

**THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
ON THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF RACE AND RACISM AT
AN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

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DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education, in the Graduate Programme in Social Justice, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, **Samantha Megan Duckworth**, declare that:

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the South African teachers and heads holding space for social justice education in their classrooms and schools. May we continue to do the work, with courage, authenticity and love.

“The movement for change is a changing movement, changing itself, de-masculinizing itself, de-Westernizing itself, becoming a critical mass that is saying in so many different voices, languages, gestures, actions:

It must change, we ourselves can change it.

We who are not the same. We who are many and do not want to be the same.”

(Rich, 1984, pp. 225).

ABSTRACT

Despite being exposed to racism in their everyday lives, young children are often left out of discussions about race. Recently located literature within the field of social justice education reveals that these discussions are not out of their grasp, issuing a call for methods to be developed to allow children to learn about race through informed discussions between teachers and learners. These informed discussions have a role to play in the interruption and avoidance of reproducing systems of inequity and oppression, such as racism. Drawing on concepts from racial identity theory, Paulo Freire and Rudine Bishop, this study focused on and aimed to investigate how children's literature influences primary school learners' understandings about race and racism. Further, the study aimed to uncover what the learners' understanding of race and racism were; what learning was made possible about race and racism using children's literature; and how the participants used their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school. The authentic voices of 18 Grade 5 learners from an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal were gleaned through participatory mini-workshops and focus group discussions in this action research study.

The findings indicated that the children's literature used in the study functioned as metaphorical windows, doors and mirrors to influence the learners' understandings of race and racism, depending on the identities of the learners. The books became windows, providing views into the racial experiences of others; doors through which learners could step into the worlds presented; and mirrors to reflect learners' experiences back at them. Based on the key findings, this study argues two points. First, that children's literature can be used to develop learners' understandings about race and racism in ways which are affirming of their own racial identities as well as those of their peers. Second, I argue that access to learning opportunities needs to be provided in schools through children's literature so that learners can develop the ability to challenge dominant negative and oppressive ideas that surround race and racism, as well as racial relationships, towards transformation that is desperately needed in South Africa.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of a larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.”

(Bishop, 1990, p. xi)

1.1 Introduction

South Africa is a racially diverse nation with a history of racial oppression. This racial oppression was also evident in education. South African society is currently at a stage where its teachers either witnessed and lived through the cruel segregation and inequality of apartheid or were born into post-apartheid South Africa. Teachers with these two differing perspectives are required by South African law (Department of Education, 1996; Reygan & Steyn, 2017) and the South African Council for Educators (SACE, 2022) to be socially just teachers who promote and uphold basic human rights, as enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa. The complex and difficult challenge of striving towards social justice in education is made so due to the elusiveness, flexibility, and lack of common understanding associated with the term ‘social justice’. This presents the need for practical tools and methods for teachers to utilise to explore topics of social justice, such as race and racism. This study was conducted on the understanding that racism occurs in society across multiple levels and in various forms. Children are also included in this and experience racism as a form of oppression in their daily lives. The practical tools and methods required to practice social justice education in schools need to serve the purpose of educating learners and teachers about how race and racism operate in society. Further, they also potentially need to be able to recognise, understand and respond to it in their own spaces too.

This study sought to explore how a potentially practical tool and method of children’s literature could function to practise a form of social justice education in a school setting: the study

focused on how children's literature influenced primary school learners' understandings about race and racism. Children's literature holds the potential to allow us to learn, relearn and unlearn in relation to our racial understandings (Wink, 2011), in the hopes of transforming ourselves and our world for the better. Children's literature also has the capability to provide self-affirmation, as well as information, insight and understanding into worlds familiar and foreign, realistic and imagined, allowing us to "see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience" (Bishop, 1990, p. xi).

The function of this first chapter is to introduce and contextualise the study. Firstly, the aims and rationale are discussed, followed by a clarification of terms which are frequently used in this study. The research questions that guided the study are provided, and then the background is given, highlighting literature about the topic. An overview of the conceptual framework follows, with the methodological approach thereafter. Finally, the structure of the dissertation is outlined.

1.2 Aims and Rationale

The main objective and purpose of this study were to explore the influence of selected children's literature on learners' understandings of race and racism at an independent school. It further aimed to investigate what the learners' understandings were of race and racism before being exposed to the literature; what learning was made possible about race and racism using children's literature; and how the participants used this learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school.

My motivation to conduct this study was multi-fold. On a personal level, I could not remember a single story featuring a main character that was a black person, or a book explicitly dealing with race and racism from my childhood. This led me to wonder how that shaped my understanding of these concepts and how it did so for my black friends. On a professional level, in my work as a librarian in a primary school, I noticed that most books in the library were written by white authors, about white characters and often took place in the United Kingdom or the United States of America. For South African learners, this may not have reflected their experiences of reality. Thus, I had been making a conscious effort to source books that featured diverse, local characters and wondered how this could be used in learning about race. I hoped that this study used children's literature to help the learners develop a critical awareness of race and racism and for them to engage in deep self-reflection in this regard, so that they could move

beyond information-gathering and into a space of collaborative, experiential co-learning about race that could contribute to their thinking and behaving in ways which resist and challenge racism.

1.3 Research Questions

To gain insight into children's literature and its use in racial learning, the study was guided by the following main research question:

How does selected children's literature influence learners' understandings about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal?

The sub-questions were:

1. What are learners' understandings of race and racism?
2. What learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature?
3. How do they use their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school?

1.4 Background of the Study

The concept of race and South African schools is complex and required an understanding of its historical background in order to understand it in this study. The literature search found that racism occurs on varying levels in South African schools (Makoelle, 2014; Naidoo, 2018; Spaul, 2012; Teeger, 2015; Wray, Hellenberg & Jansen, 2018), despite what the South African Schools Act (Department of Education, 1996) intends regarding the right that all learners have to an equal education that does not discriminate based on race. The consequences of racism in education were investigated, revealing a need for practical tools to be developed for learners and teachers to explore topics of social justice, such as race and racism. Young children are frequently excluded from conversations about race, despite being exposed to racism as a form of oppression in their lives. Whilst many academics and teachers have argued that children are incapable of having these conversations, due to their youth, innocence, and immaturity (Butcher & Gonzalez, 2021; Fass, 2007; Parents Defending Education, 2021; Sullivan, Wilton, & Apfelbaum, 2021), recently located literature indicates that young children have a sophisticated understanding of racial dynamics and messages, concluding that these

discussions are not out of their grasp (Derman-Sparks, Higa, & Sparks, 2012; Fontanella-Nothom, 2019; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006; Williams & Norton, 2000). These scholars concur that there is an essential role for informed discussions between teachers and learners in the interruption and avoidance of reproducing systems of inequity and oppression, such as racism.

The depiction of race in children's literature has been historically in support of whiteness, making it a mechanism of systemic racism (Welch, 2016). This is, however, evolving and a shift has occurred in the world of children's literature, whereby themes of racial diversity are welcomed and more frequently published (Atkins, 2013; Jablonski, N., 2021; News24, 2019; Van Vuuren, 1994). The well-researched benefits of reading and sharing books with children have consistently revealed that they can be used to examine emotions and explore ideas of acceptance and well-being (Adam, Barratt-Pugh; Haig, 2019). Children's literature that features racially diverse characters and covers topics of race and racism has further benefits such as improving awareness and acceptance of cultures, beliefs and value systems the same and different from one's own (Welch, 2016 & Kesler, 2016). The empirical research on the use of children's literature to discuss or facilitate conversations about race and racism is concentrated from the United Kingdom and the United States and reveals that this can be a useful tool to consciously mediate children's understandings of race and racism and can affirm learners' racial identities (Anand, 2020; Coon, 2012; Crosthwaite, 2015; Fontanella-Nothom, 2019; Kesler, Mills & Reilly, 2020; Welch, 2016). Boutte and Muller (2018) found that children's literature is important in the disruption of dominant discourses of identity and diversity, making it a critical need for children to have access to authentic and accurate representations of their identities.

In surveying available research surrounding the function of children's literature as a tool for learning about race and racism among primary school learners, certain gaps emerged. The research on the topic is limited in South Africa, presenting a pressing need for teaching approaches, methods and materials that unpack power, privilege and difference (Reygan & Steyn, 2017). No research has been found in the KwaZulu-Natal province or independent schools in South Africa. While there is research available regarding children's literature in South Africa (see for example Haidee, 2013; Jenkins, 2008; Labbo & Field, 1998), I was not able to locate literature or research that specifically examines children's literature being used to learn about racism and racism among primary school learners in South Africa. Further, there was no research available on this occurring in school libraries particularly, in South Africa and

globally. Thus, the literature sourced on this topic can be regarded as outdated and thin, and it is hoped that this study contributed to newer and better understandings of the influence of exposing learners to selected literature on race and racism. Certain recommendations for future research made by researchers in the field aligned with the aims of this study. Crosthwaite's (2015) suggestion of uncovering a way for students' lived experiences to inform a transformational curriculum could be done through children's literature as a tool for conversations on race and racism in a social justice curriculum. Surveyed research (Fontanella-Nothom, 2019; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006; Williams & Norton, 2000) surrounding children and their capabilities regarding understanding and engaging with topics of race and racism recommend that children need to be exposed more to critical, anti-oppressive education for social justice, and speak about these topics more and deeply. This study focused on racial discussions particularly and encouraged engagement with these topics with hopes of forwarding social justice education. It is within this context that the use of children's literature in primary school students' learning about race and racism was examined.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

To investigate the influence of children's literature on primary school learners' understandings of race and racism, a conceptual framework was constructed, providing structure and support through certain concepts related to the topic. This was done in a way to ensure that my ontological, epistemological, and axiological approaches and understandings were in harmony with one another. I used a camera lens model to explain how the concepts and constructs chosen for the framework were used, beginning with my perspective as a researcher peering through the lens, and then working through mechanical parts of the lens to reveal how the phenomenon is viewed clearly (see Figure 1). Concepts and constructs from three key areas were used. Firstly, the broad concepts and goals from the field of social justice education were used, allowing me to position myself and the study, and the pedagogical approach used in the participatory mini-workshops in the data generation phase. Concepts from Freire (1970) were particularly useful in conducting this study, such as problem-posing education, critical consciousness, co-creation of knowledge, and the learner-teacher relationship. The learners in this study were encouraged to participate and reflect on their experiences and understandings of race, given a space to question, discuss and unpack these ideas, in doing so nurturing their critical consciousness.

Secondly, it was critical to select concepts to explain what this study understood of race and racism. Concepts from Bell (1997) allowed me to begin by understanding oppression and how it operates. Then, Tatum's (1997) constructs around identity and Crenshaw's (1991) understanding of multiple intersecting identities, or intersectionality, enabled me to identify race as a social identity and better understand how it influences who we are, what we believe, and how we behave. Hardiman and Jackson's (1997) constructs of race solidified how I understood what race is, how it manifests in education, how it functions on varying levels, and how it is interrupted. These constructs combined to allow me to have a more nuanced understanding of experiences of oppression. Finally, Bishop's (1990) metaphor of books as windows, doors and mirrors played a critical role in the analysis of the data. Bishop's (1990) concepts provided the imagery and ultimately how the books functioned in the participants' learning about race and racism.

The ontological stance this study takes, which was solidified by the conceptual framework, is that reality is formed by social, political, cultural, historical, economic and other dynamics (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Social reality is constantly shaped by people, and this study acknowledges that multiple socially constructed realities exist. This means that the ways in which we experience race are different, due to racial inequality that exists in the world, as do power dynamics and structures. Epistemologically, this study assumes that it is not possible to be an objective outsider who collects neutral knowledge, but rather that knowledge is an expression of power (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). This was important in examining the power I held as a researcher and as a white person. Finally, the axiological positioning of this study was to understand the beliefs and actions that oppress to transform them (Kivunja & Kuvini, 2017). This meant that the study was pushing to go deeper than merely capturing the participants' learning, or the literature, but to empower them with knowledge in the hopes that they will go on to disrupt racism in their lives.

1.6 Methodological Approach

The methodological approach for this study underpins, informs and is informed by all other elements of this thesis. It is in harmony with the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions which anchor the study. This qualitative study in terms of style, is located within the critical paradigm of research. The critical paradigm is aligned with the principles, values and goals of social justice education, aiming to challenge the reproduction of inequalities and contribute toward emancipatory change in institutions or participants' lives (Rehman &

Alharthi, 2016). Known for its collaborative growth of knowledge and multiple strategies of social research, the study made use of an action research approach (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). The action research approach was appropriate, as it was able to fulfil traditional academic requirements, whilst having the ability to foster social change. The action research cycle carried out in the study held data generation methods of a semi-structured baseline questionnaire, participatory mini-workshops, and focus group discussions. The richness of the participants' learning about race and racism through the use of children's literature was revealed using the textual, qualitative style. The research site was an independent school in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal and the participants were a class of racially diverse 18 Grade 5 girls. Whilst this small-scale study will not change the world, it is hoped that it contributes to a wider body of knowledge that can potentially create change.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The dissertation is arranged into five chapters, with a summary of each provided below.

Chapter one provides an overview of this study in a broad sense, to prepare the reader for this dissertation. The chapter gives information on key aspects of the study, such as the research questions which guide the work, the purpose and aims, gaps and recommendations of the field, rationale and background. The chapter concludes with an outline of the chapters to guide the reader.

Chapter two considers a review of the literature related to the research topic, as well as a conceptual framework constructed for this study. The literature reviews local and international empirical perspectives currently evident. The review attempts to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being examined, which links to the other aspects of the study. The conceptual framework provides concepts from multiple theories that have been selected to create structure and support for the study.

Chapter three orientates the study within the critical paradigm of research and details the methodology used. It lays out key aspects of the methodological style, sampling and recruitment of participants, and methods of data generation through the action research approach. The chapter also deals with issues of quality, limitations, and ethical considerations.

Chapter four presents the findings and analysis of the generated data. It comprises five themes and multiple sub-themes, which are analysed by the literature and conceptual framework, as

well as the key research questions. In doing so, this chapter makes sense of the participants' learnings about race and racism.

Chapter five is the final chapter of this dissertation. It presents the recommendations of the study, as well as the conclusions. It reflects on how the study fulfilled its purpose, what significance the findings hold, and provides a summary of what the key findings are. It also includes reflections on the methodological and conceptual design, implications and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

1.8 Conclusion

Chapter one provided an overview of the different facets of this study. The aims and rationale were supplied, as well as the research questions which anchor the study. The background to the study was supplied through a brief description of the local and international arguments surrounding the topic, as well as the gaps and recommendations of the field. These were followed by a discussion of the conceptual framework and methodology. The chapter concluded with an outline of the structure of the thesis to guide the reader. The next chapter provides a review of the literature, as well as the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section is composed of two parts- a literature review and a conceptual framework. The literature review locates international and national literature about children's literature and its use in learning about race and racism. It begins by firstly framing South African schools and race in the context of history, legislation and policy. Secondly, research and beliefs about children and their ability for racial discussion and the importance of this are surveyed, as this study operates from the understanding that children are capable. The depiction of race in children's literature is then examined and followed by the discussion of studies that show the empowerment that is associated with children reading literature. The ways in which children's literature has been used in learning about race and racism will be discussed before finally exploring how this learning influences identity formation in learners. To fulfil the purpose of this study, concepts from multiple theories were selected and used together. The conceptual framework for this study is seen as a camera lens, where the mirrors and mechanisms are likened to the concepts and constructs. The concepts are taken from social justice education as a perspective, racism as a manifestation of oppression, and books as windows, doors and mirrors.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 *The Context of Race and South African Schools*

South Africa is a country known for its remarkable diversity but also for decades of racial oppression, with apartheid being white supremacy's final attempt to hold onto its position in society, based on a system of racial inequality (Quin, 2009). Race and education have a history in South Africa. The Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953 was created by the apartheid government's Department of Native Affairs to provide for the "administration and control of native education" (1953, p. 258). The Act created a new Department of Bantu Education, consolidating educational apartheid by enforcing strict racial segregation in schools. The Act ensured that black South African children received an education that trained them for menial and manual labour which the government deemed appropriate for people of their race (Bauer, 2020). This Act intended to embody and propagandize the idea that black people were inferior

to white people. Bantu Education was resisted and boycotted in many ways, with black South Africans rejecting the Act and continuing to seek quality education in other ways such as through mission institutions and the Black Consciousness movement (Global Non-Violent Action Database, 2022). The eventual fall of apartheid required that education in South Africa be restructured to provide education for all learners.

In 1994 the new South African government created the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa to redress the past. The Constitution was founded on democratic principles, including human rights and social justice, which formed the basis for desired policies and people. Section 29 of the Constitution provides for the right to education (Oosthuizen, Botha, Roos, Rossouw, & Smit, 2015; Simbo, 2018) and with that, education in South Africa needed to transform completely. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (Department of Education, 1996) was passed by parliament to provide that all learners have the right to access education that is equal and free from discrimination and prejudice. This Act also set out important provisions for the structuring, management and governance of schools (Oosthuizen et al., 2015). The Act intended that all learners have access to equal education that does not discriminate on the basis of any aspect of identity, such as race, gender, language, ability, class, and religion.

Although the Act intends “to advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance” (Department of Education, 1996), the now 28-year-old education system has not achieved this in practice (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012). Some tensions exist within the South African education system between the laws and policies, such as outlined in the South African Schools Act, and what is practised in schools. Naidoo (2018) identified policy and practice disharmony in relation to racism in South African schools, such as a general inconsistency in the implementation of and understanding of race and racism policies in schools. Schools in South Africa are either public/government or private/independent. The Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa is the biggest and oldest coalition of independent or private schools in the Southern region of Africa, with over 850 schools and 190 000 learners (ISASA, 2021). Due to the rigorous conditions to which a school must adhere to be part of the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa, independent schools are well-resourced and most have facilities such as libraries. The site of the research in this study is a school belonging to the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa which has a library.

Apartheid has left stark inequality in education. Spaul (2012) and Elliott (2016) believe that South Africa currently operates a bimodal system of education: one which achieves well and has facilities and resources, whilst the other performs poorly and has very little. In South Africa, only 8% of public schools have functional libraries- almost all of which are located in former model C schools (Equal Education, 2021), being schools categorized by the apartheid government as state-aided or semi-private (Christie & McKinney, 2017). Spaul (2012) found that the schools in South Africa that were historically black schools under apartheid remain homogeneously black, while the historically white and Indian schools are more racially diverse, as the middle and upper-class sects of society are diversifying as time moves on. The significance of this is that historically poor, under-resourced schools remain in poor, black areas today due to the spatial segregation of apartheid, while schools that perform well and have resources are geographically situated in more affluent areas. This has lasting impacts on the unequal geographical and financial access families have to quality education (Yamauchi in Spaul, 2012). This indicates a structural level of racism in relation to education in South Africa.

Schools in South Africa continue to be places of racial oppression, despite what policy says. Examples of interpersonal racism persist in the literature such as in Teegers (2015), Makoelle (2014) and Fourie and Moore-Berg's (2022) studies where the behaviour of teachers was explained as racist. Teeger (2015) provided examples of racism occurring on an interpersonal, individual level between learners. One such example was during a school lunch break time, where learners ate their lunch and socialised in separate racial groups. Incidents of racism make regular appearances in the media and are met with a mixture of public outrage and annoyance with claims of race being unnecessarily brought into schools. A photo of a Grade R class at Laerskool Schweizer-Reneke depicting children separated in racial groups during their break time went viral in 2019 (Seleka, 2019). A voice note sent over WhatsApp by a white student from Pietermaritzburg Girls' High School went viral in 2017 when she performed an overt and blatant act of vertical racism by naming her black classmates using the k-word. The learners from the school claim that the situation was brushed off, rather than treated as a serious, illegal act of racism (Alweendo, 2017). This serious racist act illustrates how an incident on the individual level becomes institutionalised when it is minimalised and ignored. Sparked by the Black Lives Matter movement, in 2020, many South African learners publicly revealed their experiences of racism (Karrim, 2020). The shared experiences of racism varied from racist remarks made by white teachers, or their racist attitudes, to concerning school policies. An example of a school where experiences of racism were shared on social media by past and

current pupils was St Anne's Diocesan College (Mthethwa, 2020), where teachers, fellow pupils and the school as an institution were accused of racism that spanned years.

Institutional racism occurs in South African schools in various ways. An example of such is school language policies, which are created by School Governing Bodies and are used to include and exclude certain learners (Naidoo, 2018). The issue of language intersects with race and becomes an issue of racism. The naming of school facilities and houses after colonialists is another common example of institutional racism within South African schools- the names of whom do not recognise the fight of those who struggled to allow black learners into those same schools currently. A principal of an independent girls' school in South Africa mentioned in her interview with Wray, Hellenberg and Jansen (2018), that when her school celebrated their founder's day, they did not acknowledge that most of their learners present had ancestors who fought for their equality and rights to attend schools much like theirs. She said that in doing this, most of their learners were excluded from the school's founder's day (Wray, Hellenberg & Jansen, 2018).

Racism also occurs on the cultural level in schools in South Africa. The dress code in schools in South Africa have often been an example of cultural racism. A common occurrence of this has been where learners wear items of religious or cultural significance and have had these banned by the school. In the South African context, this has been such as the protective red string which some Hindu people wear, a nose ring, or an isiphandla, the wrist band worn by some Zulu people made of animal skin (Wray et al., 2018). The discouragement or banning of these kinds of cultural and religious forms of expression by schools is a type of cultural racism which perpetuates a dominant race's beliefs and culture as being correct and acceptable. This also applies to the example of a dominant race's hair type being the model for what is accepted within school rules, such as schools who police black learners to swap their natural, thick or curly hair, for narrow braids (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott & Garrison-Wade, 2008). White teachers and a school which teaches black learners how to behave and think in white ways is racist and denies those learners of their own cultures.

The consequences of racism in South African schools are serious and wide-ranging. The risk of internalised subordination by black learners is real and espouses lowered feelings of confidence and self-esteem. This is due to black learners who feel their exclusion from their white educational space and adapt or assimilate their behaviour to match (Bivens, 1995; le Roux, 2016). When learners do this adaptation, they adopt the dominant race group's culture and

language and experience the loss of their own as a consequence. In turn, feelings of inferiority and low worth can result. This experience of internalised domination is discussed by a black former learner of a Model-C school, Sizwe, “Model-C schools weren’t made for black people. We’re visitors... Black people were not meant to be in that space. Sometimes you don’t mean to get involved, you don’t mean to change just to suit the system, but it becomes a subliminal thing, like an unconscious thing, you end up doing just that” (Wray et al., 2018, p. 45-46).

Black learners feeling that they need to change any part of themselves or their behaviour in order to belong at a school is wrong and something needs to be done to address this. National policy requires in recent years requires that teachers in South Africa become socially just (Reygan & Steyn, 2017). This is a complex and difficult challenge, given the legacy of inequity left by apartheid and the elusiveness of the term ‘social justice’. For example, Martin (2015) argues that the new South African government faced the challenge of entrenched inequalities, especially concerning issues of race. As part of the government’s agenda of transformation, the process of racial redress and redistribution was developed. This process, with a basis on the principle of equality of opportunity, has resulted in social justice and equity coming to mean the same. Because of this, the effectiveness and meaning of social justice have become limited. In addition, working towards achieving social justice is just as complex and elusive, as there is no clear, common understanding of what this work requires (Martin, 2015). South African society is currently at a stage where teachers either witnessed and lived through the segregation and inequality of apartheid, or were born into post-apartheid South Africa. These are two very different perspectives from which to grow into social justice teachers. One of the key ways which relates to this topic, to work toward racial justice is to develop practical tools which teachers and learners can use to explore topics of social justice, such as race and racism (Hawkins, 2010). Through these tools, both parties can learn more about how this form of oppression operates in society, but potentially also be able to recognise and understand it in their own school spaces too. One such tool to teach learners about race and racism could be through the use of literature, which is a child-friendly and non-threatening medium.

2.2.2 Children’s Ability for Racial Discussion

Despite being exposed to oppression in their everyday lives, young children are often left out of discussions about race. As indicated in chapter 1, many academics, policymakers, parents and teachers argue that children are too young, too innocent and too immature, and thus incapable of understanding the complexity of race and racism issues (Butcher & Gonzalez,

2021; Fass, 2007; Parents Defending Education, 2021; Sullivan, Wilton, & Apfelbaum, 2021). However, a growing body of scholars argue to the contrary (Derman-Sparks et al., 2012; Fontanella-Nothom, 2019; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006; Williams & Norton, 2000), calling for the reconceptualization of the ability of children.

From young, children notice race. The research indicates that children are conscious of racial and skin tone differences from between six to ten months of age and start displaying racial preferences from four years old (Aboud, 2008; Anand, 2020; Baron & Banaji, 2006; Conley, 2011; Dunham, Chen, & Banaji, 2013; Raabe & Beelman, 2011; Welch, 2016). Kelly, Quinn, Slater, Lee, Gibson, Smith, Ge, and Pascalis' (2005) research has found that, at as young as three months, infants look more at faces that match the race of their caregivers and enjoy seeing human faces in picture books. Further, children as young as two years old use race to think about people's behaviours (Hirschfield, 2008) and later at the age of three, begin to notice physical differences which lead them to categorise humans and form attitudes about people from different race groups (Conley, 2011). Katz and Kofkin (1997) found that by 30 months, most children choose playmates using race. By five, white children are strongly biased in favour of whiteness (Dunham, Baron, & Banaji, 2008) and have learned to link some groups with higher status than others (Kinzler, 2016).

Derman-Sparks et al. (2012) conducted a study in 2012 and found that the 9-12-year-old age period is a critical one, as it is when inaccurate ideas about race can be challenged or changed, and when racist attitudes and behaviour can be consolidated. These researchers found that during this period, children begin to understand historical and geographical aspects of racial identities, such as ancestry of race groups, and a deepening awareness of political and cultural values begins. Derman-Sparks et al. (2012) suggest possible intervention strategies that are important for adults to teach and equip children with tools for the creation of anti-racist behaviour and thinking. Some of these ways include helping children to recognise racial stereotypes, understanding and sorting minority and majority perspectives; and increasing their skills for fighting racism.

Children and adults gather their meanings, assumptions, judgements and understandings from the contexts and environments they live and work in, such as families, school media and the community (Anand, 2020). Welch (2016) argues that children absorb cultural messages which affirm whiteness as the superior or dominant race. Bronson and Merryman (2009) found that explicit conversations with children aged five to seven about interracial friendships can

considerably improve their racial attitudes, while Anand (2020) maintains that exposing children to differences prevents a false sense of pride in their ethnicity and normalises the acceptance of differences. These scholars agree that young children have a sophisticated understanding of racial dynamics and messages, concluding that these discussions are therefore not out of their grasp.

With the understanding that children are capable of recognising and discussing race and racial difference, comes the concern of what happens when children do not discuss this topic in the classroom. Derman-Sparks et al. (2012) argue that silence on matters of race and racism often means that teachers are provided with insufficient support and knowledge of how to teach children about racism. For example, these researchers point to the absence in key textbooks for teacher training of issues of race and racism. The consequence of this they argue is that teachers then embody a colour-blind cultural ideology. This ideology assumes that if the topic is avoided with children, they will become non-prejudiced adults. This avoidance and denial seem to be the primary techniques for dealing with the problem of racism in education. The significance for Boutte and Muller (2018) is that children will not acquire the tools necessary to process and learn how to interrupt racism if they are not included in conversations about seemingly difficult topics. They go on to say, “if teachers and parents chose not to discuss difficult issues with young children, children are left to construct their own understandings which are often misinformed” (Boutte & Muller, 2018, p. 3). This means it is important for schools and teachers to provide curricula and materials that represent all people and their full humanity for children who belong to both dominant and subordinate identity groups. For early childhood teachers who want to teach themselves and their learners how to understand and interrupt oppression, being silent on an issue such as racism is not an option. Due to the self-perpetuating nature of oppression, silence makes them complicit. As Fontanella-Nothom (2019) advocates, children’s literature can function as a pathway leading to these conversations.

2.2.3 The Depiction of Race in Children’s Literature

Children’s literature refers to any literature which children enjoy, specifically books written for children, who may not yet be interested in adult literature or have the skills or understandings needed for its reading (Kiefer, 2020). Children’s literature can be fictional or non-fictional and can take the form of picture books where visual and textual elements interconnect to form the whole. Empirical literature in this area is scarce, thus older studies are predominantly cited.

There is a great deal of cultural diversity across the globe and this diversity is reflected in the rapidly changing nature of children's literature. Although the all-white world of children's books is slowly changing as more minority groups are being represented in books (Bishop, 1990), racial representation in children's books has a predominantly white history. Conley (2011) provided a historical representation of black and white portrayal in literature. Until the mid-1950s, black people were simply and sparingly represented in children's books, while white people were depicted in a mostly positive way. The few black people that did appear in children's books then were depicted in subservient roles such as slaves, servants or workers (Pescoslido, Grauerholz, & Milkie, 1997), which reinforced the dominant hierarchy of white people as superior to black people. Conley (2011) expands this by indicating that there was little to no interaction between white and black characters and no mention of race. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, more black people began to appear in children's books but were rarely the main character. Black characters in Africa began appearing with themes of families, children playing and people storytelling, singing and dancing, but black individual characters were never focussed on and spoken about. This simplistic, plural representation of black people reproduced stereotypes and was not authentic. These showed a particular underlying ideology through the inaccurate portrayals of black people, which could confuse children and be a source of potentially harmful misconceptions for all children (Hughes-Hassell & Cox, 2010). From the 1970s, black people were represented in crowds and as supporting characters, but again they failed to be the central focus, further perpetuating the story being told about black people and their status and power in society. By the 1990s, books began to emerge that feature clear interracial themes and address political issues (Pescoslido et al., 1997).

Welch (2016) observed the pervasive whiteness of children's literature and how it contributes to the nurturing of racial biases against black people, as well as stereotypes of black people, whilst stunting the growth of compassion towards them. Welch (2016) further describes children's literature as a mechanism of systemic racism in which the current market lacks diversity in published books. This raises concern over the possible failure of white children to develop compassion for others and the development of racial biases and stereotypes, due to omissions and stereotypes of people of colour in books. There should also be concern over the consequences of the white child seeing themselves as normal, as a result of mainly white characters in books. By learning that they are what normal is, white children learn that to be white is to be human. With this view of themselves, there seems little chance of the white child

developing humility- humility desperately needed in this world- as long as “children are brought up with gentle doses of racism through their books” (Welch 2016, p. 88).

Atkins (2013) points out that although there are no statistics to show how many children’s books are published in the United Kingdom each year, and how many are by or about black and minority people, the Cooperative Children’s Book Centre does compile such statistics in the United States of America. In 2011, out of 5000 children’s books published, 6% were by or about black people, while the population of black people at the time was over 35%. Although there has been an improvement in the number of children’s books published about black people worldwide, there is growing concern that there is still a lot more to be done regarding the lack of diversity in children’s books. Atkins (2013) found that in the publishing industry, an idea exists that characters featuring black and minority ethnic characters will only interest children of the same background, which is not an expectation that exists for books featuring white characters. However, Atkins (2013) did find there are a growing number of awards given by large, successful publishing houses specifically for children’s books portraying diversity, including racial diversity, such as those by Frances Lincoln, Puffin Books and Commonword. These prizes show a shift in the children’s literature world, where racial diversity is now starting to be welcomed and celebrated.

Van Vuuren (1994) indicates that South Africa’s children’s literature has traditionally been targeted at the white middle-class audience for the protection of the Afrikaner language by the apartheid government. Moreover, most of the children’s literature that was available in South Africa was imported, except for Afrikaans fiction, which meant there was minimal indigenous children’s literature being created. van Vuuren (1994) further mentions that the mid-1970s onwards saw a significant increase in the local production of children’s literature. In South Africa today, literature that celebrates and features black characters is becoming increasingly available and popular. Ethnikids (2021) is a South African online bookstore which, according to its website, claims to have the most broad selection of national and international books which feature black protagonists. Ethnikids (2021) specializes in children’s books that feature characters of colour in various South African languages. The mission of this bookstore is to empower children by exposing them to diversity in the books they read through the provision of “diverse material that more children can relate to and identify with” (Ethnikids, 2021).

2.2.4 Children's Literature and the (em)Power(ment) of the Reader

Books do not simply convey what they mean- teachers or caregivers who read to children and the children themselves ascribe meaning to what is being read, from the base of what they know and have experienced (Fontanella-Nothom, 2019). The act of reading is then a social process rather than an individual act, as once traditionally believed. Reading occurs not only on an individual level but also in a greater interpersonal and community context. The reader is a crucial part of the reading event, taking control of their voice and the meaning that comes from the text. Crosthwaite (2015, p. 15) describes reading as an empowering and liberating act, "Reading a book is an experience, one of wonderment, adventure, and excitement, while simultaneously tapping into fears, worries and bewilderment. As a result, sharing literature becomes a means of understanding ourselves and our world, the known and the unknown". This quote describes the power a book holds to share the perspectives of people similar and different from ourselves, and the opportunity it holds for learning about ourselves and others.

Crosthwaite (2015) presents the reader response theory in her study in America, which guides our understanding of how the text is interacted with during the process of reading. An understanding of the dynamicity of interpretations of texts dependent on learners allows teachers to be cognizant of multiple perspectives within the classroom. It is important learners participate in and contribute to literature discussions, allowing them to recognise their own positionalities and thoughts while simultaneously supporting possibly differing perspectives among their peers. Despite the direction of the conversation during the literature reading, learners need to be encouraged to see the value in their peers' responses, voices and meaning making. This is aligned with a democratic education (Crosthwaite, 2015). The reader response theory displays how children's literature used as a tool for discussion can be liberating for readers, "Literature represents personal experiences, giving potential for freedom of thought for readers on many levels and it is this potential that paves the way for creative thinking and imagination- necessary components of a democratic and productive society" (Crosthwaite, 2015, p. 15).

The well-researched benefits of sharing and reading books with children are consistently shown to have a marked influence on their oral language development, beginning reading skills and the development of social skills (Adam et al., 2019). Further, children's literature can be used to study emotions and ideas of acceptance, well-being and safety. Children's literature has many benefits that relate to children's literacy development, but children's literature that features racially diverse characters and covers topics of race and racism has further benefits.

Welch (2016) argues that being exposed to children's fictional literature improves children's emotional understanding and empathy. Kesler et al. (2020) mention the benefits of multicultural literature as bringing children into contact with cultures unfamiliar to them, increasing their self-concept and awareness of their own culture, learning to understand and accept beliefs and value systems different from theirs, and discovering similarities from those from cultures and races different from their own. With the teacher's guidance, interactive read-alouds give children the chance to discuss topics of social justice and provide a strong socio-cultural context for growing deeper understandings of these issues in books (Kesler et al., 2020, p. 210). Welch (2016) profoundly describes the social importance of reading stories to children, saying that a child who is deprived of reading stories is also deprived of ways of viewing others, because the insides of people are not open for us to see and "they must be wondered about" (2016, p. 372). Shipley (2014) agrees that children's literature can empower children and provides methods or ways that literature can be used in lessons by teachers such as literature circles, taking books from school home, reading aloud, creating their own books, and having a classroom library.

Another role of children's literature is that it can introduce learners to any cultural group's important history and traditions (Bishop, 1990). In South Africa, an example of such literature is the works of author and storyteller Gcina Mhlophe's, which make the isiZulu culture come alive. Bishop (1990, p. 2) says that although multicultural children's literature won't solve homelessness or world hunger, it could help us to understand each other better through assisting change in our children so that they will see that we can celebrate our similarities and differences, "because together they are what make us human". Through literature, children can become immersed in conversations about social consciousness and the ways humans connect to help them recognise the complexity of their actions. Steiner (2008) found that multicultural literature offers a subtle, yet effective, way for children to interact across ethnic lines. Not only students from minority identity groups benefit from multicultural literature in the classroom. Multicultural literature presents children with the opportunity to see themselves in books; prevents feelings of isolation; fosters the growth of self-esteem; and nurtures empathy, respect and acceptance of all (Steiner, 2008).

2.2.5 Children's Literature Used to Discuss Race and Racism

The empirical research on the use of children's literature to discuss or facilitate conversations about race and racism has been emerged from the United Kingdom and the United States. The

surveyed literature on this topic shares a similar purpose and focus to this research: to evaluate the effectiveness and ways in which children's literature can function as a tool for teaching young children about race and racism; to observe children's responses and meaning-making processes to racially diverse literature; to deeper understand the importance of engaging children in racial discussion through literature; to explore and highlight the importance of this work for children of both dominant and subordinate racial identity groups (see studies of Anand, 2020; Boutte & Muller, 2018; Conley, 2011; Crosthwaite, 2015; Fontanella-Nothom, 2019; Kesler et al., 2020; Welch, 2016).

The surveyed literature shares common goals or aims of seeking to equip children with the skills of social awareness and critical consciousness to identify and reflect on stereotypes and biases, heighten their racial awareness, as well as develop empathy and compassion with those different from us, to interrupt oppression as part of a social justice education approach or process (Anand, 2020; Boutte & Muller, 2018; Conley, 2011; Crosthwaite, 2015; Fontanella-Nothom, 2019; Kesler et al., 2020; Welch, 2016). The primary method of all studies compiled here used multiple versions of the same idea: dialogue, conversation, verbal expressed language, or discussion, although with sometimes varying theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

The methods used in the studies surveyed in this literature review varied somewhat when examining the function of children's literature in racial discussion. Crosthwaite (2015) used many books once, while Reygan and Steyn (2017) used one book many times. Fontanella-Nothom (2019) took an immersive, participatory approach as the researcher, while Conley (2011) took a passive, observer researcher approach. Boutte and Muller (2018) cautioned that it is always possible to be critical of literature and that no book is free of complexities and issues and chose books with problematic messages or racial representations deliberately. In contrast, Kesler et al. (2020) selected books they believed to be pro-racial justice and of high quality. This study is going to use many books once which are of high quality and have pro-racial justice messages.

Coon's (2012) study found that students' exposure to multicultural literature affected their thought processes about race. Anand's (2020) study in America observed that the utilization of children's literature to discuss race and racism was a useful tool, as it operated as a way of consciously mediating historically and socially grounded meanings for children that help them to understand differences in a way that questions and rejects stereotypes and biases. Kesler et

al. (2020) pick up on this idea in America, too, of consciously mediating children's meanings through the role of the teacher who reads the literature out loud to the children. They say that the interactive nature of reading a story out loud to children provides multiple opportunities for children to speak about social justice topics with the guidance of the teacher, learning by and through conversation. This interactive process of conversing out loud between learners and teachers allows a stable context for learners to think deeper about the complex social justice issues which appear in the children's literature selected.

Learning can be seen as a process that is complex and dynamic- one which requires consideration of each learner and their experiences (Crosthwaite, 2015). This is considered when discussing race and racism through the use of children's literature. Crosthwaite (2015) asserts that literature can be a life-changing tool for learners, because it can function as a reflection of themselves or a window into their world, eventually functioning as a method for social transformation. An example of this is in Fontanella-Nothom's (2020) study, where it was found that reading and responding to children's literature with racial messages can give confirmation to black learners of their value and beauty. The representation of race in children's literature influences learners' understandings of status, power and privilege (Conley, 2011).

Studies examining racial discussion through the use of children's books comment on the discomfort experienced by learners and teachers during these conversations. Anand (2020) maintains that engaging in uncomfortable dialogue is necessary to understand and identify inequities and respond with action. Fontanella-Nothom (2019) advocates that all children need to be exposed to social justice education or anti-oppressive education, because oppression affects us all and that children's literature is a tool for starting conversations with learners about discrimination, power and injustice. It is possible to teach learners to critically inquire and reflect on structures of power and privilege in their lives and wider society (Anand, 2020).

2.2.6 The Influence of Children's Literature on Identity

Scholars concur that there is an essential role for informed discussions between teachers and learners in the interruption and avoidance of reproducing systems of inequity and oppression, such as racism. Children's literature provides primary school teachers with a powerful tool for such conversations to take place effectively (Boutte & Muller, 2018). Audsley (2019) maintains that children's literature promotes empathy, fights racism, and encourages diversity, equity, inclusion and understanding. They mention that reading is a key way of accessing another's perspective, allowing adults and children to imagine alternative ways of thinking and

worlds that are unfamiliar to them. The experience of another race, or the experience of racism, can be introduced through high-quality children's literature from early on, allowing for discussions and integration of the topic in the classroom. Remaining silent on issues of discrimination, inequity and oppression is simply not an option for those teachers who wish to teach themselves and their learners how to address and interrupt oppression. Anand (2020) argues that children need to be taught to address interlocking power structures- moving beyond superficial intersectionality (see Crenshaw, 1991)- to factor in historical and structural inequities with a view toward transformative change. This can be done through children's literature and the intentional centring of subordinate identities and consciously questioning our biases.

The use of children's literature allowed children to talk about race in Kesler et al.'s (2020) study, conducted in America, through prompting questions asked by the teacher based on the text and illustrations of the selected literature. Some learners expressed speculation around the topic of race after reading the story, using words such as 'maybe' and asking questions, while others presented partial understandings of race by beginning to show their ideas but battling to completely express them. Some learners in the study also referred to real-life examples in aiding their articulation of what they understood about race. There were instances of learners building on the understanding of what others were expressing, by verbalising their agreement. Some learners experienced confusion, frustration and anger when unpacking what they understood about race and racism in the discussion on the literature, with learners asking why things were the way they were, or expressing that racist situations in the book were unfair. Kesler et al. (2020) conclude that through the discussions around the literature read together, conditions were created in which learners could engage in exploratory talk, which enabled the class community to co-construct meaning.

Fontanella-Nothom's (2019) American study with pre-schoolers found that in initial readings of literature which hold themes of race and racism, the children appeared to withdraw from explicitly discussing skin tone and colour or race, but the more they read literature with these themes, the more they displayed comfort and interest in discussing these topics explicitly. She found that the children began to raise questions about race comfortably after the initial readings, where they had read literature together and engaged in reflective practices. They also made claims of their own racial identity with comfort- one such example being when Zoey, a participant in the study said, "I'm Black. I like to be Black and so is my auntie and my mom and my dad. We Black." (Fontanella-Nothom, 2019, p. 16). In this case, Zoey was comfortable

in verbalising and sharing her racial identity with her class after race was discussed through the literature in the study.

In discussion groups based on children's literature, Adomat (2014) found that diverse literature promotes a rich understanding of contemporary issues. Children in the study in America brought their own viewpoints and interpretations of stories to the discussions, and these understandings were enriched by the many other viewpoints expressed in the classroom by others. The study found that children's literature has the potential for preserving and reflecting negative cultural attitudes, just as they do the potential to change attitudes. The study concluded that the classroom could be a democratic place where children explore questions about social identity. White (2015) concurs with Adomat, finding that some aspects of a child's identity formation can be affected by exposure to multicultural literature, such as their attitudes, values and self-concept through how characters are portrayed, in a negative or positive light. White (2015) found that young children were able to add non-prejudicial ideas to their knowledge of identity. The identities of children can be affirmed or damaged through children's literature, affecting their self-confidence and self-belief (White).

Children's literature plays a fundamental role in the growth of a sense of identity and belonging for the children reading it, as well as exposing them to ideas and perspectives different from their own (Adam et al., 2019). Bennett, Gunn, Gayle-Evans, Barrera, and Leung (2018) conclude that children's literature that represents diversity helps to affirm children's identities, their families, and communities, bolstering a sense of pride. Literature is a powerful way that children understand themselves and others. Books can function as a 'mirror' of identity and a 'window' into the world's diversity (Adam et al., 2019). Children's literature is also important in the disruption of dominant discourses of identity and diversity, making it a need for children to have access to authentic and accurate representations related to their identities (Boutte & Muller, 2018).

The first section of this chapter presented the literature review section. International and national literature was reviewed, illuminating key ideas about the value of using children's literature for children to learn about race and their own racial identities. The context of race and South African schools was outlined, before engaging in the debate on children's ability for racial discussion. Next, a history of the depiction of race in children's literature was provided, up to present, and then the use of literature to discuss race and racism specifically was discussed. Finally, the influence of the children's learning about race and racism was explored

in relation to its influence on their identity formation. The next section serves to present and explain the conceptual framework used to guide and support the study.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

To fulfil the purpose of this study, as well as provide support to it, concepts from multiple theories have been selected and are used together. The conceptual framework for this study is seen as a camera lens, where the mirrors and mechanisms are compared to the concepts and constructs, providing focus and direction. Figure 1 below displays the conceptual framework model for this study in diagrammatic form.

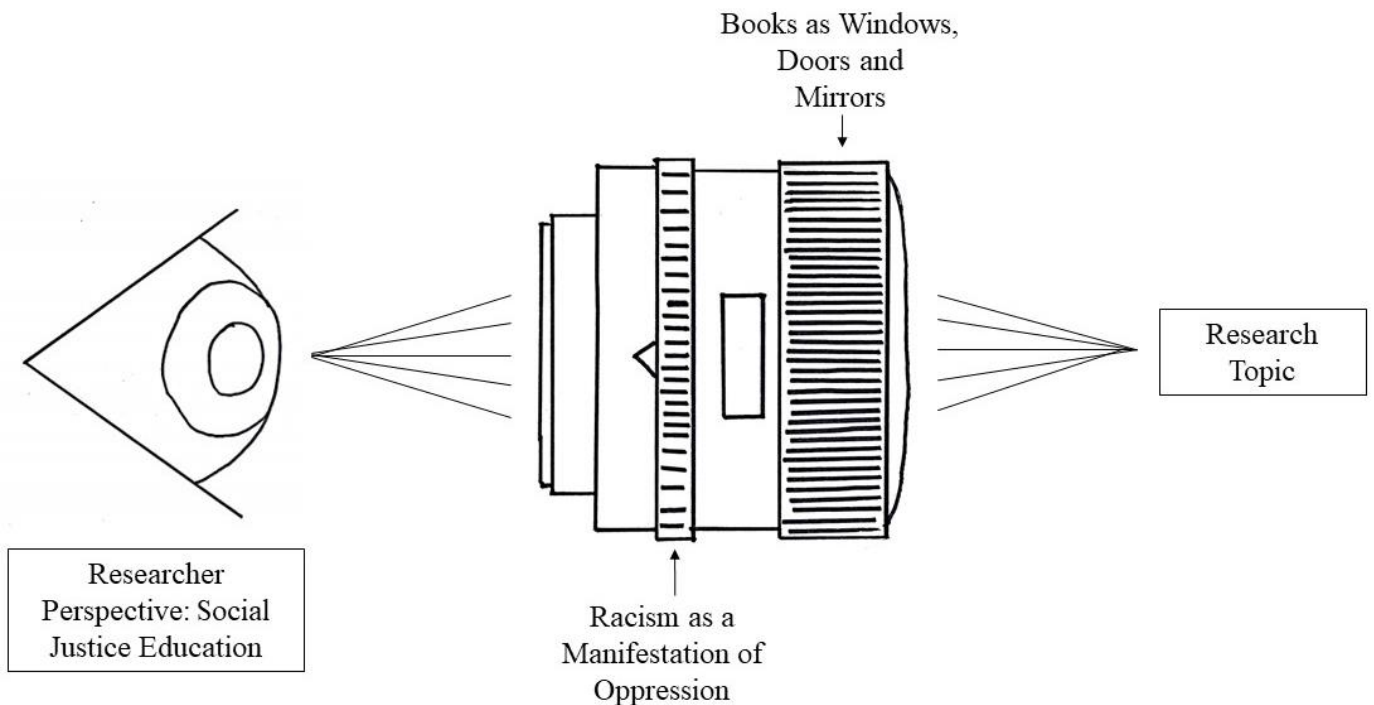


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Model

2.3.1 Social Justice Education Perspective

Social justice education is the field of education and therefore the perspective from which the research is conducted by the researcher, who is a social justice teacher. The broad concepts and goals of social justice education are used in this study, with the other components of the conceptual framework working within this field to achieve its goal.

As indicated previously, social justice is an elusive term that is constantly evolving and is dependent on particularised understanding determined by the context within which it is used (Martin, 2015). Social justice education is a field of knowledge that, according to Bell (1997),

assists learners and teachers in their personal lives and society in understanding oppression and oppressive systems. Within the theory that underpins social justice education, various concepts provide a means to analyse oppression and how it operates. Adams, Bell and Griffin (2007, p.1) define social justice as, “a process and a goal. The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs.” They elaborate and specify that the objective of social justice education is to empower people to “develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems...” with a view to developing “a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns in themselves and in the institutions and communities of which they are a part” (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007, p.2). Social justice education holds its roots in critical pedagogy, sharing many concepts with Paulo Freire (1970), who theorised that oppression can be overcome through a praxis of reflection and action and through a democratic, participatory, collaborative, and inclusive process.

Over the past century, there has been an emergence of teachers developing pedagogies for social justice, on the basis of ideas of identity, power and social construction, who call themselves social justice teachers, or teachers for transformation, liberation, empowerment, or anti-oppression (Boutte & Muller, 2018; Crosthwaite, 2015; Kesler, Mills & Reilly, 2020; Quin, 2009; Reygan & Steyn, 2017; Steiner, 2018; Welch, 2016). Quin (2009) asserts that social justice education goes beyond merely the pursuit of knowledge and identification of social justice aims and values, but for learners and teachers to be empowered to engage in anti-oppression for social justice. Reygan and Steyn (2017) state that it is important to study social justice education because of the roles schools play as sites of socialisation (see Harro, 2000).

The teacher-learner relationship within social justice education is a Freirean (1970) one, in which the banking system of education is rejected for a process of co-creation of knowledge with teachers as facilitators of learning, called problem-posing education. Through and in problem-posing education, learners and teachers grow their power to perceive their existence in the world critically and their location within it (Freire, 1970). Through the problem-posing approach, learners in this study were exposed to children’s literature where their critical consciousness about how race and racism operate in the world was discussed. Critical consciousness is another important concept that Freire (1970) advocates for and is the capacity to intervene in reality to transform it. Learners move closer toward critical consciousness through an ongoing process of conscientization, making consciousness a method. Acting against oppressive facets encourages the development of critical awareness, or a shift in attitude

from powerlessness to power to generate and achieve change. The learners in this study were encouraged to participate and reflect on their experiences and understandings of race, given a space to question, discuss and unpack these ideas, in doing so nurturing their critical consciousness. Both teachers and learners are constantly creating and recreating knowledge, with opportunities for conscientization through transforming oppressive spaces into liberating spaces (Freire, 1970). How this study has been designed, is to nurture inquiry that evolves beyond information retrieval towards the generation of knowledge together with a view towards the creation, implementation and tracking of an intervention to contribute to improvement and change. This is informed by Freire's (1970) praxis of conscientization which encourages a thicker understanding and more meaningful response to forms of oppression, such as racism, which surround and dehumanise us all within and beyond the school space.

2.3.2 Racism as a Manifestation of Oppression

Bell (1997) holds that a theory of oppression is needed in social justice education, as it allows us to think clearly about our intentions, ask questions and critique our own practices. Without an understanding of oppression, it cannot be interrupted, and social change cannot take place. Teachers, therefore, are implicated in this if they are attempting to bring about some social change, making the interrogation of equity and oppression imperative (Boutte & Muller, 2018; Freire, 1970; Kesler, Mills & Reilly, 2020). To employ social justice education, teachers need to understand how race and racism occur at various levels such as the individual, interpersonal, institutional and societal levels (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 5). These are all interconnected and influence behaviour, ideas and opinions and thus teachers need to be aware of how race and racism manifest in society.

It is also important that this is taught to learners for them to gain a critical understanding and awareness of how race and racism manifest in everyday life and why it is deeply embedded in society. Children's literature is a key way to do this, as it can be non-threatening. Children's literature can either be an ideological tool to reinforce the dominant norms, values and understanding, or it can function to interrogate and challenge these normalised understandings. In this study, literature will be selected and utilised to understand the various ways in which race, as a form of oppression, is evident in South African society.

Oppression is an interconnected, hierarchical relationship in which dominant groups benefit from the disempowerment of subordinate groups (Bell, 1997). Oppression also works at various levels and holds components that continually self-perpetuate. Oppressor groups

determine the notion of what is normal and in doing so, wield social power. In this study, the form of oppression is racism, which is based on the social identity of race. The oppressor group based on race is white people, and the oppressed group is black people. In this study, an example of the oppressor group determining notions of normal and wielding social power could be a white teacher who selects children's literature that is representative of only their race. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) provide useful labels and terms to describe binary oppressed groups (oppressors, dominants, advantaged, privileged) or oppressor (oppressed, subordinates, targets, disadvantaged), relationships between these groups (vertical and horizontal oppression), and forms of oppression (overt and covert racism, conscious and unconscious racism). These terms will be referred to in the study.

Crenshaw (1991) coined the term intersectionality in relation to the multiple ways that race and gender intersect and create multiple layers of experiences for people. She has developed intersectionality into a lens that can be used to view moments, experiences or contexts in which power interlocks and intersects. In this way, it enables people to analyse and present oppressions and privileges which reinforce and are interwoven with each other. Núñez, Rivera, and Hallmark (2020) describe intersectionality as interlocking systems of oppression, at a macro level. They tie this to individual experience based on membership to a social group within a particular social and historical period, which all function within the larger macro system which advantages and gives access to some. Crenshaw (1991) presents examples where identities intertwine to show 'double subordination' or 'intersectional subordination' which creates a unique vulnerability for young, female, black learners for example, which results in invisibilisation leading to marginalization and disempowerment. Rich (1984) mentions the importance of location- being able to recognise and name our location within a tangle of oppressions. Intersectionality and location are important ideas to be applied in this study, in understanding the power attached to my status as a white teacher, dominant over the student participants- particularly the black students- at the location of the school, where a teacher traditionally holds power over learners.

Race is a term which is socially constructed and represents a random way of grouping humans based on physical appearance. Racism has been constructed and reproduced for centuries as a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority across the world by patriarchal, capitalist, western-centric, colonial and Christian-centric institutions (Grosfoguel, 2016). According to Tatum, racism is defined as "a system of advantage based on race" (1997, p. 7). Inspired by the writings of Frantz Fanon, Grosfoguel (2016) defines racism in a way that acknowledges its

intersectionality with other forms of oppression, in relation to the zone of being and zone of non-being. They describe how those in the zone of non-being (for example, black learners) are dehumanized by oppression (racism and ageism) and experience perpetual conflict through violence, appropriation, and dispossession. Those in the zone of being (children or white teachers, for example) experience humanization, privilege, emancipation, and perpetual peace. Using this, it can be understood how racism could be experienced differently by different people in education, and what the effects are on a person who is in the zone of non-being.

Internalized racism occurs when members of the subordinate or dominant group collude with racism and develop ideas, beliefs and behaviour that support it. Internalized subordination can create low self-esteem and disempowerment, while internalised domination can create higher self-esteem and empowerment (Bivens, 1995). Cultural racism occurs when members from the subordinate group experience a loss of their own culture as a result of having the dominant group's culture imposed on them and internalised. This can be linked to examples in this study where damaging stereotypical or lack of black representation and lack of discussion of race and racism in children's literature can lead to internalized subordination on the part of black learners. Fanon (1961) argues that this internalisation process allows oppressive understandings about race to become embedded, naturalised and normalised. The consequence of the internalisation process is that it also reinforces dominant discourses around white as being the superior and dominant race.

Wijeysinghe Griffin and Love (1997), assert that institutional racism is that which occurs on the level of a network of policies, structures and practices that create privileges for white people, and disadvantages and discrimination for black people. The advantages often appear invisible to white people and are taken by them as being their right and expected. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) explain how social institutions, such as education, codify forms of oppression, such as racism, in the form of laws, policies, practices and norms. The enforcement of these maintains racism in both intentional and unintentional ways. The ways in which institutional racism occurs in South African schools were explained earlier in this chapter, such as the example of hair policies in schools, which align with the dominant white race's hair. This creates an institution in which hair that deviates from the norm of white hair is not accepted, to the detriment of black learners and teachers. The current dual system of education in South Africa, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, that is organised along race-class lines is another example of how the school system is structured in a way that is racist (see Spaull, 2012).

2.3.3 *Books as Windows, Doors, and Mirrors (Bishop, 1990)*

Researchers like Anand (2020), Fontanella-Nothom (2019); Kesler et al. (2020) all attest to the usefulness of using Bishop's theory to explain how children's literature can be used as a tool for learning about race and racism among learners. Bishop (1990) developed the metaphor of books as windows, doors and mirrors to convey the power and function of books and reading, illustrating why it is important for learners to read books about children racially similar and different from themselves.

Bishop (1990) describes books as windows because they can provide views or sights of worlds that are fictional or envisioned, familiar or foreign. The worlds that books present could take place in areas known or unknown to the child reading it, such as a book taking place in a South African city read by a South African child. It could include elements of fantasy or be realistic. These views into different worlds can go from being windows to being sliding glass doors when readers metaphorically walk through the door to become immersed, and part of the world created by the author. These windows can be transformed once more when "lighting conditions are just right" (Bishop, 1990, p. xi) into a mirror- in other words, when the literature being read is in a similar or the same context as one's own- the book becomes an experience of self-reflection. Literature has the power to transform the experience of being human and reflect it to us. In this reflection, we are able to see our own being- our experiences and lives- as part of the bigger shared experience of being human. Through this, Bishop (1990) declares that reading becomes a mode of self-affirmation. Readers then seek their reflections in books (Bishop in Anand, 2020). This can be supported by Freire's (1970) understanding of dialogue, literacy and language where he argues that language is a vital means for social reconstruction, as it is how humans communicate. The act of reading involves movement between words and reality, meaning that the spoken word also becomes a way of reading the world. Through this reading the world, reading can become self-affirmative.

This understanding of Bishop's (1990) metaphors highlights the importance of the representation of subordinate racial identity in children's literature. When black children cannot find their reflection or their reflection is distorted, negative or nonsensical in the books that they read, often in the form of stereotypes, myths and caricatures, they are sent a powerful message about their status and value in society (Bishop, 1990). By seeking themselves in books, target group readers are looking for evidence of their humanity- evidence that contradicts the internalised oppression they feel. They may become empowered target

members who begin to reject the inferior status assigned to them. They may feel a sense of pride and community in seeing themselves represented, and in ways that are positive and liberating (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). White children have always found their mirrors in literature. The lack of availability of books featuring diverse racial characters is an issue for white children too- they need books that help them understand the multiple and diverse nature of culture in the world and their place within it, and how they connect to it. They need to learn that they are not the norm or standard for being human. When children are exposed to books that can function as both windows and mirrors for all races, they see that we can celebrate our similarities and differences, because jointly they are what make us human.

Welch (2016) presents the argument that the pervasive whiteness of children's literature contributes to the creation and nurturing of racial biases and stereotypes, as well as limits the compassion of white children for others. To explore this further, one can look at the idea of racial hegemony and the power resulting from this and its ongoing reproduction (Bell, 1997). Through racial hegemony, white people are dominant over black people. This position is consistently reinforced and reproduced through behaviours, attitudes, and values such as prejudices and stereotypes. Through hegemony, white people's perspectives of social reality are the norm and therefore become the status quo. One such way that this occurs is through children's literature that represents and supports whiteness- the top white position in racial hegemony. This status quo is unquestioned, as it resides deep in our subconsciousness. The messages about white people promoted in and through this literature form part of a powerful socialisation tool in the lives of children (Harro, 2000).

When every area of our lives reinforces racial hegemony, white people begin to experience privilege as a result of their race, which carries great power in the forms of advantages, status and opportunity. Peggy McIntosh (1988) defines white privilege as unearned advantages and opportunities because of one's membership to the dominant white race group, and as a "favoured state, whether earned or by birth" (McIntosh, 1988, pp.2). White people are conditioned into owning their privilege through their dominance in society. It becomes internalised and the benefits of privilege become expected, as the natural order of things. The reproduction of hegemony concerning literature and the white identity is that it reinforces our dominant position. When books are representative positively of black people, white children's normalised perceptions are challenged, and a window is offered into another view or world in which they are not dominant. For black children, these books become mirrors- ways for them

to see themselves as human- which challenge the perceptions society has of them, and that they may have internalised of themselves.

These concepts will be used to describe how children's literature functions in the study of children's learning about race and racism- whether learners are using the literature to view their own or another world as windows; step through doors and become immersed and engaged with the world in the book; or to find themselves in the literature through their experiences and lives. With these concepts in mind, I believe reading can be self-affirmative practice.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided the key context and concepts relevant to the study, framing children's literature and its use in how children learn about race. Literature and related empirical research was reviewed from recent years, where relevant, and included international and local perspectives. The chapter concluded with a conceptual framework, which provided the theory and concepts which underpin this research. The following chapter details the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Three details the methodological design for this research. The qualitative research style and critical paradigm selected for this study are explained in this chapter, as well as the action research approach. These methodological choices made for this study are suited to its research context, which is also outlined in this chapter, specifically in relation to site, sampling, recruitment of participants and researcher positionality. The methods of data generation are described through the four distinct phases of one action research cycle, as are the selection process of the children's literature, as well as the data analysis process. Issues of quality, limitations, and ethical considerations are traced in detail, before finally explaining the beneficence of this study. This comprehensive methodology attempts to show that every aspect of the study feeds into one another, revealing a golden thread that runs throughout.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study is located within the critical paradigm of research, which guides the study through certain assumptions it makes about knowledge, reality and values (Mack, 2010). The critical paradigm used in the education field acknowledges that schools play a key role in the construction of knowledge in society- knowledge loaded with unequal power through its production, making them sites that reproduce inequalities and maintain the status quo (Mack, 2010). In this study, it is believed that schools are sites that reproduce racism and maintain whiteness as the dominant status quo. Critical educational researchers aim to challenge the reproduction of these inequalities and question normalized and dominant understandings, to contribute to emancipatory change in institutions or participants' lives (Asghar, 2013). The critical paradigm was selected for this study because its ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions are aligned with those of the researcher and the field of social justice education. The methodology designed for this study also aligns with the critical paradigm belief system and framework. This means a golden thread runs through the study, providing support and structure through the philosophical trinity of ontology, epistemology and axiology (Durant-Law, 2005).

Ontology refers to the nature of being, reality or existence. According to the critical paradigm of research, reality is formed by social, political, cultural, historical, economic and other dynamics (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Social reality is shaped by people all of the time in their daily lives. Aligned with this, this study acknowledges that multiple socially constructed realities exist rather than verifiable truth. Researchers working within the critical paradigm acknowledge that inequality and oppression exist in the world, as do power dynamics and structures- all of which can be altered by human action. Because of this inequality, how humans experience the world is different.

Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge and knowing, separate from belief and opinion (Lexico, 2020). There are certain epistemological assumptions associated with the critical paradigm that underpins this study. One such assumption is that it is not possible to be an objective outsider who collects neutral or value-free knowledge, because knowledge is socially constructed through various sects of society, making knowledge an expression of power (Cohen et al., 2017). What is constituted as worthwhile knowledge is decided by the power of the institution or person advocating that knowledge. This has implications for me as the researcher, who holds particular positions in society and my school as a white teacher, making it important to interrogate researcher positionality (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017).

The final element of the philosophical trinity, axiology, explores the nature of value and ethics and interrogates the purpose of the research (Durant-Law, 2005). A core aim of research in the critical paradigm is to go beyond merely understanding society, to change it (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Critical researchers endeavour to acknowledge power differentiations and break them down. They seek to understand the beliefs and actions that oppress, to transform the situation. In this study through the use of children's literature, learners developed critical consciousness and ways of challenging racially oppressive understandings and inequalities that they encountered (Freire, 1970). This study attempted to go further than capturing learners' understandings of race and racism, but to attempt to teach them through the use of children's literature in participatory mini-workshops what race is and how racism functions in their own lives. Through the study, learners expressed that they felt more empowered by the knowledge they had developed on race and racism. It is hoped that this empowerment will equip them in their lives towards challenging racism in the future. The learners' participation in the research was used as a platform for their voices to be heard and where they became co-constructors of their knowledge and the knowledge of those around them. This had the potential to and did, transform their way of thinking about race and racism (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

3.3 Research Style

This study utilised a qualitative research style to pursue detailed data which provided rich descriptions. Qualitative research is a naturalistic process of inquiry that seeks to understand a phenomenon in-depth in the field (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). Qualitative research is relevant to this study because textual, rich descriptions and analysis assisted in identifying, understanding and describing the role of children's literature in learning about race and racism among primary school learners (Struwig & Stead, 2015). Through the use of qualitative action research, deeper accounts of learners' understandings about race and racism in a South African context were gained. In this way, learners' multiple and complex understandings can emerge (Cohen et al., 2017).

3.4 Research Approach

Action research, the term coined by Kurt Lewin (1946), is the approach for this study. Action research is known for its collaborative growth of knowledge, multiple strategies of social research, and being able to fulfil traditional academic research requirements whilst fostering social change, in keeping with the paradigm chosen for the study. While conventional researchers may value objectivity, distance and controls, action researchers value relevance, empowerment and social change (Baum et al., 2006). A key value of action research is respect for people's knowledge and ability to understand and confront the issues they face (Baum et al., 2006). Action research assumes that knowledge is embedded in local contexts, which is essential to understanding problems and creating effective interventions for that particular context. This is particularly important in the current context of South Africa and independent schools where racism continues to be pervasive and embedded in the subconscious (Zulu, 2020). Action research is an appropriate research approach for this study because the researcher is also a teacher of the learners who participated in the study and action research usually refers to research done on a researcher's own practice (Bertram, 2004). Specifically, action researchers in education aim to find solutions for problems within their specific context, rather than research done by 'strangers'. As the action researcher, I positioned myself as a critical investigator who had an interest in improving my educational situation in participatory and collaborative ways (Carr & Kemmis, 2003).

Action research is outcome-orientated, whereby the information coming out of one phase informs the next, with its practitioners making an effort to research four phases of planning, action, observation and reflection (Struwig & Stead, 2015). According to Kemmis, McTaggart, and Retallick (2004), in the planning phase, a plan of action is developed to improve what is already happening but needs to be flexible enough to adapt when required. In this study, the planning phase was used to ascertain what the learners knew about race and racism, and this was used to plan for the action phase's participatory mini-workshops. During the action phase, the intervention in the form of the mini-workshops was implemented deliberately and thoughtfully. Although this was guided by the information generated in the planning phase, it required fluidity as practical judgement needed to be made. The next phase, observation, involved taking notice of the effects of the action or intervention within its context to provide the basis for further action and reflection to follow. Observation not only took place after the action phase but continuously throughout the cycle. In the reflection phase, which consisted of focus group discussions and self-reflexive learner journals, the observed effects were utilised as a foundation for future planning and continuation of the cycle (Kemmis et al., 2004). The reflection phase was important for myself and the learners, to see what we had learned in the process.

My role as the critical investigator and researcher conducting this action research approach project was to: manage and guide control of the research process collaboratively with various stakeholders such as the participants, my fellow master of education students, the school counsellor and my supervisor; better and refine practices based on what is delivered from the action research process; increase collaboration to ensure that I as the researcher remained actively involved in the resolution of practical concerns of participants; oversee and ensure the four phases of the cycle were carried out (adapted from Jacobs, 2018). The learners in this study played a meaningful and active role in the research activities in which they critically analysed their situations (Carr & Kemmis. 2003), keeping true to the characteristics of the critical paradigm. This is positioned in line with the conscientisation process by Freire (1970) whereby people achieve a deepening awareness of the reality which influences their lives and of their ability to transform it.

3.5 Research Context

3.5.1 Research Site

This study was conducted in an independent school in Pietermaritzburg, Kwa-Zulu Natal. According to the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA, 2019), the South African Schools Act of 1994 created a system of schooling in South Africa where two categories of schools exist: public and independent. Unlike public schools, independent schools are governed privately. Although not governed by the Department of Basic Education, independent schools must be registered with the department. The school is situated in a residential area with mostly suburban houses in the vicinity. It is a single-sex, high-fee-paying primary school. It is attended mostly by learners from upper-middle-class and wealthy families. The learners who participated in the study are all girls and are racially diverse. The research site is the school within which the researcher was employed.

3.5.2 Research Sample

Purposive sampling was used, meaning that particular choices were made about which people to include in the sample (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). The participants of this study were a class of 18 Grade 5 learners, selected because they were a racially diverse class and were at the age desired for this research. 23 Learners were invited to participate in the study, 18 of whom accepted and became participants. The participants completed the questionnaire and participated in the mini-workshops and focus group discussions. The focus groups consisted of 4 groups: 2 groups of 5 and 2 groups of 4.

The use of racial classificatory terms to identify learners in schools in South Africa is important in the context of equity reforms. According to these racial classifications, as well as the socially constructed racial categories the learners themselves identified with, 10 white, 2 black, 3 Indian and 3 mixed race learners participated in the study. The learners were between the ages of 10 and 11 and this age cohort was aligned with the gap evident in research that positions studies with learners at this age and learning about race through children's literature, as scarce. As Flick (2007) argues, purposive sampling is about finding the most knowledgeable participants for the phenomenon under study. This study intended to explore if multiple and complex understandings of race and racism could emerge that would challenge dominant norms in literature and society. Further, the study also used convenience sampling which, according to Struwig and Stead (2015), is chosen based on availability. The learners were in the same school

that I, the researcher, taught in and thus it was convenient to access learners and financial and time constraints were prevented.

3.5.3 Recruitment of Participants

The principals of the school and the school's Board of Governors were consulted about the study and their permission was granted for the study to take place. This was done through in-person discussions with the researcher and then through the gatekeeper permission request forms (see Appendices A & B). The study was then discussed with the Grade 5 class teacher to seek advice regarding the participation of the learners. It was agreed that it was appropriate to invite the class to participate in the study. The parents of the Grade 5 learners were invited to an in-person parents' evening meeting where the study and its purposes were explained. The parents were able to ask questions and discuss the study directly with the researcher. The parents/guardians were then given a letter explaining the study in writing and requesting consent for the participation of their daughters in the study. In the letter, they were invited to contact the researcher directly to discuss the study even further. A few meetings then ensued with parents to answer questions individually. Once parent consent forms were all received, the learners whose parents/guardians granted consent were invited to a meeting with the researcher, where their potential participation in the research was explained to them in an age-appropriate way. The learners were then invited to participate in the study. They were given two weeks to think, reflect and ask questions before indicating interest and then completing the learner assent forms (see Appendix D). 18 learners and their parents/guardians gave their assent and consent to participate in the study. The thoroughness of explaining the study to the participants and their families over a month-long period was important to ensure that they understood what the study was, when it would take place, what the learners' participation would entail, and to allow time for them to reflect and decide whether they would participate or not.

3.5.4 Participation

The participants in this study were required to complete a semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix E), participate in 4 mini-workshops, and participate in a focus group discussion (see Appendix H). These were part of the action research design and were audio recorded. The questionnaire, workshops and discussions took place during the school day, in the learners'

library and Reading Eggs¹ programme periods. The learners who did not participate in the study did not suffer any educational losses as a result, as the research formed no formal part of the curriculum. These learners continued with their library and Reading Eggs periods as usual, while the researcher took the participants for the research sessions. The participants of the study did not suffer any educational losses as a result of participating in the study, as they had library visits and Reading Eggs timeslots beyond those they missed due to research. The learners were aware of their rights throughout the study and knew that they could withdraw and/or seek counselling at any stage.

3.5.5 Researcher Positionality

I taught the learners who participated in the research for three years. I was their specialist teacher and taught their educational technology and library lessons for a total of two hours per week. This meant that I knew the learners quite well before the research began. Positionality asks that the researcher identifies and understands their own and participant's views, values and beliefs concerning the research process through self-reflection (Manohar, Liamputtong, Bhole, & Arora, 2017). It is important to reflect on how these and my various social identity memberships influenced my positioning and perspective in the study. Although having a relationship with the learners resulted in a more intimate understanding of the phenomenon and a closer bond and awareness of the learners' well-being, it also posed a few challenges.

Concerns about the power and privilege of the researcher are consistent in this style of research, and I sought to negotiate this as best as I could, by involving my researcher positionality in the action research process: pausing at each step to purposely reflect on my role and influence in the research process and allowing myself to adjust accordingly. This study focuses on the children's learning of race and racism through literature, which begged me to draw attention to my race. As a scholar of social justice, I must constantly reflect upon my white racial identity and how it operates in my teaching and, in turn, impacts my learners. This study was no different in terms of my ongoing reflection on this. It is hoped that my social justice background assisted me in this process. I aimed to be as critical and reflective as I could be of my white identity and the power it held, combined with my power and status as a teacher, throughout this study. This was done using a critical, self-reflexive journal where I detailed my thoughts and understandings that emerged throughout the research process. This journal served as a

¹ Reading Eggs is an online reading programme with hundreds of lessons, games and books for ages 2-13.

discussion point with my supervisor as well as critical fellow students in the master's cohort to ensure that bias did not intentionally occur. As the study unfolded, my learners insisted that I, too, had a pseudonym. They named me Mrs Pie and called me this throughout the research.

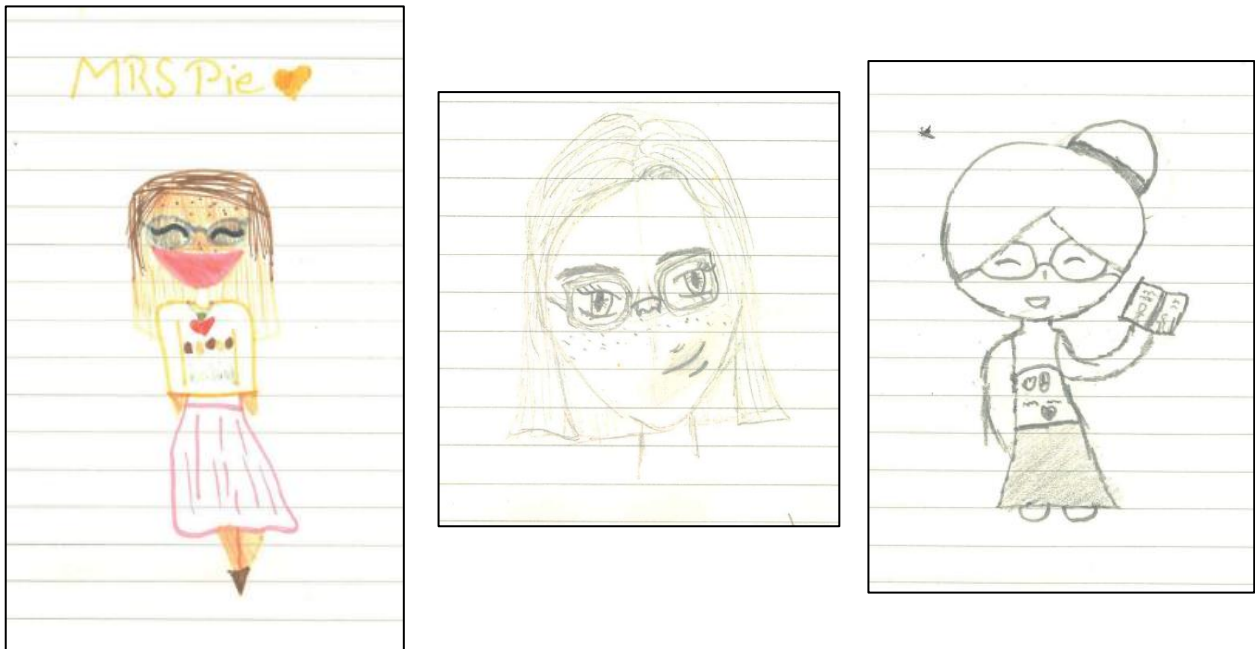


Figure 2: Drawings of 'Mrs Pie' from the Journals of Wonder, Zendaya and Mikasa Respectively

The experience of being an action researcher was an empowering one for me. After each step within each phase of the cycle, I was able to pause and observe what was happening and reflect on what it all meant. Because of the nature of action research, I was able to plan the next steps and phases upon completion of the current one. This meant that I took real ownership and direction of the research in a way that seemed deeper than had I used a different design. It also meant that the well-being of the learners took the central focus in these moments of pause- I was able to think about what the learners knew and how they were responding to the research. This allowed me to make judgements on the level of potential learning to expose them to through the books without causing emotional or cognitive distress. This deepness I found myself in came with its moments of confusion, too.

There are moments of confusion indicated in my researcher journal. After the first mini-workshop, I wrote about the more physical pressures of time, space and COVID protocols, but also the less tangible ones: were the learners okay? Was their learning unfolding in a way that was emotionally safe for them? Through the learner emotion charts used during the sessions, I could see non-verbally which learners felt discomfort, sadness or anger (as well as other, more positive emotions) and I knew how learners had responded in the sessions. In my journal I

documented meetings with the school counsellor after each session, who knew the learners, to unpack what was occurring and reflect. My researcher journal became a self-reflexive space, where the concerns, challenges and successes were inked, turned over and responded to. The reflexive element came in where all these thoughts and feelings I had, informed me what my next moves would be.

A key challenge for me as the researcher was my influence on the participants' learning. As a teacher, I was trained and well-practised in intervening during lessons to scaffold and guide my learners' understandings. In this instance, I needed to consciously stop myself and have an internal dialogue every step of the way. I was a facilitator and researcher, not a teacher. While learners were speaking to me, I was having an internal dialogue at the same time. Whilst facilitating the workshops, I knew that I wanted to truly understand what the learners were gaining from the literature- not from being taught by me specifically. However, I could not-not answer their questions, or challenge their thinking if they were harmful or wrong. But then begged the question- when do I intervene? Surely a part of the learning is grappling- grappling with an idea you do not yet have a handle on. The balance of listening and influencing as a researcher required constant conscious effort. Discussions and visits with my supervisor and master's student cohort members allowed me to come to grips with these questions I had and the challenges I faced, which some of them were facing too. Through all this introspection, collaboration and reflection, I think that my positionality as the researcher was addressed and considered adequately.

3.6 Methods of Data Generation

The term data generation is used over data collection, because of the epistemological beliefs associated with this study and the role of the learners as participants. It is understood that the participants were both a source of valuable knowledge and able to contribute to the knowledge created in the study. This study acknowledges that in order to understand the views, ideas, opinions and feelings of young children, the methods need to be appropriate to match their ability, knowledge, interest and context (Einarsdottir, 2007). Children are traditionally treated as a special case in research, which means that the principles of non-maleficence, beneficence and autonomy must be applied with particular care and caution. A study by Nairn and Clarke (2012) found that although good ethical research practices exist, ethics requires that we continue to challenge ourselves to keep abreast of changing social, political and cultural patterns.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recognises the importance of children's voices in data generation and provides tools of support with guidelines on ethics to consider when researching children. One such tool by Berman, Hart, O'Mathúna, Mattellone, Potts, O'Kane, Shusterman, and Tanner (2016) identifies and explores issues of ethics involving children that should be considered. They found that: understanding power relations and dynamics; an institution's ability to engage children in research appropriately and respectfully; retrieving informed consent and assent; identifying harms and benefits; maintaining confidentiality and privacy; and ensuring appropriate communication of findings remain relevant and applicable in humanitarian settings. Careful consideration of whether this research is necessary and safe for learners was made before deciding to work with the learners in this study. These considerations are explained below in the ethical considerations section of this chapter.

The data generation methods used in this study were participatory and collaborative in nature, which generated data from sources in varied ways. Through the action research phases explained further below, a baseline semi-structured questionnaire, participatory mini-workshops, and focus group discussions were employed as the primary data generation methods.

A semi-structured questionnaire is a powerful instrument with an open-ended format, but a clear focus, structure, and sequence (Cohen et al., 2017). This means a schedule is set but the nature of the response is not assumed or implied. This allowed perceptions and understandings to be described in depth. Baseline data refers to that which is generated at the beginning of a study, and is described by Cohen et al. (2017, p. 418) as an "important feature" if a researcher were measuring the value of a component, such as children's literature. They go on to say that "one can only assess how much a set of educational experiences has added value to the student if one knows that student's starting point" (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 418). The baseline semi-structured questionnaire utilised at the beginning of the data generation in this study served this very purpose, congruent with the purpose of action research, in determining the effectiveness of an intervention.

Workshops are a method of data generation which Ahmed and Mohd (2018) argue incorporate many attributes associated with qualitative research and can be included as a method for educational research. Workshops are typically preorganised activities, with a limited duration, structured in such a way where a group of participants acquire new understandings around a specific topic (Ørngreen & Levinsen, 2017). Workshops are associated with participatory

pedagogy, or participatory design, where genuine, active participation is promoted, and participants are encouraged to have an impact on the workshop's direction. The activities carried out in a workshop should provide space for the participants to interact and engage in their learning (Ahmed & Mohd, 2018). Workshops compliment the action research design, due to their forward-oriented process and providing opportunity for participants to realise their agency (Ørngreen. & Levinsen, 2017). Mini-workshops were particularly used in this study and called such, due to their shorter duration, associated with a typical lesson length in a school setting.

A focus group discussion, sometimes referred to as a focus group interview, is a form of group interaction to generate data about how participants understand a particular topic (Struwig & Stead, 2015). Focus group discussions require skilful facilitation and planning by the researcher, in order to elicit understandings and views in ways which are accepting and safe for the participants. In a focus group discussion, the participants interact with one another so that their views emerge, rather than the researcher's. Cohen et al. (2017, p 376) describe focus groups as "contrived" in nature, meaning that their focused on a specific topic lead to insights that may not be attainable using other methods. The collaborative and participatory nature of the focus group discussions made them a logical choice in this study, used within the action research phases.

The methods followed the action research process in four steps. I completed one cycle of action research in this study, with the learning being used in my teaching process through the cycle going forward beyond this study. Whilst action research cycles need to remain flexible to change, below is the outline of each phase of the cycle in this study as it unfolded. Appendix I shows the action research design for this study in diagrammatic format.

PHASE 1: PLANNING

> Purpose: To uncover what the learners' understandings of race and racism are (sub-research question 1).

> Step 1: The first method of data generation was through a baseline semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix E) which was given to the learners to ascertain what they understood of race and racism in-depth before the action phase of mini-workshops. The acronym BQ is used to denote baseline questionnaire in the analysis chapter.

> Step 2: The data that was generated from the questionnaire was analysed to find out what learners' understandings were of race and racism. This information allowed the researcher to then plan the action and to decide on what children's literature would be appropriate to help learners engage with race and racism on multiple levels.

PHASE 2: ACTION

> Purpose: To investigate how the learners' understandings of race and racism are influenced by the action research intervention, particularly regarding the children's literature that they will be exposed to; and to investigate what learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature (main research question and sub-question 2).

> All forms of action research require an intervention to be applied during the action phase of research. The intervention in this study occurred in the form of a learning programme composed of 4 participatory mini-workshops. The mini-workshops (MW to denote mini-workshop in the analysis chapter) were held once per week, over a month and were designed according to the information generated from the baseline semi-structured questionnaires. The reason one workshop was conducted per week was to allow the learners time to reflect on their own understandings, feelings, and behaviours before building on these in subsequent sessions.

> The mini-workshops were audio recorded and consisted of participatory data generation activities to answer in particular the main research question and sub-question 2, but learners' understandings of race and racism also filtered through. The activities used participatory visual and arts-based methods, based on the selected children's literature. Given the age of the learners, these were non-threatening ways to help the learners engage with children's literature. The mini-workshop plans are detailed in Appendix G.

PHASE 3: OBSERVATION

> Purpose: To investigate how the learners' understandings of race and racism are influenced by the action research intervention, particularly regarding the children's literature that they are exposed to; and to investigate what learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature (main research question and sub-question 2).

> Step 1: Observation occurred throughout the action phase. The researcher observed during the participatory mini-workshops by keeping field observation notes.

> Step 2: The researcher observed after the action phase by listening to the audio-recorded workshops and looking at written or drawn work produced from the sessions. Once this was done, the Mini-Workshop Observation Schedule (see Appendix F) was filled in. This schedule had questions adapted from Reygan and Steyn's (2017) criteria for critical diversity literacy.

PHASE 4: REFLECTION

> Purpose: To uncover how the learners use their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school (sub-research question 3).

> Step 1: For my reflection, I kept an ongoing researcher journal throughout the process, which was shared with my supervisor and members of the master's cohort. This was to consistently examine my researcher positionality and avoid unconscious biases in keeping with the paradigm and conceptual framework that underpins this study.

> Step 2: The learners kept journals throughout the research. This was initially to monitor learner well-being, where they could reflect on their emotions. However, the learner journals became a valuable space in which they shared and grappled with their learnings and asked questions, and therefore became a discursive, private space between the learners and I. Evidence from these journals will be referred to in Chapter Four, as they provide authentic insight into the learners' understandings.

> Step 3: Four focus group discussions (FGD to denote focus group discussion in the analysis chapter) were held with 2 groups of 4 learners and 2 groups of 5 learners, to reveal how the learners navigated their racial identities, their community and the world around them in response to the literature used in the participatory mini-workshops. Focus groups were also held to fill in potential gaps that emerged from previous data generated.

3.7 The Selection of Children's Literature

A vitally important consideration in this study was deciding which children's literature to use in the participatory mini-workshops. The literature was selected through a series of steps. First, using my experience and knowledge as a librarian, as well as what I had learned during my literature search about the depiction of race and racism in children's books, I selected a range of what I felt were age and topic appropriate books. Next, to bring in a level of standardization and rigour, the books were checked against the criteria for Reygan and Steyn's (2017) critical diversity literacy framework.

Critical diversity literacy comprises a set of principles that can be applied as a teaching tool, and draws on critical literacy theory, as well as critical pedagogy. The link between critical diversity literacy and Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy can be seen through the process of conscientization. To develop one's critical diversity literacy, is to engage in the process of conscientization, as they both involve a process of learning to perceive social and political situations, and act against oppressive elements of reality (Steyn, 2020). Critical diversity literacy is intended to be broad in its application in education and a few studies have employed it (see Ndzwabiya, Ukpere & Steyn, 2018; Hlalele, 2021). Their ideas were used by the researcher to make decisions about which children's literature would be most appropriate and would allow participants to learn about race and racism.

Once the semi-structured baseline questionnaires had been completed, they were analysed to gauge what the learners knew about race and racism. This then informed the selection of books which would be used in the first workshop from the above-mentioned pool. In keeping with the action research phases, after each mini-workshop the next books were chosen upon reflection, and so on. This was also done so that the literature would be appropriate for the learners and not overwhelm them due to being far above their level of understanding. This allowed for their understandings of race and racism to be scaffolded by each book, increasing in complexity and depth, the further into the workshops we went. The books that were used are listed below, in the order in which they were read:

- The Colors of Us by Karen Katz
- Happy in Our Skin by Fran Manushkin
- I Have Brown Skin and Curly Hair by Karen Theunissen
- Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o
- Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race by Megan Madison

3.8 Data Analysis

Action research is not a traditional, formulaic method in research, and its data analysis is therefore cyclical and ongoing through reflective practice. Data analysis in action research is not separated from data collection or generation and is not an end result or phase in the data generation process (Hawkins, 2010). It rather occurs throughout the data generation phase of the research, as well as in the analysis of the data once it has been generated. The analysis occurred naturalistically and collaboratively with the learners as the data was generated, as well as formally by the researcher in the final stage of reflection. Reflection was an important

element in this study's data analysis because it was nestled within the learners' thoughts, feelings, and experiences so that understandings could be gained by the researcher.

This study made use of both inductive and deductive methods of analysis within the action research approach. Data were analysed inductively, in that detailed, raw quotes from the data were used to derive concepts, and themes (Thomas, 2006). The data generated was transcribed into textual data, then colour coded and categorised, before being grouped into categories which had significant similarities or differences, and then finally being arranged into five themes with sub-themes. This inductive part of the analysis allowed for the authentic voices of the participants to emerge, with direct data coming through in the fourth chapter of this thesis. The study employed deductive reasoning in its analysis through the logical process of valid inferences from the conceptual framework and empirical literature presented in the second chapter (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017). These concepts were used to give critical, logical analysis to the inductively-arranged themes. This allowed me to 'live' the conceptual framework, particularly as Freire (1970) had presented, in that the methods aimed to stimulate dialogue and critical reflection and occur in a participatory way.

3.9 Quality

Quality in qualitative research is not an agreed-upon idea. Rather, the quality of a qualitative study is influenced heavily by its whole methodological design. Qualitative researchers are reluctant to use the terms 'reliability' and 'validity', as they have ties to quantitative research, generalisation and objectivity. Qualitative researchers concur that it is not possible to separate oneself from the world and operate completely unbiased. This means that due to a range of cultures, contexts, thoughts and behaviours, it is difficult to generalise findings (Cresswell, 2013). Because this is a qualitative study, validity was not a concern, but rather trustworthiness. Trustworthiness deals with the honesty and morally principled manner in which the study has captured key issues and analysed them (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) and is considered through four criteria. Trustworthiness is a concern in action research because researchers observe and evaluate change that they instigated themselves. By engaging in careful data generation and analysis, this can be countered (Bertram, 2004). The four criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research developed by Guba and Lincoln in 1985 are mentioned in Shenton (2004) as confirmability, transferability, credibility, and dependability.

This study could not achieve confirmability because no other researcher can confirm the findings of the study without being involved in the action research process, as researcher participation is a key component. Transferability also cannot be achieved, because the research is specific to a particular context and people and the findings cannot be applied to another context or person. The study makes no claims to transferability or confirmability as it is based on a specific context. Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the findings, which can be difficult to achieve in qualitative studies (Shenton, 2004). Because the process of action research in this study is open and involves other people, through multiple methods, this adds to the consistency of the findings. The final component of trustworthiness by Guba and Lincoln (1984) is credibility. The use of detailed, thick descriptions of the research process, as well as quotations and images in the analysis increase the credibility of the study. The methodology chosen for this study increased its appropriateness and relation to the issues of trustworthiness and quality.

3.10 Limitations

The limitations of the study refer to the areas of the research design that influence the interpretation of the research (Struwig & Stead, 2015). Any study carries limitations that are important to identify and address. Due to the many steps involved in the action research process and the reflection required given the nature of the topic, this study was time intensive. This study is specific to the group of students involved and the books used, so the findings cannot be generalised to all students. However, certain aspects may be helpful in the employment of a similar study in a similar context, such as children's literature being a good way for children to learn about race and racism. Although the promotion of social change and empowerment of people is a goal of this study, acknowledgement has to be made about being limited in affecting social change and empowerment. This study will not change the world, however, how the methods of data generation and the participants were positioned could allow for particular understandings which may contribute to their empowerment and being critically conscious of the world, such as being self-reflective and reflexive about subjective experiences. Another limitation of this study which has been addressed is the power of my position as a privileged, white teacher. I attempted to alleviate this through the use of critical master's cohort students, as well as a self-reflexive journal of the entire research process. Lastly, but importantly, another limitation and ethical consideration was the COVID-19 pandemic. The research sessions took place physically. These sessions complied with the school and Department of Basic Education

COVID protocols of wearing masks at all times; being in large, well-ventilated rooms; washing and sanitising hands before, during and after sessions; being socially distanced; as well as being screened before entering the sessions. I believe that my study did not pose a greater risk to learners than my usual, scheduled weekly lessons that form their schooling would. No learners tested positive for COVID-19 throughout the duration of the data generation.



Figure 3: A Self-portrait Wearing a Mask by Lucy Sky

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethics refers to what is considered right and wrong and is an important consideration in all research, but especially research involving children (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017). Through the stringent ethical clearance application (see Appendix J) process at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, regulated by the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC), the study design was checked by multiple experienced academics/researchers, who highlighted potential ethical weaknesses in the study, which were addressed before the study was approved and could be carried out. Three ethical principles for qualitative research are interrogated and applied: namely autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence (O'Donoghue, 2022).

3.11.1 Autonomy

Autonomy is a person's ability to be self-governing (Struwig & Stead, 2015). The ethical clearance process, as mentioned above, is an important way that learner autonomy was protected. Once the study had been granted clearance, request for permission forms to conduct the study at the research site were sent to the gatekeepers of the school. I met with these gatekeepers and provided them the opportunity to ask questions about the study. Because the research site was a school belonging to the Independent Schools Association of Southern

Africa, the permission was needed from the Head of the School Board of Governors, as well as the two Heads of the school (see Appendix A & Appendix B). Once this was granted, the parents and guardians of the learners were invited to an in-person parents' evening, where the study was explained to them, and they were able to ask questions. They were also given the request for permission to conduct research forms (see Appendix C), as the participants are minors. Informed written consent protected the learners' and parents' autonomy, as they were informed about what they were participating in and that they could drop out of the research at any point. The researcher explained the study to the learners whose parents had given their consent and were invited to become participants. Those learners who expressed interest were required to sign a learner assent form (see Appendix D). Those learners who assented and whose parents/guardians gave their consent were then informed again about what their participation entailed, before beginning the study. The learners maintained their autonomy throughout and were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any point, with no consequences.

3.11.2 Non-maleficence

Non-maleficence means to do no harm (Struwig & Stead, 2015). As a researcher, I aimed to use my understanding of where the learners were at and my relationship with them to ensure that the research was conducted appropriately, and in a holistically safe manner. I also utilised the action research design to establish how the learners were responding to each section of the research, before designing the next, to do my best to ensure the research was emotionally safe for them. The school psychologist was available to counsel any learners who needed it. The counsellor was reintroduced to the learners (as most already knew her) and were reminded that they could go to her if they were feeling uncomfortable, emotional, or needing to talk. To my knowledge, no learners sought counselling services. I, the researcher, sought the counsellor's advice and she acted as my reflective sounding board after each research session regarding the comfort and emotional safety of the learners- by sharing my field notes from the mini-workshops. The learners were not clear on who was and was not participating, due to groups, which prevented the victimisation of those who did not participate or those who did.

Once the study had been explained to the learners, we collectively created class guidelines for conversation, so that our expectations of one another were set to maintain respectful, stimulating conversations. It was made clear that the victimisation or stigmatization of others would not be tolerated. The guidelines were referred to in each mini-workshop and stuck on

the front cover of the learners' journals. The learners' self-reflexive journals were monitored for any signs of emotional trauma or victimization/stigmatization. In every mini-workshop, the learners had emotion charts in front of them, allowing them to show how they were feeling without speaking so that I could be more aware of and responsive to the emotions of the learners. The learners were asked to choose pseudonyms for themselves, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. All physical evidence from the study contains pseudonyms only and the learners refer to each other by their pseudonyms in the audio recordings. The name of the school will not be revealed. Through these measures of anonymity, the learners will not be identifiable to those reading the study and therefore the learners cannot be judged, victimised, or stigmatised by this.

The data that was captured, whether physically or electronically, is securely stored to ensure that it is not discovered and has any repercussions for the participants. Physical data, such as learner questionnaires and journals, is stored in a lockable cupboard to which the researcher and supervisor have access. Virtual data, such as recordings and scans, is securely stored and protected with a password only known by the researcher and supervisor. The data will be kept for five years and then destroyed (shredded or deleted).

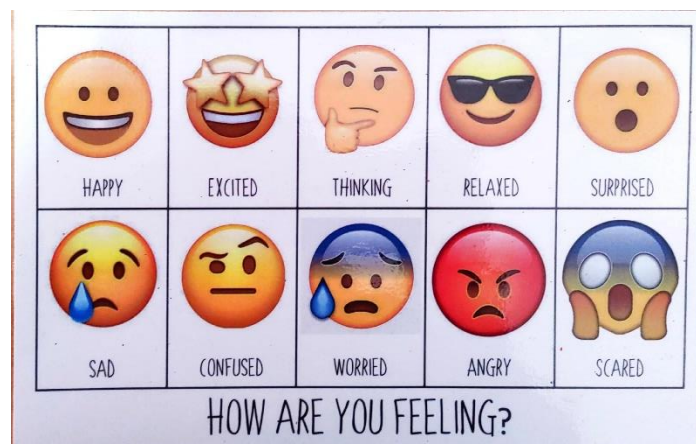


Figure 4: Emotion Chart Used by Participants During Mini-Workshops

3.11.3 Beneficence

The final consideration is beneficence, which means that the study should be beneficial to the participants, as well as to society, which is also an aim of critical paradigm research. Beneficence cannot ever be guaranteed. At best, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field, which can illuminate the role of children's literature in a class of Grade 5's learning about race and racism. Through critical reflection and engaging in discussions on

race and racism led by children's literature, the learners have had a space to share their perspectives and create new knowledge together. It is hoped that the learning from this action research can filter into the school and homes of the learners so that stakeholders can learn about race and racism and find ways to understand, reflect and challenge.

Another feature of beneficence is feedback to participants after the data has been generated. After multiple sessions, the focus group discussions functioned as a way for the learners to clarify and share their understandings to ensure that they were correctly captured. The ethical obligations of the researcher do not end after data generation. Thus, the research findings will be shared with the gatekeepers from whom I requested permission to conduct the study, once this thesis has gone through the examination process. The findings will also be shared with the learners in person through a discussion with me, the researcher. Lastly, the findings will be shared with the parents/guardians of the learners, in the form of a presentation and discussion with me. They will be invited to discuss the results further, should they wish to.

3.12 Conclusion

Chapter Three is a critical chapter in any study, as it details the methodology of the research. This underpins, informs, and is informed by all other elements of this thesis. The qualitative style, critical paradigm, and action research approach are bound together to form the core of the golden thread that runs through this study. This thread runs through the data generation methods within the semi-structured baseline questionnaire, participatory mini-workshops, and focus group discussions. The purposive and convenience sampling of participants was explained and aligned with their recruitment and participation. Researcher positionality was interrogated, as is critical with this study, and then the selection of literature was explained. The deductive and inductive methods of analysis were presented, before issues of quality, limitations, and ethical considerations were examined. All of the choices made regarding the methodology of this study were made with each methodological element in mind, with the core golden thread running through each one. The following chapter presents, analyses, and discusses the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This findings and discussion chapter presents the five key themes which emerged from the data. These themes are intertwined with the concepts and literature presented in Chapter Two. Although the presentation and discussion of the findings as themes are critical to fulfilling the purpose of this study, the integrity of the action research design must remain intact. It is necessary to identify and understand the influence of the action research design on the findings presented in this chapter, as this is a key characteristic of action research and it assists in explaining how the learners' understandings developed, from one data generation method to the next, as well as how I as researcher used these to guide each phase. The action research design diagram is presented in Appendix I for the reader to refer to the design. This outlines each phase and the research questions and data generation tools associated with these.

The five key themes are presented below with their respective sub-themes beneath them. The themes are: Before the Books: Learners' Racial Understandings; Books as Windows: Views of the Racial Experience; Books as Doors: Pathways into the Racial Experience; Books as Mirrors: Reflections of the Racial Experience; and After the Books: Impact of the Learning. In this chapter, a number of extracts from the data appear. They are referred to using an acronym such as baseline questionnaire (BQ), numbered mini-workshops (MW 1, 2, 3, 4), focus group discussion (FGD), or learner journal (LJ).

4.2 Before the Books: Learners' Racial Understandings

The first theme deals with the understandings that learners had of race and racism before the intervention of the mini-workshops, which occurred in the planning phase of the action research cycle. These are the understandings that they brought with them to the research. Data was gained through a semi-structured baseline questionnaire completed by the learners. This baseline data had two functions. Firstly, to gauge what the learners knew and understood, to plan appropriate mini-workshops. Secondly, it acted as a fixed point from which to refer when understanding the learning which emerged in the focus group discussions at the end of the research. This theme answers sub-research question one which relates to what the learners'

understandings of race and racism are. This theme has been divided into sub-themes below in order to describe what the learners understood before the action phase.

4.2.1 Varied Understandings of What Race Is

The data gathered in the baseline questionnaire revealed that the learners had varied understandings of what race is. When asked, over half of the learners related it to skin colour, skin tone, or the shade of one's skin:

Charlotte: Race means peoples skin colorer (colour).

Chef Niki: Race is your skin tone...

Evelynn: Race is like your colour. Your skin.

Lilly: Race means different skins...

Zendaya: What colour you are.

Katherine: Race is... where some people are blak (black) and some are white.

PennyG: Race is skin colour... white and black.

Vanessa: There are different races in the world like black and white. [BQ]

This understanding of race as the colour of one's skin reveals a focus on outward appearance. Skin colour and skin tone are descriptors that, according to Fanon (1952), one cannot hide away from and that mark people as belonging to different race groups. This is the key way in which these learners understand race categorisation. Racial categories according to skin colour were constructed and served as a way to legitimize the dominance of white people over black people and are not based on scientific or biological truth (Fanon, 1952). The remaining legacy of this is the view that race equals the colour of one's skin, as the learners above demonstrated. Interestingly, Katherine, PennyG and Vanessa related race to these socially-constructed groups to which people belong, of black and white, showing a binary construction of race. Their utterances also show how over time, they have come to see these groups as natural and are taken for granted to discuss the concept of race and is embedded in their identity construction of themselves and others (Lopez, 1994).

A few learners connected race to different aspects of identity such as language, culture, religion or a particular ethnic group:

Ariana: *Race is different types (types) of people like Zulu people, Indian people and Afrikaans.*

Chef Niki: *Race is... your people... like your culture.*

Layla: *Culture of someone.*

Lilly: *Race means the different... culter (culture).*

Lucy Sky: *Race is somting (something) like... religion (religion). My religien (religion) is chisten (Christian). [BQ]*

The data above suggests that learners have understood race to be more than skin colour alone as part of other social identities namely religion, culture, ethnicity and language. The learners as participants offer alternative understandings about race that point to the complexity of social identity group construction. The data suggests that the learners see race as more than just skin colour but as part of multiple and intersecting identities (Crenshaw 1991) based on religion, culture, language and religion. With this understanding of intersectionality, race is described by these participants as being more complex than just skin colour.

Some participants like Wonder, Ruby and ArtyGirl25 responded in ways which implied that race was a negative thing or a negative act:

Wonder: *I think race means someone is making fun of people and being mean.*

Ruby: *I think race is when someone mak's (makes) fun of what colour there (their) skin is and they don't let them do what they want to do.*

ArtyGirl25: *I think race is trouble and fighting against colour skin. [BQ]*

The data above is quite significant as it shows that these participants' understandings of race is based on something negative where race is seen as being about *trouble, fighting, making fun of people and being mean*. Here, these participants are hyper-sensitive to race relations and accounts for them blending race with racism based on what they have seen, experienced and have knowledge of because of their membership to a particular race group that may be negative. This is similar to what Tatum (2000) indicates, that the social identity that one is most aware of is often the target identity. As seen by the participants, this target identity is one that people reflect to them and is based on making fun of people and being mean. This results in the restriction of the movements and opportunities of people where you *don't let them do what*

they want to do and also speaks to the historical nature of racial identity construction, of fighting against skin colour because it is seen as unacceptable.

4.3.2 Varied Understandings of What Racism is

Whilst racism was understood in various, simplistic ways, there were some learners whose understandings were deeper.

ArtyGirl25: *Racism is when people get treated badly because of their skin colour.*

Katherine: *Where whites only like white and blacks only like black.*

Chef Niki: *When other races are treated better than others.* [BQ]

These utterances by the participants above show that racism is understood as relationships between black and white, but more importantly as an act, that reveals their active understandings that some races are *treated better than others*. These ideas indicate that racism can be more than an abstract idea and that the learners are aware that being black means being subjected to bad treatment. Ariana described the experience of being assumed to be Indian by others because of her skin tone when she identifies as mixed race, *Some people when they look at me think “she’s Indian” but I don’t care, ‘cause I know the truth*. She goes on, *When people think I am Indian and don’t believe in God I get a little mad*. Here, Ariana had a strong reaction to the stereotype associated with Indian people as people who do not believe in a Christian God. Her anger could be seen either against being associated with being Indian or that there is a stereotype that is perpetuated and reinforced that, for her, could be seen as unfair and this makes her *a little mad*. This is because Indian people here are othered, meaning that they are a subordinate group who have a stigmatizing difference, in this case: their religious beliefs and race (AbdulMagied, 2020). Being othered, because of her multiple and intersecting identities, is an act of discrimination and exclusion- exclusion from what she believes is a true identity and secondly from her true religious beliefs. Katherine also shared her personal experiences of racism. This focused on overt conscious acts, which are the behaviours that occur on the individual level (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997):

Katherine: *...At a shop in Jobhurg (Joburg) I was with my sister the guard only cared about black people... I remember this one time me and my sister were coming out the Spar and the guard, so normally he only checks the people who has his colour, he only checks them and has a conversation with them and just completely ignore me and my sister.* [BQ]

Like Ariana, Katherine also shows the acute awareness that children have of racism that occurs in their daily experience and is in keeping with empirical literature (see Butcher & Gonzalez, 2021; Fass, 2007; Parents Defending Education, 2021; Sullivan, Wilton, & Apfelbaum, 2021). For Katherine, she is aware of current stereotypes that surround criminality in South Africa as being a distinctly ‘black’ act. Moreover, she has the ability to critically perceive the unfairness of the act. The idea that *he only checks the people who has his colour* means that this is an act of horizontal oppression (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). The guard who is black has also internalised this stereotype and he acts on this stereotype, showing how stereotypes go from mere thought into action where he is prejudicial against his own race group. It would seem that repeated socialisation into this kind of prejudicial behaviour results in the guard colluding with his own oppression. Katherine and Ariana’s examples not only identify racism as acts but also who benefits from and is disadvantaged by these acts. Katherine in particular is consciously aware that her lighter skin affords her power and privilege because the guard *just completely ignore[d] me and my sister*. Quite consciously she is also learning that there is a hierarchy of race relationships where being white means getting preferential treatment (Bell, 1997).

4.3.3 Racism as a Taboo

A clear, key idea that came out of the baseline questionnaire was that racism is a taboo topic of conversation:

MAH: *I think it’s just something I would keep to myself.*

Katherine: *I don’t want to talk about it.*

Lilly: *I think it is sometimes rude.*

Evelynn: *I mite (might) hurt someone’s feelings.*

Piya: *I think it makes people uncuftible (uncomfortable).*

Ruby: *Because I don’t want to hurt eneyone (anyone) on how I talk. [BQ]*

The above quotes suggest that the learners felt that speaking about race and racism is too personal and uncomfortable an experience to engage with. This is in keeping with what Steyn and Reygan (2017) indicate that race as a taboo topic is a current problem in South Africa. This is because of fear and is evident in the data by the participants above who seem to fear hurting another’s feelings, as talking about race is equated with being mean or rude. Race is such a discomfoting topic to talk about that they *don’t want to talk about it*.

Discussion about race was so disconcerting for learners that their feelings and emotions erupted. The learners were given Table 1 below in the baseline questionnaire at the start of the study and asked to select the blocks which described how it felt for them to speak about race and racism. The responses have been represented as a heatmap- the red cells being a high/frequent response, the orange being a medium response, and the green a low/no response.

Table 1: Heatmap of Learners' Feelings on Racial Discussion

Comfortable/Calm	Anxious/Worried	Scared/Afraid
Uncomfortable	Sad	Excited
Confused	Angry	Interested
Upset	Happy	Embarrassed
Guilty	Frustrated	Surprised

The feelings which were chosen the most were upset, anxious/worried, sad, scared/afraid and interested. The negative feelings align with the learners' expressions of race as being a taboo topic. The findings here are reminiscent of findings across various studies that revealed that children notice race at an early age (Aboud, 2008; Anand, 2020; Baron & Banaji, 2006; Conley, 2011; Dunham et al., 2013; Raabe & Beelman, 2011; Welch, 2016). The learners in this study, aged 10-11 at the time, were interested in a discussion about race and racism but felt they could not explore these, for fear of being *uncomfortable, hurting one another's feelings or being rude*. Their uncertainty and negative feelings about race are based on historical race relations that have become the dominant norm in South Africa as a subject best ignored or made invisible (Conradie, 2016). The danger of this is that our society has a prevalent belief that children are incapable of exploring racial ideas, despite their interest in them. When children are left out of discussions of race, it becomes a kind of social taboo or a topic to be avoided, leaving children with feelings of fear and anxiety about the topic. When this occurs, children are left to create their own understandings of what race is, alone, and often assume it to be a negative concept, as they cannot speak about it (Boutte & Muller, 2018).

The one feeling that is not negative which was frequently selected is *interested*. This reveals that despite racial topics being taboo, the learners were still interested in it, as Zendaya showed, *It makes me interested (interested) but also sad. Not too sure*. This was supported further when the learners were asked to indicate how frequently they think and speak about race. The learners indicated that they think about race and racism *sometimes* or *a lot*, but that they *never* talk about

it. This again reveals that curiosity and interest are present in the learners, but that they do not explore this or are not given opportunities to discuss this.

Some participants did challenge the idea that race and racism should not be discussed. Zendaya, who above shared her interest in racial topics, but also that it made her feel sad, responded with, *Yes... because then pepoul (people) can realize other pepols (people's) sichiation (situation)*. Chef Niki, too, revealed a desire to learn about racial topics, saying, *It's something important to talk about*. Zendaya's desire to learn about racial topics and other people's *sichiation*, despite feeling *sad*, reveals that on a personal level, people can learn about and respect the experiences of others, despite feeling discomfort. Chef Niki's description of the importance of talking about race can be related to Freire's (1970) ideas on dialogue and language. This relates to naming the problem of racism to be able to learn about it. Therefore, for these two participants, talking about race and racism has the potential to enable understanding, and with understanding, the likelihood of challenging racism becomes greater.

4.3 Books as Windows: Views of the Racial Experience

The second theme discusses how the books in the study functioned as metaphorical windows for the learners to look through in connection to their learning about race and racism, providing views of the racial experience of others. The views into other experiences provided by these windows were not necessarily relatable to the learners viewing them, however, they were able to see and learn from the life and experiences of someone else. The data from this theme was generated from the participatory mini-workshops in the action phase of the action research cycle; the learner journals in the observation and reflection stages; as well as the focus group discussions in the reflection stage. This theme answers the main research question of how the literature influenced the learners' understandings about race and racism, and sub-research question two of what learning is made possible about race and racism using the literature. This theme of books as windows is part of a metaphor expanded on by Bishop (1990) which was explored in Chapter Two. The sub-themes discuss what the tools for building meaning were in the books as windows.

4.3.1 The Cover

The first tool that emerged from the data which functioned in transforming the books into windows was the cover. The conversation below shows how the learners were able to predict

what the book, *Happy in Our Skin*, was going to be about and to view a scene other than their own by using the illustration and title on the front cover:

Duckworth: *What do you see on the cover?*

Ruby: *Lots of people, different people playing... People together even though they're different races.*

Lucy Sky: *Different colour skin... Everyone in the cover probably has different emotions... some look happy, some look relaxed, some look very excited.*

Chef Niki: *Um, also, you can see that everybody is different...*

Layla: *Ummm... Our skin...*

Vanessa: *Skin... It's about different people.*

Mikasa: *Our beautiful skin.* [MW1]

The learners' first utterances of difference demonstrate that difference marks the manner in which people see and interact with one another- *different people playing, everybody is different*. Difference has become taken for granted and embedded within the learners. Further, the difference is marked by the outward appearance of skin colour, as when Lucy Sky says, *different colour skin*. This relates to Fanon's notions of the marking of bodies from the outside, as the colour of one's skin is easily recognisable and cannot be run away from. He says, "colour is the most obvious outward manifestation of race it has become the criterion by which men are judged" (Fanon, 1952, p. 97). However, contrary to Fanon's (1952) experiences, and difference as being oppressive (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Harro, 2000; Tatum, 1997) Mikasa judges skin colour, not as a negative, but rather as *beautiful*. Ruby says that people are together despite being of different races, which suggests that race should not matter.

From the above data, one can see that the participants utilised the title text and the illustrations on the front cover as a window into a realistic world. Through this cover, the learners were able to see people of different races being together, represented in one scene. The learners verbalised that they could see people of different race groups, which is valuable as Freire (1970) motivates that naming our world using language is vital to learning about it, and in turn, conscientising ourselves and others about it. From the cover itself, where learners see children of various races, abilities and genders playing together, they are being unconsciously socialised into thinking that difference does not matter. Here the "lighting conditions are just right" (Bishop,

1990, p. xi) and shows the power of literature to transform our thinking about difference. Ruby, Lucy Sky, and Mikasa's comments suggest that they are content with being different- that, whilst obvious, does not seem to matter to them. Instead, words used to describe the cover are positive words such as *happy, relaxed, excited, people together, and beautiful.*

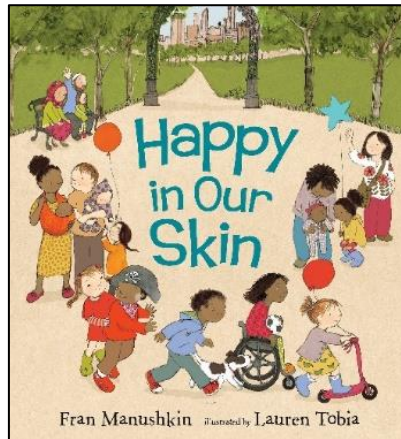


Figure 5: Cover of *Happy in Our Skin* by Fran Manushkin

4.3.2 *The Illustrations*

The illustrations in the books read were another tool used for meaning, transforming the books into windows. In this study, the illustrations were a common source of enjoyment, but also held a supportive power in adding meaning:

Piya: *I liked the pictures because you could actually see what they mean about the words.*

Lucy Sky: *I really... loved Sulwe's illustrations... And even without the, um, writing, I still thought that I could have telled (told) what is going on. [MW3]*

The illustrations were able to give additional context to the text to allow for the learners to gain more insight into what it meant, as in the following example, where a type of racism is described by the text, and an example of it is provided by the illustration:

Duckworth (reading aloud): *Racism happens in big and small ways, and it can be all around us even if we don't always notice it.*

Vanessa (asking about the illustration): *What does the sign say?*

Duckworth: *It says "silence please".*

Lucy Sky: *Because he's only saying silent to him (a black learner) but then they're already playing (a group of white learners).*

Duckworth: *So what do you think is happening in the picture?*

Lucy Sky: *This one guy, was saying silence... He was saying silence to the black boy... but then he wasn't saying silent to the other people who were being noisy (the white learners).*
[MW4]

The text in the story described how racism can be *all around us* and we may not *always notice* it. The example provided in the illustrations depicts a scene where a teacher silences a black student, next to a sign saying *silence please*, but ignores a group of white students who are playing and making a noise. Here, Lucy Sky acknowledged that the teacher in the illustration was treating the black learner differently from the group of white learners. The racism depicted in the illustration and text in this example can be explained by understanding the pervasive and systematic nature of racism, whereby racism is so embedded and sophisticated, that it becomes less visible and therefore accepted as normal (Coates & Morrison, 2011). It also shows that books as windows allow for the process of reflection (Bishop, 1990, Freire, 1970) that aids critical consciousness. This is evident in Lucy Sky's utterances where she challenges this embedded understanding by pointing out that the teachers didn't chastise the other white learners who were making a noise. The illustration, therefore, had the effect of allowing Lucy Sky, in particular, of seeing the unfairness and challenging a normalised idea that has become internalised in society (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Bell, 1997) about how people of a different race can and should be treated. When asked why the teacher thought that it was okay to do this, Lucy Sky said, "*Because sometimes people are biased.*" In this comment, Lucy reveals that she acknowledges that people can be prejudiced, or *biased*, and act on this, acknowledging that a racist system exists that favours the white group. This example from the data aligns with Fontanella-Nothom's (2019) argument that children's literature is a tool for children to learn about power, racial discrimination and injustice.

4.3.3 The Characters

The characters of the story were the third way that the books became windows through which learners could view the racial experience. The data below is extracted from the third mini-workshop and refers to the characters from the book, *Sulwe*:

Bewaffles: *...No matter what colour they are, they still are family and her mom and dad didn't care about her skin colour.*

Lucy Sky: *...colour doesn't really matter, and we can still be family if we look different.*

MAH: ...*she was loved*. [MW3]

Characters in a story are essential to a meaningful window being created. Without characters, books are merely windows into places. However, for the participants above, they were able to relate to the characters and to some extent learn and understand about race and the lack of importance of it when it comes to family because *her mom and dad didn't care about her skin colour*. Instead, the main character was *loved* despite her skin colour. Here the participants were learning that *colour doesn't really matter* and *look(ing) different* within a family is of little concern when there is love and care. This is not to be confused with colour blindness, which is rooted in the belief that race should not be considered where behaviour is enacted and decisions are made (Apfelbaum, Norton, & Sommers, 2012). In these examples, the main character's race is a central theme and is explored substantially. The message from the data then suggests that for the participants, race does matter because it is key for identification, but the learners extend this to indicate that firstly, the learners see and understand race, racial differences and racism and secondly, this understanding does not have an impact on one's family or should not impact a person's inherent worth. This is their understanding that shows their reinterpretation of blackness being firmly rooted in zones of non-being (Grosfoguel, 2016), into zones of being. This can be seen as their attempting as humanising blackness. The characters in these windows provided opportunities for the participants to learn about how people can and should conduct themselves in relation to one another to promote anti-racism (Bishop, 1990).

For Zendaya, the characters in the book *Sulwe* were a point of self-learning, self-reflection and conscientisation as she expressed in mini-workshop 3, "*Um... it showed us in a different way that I didn't think before and it's now showing me all the different ways people, like, feel... (about) themselves and... how they are treated.*" Here the characters and the book as a whole allowed Zendaya to feel empathy and also see that people can be *treated* differently because of the race they belong to. For Zendaya, it seems as though she had not previously thought about how people from different races *feel* about themselves and secondly, that they can be upset about how *they are treated*. This realisation, according to Freire (1970), is developed through self-reflection and recognition of the humaneness of others. The characters in the book revealed humaneness which prompted Zendaya to self-reflect.

Both MAH and Piya drew pictures in their journals of the sister characters, Day and Night, from the book *Sulwe*.



Figure 6: MAH’s Journal Drawing: “*She (Sulwe) was loved*”.

MAH represented the sisters united at the end of the story, hands joined, and both smiling. For her, what stood out most was that the sisters loved each other and were reunited, despite being different in their appearances and how they were treated. MAH, a white learner, perhaps felt distanced from the effects of and feelings associated with racism, because of her membership of the dominant racial group. The location of her identity perhaps meant that she felt that she could identify more with the scene in which the sisters were reunited and Sulwe felt *loved* (Rich, 1984). Contrastingly, Piya represented the sisters at the beginning of the story, when the light-skinned sister felt loved and welcomed, whilst the dark-skinned sister felt bullied and isolated. In her drawing, Piya has depicted the sisters standing apart, not facing each other, showing the difference in treatment that black people experience in relation to white people, where separateness seems to be emphasised. The Night sister, on the left, has a sad expression on her face, whilst the Day sister is smiling.



Figure 7: Piya’s Journal Drawing: “*She (Sulwe) thought she couldn’t get friends because of her skin colour.*”

For her, what stood out most was the different ways in which the sisters were treated because of their skin colours and the consequences of this on the friendship that the sisters could have, and how each of them felt as a result. The inability to move towards transformation is reflected in the sad expression of the Night sister and shows also the empathic nature of Piya. As a black learner, Piya's focus and remembrance of this scene in the story could be because she understands and identifies with the experience of racism which the darker sister felt in the story. Unlike MAH, Piya is not distanced from the effects of oppression, as a person from the subordinate racial group (Rich, 1984). This is especially present in South African society, based on the dominant norm of apartheid ideology of separateness between races. For her, this separateness continues to influence how she understands her context and this has become embedded in her consciousness (Harro, 2000).

MAH and Piya both represented the sisters from Sulwe, but they chose to focus on different parts of the story when the characters' experiences were different. Metaphorically speaking, both learners were standing in the same room, in that they were reading the same book, but were looking out at two different views through different windows, meaning that they chose to focus on different aspects of the book. These drawings reveal that the books can be perceived differently, and the ideas taken away by the learners who read them can be different, too, showing that the identity of the learner can influence how they interpret the book. What is important however is that one is able to see the embedded nature of ideology that is difficult to transform as seen through the eyes of MAH. Further, the ideas of Piya show how literature can function as a point of interrogation and self-reflection depicting her standpoint.

4.3.4 Springboard for Engagement

The fourth way that the books became a window is through its function as a springboard for engagement, meaning that the books were the base from which learners held discussions or were curious. After reading *Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race* in the final mini-workshop, the following discussion unfolded from the book:

PennyG: You know Nelson Mandela?... How come... He went to prison... And then everybody says he helped the black people. But then, when he went to prison, he stayed there and he just sat down, compared to everyone else, like his wife was out there, busy protesting, so his wife was supposed to get all the credit, and how come he got the credit, while there was... this... there was lots of black people that went to prison for the same thing Nelson

Mandela did... He got more credit than everybody else. Even his wife was fighting more than he was. She barely even got any credit.

Chef Niki: So I actually didn't know she was someone. I just know Nelson Mandela. I didn't even know who she was... We have actually never done a history project on, like, on apartheid or the other things, it is always Nelson Mandela... Nelson Mandela didn't even...

Zendaya: We could learn about Nelson Mandela's wife... [MW4]

The book became a springboard for engagement on the topic of who is recognised in South Africa's historical journey towards democracy and what is taught in school concerning race. In the extract from the data above, PennyG questions the distribution of credit to Nelson Mandela instead of his wife for her contribution to the downfall of the apartheid government. Chef Niki's indication that she *didn't know she was someone*, and Zendaya's, who calls for learning about *Nelson Mandela's wife* relate to the intersectionality of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991) of not only black people but black women. PennyG and Chef Niki have picked up on this and have used it as a lens to acknowledge a hierarchy of who is credited and whose contributions are considered valuable.

Horwitz and Spires (2011) examine why and how Nelson Mandela was pushed to the forefront of the downfall of apartheid in relation to the impactful work of his ex-wife, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. They argue that despite being the one to keep the Mandela name alive in the media whilst her husband was imprisoned, Winnie was portrayed as a widow. The media merged her identity with the idea of widowhood by foregrounding her as the wife of Nelson, an absent husband sentenced to a life away from her, rather than as a credible individual. This minimisation of Winnie meant that she was seen as an extension of him, fulfilling the stereotypical gender role of a supportive wife, but has the effect of invisibilising strong black women. This shows that oppression is hierarchical but interconnected where the dominant group- in this case Nelson Mandela benefits (Bell, 1997). PennyG displays a critical awareness of this discriminatory treatment of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, which is picked up on by Chef Niki and Zendaya. Chef Niki and Zendaya's comments on the gap in their knowledge regarding the end of apartheid- *I didn't know she was someone*- and how it relates to their education at school reveal a curiosity and realization that more people should be acknowledged for their contributions to anti-racism. The focus on Nelson Mandela, both at the time of the downfall of apartheid and now with what is taught in schools, reveals that he was more palatable to white people and the world, because he wanted to negotiate peaceful transition, whilst Winnie

Madikizela-Mandela rejected this pressure to emphasize peace and reconciliation and refused the notion that she should be apologetic for her struggle against white rule (Horowitz & Spiers, 2011). This could also explain why Zendaya continues to refer to Winnie Madikizela-Mandela as *Nelson Mandela's wife*.

The books in this study further acted as windows which fostered the learners' curiosity and acted as a springboard for engagement, as displayed in the data below:

Ruby: *I wonder if I say to someone with a different colour skin to me... if it is offensive to other people to say, what is your race?*

Evelynn: *Did the author of this book make this book for people who wonder about race?*
[MW1]

Ariana: *How do you know if someone was being racist by mistake?* [LJ]

Ruby's comment displays her uncertainty but interest in speaking about race, which relates to the data found and argument made in theme 1, that despite being exposed to racism, learners are often left out of the conversation, resulting in it becoming a taboo topic of conversation. Children, who are usually so outspoken, are learning that race is a taboo. Evelynn's comment indicates that she is curious about why the author would write about race, signalling that it is unusual in her experience to encounter a book of this nature. The question posed by Ariana in her journal displays that she is wanting to understand how a person might be racist unintentionally, revealing that this is something that would need to be guessed or figured out, rather than speaking openly to the person regarding their actions and intentions. The books here were windows which offered the learners the context from which to grow deeper understandings about race (Kesler et al., 2020). The books prompted the learners to raise questions about race, which they were not comfortable doing before, similarly to what Fontanella-Nothom (2019) found in her study, where engaging with multiple interactive read-aloud books encouraged her learners to ask questions and participate in dialogue about topics of race. The data shows that, despite being exposed to children's literature about race, the uncertainty in South African society about whether to talk about race, is still evident. The questions posed by the learners reveal that although they are curious about race, there is uncertainty when it comes to this topic and whether they should even be speaking about race, mostly because there is a fear that one could unintentionally be labelled as *racist by mistake*. This relates to the deeply embedded and therefore invisible nature of race (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). This invisibilisation of race in children's literature and wider South African

society perpetuates it being a taboo topic of conversation and is discussed further in theme 5 of this analysis.

4.3.5 Diverse Racial Representation

The representation of diverse races in the books transformed them into windows through which learners could view them:

Lucy Sky: *I thought in my own life that... that I look at the picture and like, it's kind of like I've seen it before because I've seen all different types of people... Well, not like the exact same picture, but like, I've seen it, like all the different colours.*

Ruby: *It's not just... it's not just brown, it's not just white, there's something... else. [FGD]*

Vanessa: *I think that... um... she only thought that brown was brown, but it turns out that there's a lot of different browns. And different skin tones. [MW1]*

Lucy Sky expressed here that the representation of diverse races in the book felt realistic to her because she sees people of different races around her in her own life. The representation of diverse races in the books prompted learners to think about how racially diverse people can be, disturbing the binary notions of race as a black group and a white group, that there is *something... else*. Further, the participants here were able to see that colour is being used to socially construct people and that this social construction should be questioned, because *there are a lot of different browns*, thus the validity of using skin tone to signal race is questioned.

By representing racially diverse people, the books prompted learners to see these and discuss what race actually means. An idea of race as being more than just skin colour alone emerged in the data below:

PennyG: *It doesn't really mean, like, if you're, like, Indian, you have to follow that culture. Because some people, like they are white, and they follow the Indian culture...*

Duckworth: *So are race and culture the same thing?*

PennyG: *No... Because, if you're Indian, you can be... it doesn't mean you have to follow the same religion as anyone else that's your skin colour.*

Layla: *Your race, like your skin tone, is the shade that you are, but your race is something you believe in... And also, like, things that you do. So like, if you have a quinceanera when you turn sixteen, and then to some people it's something-*

Vanessa: *What's that?*

Chef Niki: *It's... basically it's a sweet sixteen, but the Spanish version.*

Layla: *And how they believe, when you turn sixteen, you're already a woman. But then, for some people when you turn sixteen, like the main birthday for them is your eighteenth birthday. But the main, the main birthday for them is the sixteenth. So, um, some people believe in multiple Gods, some people believe there's just God and Jesus. [MW4]*

In this extract, Layla and PennyG demonstrate that they have a more complex understanding of race than just skin colour. They link race to culture and religion, revealing that it can be difficult to think that race relates to skin colour alone. By representing diverse characters, the learners in this extract are showing curiosity to learn more about people who are racially, culturally, linguistically, and religiously different from them. These intersections of identity are used by the participants to understand that identity construction is complex and multiple (Crenshaw, 1991).

The learners expressed enjoyment at seeing diverse races represented in the books, which describes the growth of their awareness of other racial groups and learning to understand and accept them (Kesler et al., 2020):

Chef Niki: *I think it's, like, beautiful to see, like, all the different races. [MW1]*

Evelynn: *I thought... I liked it quite a lot, 'cause also for one of them they told you all kinds of colours which I thought was quite nice.*

Wonder: *...the one that taught me the most was Happy in our Skin because, um, peach and black people were all playing together in the pictures.*

ArtyGirl25: *For me, I think lots of children will love to read these books, because I am pretty sure they can learn lots of things about people around the world, sometimes it might give you ideas and... thoughts about your feelings.*

MAH: *'Cause in some books they normally, like, stick with one colour skin and these ones have got all different types... I don't know, but I didn't know that these types of books were in the library. [FGD]*

MAH's description of coming into contact with a book portraying racially diverse characters as rare is not surprising, and these ideas concur with findings by Atkins (2020), who found that this kind of children's literature is lacking, although growing in popularity. The data above

indicate that the learners enjoyed the literature they were exposed to, but also that this literature was not something they would commonly see. They expressed the view that this racially diverse portrayal of people allows one to *learn lots of things about people*, and also that it allows one to learn something about themselves, *it might give you ideas... thoughts about your feelings*. This extract from the data can be explained using Harro's (2000) Cycle of Socialisation and Freire's concept of conscientisation. The cycle of socialisation (2000), which represents how the socialization process happens, has results which lead one to either do nothing and allow the cycle to continue to uphold the oppressive status quo, or it results in change and a raise in consciousness where the status quo is interrupted. When the latter occurs, it takes the form of conscientisation, as conceptualised by Freire (1970), where an individual begins to develop a critical awareness or shift in attitude from powerlessness to power, to generate change and act against oppressive elements. The learners in the study display a willingness to invest in learning and transforming themselves on the individual level, by questioning the types of mono-racial books that they have always been exposed to.

4.4 Books as Doors: Pathways into the Racial Experience

The third theme of this chapter explores how the selected books functioned as doors for learners to step through into the worlds presented to foster empathy and enable learning about race and racism. This expands on Bishop's (1990) metaphor of books as windows. As with the second theme, the data presented here was generated from the participatory mini-workshops in the action phase of the action research cycle; the learner journals in the observation and reflection stages; and the focus group discussions in the reflection stage. This theme answers the main research question of how the literature influenced the learners' understandings of race and racism, and sub-research question two of what learning is made possible about race and racism using the literature. The sub-themes discuss doors as a way of fostering empathy, learning about and engaging with race.

4.4.1 Doors as a Way of Fostering Empathy

Empathy is seen as the ability to identify and recognize another's perceptions and feelings and to appropriately convey this understanding (Rogers, 1975). Welch (2016), Steiner (2008) and Audsley (2019) found in their studies that children's literature fostered children's empathy, as was the case with this study. The first way in which the books fostered empathy was through emotionally reaching and moving the learners:

Lucy Sky: ... *When the two sisters, um, they joined each other and they were like, holding hands and then it made off a light... I really liked the part, which made me quite emotional, when... the light sister said that she realises that she needed darkness in the day and when it was dark you needed light. The stars are the light in the darkness and then the dark... ... she realizes that she's not the only one that is dark-skinned, even though, like... she realises that there are other people like her.* [FGD]

Lucy Sky self-reflects on why the book made her *quite emotional* and decides that self-acceptance and self-love are important in one's life and how they think about their racial identity, as she relates this understanding to Sulwe, and how it is important to find *other people* like yourself. Seeing Sulwe find her worth as a girl who is black and accepts her dark complexion is what moved Lucy Sky. Children's literature can allow empathy to be used as a way to learn about the self and others, and reading stories "expands our knowledge of others' lives, helping us recognize our similarity to them" (Solow, 2018, p. 69). By stepping into the situation of Sulwe, Lucy can reflect on what this means for herself. Simien in GGIE (2022, p. 1) beautifully describes this ability of stories as doors, saying "Stories teach us empathy. They reveal to us ourselves in the skins of others."

Layla was also able to step through the door into the world created by the author and attempt to understand not only how the main character felt, but also why:

Layla: ... *I also thought that... sister is really fair and Sulwe is quite dark. So even though everyone likes the light, everyone needs the night at some point in their lives.*

Duckworth: *And how do you think that relates to Sulwe as a person?*

Layla: *I think... she felt like no one needed her even though deep down everyone actually did.*

Ariana: *I think she feels that she's not alone being so dark and that just because she's dark, doesn't mean people won't like her.* [MW3]

Lucy Sky, Layla and Ariana demonstrate in these examples that they are able to do more than simply view another person's experience, but also to walk through the metaphorical door created and become immersed in the world, encouraging reflection to make sense of why characters behave and feel the ways they do (Steiner, 2008). The narrative coming through to these participants from the book is that people with all shades of skin colour, from all racial groups, are valuable and beautiful. This is important in the disruption of dominant discourses

of which racial groups hold worth and disrupts dominant beauty norms of lighter skins being more beautiful than darker skins (Boutte & Muller, 2018). Those with lighter skins are afforded their humanity, living in the zone of being (Fanon, 1967) in which their value, as a human, is superior.

PennyG: *She (Sulwe) recognizes that her skin's as beautiful as her sister's... Because she got to see how the sun and the night... are still as beautiful as each other, even though... everyone likes the sun more... Uhm, sometimes I get sad that... for like, Sulwe, they didn't accept her for who she is... [MW3]*

PennyG feels slightly differently about the story of Sulwe. She sees that the sisters are both beautiful, despite having different colour skins. However, she still recognises that people preferred the sister with the lighter skin, *everyone likes the sun more*, illustrating how value and beauty are associated with being white. PennyG illustrates here how the ideology of white people as being superior positions them within the zone of being (Fanon, 1967) which is valued and reproduces itself through beliefs that people hold. PennyG does not focus on the happy feelings of people accepting Sulwe in the end, but rather on feeling *sad* that people did not *accept her for who she is* from the beginning. PennyG has stepped through the door created in the book and has been emotionally moved by it. She is however still aware that there is continued work to be done towards transformation and social justice to debunk the embedded normative notions that white is better.

4.4.2 Doors as a Way of Learning About Race and Racism

Stepping through the door refers to how the learners, as readers of the stories, were able to walk into the stories and become part of the worlds created by the authors to become fully immersed in the experiences offered by these (Bishop, 1990). This was apparent in the extract below:

Chef Niki: *Uh... It doesn't mean that if you have darker skin, the lighter skinned people are better than you... Because normally people who have darker, darker skin don't really feel like that... sometimes if, like, in a family, like they are better.*

Duckworth: *So are you saying that sometimes people with darker skin feel like they're... not... what are you saying?*

Chef Niki: *Like, their skin is... like, wrong. [MW3]*

Chef Niki acknowledges that an unfair system exists where *lighter skinned people* think that they are better than people with *darker skin*. This shows she has a deeper understanding of racism as being more than isolated, individual acts, but as a belief that white people are more valued than, or greater than, black people at a deeper, structural level (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). Chef Niki's final line in this extract from the data is a powerful one. She expresses that *sometimes* black people feel like *their skin is... wrong*. Her choice of the word, *wrong*, reveals that skin is the visible marker which indicates the race of a person and that if dark skin is 'wrong', there is a standard for what is 'right', and that is light skin. Racism operates on the idea that white people are superior to black people, making whiteness the standard for what is acceptable, normal and correct (Harro, 2000; Tatum, 1997). Chef Niki describes how black people feel when they do not fit into this standard, as *wrong*. This also speaks to the internalised domination black people can experience when they collude with their oppression. This is described by Hardiman and Jackson (1997) as black people beginning to accept the untrue and destructive beliefs the dominant white group has about them. Black people then learn to accept a definition of themselves which hurts and limits them, and they begin to think, feel and act in ways which devalue their group and themselves as members. Black people begin to feel like they are *wrong*. Through the story, Chef Niki is not only able to see that there is value attached to skin colour, and therefore race, in a racist system. She also sees that advantages are received by those with lighter skin in the form of rewards, whilst those with darker skin, such as Sulwe, receive disadvantages in the form of punishments. These rewards and punishments contribute to the support and perpetuation of racism (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997).

The door created by the books allowed for further learning about how racism functions:

Duckworth: *And where do you think this idea comes from? That her sister had more friends than her because of her skin colour?*

Zendaya: *...maybe because her friends thought the lighter the skin colour, the better their personality and like the better the personality and, like, the better they are.*

Duckworth: *But where does that idea come from?... Why would someone think that?*

Chef Niki: *Because of their past... Maybe some of them did like that and then they just push it on to someone else... and then they just do that to someone else and then it keeps getting...*

Duckworth: *So it just kind of keeps happening?*

Chef Niki: *A cycle.*

Zendaya: *That is what happens with mean people from, like, stories. It's normally because they got bullied, because at home... they are actually nice.* [MW3]

In this extract, Chef Niki and Zendaya describe the way that racism is perpetuated through our socialisation. The cycle of socialisation created by Harro (2000), can be used to explain how racism is *pushed* onto others and then those people *do that to someone else*. The cycle reveals how humans are social beings who are influenced by and influence others, having an impact on our thoughts and behaviours moving forward. Chef Niki reveals how ideas can be told and enacted, and *pushed* onto *someone else*. This shows the historical nature of oppressive ideas. These then influence those around us, such as our children, and so on, as Chef Niki reveals that this continues into the future like a *cycle*. This cycle helps us to understand the way people are socialised to play certain roles and how we assist in the maintenance of oppressive systems, such as race, whether consciously or unconsciously (Harro, 2000).

4.4.3 *Standing in the Doorway: Books as a Space to Engage about Race*

In the extract below, the learners were introduced to a new word, *melanin*. This word sparked a discussion related to its meaning:

Duckworth (reading aloud): *You have melanin too, we all do. Everybody has just the right amount for them.*

Vanessa: *So some people have less.*

Duckworth (reading aloud): *The darker your skin, the more melanin you have. The lighter your skin, the less melanin.*

Vanessa: *That's why people with pale skin get sunburnt more easily... than others with darker skin.*

Lilly: *... my skin is dark, my actual skin is normally lighter... I get burnt very very easily.*
[MW4]

Vanessa related the idea of melanin protecting our bodies from the sun to the experience of people with more melanin than herself, *that's why people with pale skin get sunburnt more easily... than others with darker skin*. This moment can be described as Vanessa standing in the doorway provided by the book, attempting to step through. However, Lilly- a learner with

more melanin than Vanessa- shares her own experience, which is different to what Vanessa assumes. The moment of Vanessa standing in the doorway can be extended to Lilly joining her, attempting to guide and walk through with Vanessa, to a world that is authentic to Lilly's experience. The doorway created by the books allowed the learners to interact with and respond to one another regarding race. Freire (1970) explains how, when people are engaged in dialogue, they are at a moment of encounter where themselves, their ideas and conversation are imperfect, as Lilly and Vanessa confront Vanessa's ideas around melanin and these are imperfect. Freire (1970) goes on to say that, despite the imperfection of the ideas and conversation, what does exist, are people who are "attempting, together, to learn more than they know now". This requires humility and an acceptance of non-perfection of ourselves and each other, admitting that we need to learn more. In this engagement, Lilly and Vanessa display their commitment to knowing more, despite the awkwardness of their imperfect conversation. Freire (1970) describes a mutual trust which is established by dialogue, in which the dialoguers are in a partnership in their quest to name the world. Lilly and Vanessa were able to begin this quest, by walking through the door provided in the book.

4.5 Books as Mirrors: Reflections of the Racial Experience

The fourth theme of this chapter discusses how the books functioned as mirrors in which the participants saw their racial identities and experiences reflected, and the impacts of this on them. The metaphor of books as mirrors builds on Bishop's metaphor of books as windows and doors. As with the second and third themes, the data presented here was generated from the participatory mini-workshops in the action phase of the action research cycle; the learner journals in the observation and reflection stages; and the focus group discussions in the reflection stage. This theme answers sub-research question three, relating to how the participants use their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school. The sub-themes unpack mirrors as reflections of similar racial experiences, as well as of a way of expanding racial understandings and how this is an affirming of racial identity construction.

4.5.1 Mirrors as Reflections of Similar Racial Experience

For some learners, the books used in the study functioned as a mirror, reflecting a similar racial experience to them. Mikasa related *The Colours of Us* to herself through a phrase which appeared in the book:

Duckworth: ...Is there any word from the book or a word that's coming to your mind that you would want to add to the word wall?...

Mikasa: *Not just brown... because people like saying to other people, 'why do you look so brown?' They're like a light brown instead of a dark brown.* [MW1]

She goes on to add a note to the word wall which says, “*Not just brown. Because not all of us are not just brown*”.

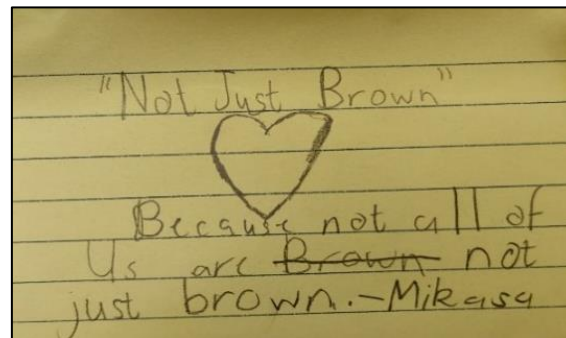


Figure 8: Mikasa's Note on the Word Wall in MW1

Mikasa includes herself in the group of people who she describes as *not just brown* when she writes the word, *us*. Here, the phrase in the book has transformed into a mirror, prompting Mikasa to relate to her own experience of having *brown* skin. In this data, a frustration with the language used to name her skin tone emerges. The use of the word *just*, indicates that Mikasa feels the description of her skin tone as brown is too simple to accurately represent her actual tone. In these spoken and written pieces of data, she demonstrates a critical awareness around her own racial identity that is emerging, through reflection of her own identity and experience, which is the conscientization process (Freire, 1970). According to Freire (1970), the process of conscientization occurs on an ongoing basis and is something the learners move closer towards, rather than something they achieve in one moment.

The character, Sulwe, had an affirming impact on Piya through the representation of a similar racial experience to one she had. Seeing Sulwe experience racism made Piya *feel the same as she felt*, as seen in her journal:

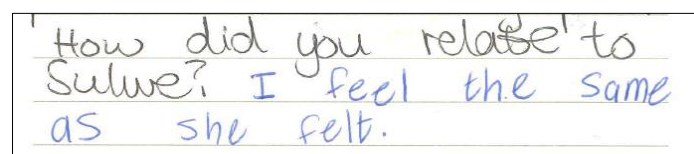


Figure 9: Extract from Piya's Journal

During her focus group discussion, Piya elaborated a little on this experience:

Piya: *Um... in my old school, there used to be girls that you couldn't be their friends, because of their skin colour, so that's why Sulwe...*

Bewaffles: *Really?... Like, would they avoid you being friends or would you not- they don't like for you to be friends?*

Piya: *Ja.*

Bewaffles: *They would not want you to be their friends?*

Piya: *Ja.v* [FGD]

Piya shares that she also had experiences of racism with friends in a school setting, like Sulwe. Bewaffles appears surprised that Piya has had this experience and asks a few questions about this, which Piya entertains but does not volunteer much information in return. The book functioned as a mirror for Piya's experience of racism, which she was able to share with a classmate. This then became a point of engagement for the two learners, as brief as it was, in which Bewaffles learnt about her classmate's experience of racism for the first time. Through their dialogue, their critical consciousness, awareness, and acceptance was nurtured (Freire, 1970). Bewaffles' decision not to ask further questions to accept the silence shows that Piya's experiences are valued and a source of learning. In this way Piya's experiences are valued and affirmed.

4.5.2 Mirrors as Interpretations of Racial Identity

After reading about a character with ancestors from different race groups and cultures, Layla sees herself. She uses the book as a mirror to share how she interprets her racial identity:

Layla: *So, my mother has green eyes, right?... And her great-grandmother... So, basically... for the people who didn't know, coloured means, like, mixed, it means the same thing. But, to me, I'm actually mixed and just because you don't look mixed, doesn't mean you aren't mixed.*

Duckworth: *Okay... when you say 'mixed', is that what you would identify with?*

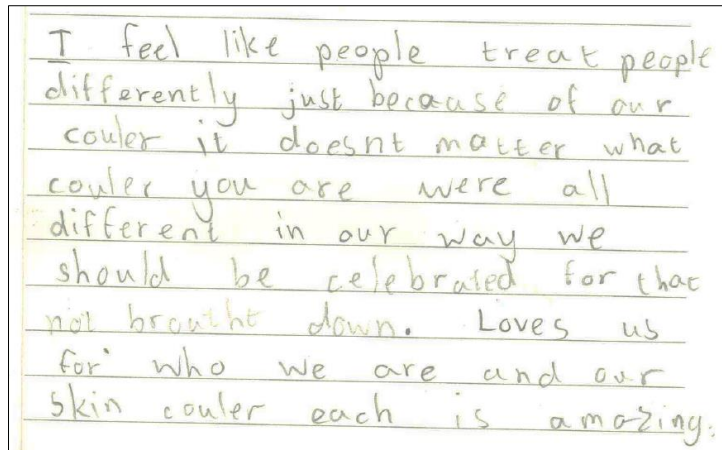
Layla: *I would identify as coloured. I know they're very similar, but, like, you can be mixed with a bunch of things, not just, like, black and white. There's so much more to it, like how you're mixed with different cultures, and you know different things, ja.* [MW2]

Layla expresses the complexity of her own race, which she identifies as *coloured*. She says that people can appear to be one race, but actually belong to another, *just because you don't look mixed, doesn't mean you aren't mixed*. She also says that a person can be *mixed with a bunch of things, not just, like, black and white*. In her journal, Layla illustrates a little of her ancestry, showing that she is *mixed*, similar to the book *I Have Brown Skin and Curly Hair* whose main character's ancestry matched hers. Coloured identity in post-apartheid South Africa is both fluid and fragile, like all identity (Tatum, 1997). *Coloured* has a unique meaning in Southern Africa, signalling a person of mixed racial ancestry, as Layla describes herself as having ancestors from different racial categories, *I'm actually mixed*. *Coloured* was one of the racial categories created by the apartheid government in South Africa, for anyone whom they deemed did not fit into the categories of black, white or Indian, and even went on to include sub-categories based on phenotypical features such as Cape Coloured, Cape Malay and Other Coloured (Pirtle, 2021). Despite the socially constructed category of *coloured* having its roots in the late 19th century, apartheid played a significant role in the shaping of coloured identity (Adhikhari, 2009). For Layla, her coloured identity is also mixed with culture and other different aspects of identity. This shows that for her the social construction of *coloured* is about a variety of combinations, for example the colour of one's eyes and not only race. Further, being coloured is not clearly visible but is a felt experience.

Adhikhari (2009) states in his book, *Burdened by Race: Coloured Identities in Southern Africa*, that colouredness goes beyond the notion of being a product of miscegenation, but that it is a product of its bearers who have displayed agency in the determining of their own identities. Adhikhari (2009) and the authors whose works are featured in his book argue that a nuanced understanding is needed of coloured identities. Anderson (2009) concurs, saying that the coloured racial identity is multi-layered, with multiple meanings, which Layla also expressed when she said, *there's so much more to it*. The fluidity of coloured identity formation is apparent here. Post-apartheid, the fluidity of colouredness has resulted in uncertainty for some concerning what it means. Whilst Anderson (2009) and Adhikhari (2009) indicate there is hesitancy in claiming a coloured identity, Layla shares proudly with the other participants her coloured racial identity, showing that she has claimed the term as her own, giving her agency and revealing her empowered status. For her, the book functioned as a mirror which allowed her to see a part of her coloured identity.

For Katherine, the books prompted a deep reflection of her experiences and how these relate to the negotiation of her racial identity. Katherine engaged with the books during the mini-

workshops and reflected in her journal, to which I responded. The journal allowed her the space to engage with her reflections on a deeper level, having more time and privacy than what the sessions allowed:

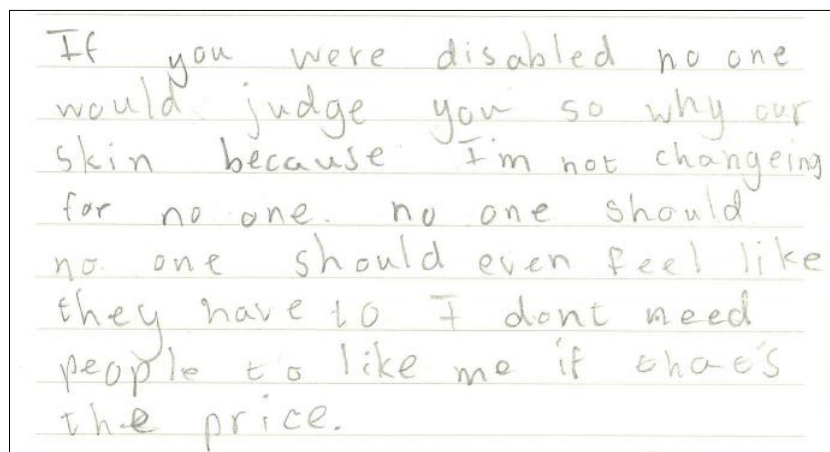


I feel like people treat people differently just because of our color it doesn't matter what color you are were all different in our way we should be celebrated for that not brought down. Loves us for who we are and our skin color each is amazing.

Figure 10: Extract from Katherine's Journal

When prejudiced feelings or judgements move into the realm of action or behaviour, the result is discrimination (Blumenfeld & Raymond, 2000). In the above journal entry, Katherine expresses that discrimination exists, where “*people treat people differently*” because of their skin colour. The discrimination she describes is individual discrimination, where behaviour from a member of one racial group is different toward members of another racial group, because of their membership (Pincus, 1996). She is taking skin colour to be a marker of one's race group. She shows that she does not agree with discrimination based on skin colour, saying that this difference should be “*celebrated*”, although one's skin colour “*doesn't matter*”. The message is, racial differences should be noticed, but should not change how people are treated.

She goes on:

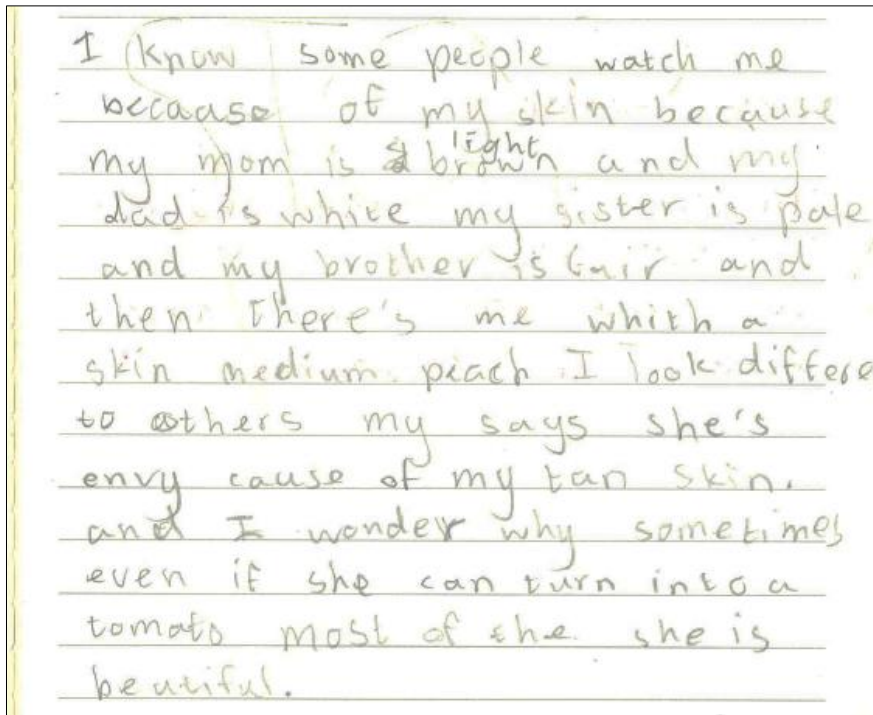


If you were disabled no one would judge you so why our skin because I'm not changing for no one. no one should no one should even feel like they have to I dont need people to like me if that's the price.

Figure 11: Extract from Katherine's Journal

Tatum (2000) describes how the parts of our identity which capture our attention most are the ones in which we are a member of the subordinate category. Conversely, the parts of our identity which are taken for granted are the ones in which we are a member of the dominant category. This is because these are the ones which other people notice and reflect on us and because we notice disadvantage, whilst advantage or privilege we become accustomed to. Katherine says that if someone were disabled, nobody would judge them. From her position as an able-bodied person, Katherine may not be aware of the experiences of a person with a disability. She goes on to question why she is then judged for her skin, which she feels as a member of the disadvantaged or subordinate race group. By saying that she feels nobody *should ever feel like they have to change* and that she does not *need people to like her, even if that's the price*, Katherine is rejecting the internalised subordination that black people feel when there is pressure to conform to the norms set by the dominant white group. She is also displaying an awareness of the rewards and punishments experienced when behaving in alignment with or against the dominant, racist status quo (Bell, 1997). She is adamant that she is not going to change, *I'm not changing for no one*, despite being aware that it could make her unpopular. Katherine is showing agency and resistance to collude with the racism which she encounters, making her an empowered target member who is rejecting the inferior status assigned to her (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). When Katherine examines her experiences in relation to her ability, she peers through a rose-tinted window- one which shields her from disadvantage. However, when she peers through a window into racial experience- the window is clear, exposing her, allowing her to feel the burn of her racial reality where she is not shielded from disadvantage.

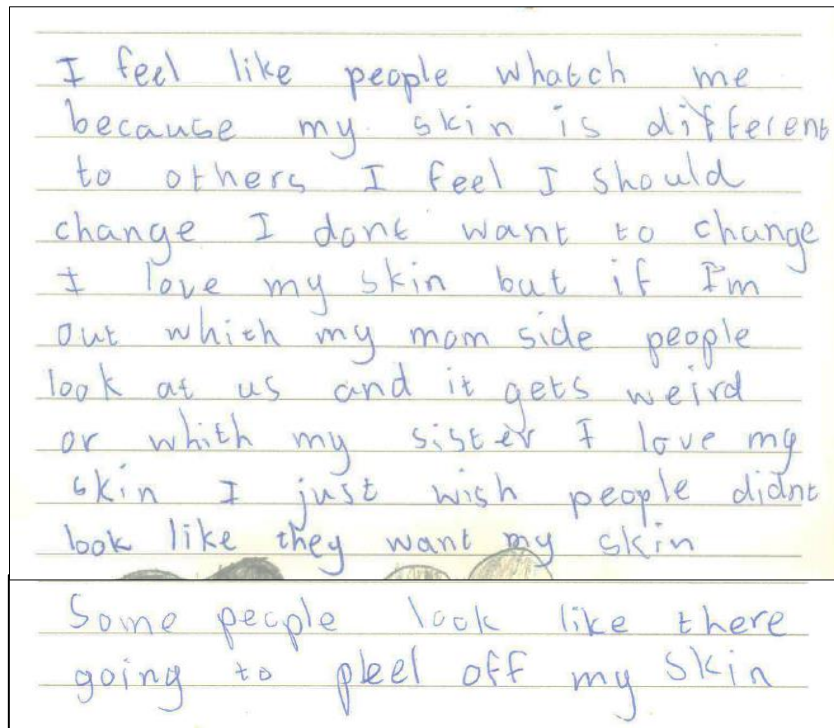
Katherine goes on to describe how members of her nuclear family have different shades of skin colour and that she *looks different* to them in Figure 12 below:

A photograph of a handwritten journal entry on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and describes the author's experience of being noticed for her skin color due to her mixed racial heritage. She compares her 'medium peach' skin to her family members: her mother is 'light brown', her father is 'white', her sister is 'pale', and her brother is 'fair'. She expresses envy for her sister's skin and wonders why she is still considered beautiful even if she were to turn into a tomato. The handwriting is somewhat messy, with some corrections and a few stray marks.

I know some people watch me because of my skin because my mom is ~~a~~ ^{light} brown and my dad is white my sister is pale and my brother is fair and then there's me with a skin medium peach I look different to others my says she's envy cause of my tan skin, and I wonder why sometimes even if she can turn into a tomato most of the she is beautiful.

Figure 12: Extract from Katherine's Journal

In this extract, Katherine displays an awareness of people noticing her race, *I know some people watch me because of my skin*, specifically because she looks different to her mom, dad and brother, and because of her different, mixed racial parentage. This relates to the confusion and marginalisation experienced in a racist society when a person does not *fit* convincingly into a binary racial category and cannot be treated accordingly. But Katherine is deeply aware of her *medium peach* coloured skin when confronted daily with family who have lighter skin and where her sister can look like *a tomato* but is still regarded as beautiful. These ideas show the pain associated with being under constant surveillance because of her skin colour, where she cannot even be comfortable in her own skin when she is with people closest and dearest to her. She constantly faces this especially when she ventures into a wider community of the extended family where people look at them and judge:

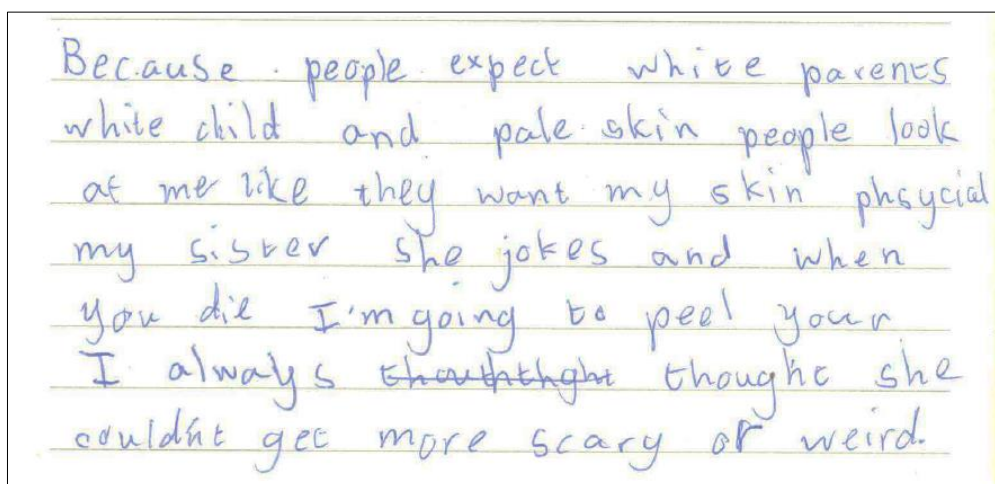


I feel like people watch me because my skin is different to others I feel I should change I don't want to change I love my skin but if I'm out with my mom side people look at us and it gets weird or with my sister I love my skin I just wish people didn't look like they want my skin

Some people look like there going to peel off my skin

Figure 13: Extract from Katherine's Journal

Like many South Africans with mixed racial ancestry, Katherine feels a sense of confusion regarding how others perceive her race, because her racial make-up is not simplistic and categorical, but requires a nuanced understanding (Adhikari, 2009). When asked why she thinks people *want her skin*, like they are going to *peel off my skin*, she responded:



Because people expect white parents white child and pale skin people look at me like they want my skin physical my sister she jokes and when you die I'm going to peel you I always ~~thought~~ thought she couldn't get more scary or weird.

Figure 14: Extract from Katherine's Journal

Here, Katherine has again described the way she is treated as a person with a mixed racial identity. She is paler than her mom and so when they go out together, people are surprised that she is her mother's child. This shows, that in Katherine's world, having lighter skin holds value

so much so that they for her wish to *peel off* her skin. This violence associated with peeling of someone's skin can be seen in the following ways. Firstly, there is a need to ensure that she is the right colour where people would prefer to peel off her skin and secondly, it is a loving gesture from her sister who thinks that her *tan skin* is amazing, and she wishes she could have it. For Katherine, she is aware that there is a difference in reaction even though she thinks her sister is scary or weird. Thus, her uncertainty of her skin tone is both a sense of fear and envy and is dependent on the context in which she finds herself.

4.6 After the Books: Impact of the Learning

The final theme of this chapter reveals the impact of the learning which occurred in the study on the learners, as it relates to the impact on their speaking about race and their displays of consciousness, agency, and resistance. The data presented here was generated from the focus group discussions held at the end of the study in the reflection phase of the action research cycle, as well as from the learner journals in the observation and reflection stages. This theme answers sub-research question two, relating to what learning is made possible about race and racism using the children's literature in the study.

4.6.1 Impact on Speaking About Race

The child-friendly nature of the books used in the study meant that the learners had positive attitudes and feelings towards them, which reduced the anxiety of discussing the taboo topic of race. This made the topic of race accessible for the learners in a way which they did not think was possible at the start of the study. The quotes below indicate some of the positive attitudes the learners had toward the books:

Vanessa: *This is actually the best book ever... I can't not like this book...*

Lucy Sky: *I feel, um, very heart touched and heart-warming about the story because it actually proves that everyone's different colours and all the friends are different colours, and even though they're different colours, they were all friends. And even though they like different things and wore different clothes.*

Layla: *It's... most of them are like child-friendly...*

Katherine: *I think they were interesting and knowledgeable.*

Mikasa: *It was... interesting and learnful. Strong and... kind... They make me feel free.*
[FGD]

Mikasa's comment about the books making her feel free is a powerful one. A Freirean notion of freedom, as it relates to education, is the ability and practice of people to negotiate reality critically and creatively, and to uncover how to take part in the transformation of their reality (Freire, 1970). The books provided a non-threatening format for Mikasa to undergo a conscientization process, whereby she shifted to the experience of freedom, one which holds power, in the realization of the ability to transform her situation. In her journal, she used drawings of eyes to share her feelings throughout the research:

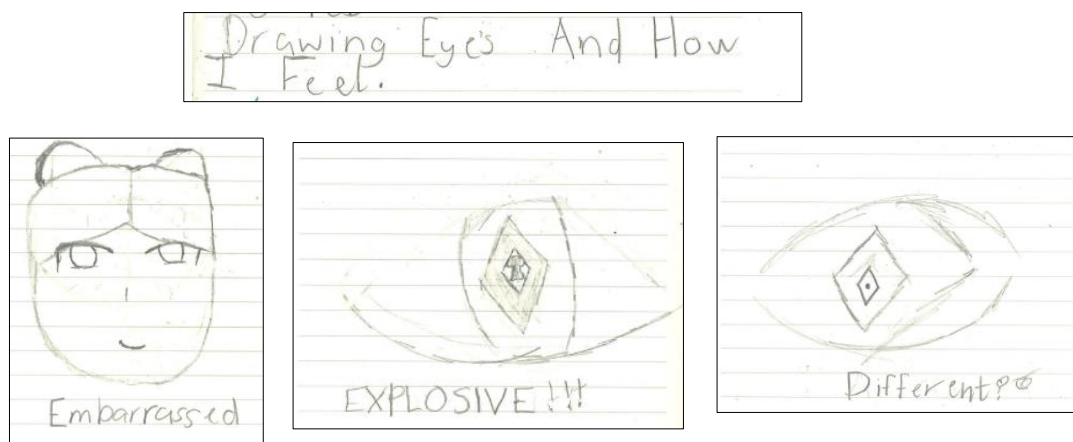


Figure 15: Extract from Mikasa's Journal

Mikasa's first journal entry revealed that she felt embarrassed. When asked about her drawing, she said that she wants to *get used to it* (talking about race), showing that race was a taboo topic of conversation for her. During the research, Mikasa drew another eye in her journal with a keyhole shape in place of the pupil, with the word *explosive* to describe it. The word *explosive* holds connotations of something occurring intensely and suddenly, while the keyhole symbol implies that there is something within that can be unlocked and seen. Toward the end of the research, Mikasa drew a picture of an eye with the caption, *different*. Given that the eyes were intended to describe how she felt, this drawing shows that she feels different at the end of the research. Mikasa experienced conscientization during the research, and the books liberated her with a feeling of being *free*, and therefore *different* than before. This is as Freire (1970, p. 49) describes the outcome of liberation, "the man or woman emerges a new person".

There was a noticeable difference in how the learners felt about speaking about race prior to the study during the first phase of planning in the action research cycle and at the end of the

study in the fourth phase of reflection. Post-intervention of the children's literature, the learners displayed increased feelings of comfort when speaking about race explicitly, as was found in Fontanella-Nothom's (2019) study:

Duckworth: *How do you feel about talking about race now?*

Vanessa: *Uhm, I am more comfortable.*

Ariana: *So, more of a comfort zone... than, like, out of your shell.*

Ruby: *I feel more comfortable than I was at the beginning.*

Chef Niki: *I actually feel... more comfortable. I'm still a little uncomfortable. Normally when my parents talk about it, I don't feel too comfortable...*

Evelynn: *I feel comfortable. I feel better than before.*

Piya: *Comfortable.*

Lilly: *Comfortable but sometimes maybe you're not allowed to talk about it. [FGD]*

Both Lilly and Chef Niki felt more comfortable talking about race at the end of the study, as did the other participants mentioned above, but displayed an acknowledgement of race remaining a taboo topic of conversation. Lilly says, *sometimes maybe you're not allowed to talk about it*, revealing she still has reservations about speaking about issues of race. Chef Niki also shares these reservations, saying *I'm still a little uncomfortable* and shares that race is something her parents speak about. This discomfort does not deter her from still speaking about race, as can be seen in her reflexive journal where she writes, *don't be afraid to talk about your race*.



Figure 16: Drawing from ChefNiki's Journal

This is in keeping with ideas about discomfort being a source of learning, unlearning and relearning (Wink, 2011) about previously held assumptions. Feelings of discomfort cannot completely disappear among participants after this study, due to the taboo around speaking about race which firmly remains internalized. However, the increased comfort experienced when speaking about race and racism became an empowering experience for some participants:

Layla: *Before, not a lot of people used to know what racism is, so I couldn't really talk about it because there wasn't anyone to really talk about it to. But now that everyone knows, I feel more comfortable to open up about my opinions that I think.*

Zendaya: *I feel, um, like, I feel more comfortable and I feel like it's... more comfortable and also like I understand it a bit better... it will be easier to talk to others.*

MAH: *I love it because we can talk about our skin colour and we don't always have to talk about the ones in the books and that now we can, like, speak to someone.*

Katherine: *I feel like I'm much more comfortable talking about it now than I was in the beginning... I liked discussing it because I felt like I probably would have discussed with other people, but, but not the class normally.*

Ruby: *I felt a bit puzzled at the beginning, but then as I read more and more it felt... more comfortable... I think it was a good way to get us to know more about race instead of thinking it as a bad thing. [FGD]*

For Layla, the study increased the number of people available for her to *open up* to about her *opinions*, regarding racism. Feeling more accepted in sharing one's opinions was a comforting experience for her. Zendaya felt empowered to *talk to others* as a result of the increased understanding she gained from the books saying, *I understand it a bit better*. MAH also felt this sense of empowerment, particularly by being able to *speak to someone* in her life about race. Katherine expressed that she was *more comfortable* talking about race at the end of the study and enjoyed the opportunity to do so with her classmates, which she would not have done normally. Ruby expressed how at *the beginning* of the study, she felt confused about how to feel but became *more comfortable* as she read more books. She admits that she thought of race as a *bad thing*, but that the books in the study were a *good way* to help her *know more about race*. Ruby was able to break the taboo of speaking about race by learning more about it through the books in the study.

The liberation from the taboo of speaking about race that the participants in this theme have experienced had an empowering effect on them. In this study, and as advocated by Freire (1970), dialogue and communication were the methods for the conscientization experienced through the children's literature read and the discussions facilitated in the mini-workshops. The discussions did not allow for a culture of silence but instead created intense engagement and thought. By engaging in the initially uncomfortable dialogue about race, allowed by the ways the books functioned as windows, doors and mirrors, the learners did what Anand (2020) describes as being necessary to understand and identify inequities surrounding race.

4.6.2 Displays of Consciousness, Agency, and Resistance

The majority of participants displayed signs of consciousness, agency and resistance against racism as a form of oppression through their learnings generated from the books as windows, doors and mirrors. During her focus group discussion, Layla shared what she learnt about how racism operates:

Layla: I do think we should talk about it (race) more. Especially for a young age group. Because one day somebody had the idea that racism was a thing, and even if no one told the kid about it, they could still, like, somewhere in their mind, figure out a way. [FGD]

Layla shows that she understands that racism operates on an unconscious dimension, as Hardiman and Jackson (1997) theorised, where *even if no one told* a child about racism, the child could, *somewhere in their mind, figure out a way*. This shows that, without actively teaching people to uphold racism, it still happens because it is a self-perpetuating form of oppression, learnt through a process of socialisation (Harro, 2000) within our world. The unconscious dimension on which racism operates is one where social power is maintained by members of the dominant group, as well as members of the subordinate group who have all internalised their roles in perpetuating racism. This unconscious and unintentional dimension occur on the individual, institutional and societal levels (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). In the extract from the data, Layla describes the individual level where a person's attitudes and behaviours occur unconsciously. She displays critical consciousness in her awareness of this and resistance in her refusal to accept this, saying, *I do think we should talk about it more*. By saying she feels this is especially necessary for a *young age group*, she shows that it is important to interrupt the cycle of socialisation from a young age through conversation about race, and displays that she has a belief in young people as having the capacity to be agents with the ability

to transform their world (Freire, 1970). Layla made a joke around the idea of black and white categories of race being labels, rather than a realistic description of skin colour:

Layla: *...if a white person and a black person have children, then how come there aren't any grey people in the world? *Group laughs* [FGD]*

In doing this, she displayed an awareness of the social construct that race is- that it is a label assigned to a group of people, rather than something naturalistic or accurate. In the extract above, she hinted at this, saying, *one day somebody had the idea that racism is a thing*. She shows that she understands that race is a social construct that was created as a means to afford privilege and disadvantage to groups of people. By thinking differently than the world socialises her to think about race, Layla demonstrates her agency as a person who has the ability to be conscious and make decisions for herself (Bell, 1997). It is this awareness that, again, is the critical consciousness which Layla developed whilst reading and discussing the literature during the research.

Another participant who displayed consciousness and agency was Lucy Sky. When asked whether she would like to learn about race more beyond this study, she responds:

Lucy Sky: *I think that we should talk about race more, but in a good way, not a bad way because race is important. It's not something that lives on another planet and we don't have to worry about it like lives on Mars or whatever, like we're just learning about it because we want to... because it's all around us. And I think if there's something all around us, I think we should try to learn about it. [FGD]*

In this extract, Lucy Sky rejects colour-blind ideology, which deliberately avoids and ignores race on the logic of it being non-discriminatory to do so (Neville, Awad, Brooks, Flores, & Bluemel, 2013). Lucy Sky goes against this ideology by saying *we should talk about race more* and acknowledges its importance, *race is important*. She reasons that this is because race is *not something that lives on another planet* and that it *is all around us*. This recognition of race in a colour-blind world displays Lucy sky's critical consciousness and agency to think independently. She shows a willingness to continue to learn about race, *if there's something all around us, I think we should try to learn about it*.

In Zedaya's journal, she shares her commitment to interrupting racism, emphasizing working *together to stand against racism*. She displays a belief in people as having the ability to act to transform their world, as well as a moral and ethical attitude towards racial equality (Freire,

1970). She emphasises that *standing up against racism* is possible when we work *together*. There is an idea that the problem of racism cannot be tackled individually alone but requires a collective. Allies are members of the oppressor group who act against the oppression which grants them privilege and acceptance (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). In the fight against racism, there are roles to play by both empowered target group members and allies to work together as agents of change. Because we all hold multiple identities at once, resulting in intersectional subordination in some cases, choices made by allies are important in challenging oppression (Crenshaw, 2017).

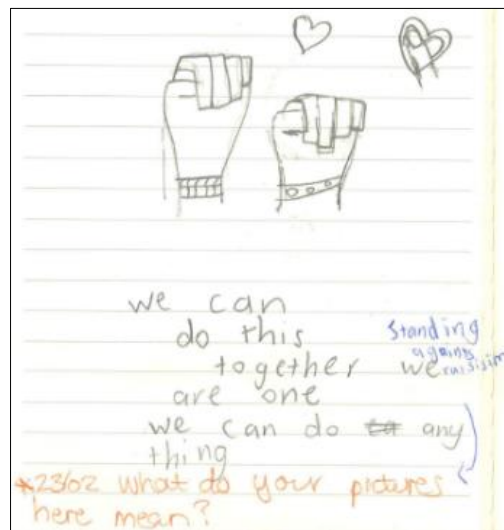


Figure 17: Extract from Zendaya’s Journal

An important part of interrupting racism as a form of oppression is the critical consciousness which needs to be awakened in a person for them to believe that they have the ability to act and intervene. PennyG displayed this in the extract below:

PennyG: *So, you don't have to... you don't have to follow, like, everyone else... And you don't even have to follow, like let's say your family is very racist and says some bad things and says, "if you're black you won't get anywhere", and "if you're white, you won't get anywhere in life". You don't have to follow that. Like, part of my family is coloured and a part of it is- is from Europe. And I'd- none of that family is racist, but if they were, none of my family would have to follow them. [MW4]*

PennyG rejects the idea that people are helpless and instead expresses her belief in the power that people hold to challenge racism, saying that even when racism is around you, *you don't have to follow that*. It is this statement that shows that she views race and racism not from a place of despair, but a place of empowerment.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the data analysed in this chapter were done so using the concepts and literature presented in chapter two, as well as the understanding of the impact of the action research design of this study. There were five themes which emerged from the data and addressed all of the research questions and sub-questions. The first theme established what understandings of race the learners brought with them, which were used to inform the action phase of the cycle. It was found that, before the study, the participants had varied, mostly simplistic understandings of what race is; varied understandings of racism were present; race was a taboo topic of conversation. The second, third and fourth themes utilised Bishop's (1990) metaphor to unpack how the books functioned as windows, doors and mirrors in relation to the understandings of race the learners crafted throughout the action, observation and reflection phases of the cycle. The second theme discussed how the books served as windows for the learners to look through in connection to their learning about race and how these provided views of the racial experiences of others through the cover, illustrations, characters, diverse racial representation, and as a springboard for engagement on topics of race. The third theme explored the pathways into the racial experience that the books provided as doors by fostering empathy, enabling learning about race and racism, and providing a stable context from which to engage. The fourth theme examined how the books acted as mirrors as reflections of similar racial experiences, as well as of a way of interpreting racial identity. The fifth and final theme tied together the impact and significance of the new understandings which the participants built throughout the research and emerged with. These were revealed to be the positive impact on their experience of and ability to speak about race, as well as the consciousness, agency and resistance displayed by the learners.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the findings were analysed and discussed through the presentation of five themes related to the research topic of how children's literature influences learners' understandings about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal. This chapter pulls together all of the most significant elements of this study, revealing the essential conclusions and recommendations that can be made from this research. First, the purpose and significance of this study are discussed, and the small, but significant, contributions of this study are mentioned. My reflections on the efficacy and appropriateness of the conceptual and methodological issues are then discussed. Next, a summary of the key findings is presented according to the themes which emerged, in relation to the research questions or aims which guided and formed this study. This is followed by the implications of the study on my own praxis as a teacher and then considering the plausible implications of this study concerning individual learners and teachers, the school, and education in South Africa as a whole. The limitations I encountered are discussed, followed by recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with my final thoughts and reflections.

5.2 Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose and aim of the study were to explore the influence of selected children's literature on learners' understandings of race and racism at an independent school. Findings from this study contribute to an academic body of knowledge around children's literature as an important tool to help engage learners about sensitive but highly important understandings of race and racism. The study was driven by a desire to move beyond information gathering on the topic and into a space of critical awareness and reflection, with the hope of transformation in thoughts and behaviours for the participants and myself. It is hoped that the conscientization that did take place throughout this action research process leads to the transformation of learners' thinking and behaviours in the interruption of racism as a form of oppression. The use of action research allowed the researcher to foreground and position the learners' voices as central to this study. Further, the participants were positioned as having the critical capacity to discuss matters of race and racism and the various ways that they could negotiate who they were. In

order to achieve this, the study aimed to answer a main research question and three sub-research questions.

The main research question that this study attempted to answer was:

How did selected children's literature influence learners' understandings about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal?

The sub-research questions were:

1. What were learners' understandings of race and racism?
2. What learning was made possible about race and racism using children's literature?
3. How did they use their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school?

This study was borne out of personal, professional, and academic experiences and therefore held significance in these areas. Personally, my own experience of an over-representation of my race group depicted in the stories I read as a child seemed to reaffirm whiteness as the dominant norm. I experienced dissonance between my reality and that of my reality and thus I wanted to change this for the learners in my class. Professionally through my work as a librarian in a school, and based on the findings of this study, I have concluded that the provision and reading of this kind of literature have immense potential to provide affirmation for learners of their own racial identities. It further has the potential to witness, listen to and engage with the racial experiences of others, as well as the ability to develop learners' racial understandings in ways which challenge racism. This is significant because of the implications it has on how school libraries can and should be operated and utilised. Academically, the findings from this study have contributed to the limited research, and therefore gaps, that emerged from the literature review conducted in chapter two, such as the lack of studies done on the use of children's literature used to conscientize learners about race and racism. There was no literature available on this topic in school libraries or with primary school learners in KwaZulu-Natal or South Africa.

This study was significant in its contribution to three recommendations given by researchers in the field. First, Crosthwaite (2015) recommended that a way needed to be uncovered for students' lived experiences to guide a transformation curriculum. This study shows that children's literature can be one such way because it provided the participants with opportunities to share their experiences, which were used to plan each workshop. The second

recommendation that this study contributed towards, was that children's literature is used as a method for critical consciousness (Crosthwaite, 2015). The books in the study functioned as windows, doors and mirrors to foster the participants' critical consciousness and then conscientisation (Freire, 1990). Thirdly, it was recommended that children be exposed to critical, anti-oppressive education for social justice and speak about these topics more and deeply (Fontanella-Nothom, 2019; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006; Williams & Norton, 2000). The study's participants, who were children, were exposed to anti-racist literature and engaged with topics of race on a deeper level than they had done so before, and most participants came out of the study feeling more comfortable speaking about race.

5.3 Reflections on Conceptual and Methodological Issues

This section serves to reflect on and review the conceptual framing and methodology that was used in this study. The conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two fulfilled the purpose of the study using concepts from multiple theories which were selected and used together (see Figure 1). The first concepts that were used were taken from a social justice education perspective (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007), to position this study according to the field of education within which it sits and to support this. This was particularly useful in aligning the aims of the study with the goals of social justice education, strengthening the purpose and significance of the research, as well as providing the practical language that was used in naming, explaining, and analysing racism as a form of oppression. Various concepts from Freire (1990) were woven into the social justice education lens, to inform and nurture the nature of inquiry which took place in this study. This was also vital to fulfilling a key requirement of the critical paradigm and social justice education fields: to contribute towards interruption, improvement, and change. The second conceptual lens was racism as a manifestation of oppression, particularly as it relates to education, taken from the key theorists Hardiman and Jackson (1997), Grosfoguel (2016), Tatum (1997), Fanon (1952). This lens provided stability, in that racism was a key aspect of the phenomenon studied and needed to be deeply interrogated and consistently referred to. The final lens used the concepts of books as windows, doors and mirrors from Bishop (1990). These concepts became integral in how the data were analysed in this study, providing the structure for most of the themes which emerged from the data. These concepts assisted greatly in understanding the dynamics of racial identity when it comes to the child reading the book, the children that they're reading the book with, and the identities of the characters the book represents.

The methodological design of the study involved choices that were made which ensured that every aspect of the methodology fed into one another, providing a stable structure which both supported and enhanced it in its entirety. This study was underpinned by the critical paradigm of research. Critical educational researchers aim to challenge the reproduction of inequalities and question normalized and dominant understandings, to contribute to emancipatory change in institutions or participants' lives (Asghar, 2013). This paradigm enabled the development of the learners' critical consciousness and ways of challenging racially oppressive understandings and inequalities that they encountered, through literature, making the hallmarks of the critical paradigm of transformation and empowerment evident in this study, albeit on an individual level. The qualitative research style, a naturalistic process of inquiry that seeks to understand a phenomenon in-depth in the field (Bertram & Christiansen, 2017), was used. Qualitative research was relevant to this study because textual, rich descriptions and analysis assisted in identifying, understanding and describing the role of children's literature in learning about race and racism among primary school learners in an independent school (Struwig & Stead, 2015). Using qualitative action research, deeper accounts of learners' understandings of race and racism in a South African context were gained. In this way, learners' multiple and complex understandings emerged (Cohen et al., 2017).

Action research, coined by Lewin (1946), was an appropriate and empowering research approach for me because it allowed me to be both the researcher and the teacher of the learners who participated, as action research usually refers to research done on a researcher's own practice (Bertram, 2004). This meant that both purposive and convenience sampling was used. The empowering experience of being an action researcher meant that I took real ownership and direction of the research in a way that seemed deeper than had I used a different approach. Through my self-reflexive researcher journal, I was able to grapple with my positionality and identify and address areas of concern or challenge for me in this regard.

The outcome-orientated nature of the action research design allowed me to carry out four phases of the research, each phase informing the next. The first phase, *planning*, utilised a semi-structured baseline questionnaire, given to ascertain what the learners understood of racism in depth. With this understanding of the knowledge that the learners brought with them into the study, I was able to design phase two, *action*. During phase two, the learners participated in four participatory mini-workshops consisting of the reading aloud of children's literature dealing with racial topics, and data generation activities using participatory visual and arts-based methods. These mini-workshops enabled me to understand how the learners'

understandings of race and racism were influenced by the children's literature, as well as to understand what learning about race and racism was made possible using the literature. Phase three, *observation*, assisted me greatly in ensuring that I was getting an, as accurate as possible, understanding of what unfolded in these mini-workshops, through an observation schedule, audio-recordings and written/drawn work produced. The fourth phase, *reflection*, was vital in uncovering how the participants used their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school. This was done through learner journals, which provided richer data than was initially anticipated. The journals were originally for the reflection of how the learners felt during the sessions, for me to monitor. However, these journals became reflexive, in that they became a way for the learners to reflect on how they felt, what they had experienced, what they thought, and then how to use what they were learning in the workshop sessions to change their feelings, understandings and behaviours. The journals became a more private, discursive space between the participants and I, with more time and space to engage in a more individually focussed way than was allowed in the workshops. Using action research allowed the learners to be foregrounded and their ideas to be considered, so that they could learn together, as part of a shared journey of critical consciousness. This made the choice of action research as the design for this study not only empowering for me as the researcher, but also for the learners as participants, aligning with the aims of the critical paradigm and the ways in which I positioned them in the study, all in keeping with the methodological design choices of the study.

5.4 Summary of Key Findings

This subsection provides a summary of the key findings that emerged in this study. The key findings below are presented according to the research questions in order to display how they have all been answered.

Main Research Question: How did selected children's literature influence learners' understandings about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal?

The study responded to the main research question in two ways: the books functioned both as windows and doors to expand the learners' awareness, understanding and curiosity regarding race and racism. The main research question was answered in such a way that supported Bishop's (1990) theory of books functioning as windows and doors and deepened its interpretation and links to the topic.

Firstly, the books functioned as windows to provide views of the racial experiences of others, providing divergent opportunities for the participants to learn about race and racism from these. The windows into the racial experiences of others were provided by the book covers, illustrations, and characters and functioned to provide a springboard for further engagement on race. The covers assisted the learners in naming racial differences evident in the outward obvious skin colour but allowed the learners to see skin colour and subsequently race as immaterial to building positive relationships. This aligned with Freire's (1970) notions on the role of language in naming the world. The illustrations supported the learners in identifying racial prejudice and acts of racism, in agreement with Fontanella-Nothom's (2019) findings in their study. Here learners could identify the embedded nature of racism that determines how people are treated. The characters assisted the learners in being able to identify how race can impact one's experience. Interestingly, the racial identities of the participants influenced which characters they learnt from. Their own racial identities acted as lenses which highlighted different characters' experiences, which holds significance as a new finding on this topic and the literature located by the researcher. This meant that, although learners were reading the same books, the connection that participants felt with different characters, meant that different learning experiences were had. Metaphorically speaking, learners were able to look at different views through different windows created by a single book, meaning that the identity of the learner influenced how they interpreted the book. This revealed both the embedded nature of ideology that can be difficult to change from a person's perspective, as well as how literature can function as a place of interrogation and self-reflection depicting a particular perspective. The final way in which the books functioned as windows were to launch learners into further discussions and engagement about race, similar to what Kesler et al. (2020) and Fontanella-Nothom (2019) found. The learners used the books as a stable and safe base from which to discuss their own knowledge of race and why they know what they know, discussing what is taught to them in school and through the media about race and why.

Secondly, the books operated as doors for the participants to step through into the worlds presented to enable learning about race and racism by fostering empathy in relation to racial experiences of the characters in the books and fellow learners, similar to what Welch (2016), Steiner (2008) and Audsley (2019) found in their studies. The doors facilitated the fostering of empathy of the participants by emotionally reaching and moving them, enabling them to do more than simply view the experiences presented- but also to walk through the metaphorical door created and become immersed in the world and experiences of the book. This immersion

fostered empathy by the learners trying to understand how and why people behave the ways that they do concerning their racial experiences, such as learning about the struggles of racism experienced by black people and their negotiation of self-worth related to this. After attempting to empathise with characters in the stories, the learners came to the understanding that all race groups are beautiful and valuable, while still recognising that a dominant, unfair racist system exists.

Interestingly, the doors presented in the books also became a space for the learners to engage with race, where ideas about race could be corrected and guided by the learners. This engagement with race was extended to the metaphor of the door, with the learners standing in the doorway to each other's worlds authentic to their own experiences, attempting to enter and having the door shut, or being welcomed through by their peers. This 'standing in the doorway' was an exciting and unique space, where the art of conversation was practised and developed by the learners, despite the imperfections of their ideas and their conversations- humility, the acceptance of non-perfection, and an admittance to know more were most important. Although this is supported by Freire (1970) and his ideas on mutual trust and dialogue, this finding in particular is a new contribution to the topic. The books read became a brave space where the topic of race was made accessible for the learners in a way which they did not think was possible at the start of the study.

Sub-Research Question 1: What were learners' understandings of race and racism?

The first sub-research question asked what the learners' understandings were of race and racism in the initial planning stage of the action research cycle, which described the understandings which the learners had coming into the research. The information generated here was used to plan the second intervention stage in which the learners were exposed to the children's literature selected for this study.

The findings from the baseline questionnaires reveal that the learners' understandings of race and racism were varied, but all based on the idea of difference. This was difference that marked people by their skin colour, ethnicity, language and religion and the unequal relationships that result (Crenshaw, 1991; Fanon, 1952; Grosfoguel, 2016; Lopez, 1994; Tatum, 2000). These factors and identities of difference intersected as they became the first step in the recognition of the *other*- the one who is subordinate (AbdulMagied, 2020; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). Many of the understandings of the learners were based on stereotypes surrounding these factors

and identities, for example, the stereotype that *Hinduism* is abnormal in a society that values, privileges and provides power to the Christian religion, which is more familiar to the learners, and the assumption that learners with brown skin would be Hindus before they are Christians. This revealed the complexity of identity construction, especially when other social identities intersect. These race constructions tended to reproduce unequal power relationships and dominant norms and values. In keeping with Anand's (2020) research, the learners were uncomfortable with discussing the topic of race and racism, identifying most with the emotions of anxious, scared, sad, upset and interested. This suggests that it is a taboo subject, in keeping with current race relationships in society, where there is discomfort and fear associated with speaking about race. Despite this discomfort, the learners still felt interested in learning and speaking more about race and racism and some challenged stereotypical ideas of race. This suggests that if children were provided with access to learning opportunities, they can have the ability to challenge dominant negative ideas that surround race and racism and racial relationships towards transformation that is desperately needed in South Africa.

Sub-Research Question 2: What learning was made possible about race and racism using children's literature?

The second sub-research question asked what learning was made possible about race and racism using children's literature. The answers to this were woven into themes 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the data analysis. The participants did not all learn the same ideas about race and racism, as their own identities positioned them in ways which had an impact on which books they connected with and how they connected with them to learn. Through the books' functioning as windows, doors and mirrors, the majority of participants developed their understandings surrounding race, as will be explained below.

The books developed an understanding among the participants of race as being more than skin colour alone. The learners developed their awareness of racial groups, naming these groups according to socially constructed categories. They sought to understand categories of race and how they relate to other aspects of identity such as religion and ethnicity, to craft a more nuanced or complex understanding, similar to Kesler et al.'s (2020) findings. This was enabled through the representation of racially diverse characters in the books, which reflected the reality the learners found themselves in, in their context of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. By seeing diverse races represented in the stories they read, the learners were compelled to identify these races and realise that people experience race differently. By walking through the doors into

these worlds created by the books, the participants were able to understand how racial identity can work to create a privileged or disadvantaged experience for people- that some never notice their race, while others feel disadvantaged by it. Consequently, they learned that an unfair racist system exists in society. The learners developed new vocabulary to name bias and prejudice, something which they had described before as 'unfairness'. Further, they launched into an inquiry among themselves about how and why racism exists. Some learners uncovered that race is a social construct, which people learn how to 'do' through different structures in society, such as from our families, the media, and schools. This learning about how race operates and is perpetuated agrees with Harro's (2000) cycle of socialisation model.

Most participants displayed various signs of agency and resistance against racism, after having had their critical consciousness nurtured (Freire, 1970), by having the space to question, think, discuss and unpack their ideas and experiences on race. They showed their resistance by rejecting dominant white standards of beauty through the books' promotion of all racial groups as valuable and beautiful. Another display of resistance by the learners was their rejection of colour-blind ideology- their eagerness and insistence on naming and identifying race in themselves and each other so that they could better explore and understand each other's experiences and seek to identify with those experiences in ways which are similar to their own. They displayed allyship in their willingness to listen to each other, acknowledge and value their ideas and experiences, as well as verbalise their disagreement with unfair treatment based on race. They showed an incredible ability to listen to racial experiences of their peers, respond with humility, and stand with them, describing the experience as freeing and different. The learners rejected the idea that people are helpless in the roles that they play in the perpetuation of racism, realising that they have the autonomy to resist through their behaviours, thoughts, and language.

Lastly, there was a noticeable difference in how the learners felt about speaking about race before the study in phase 1 of the action research cycle and at the end, in phase 4. Post-intervention of the children's literature, the learners displayed increased feelings of comfort when speaking about race explicitly, as was found in Fontanella-Nothom's (2019). The decreased discomfort when speaking about race was an empowering experience for some learners because it meant that they were able to speak with people regarding their thoughts on race. As Freire (1970) advocated, dialogue and communication are methods for the liberating experience of conscientization, which these children experienced through the children's literature they read.

Sub-Research Question 3: How did they use their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school?

The third sub-research question asked how the participants used their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school and were particularly fulfilled through the books as mirrors. The participants developed an awareness of their own identities, expressing which racial groups they and their families belong to, enabling learning about themselves and their peers. For some learners, they were able to express for the very first time to their peers that they were Indian, coloured or black, surprising some. This allowed the participants to engage in this by asking questions and respectfully sharing experiences or family histories, and from a place of longing to understand, to connect with one another. This, prompted by the learners seeing themselves in the mirrors created by the books, generated the understanding that racial identity is nuanced and uniquely experienced by us all, making racial assumptions, biases and stereotypes incorrect. In agreement with Bishop's (1990) metaphor, being able to share information about their racial identity publicly had an affirming impact on the participants, bolstering their sense of pride in their own race- and sometimes their ethnicity, too- and seeing the similarities and uniqueness of other races. For some learners, the books prompted deep reflection of their racial experiences in relation to their racial identity. Here, they were able to reject internalised subordination, display a resistance to collude with racism they had encountered and a determination to identify and resist racism in their homes and school they may encounter in the future.

5.5 Implications

There are implications of this research which I believe have significance. The implication of this research on myself as a school librarian is to purchase literature that covers racial themes in the library, read them to learners, and allow them to be taken home, in the hopes that children and their families will discover their windows, doors and mirrors in these, allowing them to learn more about race. There have been a few direct results of this research on me and some actions I have taken in my profession. Firstly, I have been developing and piloting a curriculum to intentionally enable learning about race and racism through children's literature. This means that I have been sourcing and providing more racially diverse children's literature in the school library and allowing learners to engage in discussion about these. Secondly, with a new understanding of the power of stories, particularly concerning the affirmation of racial identity,

I decided to create a library in a school that did not have one in my area. Through donation and fundraising drives, working with local businesses, and through the volunteer efforts of my school community, the library has been operational for over a year (at the time of writing) and has racially diverse children's literature stocked in it, as well as the books used in this study. The final result of this research was an article I wrote on my praxis as a librarian stocking literature which fosters social justice education. This appeared in the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa magazine, *Independent Education* (Evans, 2021). I wrote this in the hopes of communicating the learning I have gained on how books can function to affirm learners' identities with the wider community and enable learning about race and racism. It is my goal and hope to publish and present this research to those in the South African education community.

This research has implications for teachers and schools in relation to the books they source in their classrooms; whether in their reading corners, in the readers that they send home for learners to practise their reading skills, in the set works they read as a class, or even in the texts they select for language exercises. Based on the findings, teachers and schools need to consider whose stories are told in the texts used in their spaces and how those texts can be used to facilitate engagement on race. For too long, children's literature has been a whitewashed world. The books that teachers stock hold immense power in how the learners reading them see their own racial identity and those of people from race groups different to theirs (Bishop, 1990). In this way, learning and dialoguing with issues associated with race and racism can become part of learning and teaching. Further, there is an implication for schools to invite and facilitate discussions among children about race, using children's literature to do so. Considering that the use of children's literature allows children to engage pedagogically with learning about race and racism through conversation and dialogue, schools are implicated in this research to recognise that there is a way to engage with learners about race and racism issues using children's literature. This is especially helpful considering the non-threatening opportunity that using children's literature provides to move towards normalising the discussion and being conscientized about race (see: Anand, 2020; Boutte & Muller, 2018; Conley, 2011; Crosthwaite, 2015; Fontanella-Nothom, 2019; Kesler et al., 2020; Welch, 2016). Further, the implication for universities is to think about their roles in disseminating this method for learning about race to student teachers in training. Similarly, parents have the above-mentioned implication too, in the books that they read to their children in the home and the discussions

they have about race. These books may provide parents with an easily accessible material to have these much-needed conversations with their children.

Lastly, this research has implications for those who write stories and who bring them into the world: the authors, illustrators, and publishers. I hope that this research could contribute to the larger, growing body of research revealing the importance of racial representation in children's literature, as well as the importance of providing books which explore how people experience race. While books such as the five selected for this study are becoming increasingly popular, they are far from being the norm. To South African publishers and authors, I hope that more stories from our country and the province of KwaZulu-Natal particularly, find their way into the shelves of schools and homes of children so that they may have these discussions and learn about race young.

5.6 Limitations

This study has limitations that are important to recognize and address. The many steps and reflections required in action research meant that the study was time-intensive and that more mini-workshops were not possible, therefore the participants could not be exposed to more literature than they were. This small-scale study involved 18 Grade 5 learners from one independent school in KwaZulu-Natal, making the study specific to the participants and books/literature used. This, paired with the qualitative style of this research, means that the findings from this study cannot but do not aim to be generalised. Rather, a contextual, authentic, and deep comprehension of how children's literature influenced the learners' understandings about race and racism was gained. However, it is hoped that the rich descriptions provided in the methodological design, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the data, provide authenticity, dependability and rigour and enhance the trustworthiness of the study. Despite this study's inability to be generalised, certain aspects may be helpful in the employment of a similar study and context.

Although the promotion of social change and empowerment of people was a goal of this study, acknowledgement is made about being limited in affecting social change and empowerment. This study did not and will not change the world, however, the ways in which the data was generated and how the participants were positioned allowed for altered, socially just and humane understandings to emerge about race and racism, which may contribute to

empowerment and critical consciousness of the participants. The participants were able to be self-reflective and reflexive about subjective experiences.

The rationale for conducting this research was based on my personal, professional, and academic experiences. I also selected an action research approach and the participants were some of the students that I teach. Consequently, I- a privileged white teacher- positioned myself within the research. The limitation here is that there was a risk that possible unconscious biases of mine influenced the data generation and data analysis process. I attempted to alleviate this using critical master's cohort students, input from my supervisor as well as a self-reflexive journal. The raw data, in the form of audio recordings and transcripts, as well as written pieces by the participants, have been transparent and accessible to my supervisor.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic provided some limitations in this study, especially pertaining to ethical considerations. This coursework master's qualification was started in January 2020, as the pandemic hit. This meant that the start of this thesis component was delayed. However, I used this time as an opportunity to read more literature surrounding the topic. The data generation methods in this study were fully compliant with the Department of Basic Education's protocols in place at the time. I believe that my study did not pose a greater risk to the learners than the usual lessons that form their schooling would have. No learners tested positive for COVID-19 throughout the duration of the data generation. Whilst these were a few challenges, they were not insurmountable and did not hamper the research in any substantial way.

5.7 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the data generated and the findings of this study, there are various recommendations for future research on this topic that could be explored. This study investigated how children's literature influenced learners' understandings about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal. Firstly, future studies could be conducted with learners from age groups other than that of the participants in this study, who were Grade 5 learners aged 10-11. There is potential to conduct the same research with learners as young as 4 years old in a school setting, and learners older than 11, such as those in high school, to see if more learning is possible with literature. Secondly, there is potential to conduct this study in a different school setting such as a government or co-educational school, or a school in a different province of

South Africa and using different books in the mini-workshops. There is space to see whether these changes influence the learning that is possible from the children's literature.

Thirdly, there is potential to examine the influence of children's literature on learners' understandings of other aspects of identity such as gender, class, sexual orientation, nationality, ability, religion and language. These are important because, like racism, they are identities upon which prevalent forms of oppression in our society are performed. Understanding more about how and what children can learn about these forms of oppression can contribute toward conscientising learners so that they may show agency and resistance and feel empowered and affirmed. The last, and perhaps most significant future research that could stem from this study, is to create a social justice curriculum for primary schools with the purpose of educating or conscientising learners about social identities and forms of oppression, using the school library and children's literature as a primary method and material. The children's literature in this curriculum could create a safe and stable context from which to engage about these socially perceived taboo topics. It is my opinion that there is a gap in the social justice education that primary school learners from Grades RR to 7 receive, particularly in independent South African schools.

5.8 Concluding Thoughts

Based on the key findings, this study argues two points. First, that children's literature can be used to develop learners' understandings about race and racism in ways which are affirming of their own racial identities as well as those of their peers. Second, I argue that access to learning opportunities needs to be provided in schools through children's literature so that learners can develop the ability to challenge dominant negative and oppressive ideas that surround race and racism, as well as racial relationships, towards transformation that is desperately needed in South Africa. This study has focused on the influence of children's literature on learners' understandings about race and racism and moved beyond information-gathering on the topic, into a space of critical awareness and reflection by the participants and myself, as a researcher and teacher. Prior to the intervention of the children's literature, the learners had varied ideas around race and racism. They also approached race as a taboo topic of conversation which, despite their discomfort, they were interested in. In this study, the books functioned as windows to provide views into the racial experiences of others, influencing the learners' understandings of race and racism by providing divergent learning opportunities. In addition, the books acted as doors for the learners to step through and become immersed in the worlds presented,

enabling learning through empathy, as well as the guidance of and engagement with other learners. The books also operated as mirrors for the learners, affirming them and allowing them to reflect on and negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school. It was found that the racial identities of the learners played a role in how they interpreted the books as windows, doors, or mirrors and what they were able to learn from them. The participants engaged with anti-racist literature, reflecting on their experiences and collaborating with one another regarding theirs, developing more complex and nuanced understandings of race and racism as a result. The books read served as a stable and safe space, where the topic of race was accessible for the learners in a way which they did not think was possible at the start of the study.

The majority of participants displayed signs of agency and resistance against racism, after having had their critical consciousness nurtured by having the space to question, think, discuss and unpack their ideas and experiences. The reading of racially diverse and anti-racist literature has immense potential to provide affirmation for learners of their own racial identities; to witness, listen to and engage with the racial experiences of others; as well as the potential to develop learners' racial understandings in ways which challenge racism. South Africans, people from a nation marked by race, seem perpetually uncomfortable and flustered in the conversation of race. Perhaps, through books, the children who have had the chance to openly see, share and learn about themselves, their peers and their families' racial identities and experiences can become adults who can negotiate race in ways which are affirming, humanizing and just, to themselves and their fellow citizens.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Gatekeeper Request for Permission Letter and Form- Head of the Board of Governors



The Chairperson of the Board of Governors

Dear ***

Request for Gatekeeper Permission to Conduct Research at ***

I am the Resource Centre teacher employed at ***. I am also a student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Social Justice Education. I am from the School of Education in the College of Humanities on the Pietermaritzburg campus. I am conducting research for a thesis to fulfil part of the requirements for the Master's programme. The title of the research is '*An investigation into how children's literature influences learners' understanding about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal.*' The primary aim of this study is to uncover what the influence of children's literature is on learners' understanding and learning about race and racism. The secondary aims are to investigate: what the learners' understandings are of race and racism prior to being exposed to the literature in the study; what learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature; and how the learners use their learning to navigate their own racial identities in their home and school. According to recent literature surveyed on this topic, children are capable of discussion about race and racism in an age appropriate way and an effective method of doing this is through children's literature. Children's literature that features racially diverse characters or covers topics of race have benefits such as increasing awareness of the child's own and other cultures, learning to understand and accept beliefs and value systems different from theirs, and discovering similarities from those cultures and races different from their own. As a result, I would like to investigate how children's literature

influences learners' racial understandings. My study is attempting to fill particular gaps in the literature, such as the lack of research on this topic currently in South Africa. I wish to feature your school in this study.

I hereby seek permission to conduct my research with the Grade 5 learners at ***. The study takes a participatory action research approach, making participation key. Using various methods, I would like to generate data from the Grade 5 learners in your school. There will be a baseline questionnaire, 6 hour-long mini-workshops (which take place in the form of lessons), and a focus group discussion, which will all take place over a month. The research will take place during the lesson times of Book Education and Reading Eggs. The girls who participate in the study will have opportunities to change their library books outside of this lesson time, and to do Reading Eggs at their own pace during other school or home times, as it is an individualised program suited to their personal level. The girls who do not participate in the study will change their library books and continue with their Reading Eggs progress. The mini-workshops and focus group discussion will be audio and video recorded. The research will be conducted in accordance with the schools and Department of Basic Education's COVID-19 requirements and policies. I do not foresee this research posing more risk to learners than they are exposed to in being present at school.

Please note that

- The school and participants will not receive any monetary or material gains for participating in the study.
- The school and participants' identities will not be divulged.
- Pseudonyms will be used when writing the thesis.
- Participation is voluntary, thus participants and their guardians can withdraw from the study anytime they wish to do so and will not be penalised in any way for this.
- Learners who participate can opt not to answer questions during the study if they do not want to.
- Audio and video recordings of the interviews will only be done if permission is granted by the guardians and participants.
- Data collected will be used solely for academic purposes.

- Physical data will be stored in a lockable cupboard which the researcher and supervisor have access to. Virtual data, such as recordings, will be securely stored and protected with a password only known by the researcher and supervisor. The data will be kept for five years and then destroyed.
- The findings from this study will only be used for the purpose of writing the master's dissertation.
- Measures will be taken to monitor the participants' emotional well-being throughout the research process. The school counsellor will be available to the learners, should they feel the need to use her services.
- The learners whose parents/guardians grant permission for their daughter to participate in the study, will have the study and their role in it explained to them. The learners will be aware that they can withdraw at any time, with no consequence.
- The findings will be shared with the participant learners, their parents/guardians, the heads, and the board of governors of ***

As researcher I will abide by all of the rules and ethics that encompass researching in an academic context. I am especially committed to conforming to the necessary ethical requirements when working with minors and discussing potentially sensitive topics. My supervisor in this project is Dr. Melanie Martin, whose contact details are below. Should you have any queries, you can contact her.

School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Cell 083 651 4564

Email: martinm@ukzn.ac.za

You are welcome to also contact the University research office:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

Kwazulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 – Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

My full research proposal is available upon request, should you wish to know more about the study. If you have any questions or wish to discuss the study, please reach out.

Your contribution to the study is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Samantha Duckworth

Student no.: 219091779

Cell no: 064 470 9017

Email: 219091779@ukzn.stu.ac.za / samanthaduckworth40@gmail.com

CONSENT FORM:

If permission is granted to conduct the research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, _____, hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project at ***. I understand that learners and their guardians are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/ 2021

SCHOOL STAMP

Appendix B: Gatekeeper Request for Permission Letter and Form- Heads of School



The Headmistress of ***

Dear ***

Request for Gatekeeper Permission to Conduct Research at Your School

I am the Resource Centre teacher employed at your school. I am also a student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Social Justice Education. I am from the School of Education in the College of Humanities on the Pietermaritzburg campus. I am conducting research for a thesis to fulfil part of the requirements for the Master's programme. The title of the research is '*An investigation into how children's literature influences learners' understanding about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal.*' The primary aim of this study is to uncover what the influence of children's literature is on learners' understanding and learning about race and racism. The secondary aims are to investigate: what the learners' understandings are of race and racism prior to being exposed to the literature in the study; what learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature; and how the learners use their learning to navigate their own racial identities in their home and school. According to recent literature surveyed on this topic, children are capable of discussion about race and racism in an age appropriate way and an effective method of doing this is through children's literature. Children's literature that features racially diverse characters or covers topics of race have benefits such as increasing awareness of the child's own and other cultures, learning to understand and accept beliefs and value systems different from theirs, and discovering similarities from those cultures and races different from their own. As a result, I would like to investigate how children's literature influences learners' racial understandings. My study is attempting to fill particular gaps in the

literature, such as the lack of research on this topic currently in South Africa. I wish to feature your school in this study.

I hereby seek permission to conduct my research with the Grade 5 learners at ***. The study takes a participatory action research approach, making participation key. Using various methods, I would like to generate data from the Grade 4 learners in your school. There will be a baseline questionnaire, 6 hour-long mini-workshops (which take place in the form of lessons), and a focus group discussion, which will all take place over a month. The research will take place during the lesson times of Book Education and Reading Eggs. The girls who participate in the study will have opportunities to change their library books outside of this lesson time, and to do Reading Eggs at their own pace during other school or home times, as it is an individualised program suited to their personal level. The girls who do not participate in the study will change their library books and continue with their Reading Eggs progress. The mini-workshops and focus group discussion will be audio and video recorded. The research will be conducted in accordance with the schools and Department of Basic Education's COVID-19 requirements and policies. I do not foresee this research posing more risk to learners than they are exposed to in being present at school.

Please note that

- The school and participants will not receive any monetary or material gains for participating in the study.
- The school and participants' identities will not be divulged.
- Pseudonyms will be used when writing the thesis.
- Participation is voluntary, thus participants and their guardians can withdraw from the study anytime they wish to do so and will not be penalised in any way for this.
- Learners who participate can opt not to answer questions during the study if they do not want to.
- Audio and video recordings of the interviews will only be done if permission is granted by the guardians and participants.
- Data collected will be used solely for academic purposes.

- Physical data will be stored in a lockable cupboard which the researcher and supervisor have access to. Virtual data, such as recordings, will be securely stored and protected with a password only known by the researcher and supervisor. The data will be kept for five years and then destroyed.
- The findings from this study will only be used for the purpose of writing the master's dissertation.
- Measures will be taken to monitor the participants' emotional well-being throughout the research process. The school counsellor will be available to the learners, should they feel the need to use her services.
- The learners whose parents/guardians grant permission for their daughter to participate in the study, will have the study and their role in it explained to them. The learners will be aware that they can withdraw at any time, with no consequence.
- The findings will be shared with the participant learners, their parents/guardians, the heads, and the board of governors of ***.

As researcher I will abide by all of the rules and ethics that encompass researching in an academic context. I am especially committed to conforming to the necessary ethical requirements when working with minors and discussing potentially sensitive topics. My supervisor in this project is Dr. Melanie Martin, whose contact details are below. Should you have any queries, you can contact her.

School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Cell 083 651 4564

Email: martinm@ukzn.ac.za

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My full research proposal is available upon request, should you wish to know more about the study. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss the study further, please reach out.

Your contribution to the study is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Samantha Duckworth

Student no.: 219091779

Cell no: 064 470 9017

Email: 219091779@ukzn.stu.ac.za / samanthaduckworth40@gmail.com

CONSENT FORM:

If permission is granted to conduct the research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, _____, hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project at ***. I understand that learners and their guardians are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/ 2021

SCHOOL STAMP



The Headmaster of ***

Dear ***

Request for Gatekeeper Permission to Conduct Research at Your School

I am the Resource Centre teacher employed at your school. I am also a student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Social Justice Education. I am from the School of Education in the College of Humanities on the Pietermaritzburg campus. I am conducting research for a thesis to fulfil part of the requirements for the Master's programme. The title of the research is '*An investigation into how children's literature influences learners' understanding about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal.*' The primary aim of this study is to uncover what the influence of children's literature is on learners' understanding and learning about race and racism. The secondary aims are to investigate: what the learners' understandings are of race and racism prior to being exposed to the literature in the study; what learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature; and how the learners use their learning to navigate their own racial identities in their home and school. According to recent literature surveyed on this topic, children are capable of discussion about race and racism in an age appropriate way and an effective method of doing this is through children's literature. Children's literature that features racially diverse characters or covers topics of race have benefits such as increasing awareness of the child's own and other cultures, learning to understand and accept beliefs and value systems different from theirs, and discovering similarities from those cultures and races different from their own. As a result, I would like to investigate how children's literature influences learners' racial understandings. My study is attempting to fill particular gaps in the literature, such as the lack of research on this topic currently in South Africa. I wish to feature your school in this study.

I hereby seek permission to conduct my research with the Grade 4 learners at ***. The study takes a participatory action research approach, making participation key. Using various methods, I would like to generate data from the Grade 4 learners in your school. There will be a baseline questionnaire, 6 hour-long mini-workshops (which take place in the form of lessons), and a focus group discussion, which will all take place over a month. The research will take place during the lesson times of Book Education and Reading Eggs. The girls who participate in the study will have opportunities to change their library books outside of this lesson time, and to do Reading Eggs at their own pace during other school or home times, as it is an individualised program suited to their personal level. The girls who do not participate in the study will change their library books and continue with their Reading Eggs progress with Miss Burt. The mini-workshops and focus group discussion will be audio and video recorded. The research will be conducted in accordance with the schools and Department of Basic Education's COVID-19 requirements and policies. I do not foresee this research posing more risk to learners than they are exposed to in being present at school.

Please note that

- The school and participants will not receive any monetary or material gains for participating in the study.
- The school and participants' identities will not be divulged.
- Pseudonyms will be used when writing the thesis.
- Participation is voluntary, thus participants and their guardians can withdraw from the study anytime they wish to do so and will not be penalised in any way for this.
- Learners who participate can opt not to answer questions during the study if they do not want to.
- Audio and video recordings of the interviews will only be done if permission is granted by the guardians and participants.
- Data collected will be used solely for academic purposes.
- Physical data will be stored in a lockable cupboard which the researcher and supervisor have access to. Virtual data, such as recordings, will be securely stored and protected with a password only known by the researcher and supervisor. The data will be kept for five years and then destroyed.

- The findings from this study will only be used for the purpose of writing the master's dissertation.
- Measures will be taken to monitor the participants' emotional well-being throughout the research process. The school counsellor will be available to the learners, should they feel the need to use her services.
- The learners whose parents/guardians grant permission for their daughter to participate in the study, will have the study and their role in it explained to them. The learners will be aware that they can withdraw at any time, with no consequence.
- The findings will be shared with the participant learners, their parents/guardians, the heads, and the board of governors of ***

As researcher I will abide by all of the rules and ethics that encompass researching in an academic context. I am especially committed to conforming to the necessary ethical requirements when working with minors and discussing potentially sensitive topics. My supervisor in this project is Dr. Melanie Martin, whose contact details are below. Should you have any queries, you can contact her.

School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Cell 083 651 4564

Email: martinm@ukzn.ac.za

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My full research proposal is available upon request, should you wish to know more about the study. Should you have any questions, or wish to discuss the study further, please reach out.

Your contribution to the study is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Samantha Duckworth

Student no.: 219091779

Cell no: 064 470 9017

Email: 219091779@ukzn.stu.ac.za / samanthaduckworth40@gmail.com

CONSENT FORM:

If permission is granted to conduct the research at your school, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, _____, hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. I hereby grant permission for the researcher to conduct the research project at ***. I understand that learners and their guardians are free to withdraw from the project at any time, should they so desire.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/ 2021

SCHOOL STAMP

Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter and Form- Parents/Guardians



School Parent

Dear Madam/Sir

Invitation for Your Daughter to Participate in a Study

My name is Samantha Duckworth and I am the *** teacher at ***. I am also a student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Social Justice Education. I am from the School of Education in the College of Humanities on the Pietermaritzburg campus. I am conducting research for a thesis to fulfil part of the requirements for the Master's programme. The title of the research is *'An investigation into how children's literature influences learners' understanding about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal.'*

The primary aim of this study is to uncover what the influence of children's literature is on learners' understanding and learning about race and racism. The secondary aims are to investigate: what the learners' understandings are of race and racism prior to being exposed to the literature in the study; what learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature; and how the learners use their learning to navigate their own racial identities in their home and school. According to recent literature surveyed on this topic, children are capable of discussion about race and racism in an age appropriate way and an effective method of doing this is through children's literature. Children's literature that features racially diverse characters or covers topics of race have benefits such as increasing awareness of the child's own and other

cultures, learning to understand and accept beliefs and value systems different from theirs, and discovering similarities from those cultures and races different from their own. As a result, I would like to investigate how children's literature influences learners' racial understandings. My study is attempting to fill particular gaps in the literature, such as the lack of research on this topic currently in South Africa.

I have been granted permission from the Board of Governors and the heads of *** to conduct this research in the Junior School. Your daughter is a student in this class and thus I am requesting your consent. The study takes a participatory action research approach, making participation key. Using various methods, I would like to generate data from your daughter's class. There will be a baseline questionnaire, 6 hour-long mini-workshops (which take place in the form of lessons), and a focus group discussion, which will all take place over a month. The research will take place during the lesson times of Book Education and Reading Eggs. The girls who participate in the study will have opportunities to change their library books outside of this lesson time, and to do Reading Eggs at their own pace during other school or home times, as it is an individualised program suited to their personal level. The girls who do not participate in the study will change their library books and continue with their Reading Eggs progress as usual. The mini-workshops and focus group discussion will be audio and video recorded. The research will be conducted in accordance with the schools and Department of Basic Education's COVID-19 requirements and policies.

Please note that

- The school and participants will not receive any monetary or material gains for participating in the study.
- The school and participants' identities will not be divulged.
- Confidentiality will be highly observed and the school and learners' identity will be protected. Therefore, pseudonyms will be used when writing the thesis.
- If any learners disclose any incidents of racism experienced at school, they will be informed about the official school procedures to follow to report this. The decision to report this will be up to them and you as the parent. Your child's identity as well as your identity and the incident will not be reported to the school by the researcher.

- Participation is voluntary, thus participants and their guardians can withdraw from the study anytime they wish to do so and will not be penalised in any way for this.
- Learners who participate can opt not to answer questions during the study if they do not want to.
- Audio and video recordings of the interviews will only be done if permission is granted by the guardians and participants.
- Data collected will be used solely for academic purposes.
- Physical data will be stored in a lockable cupboard which the researcher and supervisor have access to. Virtual data, such as recordings, will be securely stored and protected with a password only known by the researcher and supervisor. The data will be kept for five years and then destroyed.
- The findings from this study will only be used for the purpose of writing the master's dissertation.
- Measures will be taken to monitor your daughter's emotional well-being throughout the research process. The school counsellor will be available to your daughter should she feel the need to use her services.
- Should you grant permission for your daughter to participate in the study, the study and her role in it will be explained to her and she will be aware that she can withdraw at any time, with no consequence.
- The findings will be shared with the participant learners, their parents/guardians, the heads, and the board of governors of ***.

As researcher I will abide by all of the rules and ethics that encompass researching in an academic context. I am especially committed to conforming to the necessary ethical requirements when working with minors and discussing potentially sensitive topics. My supervisor in this project is Dr. Melanie Martin, whose contact details are below. Should you have any queries, you can contact her.

School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Cell 083 651 4564

Email: martinm@ukzn.ac.za

You are welcome to also contact the University research office:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

Kwazulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

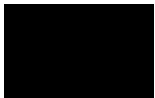
Tel: 27 31 2604557 – Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

My full research proposal is available upon request, should you wish to know more about the study. If you have any questions or wish to discuss the study, please reach out.

Your contribution to the study is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,



Samantha Duckworth

Student no.: 219091779

Cell no: 064 470 9017

Email: 219091779@ukzn.stu.ac.za / samanthaduckworth40@gmail.com

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM FOR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION:

If permission is granted to conduct the research with your daughter, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, _____ (full name), the parent/guardian of _____ (child's full name), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project titled, *investigation into how children's literature influences learners' understanding about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal.* I hereby grant permission for my daughter to participate in the study. I understand that as a parent/guardian, I am free to withdraw my daughter from the study at any time, should I so desire.

If you are willing to have your daughter's participation in the mini-workshops and focus group discussion to be audio and video recorded for data transcription and analysis purposes, please indicate by ticking as applicable:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recorded		
Video recorded		

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study and have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction. I declare that my child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that she may withdraw at any time without any consequences. If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 219091779@stu.eite.ac.za/samanthaduckworth40@gmail.com or supervisor Dr Melanie Martin on martinm@ukzn.ac.za. If I have any questions or concerns about my child's rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher then I may contact the HUMANITIES and SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION at HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za.

Name: _____ (parent/guardian)

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/2022

Appendix D: Informed Consent Letter and Form- Learner Assent



Grade 5 Learner

Dear Learner

Invitation to Participate in a Study

My name is Samantha Duckworth and I am your *** teacher at ***. I am also a student of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where I am doing my Master's degree in Social Justice Education. I am doing research for a thesis (a big research project) and the title of it is '*An investigation into how children's literature influences learners' understanding about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal.*' I am wanting to find out what learners think and know about race and racism. I also want to find out how this changes when they are read books that talk about race and racism. The third thing that I want to investigate is how the learners use their thoughts and knowledge about race and racism when thinking about their own race in relation to their homes and school. I think that children's books/stories are a powerful way for us to learn more about topics such as race and racism in ways that are better and good for us all.

Your school has agreed to let me do my research at *** and your parents/guardians have given their permission for you to participate. I now ask for your participation in my research. This would mean that you answer a questionnaire, participate in 6 mini-workshops (lessons) and take part in a focus group discussion (a group discussion with guiding questions). Should you agree, you would participate in my research during Book Education and Reading Eggs time

and will be given opportunity to change your library books and use Reading Eggs before school and from home. If you choose not to participate in the study, you will participate in book changing and reading as usual. The mini-workshops and focus group discussion would be audio (sound) and video recorded. This means that there will be a camera and/or voice recorder in the room recording what happens, so that I can write about it and understand it better later. The research will be done following the same COVID-19 protocols you have been following at school to keep us safe.

Please note that

- Your school and you will not receive any monetary or material gains for participating in the study.
- The school and your identities will not be mentioned.
- Confidentiality will be followed, which means that the things you say and do will not be published in my research or told to anyone other than myself and your class mates that also participate. Therefore, pseudonyms (fake names) will be used when writing the research project.
- Anything you share about happening at the school will not be told to the school. If you want to report any experiences to the school, it will need to be done by you. I respect your decision to do this. What you share will be kept confidential in the study.
- Participation is voluntary, which means that you don't have to do it. This means that you or your parents/guardians can leave the study anytime you want to, without any consequences from me or the school.
- You don't have to answer any questions that you do not want to.
- Data (the information) collected will only be used for academic purposes (my studies).
- Physical data (the information) will be stored in a lockable cupboard which the researcher and supervisor have access to. Virtual data, such as recordings, will be securely stored and protected with a password only known by the researcher and supervisor. The data will be kept for five years and then destroyed.
- The findings from this study will only be used for the purpose of writing the master's dissertation.
- The school counsellor (Mrs ***) will be available to you if you feel you need to see her.

- If you are ever confused or worried about something, please come and see me and I will happily help.

As a researcher, I will follow the rules that I need to follow from the university. I promise to take care of you throughout the research. My supervisor (teacher at the university) in this project is Dr. Melanie Martin, whose contact details are below. If you have any questions, you can ask her too.

School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal

Cell 083 651 4564

Email: martinm@ukzn.ac.za

You are welcome to also contact the University research office:

HUMANITIES and SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

Kwazulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 – Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Your contribution to the study is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,



Samantha Duckworth

Student no.: 219091779

Cell no: 064 470 9017

Email: 219091779@ukzn.stu.ac.za / samanthaduckworth40@gmail.com

LEARNER ASSENT FORM:

If permission is given to conduct the research with you, please fill in and sign the form below.

I, _____ (full name), a learner in Grade 5, hereby confirm that I have been explained the contents of this document and have been explained about the research project titled, *investigation into how children’s literature influences learners’ understanding about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal.* I hereby give my permission to participate in the study. I understand that as a learner, I am free to leave the study at any time, should I so want to.

I assent (agree) to be audio and video recorded for data transcription and analysis purposes, please indicate by ticking as applicable:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio recorded		
Video recorded		

I gave been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and am happy with the answers that I received. If I have any more questions I can ask the researcher (219091779@stu.ukzn.ac.za/ samanthaduckworth40@gmail.com) or her supervisor from the university (martinm@ukzn.ac.za). If I am worried or have more questions, I can also contact the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration (HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za).

Name: _____ (learner)

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/ 2022

Appendix E: Baseline Semi-Structured Questionnaire

Purpose: To answer sub-research question 1: What are learners' understandings of race and racism?

This questionnaire is part of the research you are doing with Ms Duckworth. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. Your honest opinions or thoughts are what is wanted.

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS PRIVATE, WHICH MEANS THAT ONLY YOU AND MS DUCKWORTH WILL SEE YOUR ANSWERS. PLEASE COMPLETE IT AND HAND IT TO MS DUCKWORTH.

Section 1:

1.1) Please think of and write a pretend name for yourself to be used in Ms Duckworth's research. This is so that your real name and identity are a secret.

1.2) How old are you?

1.3) Write a little bit about yourself. Who are you? What makes you, you?

1.4) Where is power in the world around you? Who/what holds power?

Section 2:

2.1) What is race?

2.2) Do you ever notice race? If yes, what do you notice?

2.3) What are the races of people in your school?

2.4) Does a person's race matter? Yes/No

Why/Why not?

2.5) Does a person's race mean anything about them? If yes, what does their race mean about them?

Section 3:

3.1) What is your race?

3.2) Do you ever think about your race? If yes, what do you think about?

3.3) What is it like to be your race?

3.4) Do you ever think about the race of your family and friends? If yes, what do you think about?

Section 4:

4.1) Does a person's race change their life or mean anything in their life? Yes/No

Please give a reason for your answer.

4.2) Would your life be different if you belonged to another race group? Yes/No

How?

Section 5:

5.1) Do you know of any untrue or unfair ideas that people have about your race? If yes, what are they?

5.2) What do you think about these untrue or unfair ideas about your race?

5.3) Do you know of any untrue or unfair ideas about other races? If yes, what are they?

5.4) What do you think about these untrue or unfair ideas of other races?

5.5) Are all people treated the same? _____

Why or why not?

5.6) What is racism?

5.7) Have you ever seen racism? Can you describe it?

Section 6:

6.1) How much do you **think** about race and racism?

A lot	Sometimes	Never
-------	-----------	-------

6.2) How much do you **talk** about race and racism?

A lot	Sometimes	Never
-------	-----------	-------

6.3) Do you enjoy talking about race and racism? Yes/No

Why/why not?

6.4) Please choose the blocks that explain how it feels for you to talk about race and racism.

Comfortable/Calm	Anxious/Worried	Scared/Afraid
Uncomfortable	Sad	Excited
Confused	Angry	Interested
Upset	Happy	Embarrassed
Guilty	Frustrated	Surprised

6.5) Do you ever get the chance to talk about race and racism at home? Yes/No

6.6) Do you ever get the chance to talk about race and racism at school? Yes/No

6.7) Do you think we should talk about race and racism more? Yes/No

Why/why not?

Appendix F: Mini-Workshop Observation Schedule

Purpose: To answer the main research question: How does selected children's literature influence learners' understandings about race and racism?

To answer sub-research question 2: What learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature?

Mini-workshop #____ Date: _____ Time: _____ - _____		
How did the learners respond to the book?		
Did the learners learn anything about race and racism?	Yes	No
What did the learners learn about race?		
What did the learners learn about racism?		
How was the literature used? e.g.: read aloud, illustrations used, text used, story used as a base for an activity or discussion, stimulation for conversation...		
What were the main themes in the book that came up with the learners?		
Did the book provide opportunities for learners to speak about race and racism?	Yes	No
How?		

Did the learners use any parts of the book to support their understandings in any way?		
Did the learners ever refer to the characters in relation to their understanding about race and racism?	Yes	No
How?		
Did the learners ever refer to the illustrations in relation to their understanding about race and racism?	Yes	No
How?		
Did the learners ever refer to the plot in relation to their understanding about race and racism?	Yes	No
How?		
Did the book deal with racial stereotypes or biases in any way?	Yes	No
How? e.g. did it question and reject them or support them		
Were the learners able to bring their own experiences into the lesson?	Yes	No
How?		
Were the learners encouraged to participate and reflect on their experiences and understandings of race and racism?	Yes	No
How?		

Did the book provide opportunities for further learning? How?		
Did the learners enjoy the book?	Yes	No
Why/Why not?		
Was the book a window, door or mirror for any learners (Bishop, 1990)?	Yes	No
How?		
Any notable observations from the workshop?		
Adaptation of Reygan and Steyn's (2017) Criteria for Critical Diversity Literacy		
Were the learners aware of who/what holds power in the story?		
Did the learners pick up on any "rules" for different groups of people: black and white people? Are black and white people treated differently?		
What are the differences between characters that the learners picked up?		
Did the kids think of examples now/in the past of how different people were treated based on their race?- any examples in the book?		
What did the learners pick up on about the identities of the		

characters? Were these related to themselves at all?	
What were the important words to talk about when thinking about race and racism from the story that the learners picked up on?	
Is it true what people say about people who are different races? Did learners question any of this or not?	
What is the setting of the book like for people who are different- did learners pick up on this?	
How did the learners feel when people are treated badly for being black or white in the books?	
What did the learners think they could do to make things better?	

Appendix G: Participatory Mini-Workshop Plans

Participatory Mini-Workshop 1

- **Main research question:** How does selected children’s literature influence learners’ understandings about race and racism?
- **Research sub-question 2:** What learning is made possible about race and racism using children’s literature?

**Before beginning, ensure emotion charts are out and guidelines for discussion chart is visible to all*

Books: The Colors of Us by Karen Katz	
Happy in Our Skin by Fran Manushkin	
a) The Colors of Us Introduction	
Time: 5 mins	Resources: The Colours of Us book
- We will look at the book The Colours of Us. We will share what we think the book is about based on clues from the cover, blurb and title.	
b) Story Read Aloud	
Time: 10 mins	Resources: The Colours of Us Book
- The book will be read aloud by the teacher. This entails holding the book facing the learners and reading the text aloud, pausing to show pictures.	
c) Questioning	
Time: 10 mins	Resources: Word Wall display and whiteboard markers
- We will hold a discussion on the book in the form of the response prompt “I think, I feel, I wonder”. Learners may begin using these prompts to share their thoughts, feelings and wondering questions they are left with in response to the book.	
- We will ask ourselves if there are any words we would like to know the meaning of and/or add to the Word Wall.	
d) Happy in Our Skin Introduction	
Time: 5 mins	Resources: Happy in Our Skin book

- We will look at the book <i>Happy in Our Skin</i> . We will share what we think the book is about based on clues from the cover, blurb and title.	
e) Story Read Aloud	
Time: 10 mins	Resources: <i>Happy in Our Skin</i> book
- The book will be read aloud by the teacher. This entails holding the book facing the learners and reading the text aloud, pausing to show pictures.	
f) Questioning	
Time: 10 mins	Resources: Word Wall display and whiteboard markers
- We will ask ourselves if there are any words we would like to know the meaning of and/or add to the Word Wall.	
- We will hold a discussion on the book in the form of the response prompt “I think, I feel, I wonder”. Learners may begin using these prompts to share their thoughts, feelings and wondering questions they are left with in response to the book.	
d) Journal Entry	
Time: 10 mins	Resources: Journals, stationery and skin-tone-coloured crayons
- We will write in our journals. We will reflect on what we read and learnt from the two books.	

Participatory Mini-Workshop 2

- **Main research question:** How does selected children’s literature influence learners’ understandings about race and racism?
- **Research sub-question 2:** What learning is made possible about race and racism using children’s literature?

**Before beginning, ensure emotion charts are out and guidelines for discussion chart is visible to all*

Book: I Have Brown Skin and Curly Hair by Karen Theunissen	
a) Book Introduction	
Time: 5 mins	Resources: Pictures of the characters printed without text, prestick
- A picture of the family from the story will be stuck on the board and introduced.	
- Pictures of the different ancestor characters will be placed on the board. We will speculate what we think this story with all of these characters could be about.	

- The book will be shown to the learners and the title read.	
b) Story Read Aloud	
Time: 15mins	Resources: I Have Brown Skin and Curly Hair book
- The book will be read aloud by the teacher. This entails holding the book facing the learners and reading the text aloud, pausing to show pictures.	
c) Questioning	
Time: 20 mins	Resources: Posters with questions typed on, markers
<p>- We will break into groups of 4 or 5. Each group will be given a sheet of big poster paper with questions on it and a marker. They will nominate a scribe, discuss and write their answers to the questions, in response to the story:</p> <p>> What parts of the main character's identity are explored in the story</p> <p>> Why do people ask the family questions when they go out together?</p> <p>> What did you learn about the little girl's family history?</p> <p>> What did you notice about the skin colours of main character's ancestors?</p>	
d) Sharing/Feedback	
Time: 15 mins	Resources: Posters with answers filled in, prestick
- The groups will share their answers with the class.	
e) Journal Entry	
Time: 5 mins	Resources: Journals, stationery
- We will write in our journals. We will reflect on what we read and learnt from the book.	

Participatory Mini-Workshop 3

- **Main research question:** How does selected children's literature influence learners' understandings about race and racism?
- **Research sub-question 2:** What learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature?

**Before beginning, ensure emotion charts are out and guidelines for discussion chart is visible to all*

Book: Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o

a) Journal Response	
Time: 5 mins	Resources: Journals, stationery
- We will spend the first 5 minutes of the session responding to questions left in the journals.	
b) Book Introduction	
Time: 2 mins	Resources: Sulwe book
- The book will be introduced, with the title and cover being shown. The author will be introduced and her picture shown from the back of the book.	
c) Read Aloud	
Time: 13 mins	Resources: Sulwe book
- The book will be read aloud by the teacher. This entails holding the book facing the learners and reading the text aloud, pausing to show pictures.	
d) Fishbowl Conversations	
Time: 20 mins	Resources: Questions for discussion
<p>- The room will be arranged for the fishbowl- desks in a circle/horseshoe around some chairs in the middle.</p> <p>- Learners will be put into groups of 4/5. Each group will be invited into the fishbowl to discuss and respond to a question, where the rest of the class will eavesdrop on the conversation. The rest of the class may only give feedback at the end of the conversation. Each group will be asked different questions.</p> <p>- The questions for the fishbowl:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Sulwe’s mama tells her that real beauty begins with “how you see yourself, not how others see you.” What do you think this means? What does real beauty mean to you? > Sulwe dreams of being lighter-skinned so that she can make real friends, like her sister, Mich. Why do you think Sulwe believes she must have lighter skin in order to make friends? > What advice would you give to Sulwe? > Why does Sulwe dream of being the same color as her sister? > How does Sulwe try to become the same color as her sister? How did you feel as you read about this? > How does Sulwe feel about her dark complexion? How do you know? > What does her mother do to try to make Sulwe feel better? Do you think it works? > What did Sulwe learn from the dream that she has about the sisters, Night and Day? How does the story relate to Sulwe? 	

- > What does Sulwe learn or discover through the story of Night and Day? What did you learn from their story?
- > How does Sulwe feel when she wakes up the next morning? How do you know?
- > How does the book end? What do you think will happen next?

e) About the Author: Appearance, Prejudice and Acting as an Ally

Time: 15 mins	Resources: Sulwe book
---------------	-----------------------

- We will discuss the author, Lupita Nyong'o. We will look at her picture from the back cover.
- We will read aloud the "Author's Note" in the back of the book.
- We will talk about how the author's experience shaped the book. Questions to ask: Why do you think Lupita Nyong'o wrote the book? How does the book relate to her life?
- Next, we will define and discuss prejudice: as judging or having an idea about someone or a group of people before you actually know them. Prejudice is often directed toward people in a certain identity group (race, religion, gender, etc.).
- Ask: What kind of prejudice is being discussed in Sulwe? Explain that Sulwe is the target of skin complexion prejudice, which is called "colorism" (bias about skin color that says lighter skin is better than darker skin). Have students share examples of prejudice they have heard about, seen or experienced themselves. It can be about colorism, appearance or any other form of prejudice. Explain that when we see others being targeted for bias, we can act as an ally to them.
- We will discuss what an ally is: someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied or the target of bias (or prejudice). We will mention that Sulwe's mom acted as an ally in the story.

f) Journal Entry

Time: 5 mins	Resources: Journals, stationery
--------------	---------------------------------

- We will journal to reflect on what we have learned from the book.
- Here are some prompting/guiding questions"
 - > Can you relate to Sulwe? If so, how?
 - > What did you learn from the book?
 - > Have you ever acted as an ally or had someone act as an ally for you? Describe the experience.

*ensure Word Wall is still running, that we continue adding words we need

Participatory Mini-Workshop 4

- **Main research question:** How does selected children’s literature influence learners’ understandings about race and racism?
- **Research sub-question 2:** What learning is made possible about race and racism using children’s literature?

**Before beginning, ensure emotion charts are out and guidelines for discussion chart is visible to all*

Book: Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race by Megan Madison	
a) Book Introduction	
Time: 5 mins	Resources: Our Skin book
- The book will be introduced. The covers and title will be discussed and we will discuss what we think the book is about.	
b) Read Aloud and Questioning	
Time: 25mins	Resources: Our Skin book
- The book will be read aloud by the teacher with us pausing to discuss key ideas along the way.	
Key ideas from the book are:	
- Rejecting stereotypes	
- Racial categories in the world	
- Race is a social construct/manmade by humans: uses history and inequality, links to today	
- Different forms of racism: explicit or subtle WITH examples, intentional or unintentional	
- The painful effects of racism	
- The embedded nature of racism	
- Speaking up and challenging racial injustice- allyship	
- Identity terms used to empower learners	
- Explanation of melanin to reject stereotypes and demystify skin colour... uniqueness of our skin	
c) Creation of Racism Mind-map	
Time: 15 mins	Resources: Mindmap large paper, markers

- We will create a mindmap collaboratively as a class about all we know about race and racism.

- We will look to our Word Wall for new words we have learnt that may help.

d) Word Wall

Time: 5 mins

Resources: Wonder wall heading, sticky notes, stationery

- We will near the end of the workshops by writing down any words we have for the word wall.

e) Journal Entry

Time: 5 mins

Resources: Journals, stationery

- We will journal one last time. We will journal about the book and reflect on all we have learned in the mini-workshops.

f) Explanation of What Will Happen Next

Time: 5 Mins

- Learners will get to select a skin tone crayon which represents their unique tone.
- It will be explained to the learners that the workshops are over, and that focus group discussions will come.

Appendix H: Focus Group Discussion Schedule

Purpose: To answer sub-research question 3: How do they use their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school?

TO BE DONE IN SMALLER GROUPS WITH THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

- > Did you learn anything from the books?
- > What did you learn from the books?
- > How did the book/s teach you this?
- > Which book taught you the most? Why?
- > Which book taught you the least? Why?
- > How did the books make you feel?
- > Did the books make you think about your own life in any way? How?
- > Do you think other children should read these books? Why?

Appendix I: Action Research Design

1 Planning

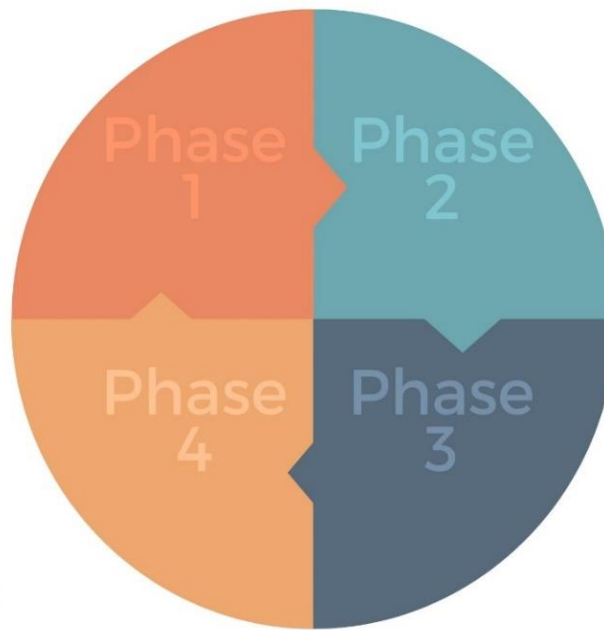
- Sub RQ 1: What are learners' understanding of race and racism?
- Baseline semi-structured questionnaire

2 Action

- Main RQ: How does selected children's literature influence learners' understanding about race and racism?
- Sub RQ 2: What learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature?
- 4 Participatory mini-workshops

4 Reflection

- Sub RQ 3: How do they use their learning to negotiate their own racial identities in their homes and school?
- Ongoing self-reflexive learner journals, 4 focus group discussions



3 Observation

- Main RQ: How does selected children's literature influence learners' understanding about race and racism?
- Sub RQ 2: What learning is made possible about race and racism using children's literature?
- Field observation notes, researcher observation journal

Appendix J: Ethical Clearance



14 November 2021

Samantha Megan Duckworth (219091779)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear SM Duckworth,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003369/2021

Project title: An investigation into how children's literature influences learners' understanding about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Full Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your response received on 07 November 2021 to our letter of 12 October 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

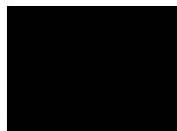
This approval is valid for one year until 14 November 2022

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



16 March 2022

Samantha Megan Duckworth (219091779)
School Of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear SM Duckworth,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003369/2021

Project title: An investigation into how children's literature influences learners' understanding about race and racism at an independent school in KwaZulu-Natal.

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 11 March 2022 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in research methodology

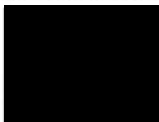
Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.




Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix K: Turnitin Report

S. DUCKWORTH MA THESIS

ORIGINALITY REPORT

3%

SIMILARITY INDEX

1%

INTERNET SOURCES

1%

PUBLICATIONS

1%

STUDENT PAPERS



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