Children's literature portrays particular aspects of reality and the human condition (Serafini, 2004), offering children insights into worlds like and unlike their own. Picture books that portray rural America represent a tiny fraction of picture books published each year, yet 30 percent of school-aged children live in rural America (The Rural School and Community Trust, 2009, n.p.). At the very least, this statistic points to a disconnect between the imagined audience for picture books and the reality of rural children's lives.

The choice of the picture book genre is important because the texts contribute to children's understandings of place and what it might mean to be rural. Although gender-role stereotyping in children's books is a consistent focus of research, the study of the gender role stereotyping of parenting in particular is less common, despite a developing...