants to go out and play with him.

However, he dares not go alone. His loyal imaginary companion accompanies him as a support. The book presents a sequence of illustrations depicting Leon's hesitation before knocking on the door of the boy's home. One double-page spread shows him stopping halfway toward the doorway. He turns back only to find that his imaginary Bob is not there any more. The next illustration portrays him sitting in the doorway weighing the pros and cons of knocking at the door. The ensuing pictures demonstrate how the boy eventually works out his courage and rings the doorbell. He is even brave enough to invite the boy to go to the park with him. To Leon's delight, the boy is quite willing to play with him; furthermore, he shares the same name with his beloved imaginary friend Bob. The last double-page spread presents a happy scene where Leon and the real Bob play together. Even without the imaginary Bob, Leon can be self-confident and happy.

Targeted toward kindergarten and lower-grade children, one feature of this book is its simple text. However, the "ink and subdued water color illustrations with plenty of details" (The Horn Book Online Guide) provide rich information about Leon's interactions with the imaginary Bob. Despite being invisible on the pages, the imaginary Bob can be seen helping Leon endure the loneliness he experiences after moving to a new town. Furthermore, the imaginary Bob is depicted as a supportive friend who helps Leon regulate his behavior and emotions.

The role of the imaginary Bob as one of the more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978) in teaching self-regulation is clear when Leo turns to him for courage, especially when the boy is emotionally struggling. A typical example is when the boy hesitates about going out to seek friendship—the imaginary Bob gives him support by

arming him with bravery. In other words, the existence of the imaginary friend allows Leon to take a more active stance in starting a friendship.

In addition to the imaginary friend, play helps Leon make a new friend. Burk (2005) pointed out the close link between play and children's friendships, stating that young children's notion of friendship is much the same, "defined by pleasurable play and sharing of toys" (p. 368). This explains why Leon picks play as a way to start a friendship. It also indicates why Bob accepts his invitation so gladly. The friendship between the two boys is nourished by shared and pleasurable play activities.

Table 4

Books selected in this section categorized by their function in fostering self-regulation:

Function	Title	Author
Challenging dominant children	<i>A Weekend with Wendell</i>	Kevin Henkes
	<i>King of the Playground</i>	Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
	<i>The Recess Queen</i>	Alexis O'Neil
	<i>Connie Came to Play</i>	Jill Paton Walsh
Fostering friendship	<i>Harry and Willy and Carrot Head</i>	Judith Caseley
	<i>Enemy Pie</i>	Derek Munson
	<i>Big Little Elephant</i>	Valeri Gorbachev
	<i>Hunter's Best Friend at School</i>	Laura Malone Elliott
Imaginary friends	<i>Leon and Bob</i>	Simon James
	<i>Jessica</i>	Kevin Henkes

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Discussions and findings

Divided into four groups, the forty selected books depict four types of interpersonal relationships children experience in their lives. They are respectively relationships between children and adult family members, relationships between siblings, children's relationships with adults outside the family and with peers. An analysis of the books reveals that play is an ideal context where children learn and practice self-regulatory skills, which serves as an important factor in maintaining good relationships with others. Based on the analysis in Chapters 3 and 4, the following discussion describes how play helps child characters learn the self-regulation needed for different social relationships.

Books about relationships with adults in the family

Most of the books in this category depict children's relationships with their parents, and only one book is about a child's interaction with his aunt. The analysis of play and self-regulation depicted in these books reveals that play helps children learn self-regulation in the following ways.

Transforming work to play

When children approach the age of five or six, parents start to assign them some light housework. This is depicted in books such as *Once upon a Saturday* (Lammle, 2009) and *Now What Can I Do?* (Bridges, 2001). Giving and completing tasks is one part of the parent-child relationship that children need to deal with. In the selected books, the two children manipulate the blurry line between play and work and skillfully transform the tedious household chores into enjoyable play activities. Besides the active role these child characters take in the self-regulating process, adults play a positive role guiding or promoting the self-regulation. In *Now What Can I Do?* (Bridges, 2001), the mother suggests her son transform work into play. In *Once upon a Saturday* (Lammle, 2009), it is the mother who gives the tasks to the girl and thus provides the girl with chances to practice self-regulation.

Giving children autonomy

Explicitly or implicitly, nearly all the selected books about child-adult relationships depict power struggles between the two generations. Such conflict is more explicitly depicted in books such as *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) and *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry ...* (Bang, 1999). In both books, the child characters receive some punishment: one for offending his mother and the other for disobeying. The ultimate cause of their trouble is disobedience of the implicit rules operating in the play process. Specifically, Max plays too aggressively and even extends the aggressiveness to his mother; Sophie does not take turns with her sister. Although a

punishment is not a pleasant thing to a child, it provides the children with opportunities for solitary play. In solitary play, children can find a sense of autonomy (Katz & Buchholz, 1999, p.47). The sense of autonomy obtained through play releases their desire for power in an acceptable way, which helps children achieve emotional self-regulation and eventually control their behavior. In comparison, *No, David* (Shannon, 1998) does not depict another play process after the boy character is punished, but play still helps David learn self-regulation by providing a safe ground for trial and error. In other words, play is a context where David knows he has to control himself after getting punished for his mistakes. A noteworthy point is that proper punishment does not mean that the children lose their battle for power. On the other hand, it helps children find acceptable ways for seeking autonomy.

A channel to express feelings

“Culturally acceptable ways of expressing emotions” are an important aspect of emotional self-regulation (Ashiabi, 2007, p. 201). Play is a good channel for expressing complex emotions that may be beyond a child’s language ability. Play is also culturally acceptable as a common form of children’s activity. This function of play is depicted most notably in books like *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry ...* (Bang, 1999), *Princess Baby* (Katz, 2008)) and *What’s So Bad about Being an Only Child* (Best, 2007). In her imaginative play, Sophie creates a variety of images and colors to express fury. The young girl in *Princess Baby* (Katz, 2008) uses play to express her desire for an independent identity—one that she gives herself and that is not imposed upon by her

parents. Similarly, the girl character in *What's So Bad about Being an Only Child* (Best, 2007) resorts to pretend play to speak out her desire for sibling companionship.

Giving children courage and support

Because play creates the zone of proximal development, children find themselves more capable and thus feel more confident in the context of play. Take, for example, the boy in *Candy Shop* (Wahl, 2005); imagining that he is a cowboy gives him courage to help the shop owner out. In other words, the imaginative play enables the boy to overcome his hesitation and regulate his emotions to achieve a goal he would otherwise dare not achieve. In *Am I Big or Little* (Bridges, 2000), the confidence derived from play allows the girl to feel powerful and thus have the proper level of autonomy when getting along with her mother. In the book *Owen* (Henkes, 1993), the blanket as a toy serves positive functions for the boy mouse because it provides comfort for him. Even when it is impossible to carry an entire blanket, the small piece of the blanket still serves as a playmate and helps Owen regulate his emotions in the transitional period when starting school.

Books about sibling relationships

The selected books depict both sweetness and bitterness in sibling interactions. An analysis of the books reveals that play has an important role in determining sibling relationships, given its connection to self-regulation. Below is a synthesis of how play is

depicted as related to self-regulation and in turn helps sibling relationships in the selected books.

A channel for releasing feelings

As in relationships between children and parents, unpleasant feelings can also arise between siblings. A typical negative feeling between siblings, jealousy is depicted in books such as *Barfburger Baby, I Was Here First* (Danziger, 2007), *Julius, The Baby of the World* (Henkes, 1995) and *Mail Harry to the Moon* (Harris, 2008). In these books, the child characters resort to play to express their anger and jealousy when feeling neglected due to a younger sibling. Imagination provides them with a chance to get revenge upon the babies who steal away the attention they used to enjoy. In *Sometimes, I'm a Bombaloo* (Vali, 2002), the girl character discharges anger through imagination after her play is ruined by her younger brother. In all of these books, imaginative play is a safe, culturally acceptable way of releasing feelings. A form of self-regulation, the imagination helps the children feel emotionally better while bringing harm to no one.

A cradle fostering sibling affection

Despite their conflicts, sibling relationships also contain warmth and mutual care (Deater-Deckard, Dunn & Lussier, 2002). As depicted in some of the selected books, play is a territory where sibling conflicts arise, but it is also through play that children learn to make compromises with brothers or sisters. *Hello Twins* (Voake, 2006)

represents how twins may reconcile in joint play after they fight in other play episodes. In *What the No Good Baby Is Good For* (Broach, 2005), the boy hates his baby sister because she always ruins his play, but he also loves her more for the playful fun she brings to him. It is through play that the boy in *The Boy Who Wouldn't Share* (Reiss, 2008) realizes his own selfishness and learns to share with his sister.

Balancing power relations

Three books *Annie and Cousin Precious* (Chorao, 1994), *Sheila Rae, The Brave* (Henkes, 1987) and *Seymour and Opal* (Jussek, 1996) focus on depicting power relations between siblings. Analysis of the books shows that children in a subordinate position can change their power status in relation to siblings by manipulating the play. In *Annie and Cousin Precious* (Chorao, 1994), Annie teaches her arrogant cousin a lesson by scaring her, pretending to be invisible. She also makes her cousin compromise through skills in negotiating play. Rae in *Sheila Rae, The Brave* (Henkes, 1987) learns to treat her sister with respect after she realizes her sister's play ability and courage. In *Seymour and Opal* (Jussek, 1996), Opal the sister uses attractive play activities to force her brother Seymour to give up his dominant position and learn to share.

Books depicting children's relationships with adults outside the family

Play also helps children's self-regulation when they deal with adults outside the family. The findings from analyzing the books are described below in three categories.

A way of communication

The chance for children to feel negative feelings may increase when they interact with adults outside the family, especially when the interactions occur in some contexts disliked by children. For example, children may have fear of nurses and doctors, like Filbert in *This is a Hospital, Not a Zoo* (Karim, 1998). They may be nervous before a new teacher in their new school life, like Yoon in *My Name Is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2004), *The School Trip* (Veldcamp, 1997) and *First Grade Stinks* (Rodman, 2006). In these books, imaginative play serves as a medium through which children speak out their thoughts to the adults, which eventually makes them understood and comforted. Making themselves feel better is a successful practice of self-regulation. In *The Librarian from the Black Lagoon* (Thaler, 2008), children practice facing the terrible librarian through imaginative play, which puts them at ease when coming to the real librarian.

A tool for power struggle

Power struggles are also seen between children and adults outside their family. In *Lilly's Big Day* (Henkes, 2006), Lilly as a child is unable to change the adults' idea of having another child as the flower girl. Through imaginative play, she practices being the flower girl she dreams of. Not only does the practice prepare her to be a qualified flower girl, she also has her desire for the position satisfied and her mood soothed. As a child, she uses play to overcome the negative feelings that adults cause for her, and she even proves to them that she is the most capable candidate for the position. In *How I Became a Pirate* (Shannon, 2003), the little boy wins high status among a group of adult pirates

with his impressive play skills. The adults' respect comforts the boy's feelings of being neglected after he fails to get attention from his parents.

A safe land to make mistakes and learn

Vygotsky (1978) argued that play is a context to nurture self-regulation because it requires children to follow rules. The child characters in *Miss Nelson Is Missing* (Allard, 1985), *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse* (Henkes, 1996) and *David Goes to School* (Shannon, 1999) pay for disobeying rules in the play process. The first two books explicitly depict children who learn from their mistakes and become self-disciplined. In *David Goes to School* (Shannon, 1999), the fact that David is punished but still loved by the teacher indicates that play can be a safe territory that allows children to make some mistakes, get punished, and eventually learn.

Books about peer relationships

Peer relationships constitute an important part of children's social lives. An examination of the selected books about peer relationships reveals that they always occur in the context of play. Conflicts and problems will arise when children play together, and it is in dealing with these problems that children learn self-regulatory abilities. Below is a detailed analysis of how play fosters self-regulation as depicted in the selected books.

Challenging dominant children

Stories like *A Weekend with Wendell* (Henkes, 1995), *King of the Playground* (Naylor, 1994), *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill, 2002), and *Connie Came to Play* (Walsh, 1995) juxtapose two children in the same play context. In each story, the protagonist child needs to deal with a dominant or even bullying child. For example, in *A Weekend with Wendell* (Henkes, 1995), the girl character Sophie has to play with a guest boy Wendell, who likes to impose his own ideas on Sophie during play. Katie Sue in *The Recess Queen* (O'Neill, 2002) needs to confront a bullying girl named Mean Jean who keeps the whole playground to herself. Sophie and Katie Sue are forced into a subordinate status in relation to the more dominant children, but they finally change the hierarchical relationships by manipulating play. In these examples, Sophie gains a more powerful position over Wendell by initiating play activities that she prefers. Katie Sue makes Jean respect her and even be friendly to her by showing impressive play skills and by inviting her to play. The process by which these children find ways to deal with the more powerful ones is a self-regulatory process where they learn to control their anger or fear and initiate positive actions to solve problems. As for the dominant children, they also learn the lesson to be considerate and to share through their interactions with other children.

Fostering friendship

As discussed above, playing with peers can prompt weak children to become stronger and the dominant ones to become more considerate. Additionally, such changes

occurring within children allow them to play happily together and eventually become good friends. This process is depicted in the four books mentioned above. In some other books, play serves as territories where children break through the barriers created by unfamiliarity, difference, or misunderstandings and finally form friendships. This is shown in books like *Harry and Willy and Carrot Head* (Caseley, 1991), *Enemy Pie* (Kean & Calkins, 2004) and *Big Little Elephant* (Gorbachev, 2005). In these stories, play promotes self-regulation by helping children overcoming the fear they experience from knowing someone strange or different. A difference is the story *Hunter's Best Friend at School* (Elliott, 2002). In this book, problems occur between two good friends when they have different opinions about illicit play. However, the conflict eventually teaches one of the friends to stick to his principles and the other one to follow the rules of play. They both learn self-regulation from the conflict caused by illicit play.

The theme of imaginary playmates distinguishes the two books *Leon and Bob* (James, 1997) and *Jessica* (Henkes, 1998) from the other books in this group. However, the interactions between the child characters and their imaginary companions not only comfort them when they feel lonely, but give them skills and courage when it comes to forming friendships with real children. In this sense, play activities with imaginary friends promote the emotional and behavioral self-regulation of the two child characters.

Summary

To conclude the discussion above, as the selected books portray, children can learn self-regulation through play activities occurring in social contexts when they are

with family members, other adults, and peers. In addition to these findings, another important point is that the existence of other people, no matter whether they are adults or children, has an impact on children's play activities and eventually influences their learning of self-regulation. This finding is in accordance with Vygotsky's (1978) argument that children learn best when they interact socially with others. However, this study also finds that the other people are not always the positive more knowledgeable others described by Vygotsky (1978). In some books, other people may provide guidance or suggestions to help children master self-regulatory skills through play; in other cases, the other people are not active in offering help. Instead, their role is that their existence makes the children uncomfortable, and thus motivates children to become stronger or more capable to overpower them. One of the measures children take to "fight" them is play. Therefore, although other people may not voluntarily help children learn self-regulation, they still provide a social context that fosters the development of self-regulatory skills. Finally, the learning process is impossible without the children's active role. Together with others' guidance or motivation, the children's efforts are the indispensable factor in their growth, no matter in cognitive, emotional, or social domains.

Implications

The intended audience of this study is pre-service or in-position teachers for preschoolers and first graders. Ample research indicates that children's literature is currently undervalued in the field of early and primary education, especially its significance to children's social and emotional development (Cooper, 2009; Hoewisch,

2000; Lehman, 2009). Despite being the leading activity of preschool children (Vygotsky, 1967), play is also experiencing a downward trend in preschools and early-grade classrooms. This trend is largely attributed to the “increasing emphasis at school on developing academic skills in children at younger and younger ages” (Bodrova & Leong, 2005, p. 1).

This study is a response to the disappearance of both children’s literature and play in early education settings. By analyzing forty selected picture books, it argues that play is an ideal context for children to learn self-regulation. Play promotes self-regulation within children because first, play creates a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) in which children show better learning capacity. Second, play contains explicit and implicit rules, and the practice of abiding by rules enhances self-regulatory awareness and skills. Third, play provides a social context in which children learn socially from interactions with others.

In application to teaching, this study suggests that teachers can use picture books with substantial depictions of play to teach children self-regulation. By linking themselves with the child characters, children can vicariously experience the depicted play processes and thus experience the process of self-regulation together with the child characters.

To build a link between characters in selected picture books and actual human readers, this study adopts Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional reader’s response theory, which asserts that the reader determines the meaning of the text regardless of the author’s intentions. As Rosenblatt (1938) wrote,

The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text. (p. 30-31)

This theoretical view supports the assumption of this study that young children can respond to the books with a focus on play and social interactions under the guidance of their teachers and assisted by their prior knowledge and experience related to play and social interactions.

Rosenblatt's (1978) perspective on the positioning of one's stance towards the text also lends support to the argument proposed by this study. She argued there are two opposite modes of experiencing a text – the “efferent” and the “aesthetic”. From the efferent stance, the reader reads to understand the literal meaning of the text or to gain information. In contrast, when adopting an aesthetic stance, the reader primarily focuses on his or her own lived-through experience. Rosenblatt (1978) pointed out that the reader might shift back and forth along a continuum between these two modes during the reading process.

This perspective regarding two modes of reading provides guidance for teachers to select books. It is better that the books are designed for pre-primary and early-grade primary school children by featuring easy, short text and detailed, appealing illustrations. Such books allow children to easily take a more aesthetic-oriented reading stance. In other words, children will not be hindered by language difficulties and can easily relate to the child characters and their experiences in the books.

In relation to Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory discussed earlier, Rosenblatt's perspective on reading modes suggests one of the roles teachers play in

reading process; that is, teachers can guide children to take a predominantly aesthetic stance towards the books, a stance associated with children's unique experiences about play and socialization with others. Vygotsky (1978) believed that proper guidance from more knowledgeable others is indispensable for children to reach a proximal development zone. In relation to this study, his notion suggests that another role of teachers is to help children understand the self-regulatory skills they may fail to see when they read the books alone. In this reading and teaching process, children are not merely passive receptors of instructions. Incorporating their own experiences and thoughts acknowledges children's active role, as emphasized by Vygotsky (1978). In allowing children's active participation, the ideal role of the teacher is to provide scaffolding (collaborative dialogue) to assist students with tasks within their zones of proximal development (Hamilton & Ghatala, 1994, p.277). As for students, they co-construct meaning in partnership with their teachers. Their prior knowledge and experiences similar to those of the child characters enable them to come up with their own ideas and interpretations of the books.

Taking *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry* (Bang, 1999) as an example, the following discussion illustrates how a picture book depicting play and children's social relations can be used to teach self-regulation.

A guided discussion can be held on the following questions: what do they think about Sophie's fight with her sister? What are their own experiences of playing with a sibling or other children? What do they do when they are angry? How do they calm down when they are furious?

Based on the discussion about Sophie's and their own emotional self-regulation, an art activity can be conducted where children are suggested to use colors and drawings to express their emotions. To acknowledge their active role, children can draw pictures to express any feelings they like. They can use whatever colors they prefer and draw whatever images they wish. Teachers can use other picture books such as *Today I Feel Silly* (Curtis, 1998) to complement the activity because they expose children to additional examples of relating images to emotions. Children can also discuss in small groups about their work. In such activities, both teachers and books serve as the more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978). Their guidance makes children aware of the associations between colors and emotions, and thus provides them with more options for emotional self-regulation.

When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry (Bang, 1999) also represents the implicit rule of taking turns during play. An activity can be conducted in which some children engage in a play activity while the others act as adults to watch whether the playing children are following the rules. Children can take turns being the judges and the players. This activity is to enhance self-regulation through regulating others and themselves. It may also strengthen children's awareness of rules.

Future directions

Supported by Vygotsky's social learning theory and his psychology of play, this study focuses on children's self-regulation and play depicted in picture books. However,

the process of the study also has also yielded some other potential research topics that might be valuable and interesting.

One of the issues I am interested in is that among the books depicting children's relationships with family members, a majority of the books depict the mother as one of the parental characters or as the only parental character. Fathers seem to be neglected by picture book authors and illustrators. Although the limited number of selected books cannot speak for all books on the market, this at least suggests an existing stereotype that mothers tend to have more interactions with children in domestic life. There is a need for a substantial study of existing picture books to see if this stereotype is represented in picture books. Such a study would be significant because it may help picture book authors reduce stereotyping in their work, and thus reduce the risk of suggesting stereotyped images to children's minds.

Another issue worth studying is the gender stereotypes of child characters. In the selected books depicting children's mutual interactions, a majority of the books portray children of the same gender playing together. In the two books depicting a girl playing with a boy, both of the two boy characters are portrayed as dominant, mischievous, and selfish. The two well-behaving girl characters are in a subordinate position at the first and have to find ways to win themselves an equal position. "Picture books often provide very young children with some of their earliest perceptions of gender, race and class—creating a stockpile of images for 'children's mental museums'" (Frawley, 2008, p. 291). Depicting children either playing with the same gender or showing boys dominant over girls may create gender stereotypes for children regarding their play life. A gender study

on the play depicted in picture books is necessary to reduce the risk of stereotyping gender roles in play activities.

To avoid generalization, I only selected books published in the United States for this study. An examination of these books shows that nearly all feature middle class white children as protagonists. Even the few books depicting ethnic minority children still portray the children as living a comfortable life with a large variety of toys to play with. They do not tell how children living in poverty play and how they interact with adults and other children. Studies using books portraying poor children may shed new light in similar academic attempts. This study also does not analyze how self-regulation and play is depicted in picture books from other countries. A comparative study with picture books from another culture may be valuable to see how children in other cultures learn self-regulation as well as other social competencies through play.

Appendix

Picture Books Categorized By Themes

Books about children's relationships with adult family members

Title	Author	Year
<i>Once upon a Saturday</i>	Lammle, L.	2009
<i>Now What Can I Do?</i>	Bridges, M.P.	2001
<i>Where the Wild Things Are</i>	Sendak, M.	1963
<i>When Sophie Gets Angry— Really, Really Angry</i>	Bang, M.	1999
<i>No, David</i>	Shannon, D.	1998
<i>What's So Bad about Being an Only Child</i>	Best, C.	2007
<i>Owen</i>	Henkes, K.	1993
<i>Am I Big or Little?</i>	Bridges, M.P.	2000
<i>Princess Baby</i>	Katz, K.	2008
<i>Candy Shop</i>	Wahl, J.	2004

Books about children's relationships with siblings

Title	Author	Year
<i>What the No-good Baby Is Good for?</i>	Broach, E.	2005
<i>Annie and Cousin Precious</i>	Chorao, K.	1994
<i>Seymour and Opal</i>	Jussek, N.	1996
<i>Barfburger Baby, I Was Here First</i>	Danziger, P.	2004
<i>Sometimes I am Bombaloo</i>	Vail, R.	2002
<i>Mail Harry to the Moon</i>	Harris, R.H.	2008
<i>Sheila Rae, the Brave</i>	Henkes, K.	1987
<i>Julius, the Baby of the World</i>	Henkes, K.	1995
<i>The Boy Who Wouldn't Share</i>	Reiss, M.	2008
<i>Hello Twins</i>	Voake, C	2006

Books about children's relationships with adults outside the family

Title	Author	Year
<i>This Is a Hospital, Not a Zoo!</i>	Karim, R.	1998
<i>David Goes to School</i>	Shannon, D.	1999
<i>Miss Nelson Is Missing</i>	Allard, H.	1985
<i>My Name Is Yoon</i>	Recorvits, H.	2004
<i>First Grade Stinks</i>	Ann Rodman, M.	2006
<i>Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse</i>	Henkes, K.	1996
<i>Lilly's Big Day</i>	Henkes, K.	2006
<i>The School Trip</i>	Veldcamp, T.	1997
<i>How I Became a Pirate?</i>	Long, M.	2003
<i>The Librarian from the Black Lagoon</i>	Thaler, M.	1997

Books about children's relationships with peers

Title	Author	Year
<i>Harry and Willy and Carrothead</i>	Caseley, J.	1991
<i>Hunter's Best Friend at School</i>	Elliott, L.M.	2002
<i>Big Little Elephant</i>	Gorbachev, V.	2005
<i>Connie Came to Play</i>	Walsh, J.P	1995
<i>A Weekend with Wendell</i>	Henkes, K.	1986
<i>Jessica</i>	Henkes, K.	1989
<i>Leon and Bob</i>	James, S.	1997
<i>Enemy Pie</i>	Munson, D.	2000
<i>King of the Playground</i>	Naylor, P. R.	1991
<i>The Recess Queen</i>	O'Neill, A.	2002

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Su, M. (2008). *Finding your soul: the way Jin builds a bicultural identity in the graphic novel American Born Chinese*. The 29th International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, Orlando, FL.

Su, M. (2006). *A review of Chinese market of children's literature in 2005*, *China Book Review*. (2), 80-84, Beijing: China Book Review Press.

Su, M. (2006, July 9). Translator of *The Tidy Drawer* by Mo McAuley. *Journal of Children's Literary Art*. Beijing: The Writers Publishing House.

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