Reframing Multiracial Picturebooks as Transformative Texts

An inquiry into explicit and implicit representations of multiraciality

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<u>SUMMARY</u>

This dissertation sets out to analyse the signification of multiracial identity in children's picturebooks. Specifically, I investigate if it is possible to propose ways to reimagine multiraciality through the modality of picturebooks by developing the following research question: How can picturebooks with explicit and implicit messages regarding multiracial identity be utilised as transformative texts? I explore this through the following three interrelated objectives: to identify and analyse the explicit and implicit depictions of multiracial bodies, to consider their signification implications and finally, to propose picturebooks as transformative texts to be used as epistemological and methodological tools to foster critical discussions of multiracial identity.

Highlighting the need for such studies, I open with a discussion on the current Western discourse surrounding Critical Race Theory's place in education before outlining the role that the media can play in identity formation. Given the power of language and nuances of racial discourse, I clarify my usages of the key terms early on and make it clear I do not wish to dissect their accuracy.

Considering the dearth of picturebooks available, I put forth three categories of multiracial picturebooks and select a corpus that exemplifies each category: 1) Méndez's *Where Are You From?* (2020) in Explicit Representation; 2) Averbeck's three-part *Sophia* series (2015, 2018, 2020) in Implicit Representation; and 3) Maclear's *Spork* (2010) in Abstract Representation. The significance of the content analysis was to identity transformative texts that can act as guideposts for educators in the practice of negotiating the values of diversity through picturebooks. Thus, to analyse my selected corpus I propose a multidisciplinary context that combines three bodies of thought: picturebook theories, utopian theory and the scholarly approach of Critical Mixed Race Studies, to discuss the visual and textual construction of multiraciality in picturebooks. I map out the multiracial scholarship that will foreground my analysis before adapting Hirschman's utopian concerns (futility, danger, and perversity) as a schema to develop critical questions regarding the construction of multiracial bodies.

I discuss the ways the picturebook narratives that move away from the geno-phenotypical traits of the body present a new way to explore multiraciality for children by focusing on the layering of ecological, geographical and sociopolitical ancestral histories that can form an individual's identity. Following this, I consider the contextualisation of

multiraciality through its placement in a family unit and how family representations often evoke dichotomous imagery. Finally, I examine allegorical narratives that reduce multiraciality to abstract forms, and how that exposes the historical "tragic mulatto" trope still permeates contemporary media. The stereotypical undertones that perpetuate problematic notions regarding multiracial bodies could reinforce such ideals into the cultural consciousness; however, I put forth pedagogical activities conducive to fostering a transformative dialogue to reimagine multiraciality. Developed from the selected corpus, these activities when coupled with the developed critical questions have the potential to create an embodied learning environment. This environment is where children can enter an "integrative process" that can lead to "change, transition and transformation" (Haring et al., 2020, p.17). Through proposing teaching interventions during critical discussions and facilitating creative workshops, I explore the methods of engaging with multiracial picturebooks that can lead to transformative discourse regarding racial identity formation.

Finally, I conclude by unfolding the key elements that have emerged in my critical content analysis findings. I consider the limitations of my study in terms of the scope, access to texts and my own positionality as an English-speaking individual in a Western context before making suggestions on the ways my framework could be utilised and broadened for further study on the same corpus, or by broadening the scope to include multiraciality in other forms, such as families in terms of transnational adoptees. I hope to add my voice and highlight an avenue for furthering the dissemination of pertinent research that can assist in policymaking or creation of multiracial inclusive material guidelines for educators and teacher development programmes.

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<u>CHAPTER 1</u>

INTRODUCTION

We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.

-    (Angelou, 1993, p.124)

Multiraciality itself is a rich and complex tapestry. The myriad of racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious threads that can be combined, layered, intertwined and weaved together to form a multiracial identity is boundless and, as Angelou says (1993) says: "we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color" (p.124). When there are so many variables woven into a singular multiracial identity, it is most certainly impossible to encapsulate the complicated pictorial design of many individuals. Many elements comprise a person's identity: race, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and so forth. These interrelated elements are woven together in the identity formation process to form the remarkable tapestry that is identity. Just like there are tapestry needles, looms and bobbins, there are many tools that can have a profound effect on the development of identity.

Media has the potential to be a tool in an educational setting that facilitates the weaving of new strands and the unravelling of tangled knots. Striving for a utopia where every multiracial child can see their identity - every pattern and stitching combination sewed together – in a positive manner that reflects and validates them can be considered an idealistic and perhaps futile dream. However, "for the child was made through texts and tales" (Lerer, 2008, p.1), it is crucial to examine the significance of multiraciality in popular culture in order to explore the potential of a utopian pedagogy that does not exclude multiracial discourse. What does do I mean by utopian pedagogy? Rather than thinking of "utopia" as an end goal that solves every socio-cultural problem imaginable, it can also be a "method of interrogating imagined future political, economic or social alternatives in a given community" (Deszcz-Tryhubczak, 2017, p.138). Proposed seminally by Ruth Levitas (2013), utopia as a method is described as a "critical tool for exposing the limitations of current policy discourses [and] holistic thinking about possible futures" (p.xi). Additionally, and the concept this dissertation aligns itself with, is that utopias "offer no ready-made answers, let alone solutions. But they do ask the right questions" (Bregman, 2017, p.26).

Rationale

Can multiraciality be woven into educational settings without becoming a hopelessly tangled knot in the wider tapestry of racial discourse? At the time of writing, the topic of race in education is a provocative area that has been put into question in the United States and Britain. There is a surge in U.S states attempting to ban Critical Race Theory (CRT) from schools and universities with an anti-CRT law bill. The law bill proposal states that CRT is to be banned, along with the limiting of other racial discussions, and as of June 2021 five states have signed the bill into law and a further seventeen have introduced the bill into legislature (Adams et al., 2021). Meanwhile in Britain, the Commons 'Education Committee' (2021) published a report in the same month stating that:

> Schools should consider whether the promotion of politically controversial terminology, including White Privilege, is consistent with their duties under the Equality Act 2010. (para. 29)

Although considered a cross-party committee it should be noted that the Commons 'Education Committee' is conservative-dominated. The "importance of language, of discourse, in both the restructuring and its legitimation with respect to particular issues … become a matter for political debate" according to Fairclough (2003), who explains that the rhetoric "of 'PC' remains an effective and damaging strategy" against progressive utopian ideals (p.27). To avoid using terms such as "White privilege" in the classroom is to avoid teaching young people how to challenge the systems of power that racism stems from. Such pervasive critiques in the name of political correctness serve to avoid transformative discourse that can dismantle the racial hierarchy.

With the push for diversity and inclusion in the media to reflect the increasingly globalised and multicultural world, there is a desire to declare a utopian "post-race" and/or "colourblind" society (Rhodes, 2009; Ortiz, 2020). The root of these arguments stem from the semantics of mixing; are we not all racially mixed in some way? This is true to some extent; however, to propose "a new race fashioned out of the treasures of all the precious ones: the final race" (King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p.144) reduces the nuances and nefariousness of prevailing racial boundaries. Such ideals are posited to combat racism, for how can racial prejudice exist when race is no more? To be "post-race" would suggest that race no longer permeates society when the reality is that, although race is a social construct, systematic racism continues to nefariously imbue cultural consciousness. In a similar vein, to be

colourblind is to erase the differences between racial binaries in the effort to combat racial prejudice but, in doing so, also erases the real ways the arbitrary "black" and "white" binary uphold a racial hierarchy. Both ideals ultimately erase and invalidate the experiences that people of colour (POC) have, which reduces society to the default (or "whitewash") of the dominant norm of "Whiteness" and, in turn, further renders multiracial individuals invisible. This is not to say that all who claim the present as "post-race" or strive for such utopianism are intending to "whitewash" but rather, whenever there is an "interest in utopia, there has [often] simultaneously been a flood of dystopian visions marked by the attenuation of hope that suggest a bleaker view, especially regarding race" (Chan & Ventura, 2019, p.1).

Thus, I do not wish to add my voice to the debate for the dismantling of racial classifications. Rather, I align myself with Chan and Ventura (2019) who state:

> We maintain that part of the response to such a bleak worldview in these times requires bringing together race and utopian consciousness. … We think it important in the current moment to counter racist visions by situating race … in a more hopeful way. (p.2)

I acknowledge that although "the notion of transcending race is appealing", the focus on "moving beyond racist identification" disregards multiracial identities and the way racial classifications percolate our everyday lives (King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p.140). Avoiding racial discourse does not end racism; it merely presents systematic racism and inequalities "as reflective of a natural order" (Rhodes, 2009, para. 3.6). Increased awareness and focus to shed light on the formation to challenge racial classifications, and in this case, multiracial identity, is necessary and, I posit, an important area of study.

So how can we move towards a utopia where multiraciality is made visible and race is situated in a more hopeful way without reinforcing problematic notions of racial boundaries? When envisioning these possible futures, I return to Bregman's (2017) proposal that there are, in fact, "no ready-made answers, let alone solutions" in achieving utopia (p.26). Bregman prefaces his proposal by distinguishing between the two forms of utopian thought: the utopia of the blueprint (critiqued by Arendt and Popper) and the utopia of abstract ideals (Bloch, 1954, 1955, 1959; Moylan, 1986). There is a freedom in the latter, with Bregman (2017) distinguishing them as follows:

If the blueprint is a high-resolution photo, then this utopia [of abstract ideals] is just a vague outline. It offers not solutions but guideposts. Instead of forcing us into a straitjacket, it inspires us to change. (p.26)

Embracing the utopia of abstract ideals rather than blueprints, I propose an investigation in multiracial representation that serves to nurture a dialogue that inspires change regarding our notions of multiracial classification. I acknowledge it would be foolish to suggest I would be able to conclude a solution to the forever in flux problem that is racial discourse. What is possible, and what I intend to do, is ask the right questions that might serve to act as guideposts by stimulating the necessary dialogue that unravels the tangled knots and reveals the complexities of multiracial identity in picturebooks.

Why Picturebooks?

Children's literature is a fundamental constitution within educational spaces and, thus, is a primary influence on the attitudes and perspectives of a child during their formative years (Cameron & Rutland, 2006; Rice, 2005; Trepanier-Street & Romatowski, 1999). Literature has the potential to challenge heteronormative, monoracial and homogenous ideologies; however, there are, of course, pedagogical limitations as the textual or visual representation available cannot appeal to or reflect each individual child. Sometimes texts require some readers to read beyond textual configurations for the literature to become a tool for self-reflection.

Although there is a growing interest in multiracial identity in classic texts and YA literature, there exists a gap in the field of children's picturebooks. Picturebook narratives are often deceptively simple because their ideological dimensions are "inscribed textually as an aspect both of *story* and *significance"* and thus, "are often virtually invisible, and may lie at a level of meaning deeper than the notion of 'theme' which is often the endpoint of interpretation" (Stephens, 2018, p.137). Complex topics or subject matters considered taboo, such as the now contentious anti-CRT discourse, for young readers can and have been tackled through picturebooks in varying forms. Stephens (2018) explains how ideology permeates even the seemingly apolitical picturebooks:

Even if the story's events are wholly or partly impossible in actuality, narrative sequences, character inter-relationships, processes of inferencing, aspects of visual modality, and so on will be shaped according to recognizable forms, and that shaping

can in itself express ideology insofar as it implies assumptions about the forms of human existence. (p.137)

A correlation can be made between the multiraciality and the modality of picturebooks. Multiracial bodies are often crudely depicted as *half and half* of their heritage; however, similar to the complex interweaving of text and images in picturebooks, the reality and nuances of reading the semiotic systems or strands of identity is a varied and complex process. I propose that in addition to picturebooks, multiraciality can be said to be "a cohesive patterning of inter-related strands that adds up to more than a mere accumulation of individual parts" (Lewis, 2001, p.33). Picturebooks embody many genres and present many narrative formats that can "explode cultural myths and reveal the constructedness of reality and identity" (Coats, 2008, p.80). Multiracial picturebooks "can help children develop a healthy identity – one that is normal and a 'regular part' of the child's life" argued Benjamin (as cited in Sands-O'Connor, 2001), with repeat exposure to "valid interracial experiences … broadening their understanding of our society" (pp. 413-414). The freedom and flexibility of the picturebook form allows it to become a site of transformation; by reimagining the freedom and flexibility of racial categories, picturebooks have the potential to reframe readers understanding of multiraciality through textual and visual descriptors.

Research Questions

This dissertation is mainly concerned with the formation and depiction of multiracial bodies and asks: How can picturebooks with explicit and implicit messages regarding multiracial identity be utilised as transformative texts?

First, I will begin by defining what is meant by "transformative texts". Drawing on utopian and picturebook theory, I intend to present five picturebooks (three of which belong to one book series) and propose a critical analysis framework that highlights them as conducive to transformative social discourse regarding multiracial bodies. To facilitate this aim, the picturebooks selected for analysis will be reviewed on their ability to address the three utopian concerns, according to Albert Hirschman (1991). Progressive interventions and "any effort to transform institutions so that they reflect a multicultural standpoint must take into consideration the fears teachers have when asked to shift their paradigms" (Hooks, 2014, p.36). By anticipating and understanding these reactionary arguments in the context of multiraciality, it will allow for a critical and pragmatic investigation into the construction of multiracial identity in picturebook form. Thus, adapting Hirschman's schema will provide the

methodological grounding to approach, identify, and address the messages conveyed and how they can be used to pedagogically transform sociocultural meaning of multiraciality.

Books selected (see Corpus) for analysis in this dissertation and their use in a pedagogical capacity were reviewed on their ability to "release readers from the thrall of powerful controlling narratives" (Coats, 2008, p.80) surrounding multiracial identity. The content analysis will be framed within Albert Hirschman's (1991) schema of reactionary rhetoric or "utopian concerns". Hirschman contends that proposals towards utopian ideals are often denounced with reactionary arguments of futility, jeopardy, and perversity. Arguing against change on the basis that it is futile, dangerous, and perverse has and continues to plague the "great milestones of civilization" (Bregman, 2017, p.22). These points of contention form the schema of which the themes, texts, and images of multiracial picturebooks can be explored through. For the purposes of this dissertation, the main research question will be examined through three lines of enquiry that conceptually adapts Hirschman's schema to the following:

- **Futility** (i.e., it is not possible) – Is it possible to represent an identity that is not monolithic in an authentic way?
- **Danger** (formally jeopardy, i.e., the risks are too significant) – By focusing on "multiracial" as a concept that blurs racial boundaries, are we also risking reinforcing problematic boundaries and the construction of racial binaries?
- **Perversity** (i.e., it will degenerate into a dystopia) – How can the advocation for the implementation of multiracial picturebooks in an educational role counter-accusations of political correctness?

Careful consideration needs to be made to address the utopian concerns in order to advocate for the pedagogical use of multiracial picturebooks in good conscience. Focusing on the relationship of information between the textual and visual construction of picturebooks that explicitly or implicitly feature a multiracial body, I intend to explore and highlight the transformative potential for critical discussions that embraces the contradictions and multiplicity of shifting racial boundaries. To foster a dialogue that inspires change regarding our understanding of multiracial identity, the relevant applications of theories that constitute racial discourse are needed.

Since this dissertation is a literary and visual analysis into multiraciality in children's picturebooks, a theoretical framework is needed to establish a need for it within a larger body

of research. Children's literature scholars support the pedagogical use of picturebooks (Bader, 1976; Doonan, 1993; Fang, 1996; Sipe, 1998; Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Wolfengarger & Sipe, 2007), and there exists a growing scholarship on the importance of diverse representation (Feelings, 1985; Bishop, 1990; Roethler, 1998; Taylor, 2003; Colby & Lyon, 2004; Arizpe et al., 2013) however, there remains a limited exploration on multiracial-inclusive books and their use in classrooms as transformative texts. CRT and the concept of racialised interaction order (Rosino, 2017; Meghji, 2018) will contextualise the analysis within a multiracial paradigm of Critical Mixed Race Studies (CMRS). This provides the theoretical grounding to allow for extensive dissection on the racial identity formation process construed through the body and how the subsequent semiotic codes convey a particular message. Consideration will be made to global contexts and commodification of multiraciality as emblematic of multiculturalism or a "post-race" society "within global capitalism", while representations of them are simultaneously "seen as suspect because they are considered not pure or 'inauthentic'" (King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p.viii).

Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 – Introduction, prefaced by Angelou's quotes regarding diversity, sets the stage with a clear focus on multiraciality and identity development. I open with a discussion on the current Western discourse surrounding CRT's place in education as the **Rationale** before outlining the role that the media can play in identity formation (**Why Picturebooks?).** I then introduced the **Research Questions** and offer clarification on the three lines of enquiries I adapted from Hirschman's utopian concerns.

Chapter 2 - Terminology acknowledges the "slipperiness of language" (Reynolds, 2009, p.xi) that echoes the concept of utopia itself being "beset by internal contradictions and limitations" (Chan & Ventura, 2019, p.2). This section outlines the terminology used throughout this dissertation and clarifies my decision on terminology choices and usage of scare quotes. I identify the interrelated terms that may sometimes intertwine, but for clarification purposes, I define the key terms based on their common usage and make it clear I do not wish to dissect their accuracy.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review maps out the foundational scholarship regarding multiracial discourse and the field of Critical Mixed Race Studies. Considering the need to centre multiraciality going forward, I decided to focus on scholarship regarding the fundamentals of multiracial identity formation and subsequent literary representations rather than the concept

of utopia itself. This chapter outlines the key scholarly work that foregrounds my analysis, divided into the following subheadings: 1) **Foundations of Critical Mixed Race Studies**; 2) **The Global Mixed Race Paradigm**; 3) **Multiraciality within Racialised Embodiment Scholarship**; and 4) **Existing Multiracial Representation Scholarship**.

Chapter 4 – Methodology starts with developing Hirschman's utopian concerns as a schema, in a similar manner to Sims Bishop's analytical framework, for critical content analysis. I establish my analytical framework and, using the adapted schema of futility, danger, and perversity, I develop critical questions that structures my **Process of Analysis.** I discuss my **Selection Process** and elucidate my categorisation process of 236 picturebooks, using an organisational chart (see Appendix C). In my search, I relied on various online databases that tagged picturebooks as "Bi/Multiracial/Mixed Race" and Yokota and Frost's (2002) reviews of 31 multiracial books. Considering the dearth of picturebooks available, I put forth and define three categories of multiracial picturebooks for my initial analysis: 1) Explicit Representation; 2) Implicit Representation; and 3) Abstract Representation.

Chapter 5 – Corpus begins with a visual breakdown of the 236 picturebooks into my developed categories of representation. Considering my access limitations and research constraints, I was restricted in which and how many texts I would be able to analyse. I introduce my selected corpus for deeper analysis within each category and provide a brief synopsis of each for added context: 1) Méndez's *Where Are You From?* (2020) in **Explicit Representation;** 2) Averbeck's three-part *Sophia* series (2015, 2018, 2020) in **Implicit Representation;** and 3) Maclear's *Spork* (2010) in **Abstract Representation**. I engage with these particular examples because the initial analysis demonstrated to me the ways that the synergy of the texts and images could be conducive to and effective in critical and reflective questioning.

Chapter 6 – Content Analysis Findings discusses the analytical examination of the multiracial body through Curington's (2020) notion of multiracial dissection by combining three bodies of thought: picturebook theories (Moebius, 1986), utopian concerns (Hirschman, 1991) and the theoretical background of CMRS as outlined in Chapter 3. In **Unravelling the Identity Spool in *Where Are You From?*** I explore the narratives reframing how multiracial identity can be viewed and constructed; away from the geno-phenotypical traits of the body and instead, focused on the layering of ecological, geographical and sociopolitical ancestral histories that can form an individual's identity. The section **Interrogating the Familial**

Seams in the *Sophia* Series investigates another avenue of contextualising the multiracial body through establishing their place in a family unit. Although not pertinent to the narrative, Sophia's multiraciality and the representation of her family evokes dichotomous imagery that, not only exposes my own bias in identifying the series as implicitly multiracial but lends itself to critical questioning and reflection on the role our perception plays in the racialised embodiment process. Finally, **The Prevailing Patterns of Stereotypes in *Spork*** reveals that the evolving historical "tragic mulatto" trope still permeates contemporary media. The narrative is accessible, and the aesthetics could be utilised as creative workshop inspiration, but the stereotypical undertones perpetuate problematic notions regarding multiracial bodies, reinforcing such ideals into the cultural consciousness. The last section of this chapter, **Stitching Together Transformation,** puts forth pedagogical activities that are developed from the selected corpus. Through proposing teaching interventions during critical discussions and facilitating creative workshops, I explore the methods of engaging with multiracial picturebooks that can lead to transformative discourse regarding racial identity formation. Looking at the artistic elemental depth available in *Love by Sophia* and *Spork,* I explore the potential for developing practical activities to explore children's ability to engage with abstracted forms as a means for critical self-reflection.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion unfolds the content analysis findings and reflects on what has emerged. I consider the limitations of my study in terms of the scope, access to texts and my own positionality as an English-speaking individual in a Western context. I end with suggestions on the ways my framework can be utilised and broadened for further study on the same corpus, or by broadening the scope to include multiraciality in other forms, such as families in terms of transnational adoptees.

CHAPTER 2

TERMINOLOGY

I recognise that "to study race … is to enter into a world of paradox" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p.xi) and so, I shall define the key terms that will be frequently weaved throughout this dissertation. At the time of writing, I have chosen to use the currently accepted terminology, in a British context, concerning racial groups and identity. There is a recognition that such terminology may become outdated and/or offensive in the future and may not translate into other cultural contexts. Additionally, I have chosen to introduce the terms using scare quotes (quotation marks that are used to convey scepticism or derision) to signify and acknowledge their socially constructed nature. To maintain clarity and avoid trivialising the weight these terms hold, the chapters that follow will not maintain this and instead, follow previous scholarly approaches that it should be read with *assumed* scare quotes. In other words, I am approaching my research with the same candour as Brennan (2002), acknowledging that:

> once one enters the territory of race, one must simultaneously suspend belief [,] acknowledge the powerful grasp that race often maintains over us, and work actively to continually challenge our beliefs. (p.7)

Race is defined as a way of classifying "a large group with shared ancestry and common traits that often lived in a similar environment or continent for a considerable amount of time" (Ginneken, 2007, p.241). The process of racialisation is often on the arbitrary basis of physical phenotypic characteristics – such as skin pigment, eye colour and hair colour – and yet, "the selection of specific human features for the purposes of racial signification is a constantly changing sociohistorical process" (Daniel, 2014, p.2).

Culture is defined as a set of shared ideals, rules and meaning that a group of people consider "natural, logical, and self-evident in everyday life and work, in conversations and the media" (Ginneken, 2007, p.15). These ideals can manifest as "knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor, 2010, p.1). Culture conceptually can also be an unconscious identifier as we often "do not consciously realise that we belong to a culture" and instinctively "may experience a vague unease whenever these hidden assumptions are challenged" (Ginneken, 2007, p.15).

The overlap and confusion in racial discourse terminology is often in the blurring definition of ethnicity. Ethnicity is a broader term that is defined as being "the external traits certain categories of people share" (Ginneken, 2007, p.15) and/or traits that are "socially defined but on the basis of cultural criteria" (Van Den Berghe, 1967, p.10). This means that while race is seen as a classification based on physical attributes and culture is based on social ideals, ethnicity can encompass both racial and cultural factors such as – but not limited to – nationality, religion, ancestry, customs, artefacts, traditions, and language. However, these racial and ethnic lines become blurred as ethnicity can also define individuals who "share a common origin or ancestry (real or imagined) – and thus may have similar ancestral and common geno-phenotypical traits – that also distinguish them from other social groups" (Daniel, 2014, p.5).

These subtle differences in definition between race, culture and ethnicity complicate social self-identification as these interrelated terms are often used interchangeably. This becomes more complex when trying to place racial, cultural, and ethnic markers on multiracial realities. With the fragile nature of terminology in mind, the paradoxical nature of multiracial terminology that "both reinforces these essential categories of race" while also revealing the "limitations and absurdity of racial categories" in its definitions can be engaged with (Brennan, 2002, p.7). Individuals defined as "multiracial", in simple terms, are immediately "descended from and attached to two or more socially significant groups" (King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p.vii). This term is used interchangeably with biracial, but due to the prefix "bi" meaning two, its usage is limited to descendants of *only* two distinct racial groups. In addition to the prefix "multi," another commonly accepted term is "mixed-race." Other terms such as "dual-heritage", "multi-ethnic" and "multicultural" are also often used interchangeably. This highlights that there is a nuanced and often overlap in the use of race, ethnicity, and culture to define an individual's identity and background.

Arguments can – and have – been made to dismantle racial binaries and reject the notion of a "mixed" identity; after all, *genetically* monoracial and homogenous populations "do not exist in the human species today, nor is there any evidence that they have ever existed in the past" (Belgrave & Allison, 2010, p.99). I recognise the linguistic fluidity of "multiracial" and "mixed" and the nuances that come from trying to encapsulate the "sense of personal spatiotemporal location in relationship to other points of reference in terms of similarities and differences" with just one word and so, there may exist some overlap (Daniel, 2014, p.5). Due to how often these terms are confounded with each other in socio-political,

scholarly, and everyday discourse, I have chosen to utilise the term multiracial in my title as the umbrella term that encompasses the varied – or the *multitude* – of racial, cultural, and ethnic combinations and variables that are encoded onto an individual's body.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acknowledging that racial discourse is forever evolving and identity classifications rooted in sociocultural basis are unstable with multiracial, mixed and hybrid identities being "not reducible to fixed formulas; rather, they form a changing repertoire of configurations" provides an incentive for further study on this forever evolving identity (Daniel, 2014, p.1). Multiracial people have always existed, and statistics often project this population to be growing, particularly in the United States where it is estimated to be the "fastest growing" (Colby & Ortman, 2014, p.9). This is not to say, however, that there should be an inference that to qualify for meaningful representation, that a group of people are only worthy of significant visibility in media that is in line with statistics and population demographics. Understandably, scholarship on diverse representation often justifies the *need* for authentic representation in correlation to market demographics; after all, there is an equivalence between a growing population and growing demand. However, I would suggest this is an area of contention; if you are part of a group that is rendered as *statistically* insignificant for media visibility, this can be detrimental to how you conceive of your place in the world. Considering this, how can picturebooks be used to validate and provide visibility to multiracial individuals that expose the porosity of racial, cultural, and ideological boundaries in this globalised world?

When considering the research question of "How can picturebooks with explicit and implicit messages regarding multiracial identity be utilised as transformative texts?", consideration must be made with what crucial research is available in regard to multiracial identity formation, representation and the semiotics of picturebooks. I acknowledge that there is a "shortage of examinations of race and utopia" which Chan and Ventura (2019) say is on account of the:

> … uncertainty among scholars as to what constitutes utopian thinking in contexts outside of the West: to the influence of postrace discourse, with its implication that racism is largely a problem of the past; to a sense that utopianism is an insufficient heuristic for addressing the realities of racism's victims; and to the larger, vague notion that utopian imagining is just wrongheaded. (pp. 3-4)

Considering the need to centre multiraciality going forward and given the constraints of the dissertation, I decided to focus on scholarship regarding the fundamentals of multiracial identity specifically. Rather than providing a literature review on utopian theory with race, I thought it was pertinent to focus on the scholarly work that will provide the basis for my analysis. This chapter outlines the key scholarships that examine embodiment, identity formation and literary representations. First, an understanding of the fundamental paradigms that formed CMRS.

Foundations of Critical Mixed Race Studies

Multiracial people have always existed, but the term "multiracial" was first notably used apropos to people descended from multiple racial groups was in the early 1980s. Pioneered by Christine Iijima Hall (1980) in her doctoral dissertation 'The Ethnic Identity of Racially Mixed People: A Study of Black-Japanese', Hall used multiracial and multicultural interchangeably to examine the psychological complexities of a marginal identity. Hall's radical albeit unpublished linguistic choice became the catalyst on multi and mixed identity and in the early 1980s, many more fundamental unpublished scholarly research papers were written (George Kitahara Kich, 1982; Michael C. Thornton, 1983; Marvin C. Arnold, 1984; and Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, 1987). By the early 1990s, there was a momentous surge in the examinations of multiracial people and families. Paul Spickard's book *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America* (1989) and Maria P.P. Root's edited anthology *Racially Mixed People in America* (1992) were revolutionary studies on the multiracial experiences in an American context, the latter being the first published and comprehensive analysis of multiracial phenomenology. *Racially Mixed People in America* includes a chapter by Spickard, 'The Illogic of American Racial Categories', who became co-founding editor alongside fellow chapter author G. Reginald Daniel, 'Passers and Pluralists', who is also editor in chief of the *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies* (JCMRS). Established in 2011, JCMRS is the first major academic publication solely focused on this marginal identity and seeks to collate the emerging paradigms of multiracial and mixed race studies both in the U.S. and global context. Other seminal works that contributed to the foundations of multiracial and CMRS were written by Nelly Salgado de Snyder, Cynthia M. Lopez, Amado M. Padilla, 1982; Francis Wardle, 1987; Jewelle Taylor Gibbs, 1988; and W.S. Carlos Poston, 1990.

In the inaugural issue of the JCMRS, editor Daniel maps out the journey of founding the JCMRS and emphasises the significant shifts in socio-political, cultural, and economic understanding of multiracial hybridity. In the span of two decades since *Racially Mixed People in America* was published, scholarly research on multiracial identity had reached "critical mass" and, with the inauguration of the CMRS conference at DePaul University in 2010, had started to become more widely accepted as "a distinct area of intellectual inquiry" (Daniel, 2014, p.1). Following this, JCMRS launched as an online, open-access peer-reviewed journal that advocates as a "transracial, transdisciplinary, and transnational in scope" space that places "*mixed race* at the critical center of focus such that multiracial individuals become subjects of historical, social, and cultural processes rather than simply objects of analysis" (Daniel, 2014, p.1). It is interesting to observe that Daniel uses multiraciality and mixed race interchangeably. In his editor's note, Daniel explains why the title of JCMRS is "Mixed Races Studies" and, by removing the hyphenation and single quotation marks, the title avoided "Mixed-Race" becoming an adjective preceding "Studies" and instead, drew focus to the *whole* title as a complete and substantive analysis. Regardless of the chosen nomenclature, Daniel (2014) affirms:

> Notwithstanding the title, *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies,* we accommodate the terms mixed race and multiracial interchangeably in the journal since both are widely used in the field of mixed race/multiracial studies and consciousness, as well as in the public imagination. (p.5)

Indeed, although there exists much contention on negative connotations and nuances of the term mixed, both mixed race and multiracial are used wildly in scholarship. Depending on international and transnational contexts, and research in languages other than English, some terms and ideologies relating to racial and cultural hybridity are preferred, and others can be deemed offensive or insensitive. Although the preferred term in British census' is mixed race, it is a vexatious term in the United States (where biracial or multicultural are often used instead) as there exists some debate on the negative connotations – i.e., being *mixed* up. These terms – mixed, bi/multi-, racial and cultural – however, have different meanings in different international contexts "where it may be more difficult to delineate racial backgrounds because of centuries of forced migration, colonization, and imperialism, which complicate the history of miscegenation and concept of racial categorization" (Daniel et al., 2014, p.26). An example of such phenomenon is in Latin America, whereby the terms *mestizo* – meaning mixed in Spanish – and *mulatto* are the favoured nomenclature for those

self-identifying within the multiraciality paradigm, according to a survey on the Hispanic racial identity (Pew Research Center, 2015). Although *mulatto* was once used by enumerators in the U.S census from the year 1850 until 1930, it is now considered a racial slur in the Anglo-American context. This is by virtue of the postulated etymology of the term being derivative of the Latin *mūlus,* meaning mule, the infertile hybrid offspring of a donkey and a horse. This further highlights the "complexities and contradictions" that surround multiracial identities and identity classifications because they are not "reducible to fixed formulas; rather, they form a changing repertory of configurations" (Daniel, 2014, p.1). When racial categories are unstable and fraught with ideological and cultural meaning, how can picturebooks translate, transform, create, and contest racial boundaries and multiraciality in an international and transnational context? Is it even possible?

The Global Mixed Race Paradigm

Endeavours towards utopian improvement are doomed to fail when considerations regarding the "deep" political, social, and economic "structures of society" are overlooked and, thus, "remain wholly untouched" (Hirschman, 1991, p.43). The field of CMRS is abounding with scholars navigating and negotiating the socio-political gulf that is the multiracial discourse, often within an American context. Within the last decade, there has been a shift in underscoring the intersectionality of race with gender, sex, sexuality, and class along with global systemic frameworks within the field. To broaden this scope, considering representation within and towards an international and transnational context enlarges the research and policy-making gulf. Examining and challenging the racial structures of multiraciality on a global scale is a momentous task, but is it a futile one?

A global examination of mixed race is not a new area of focus (Gist & Dworkin, 1972; Henriques, 1975), but comparative racialisations out with an Anglo-American context and within and between international and transnational borders are few and far between. Recent influential works (Christian, 2000; Edwards et al., 2012; Aspinall & Song, 2013; King-O'Riain et al., 2014) have contributed to the CMRS goal of an expansive and intersectional coalition. An emerging paradigm uses CMRS as a "lens that enables an examination of the comparative processes of racialization without resorting to or privileging any single defined group identity or place in an absolute sense" (Daniel et al., 2014, p.26). This paradigm in CMRS is more inclusive towards the diasporic international and transnational issues on a global scale and creates space for CMRS to become an intersectional

"activist coalition" between "people of color, Indigenous Nations, queer populations, immigrants, veterans, women, the poor, political prisoners and children" (Jolivétte, 2014, p.156). A coalition of this kind propounds the global potential of CMRS as a community-based pedagogical and research tool for educators and organisers. This move towards the development and divergence from previous scholarship in the field situates global CMRS in an interesting liminal space between the academic, new media and community-based structures.

The futility line of enquiry suggests that proposed improvements will yield no substantial changes, and any arguments for transformation is subsequently refuted. In order to anticipate and counter this argument, awareness of the different global experiences of multiraciality is needed so that allowances "for social learning or for incremental, corrective policy-making" (Hirschman, 1991, p,78) can be made. King-O'Riain et al.'s extensive collection of empirical data is a notable entry to the field; *Global Mixed Race* (2014) maps out the dynamics of the contemporary multiracial experience from around the world and beyond US borders. In each chapter, the author asks: "How has globalization and the role of the state (among other things) affected the mixed experience in each country or context and what are the similarities/differences across countries?" (King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p.viii). *Global Mixed Race* is one of the only comprehensive volumes published that attempted to answer this question by focusing on the interconnected triad of globalisation, identity and multiraciality in nations such as Zambia, Trinidad and Tobago, Mexico, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, Okinawa, Australia, and New Zealand. Throughout the book, the chapter authors highlight the different significations of multiracialism and how this identity is often commodified within global capitalism as a marker for a multicultural society. By seeking to answer this, each contributor works within a global framework to address the ways international migration and colonial histories have influenced the political, economic, and cultural facets of multiracialism. Examining both individual and collective multiracial identity in a global context is a considerably arduous task, but *Global Mixed Race'*s compilation of comparative case studies can form the theoretical groundwork for this emerging global paradigm.

What *Global Mixed Race* develops from the foundational CMRS and extends to a global context is the problematic reality that multiraciality not only challenges but simultaneously reinforces racial categorisations. Although not delving into too much detail, *Global Mixed Race* touches upon the dissemination of multiracial identity in popular culture

(media, academia and online communications) and poses the following question: "To what extent have mixed bodies been used to further neoliberal ideologies of choice and multiculturalism without tackling the lived experiences of marginalization and discrimination that people of mixed descent may encounter?" (King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p.xii). King-O'Riain et al. present a copious amount of evidence that "the multiracial experience" is not one of a global *collective* experience and is "a long way from the panacea of racial and ethnic harmony as it is often portrayed" (2014, p.278). Although an extensive piece of research, *Global Mixed Race* does not delve into scrutinising the portrayal of multiracial individuals in popular culture. Much could be inferred about the repercussions of negative representations (as a whole) in the media, but we know little about the impact of binary representations on individuals of multiracial identity, especially children. There is an opportunity to use the comparative case studies as a springboard to consider authentic perspectives out with the U.S centred discourse of multiracial representation.

The global paradigm of CMRS is often focused on case studies that illustrate and compare the individual experience and mediation of hybrid identities, largely informed by postcolonial identity theory (Gilbert, 2005; Lo, 2006). There is a surge in research that explores the many facets of identity (such as gender, sexuality, family status, socioeconomic class, age, physical ability or disability, religion, and so on) in relation to multiraciality. A growing area of scholarship in CMRS is the examination of hybrid performativity (Bhabha, 1994) and cosmopolitanism of the multiracial body in popular culture. The signification of the body is essential to consider because research has shown that multiracial individuals are questioned about their identity categorisation based on geno-phenotypical traits, as well as available parentage information and socio-political environments (Chaudhri & Teale, 2013; Roberts & Gelman, 2017; Curington, 2020). Thus, when considering how can we represent this identity in popular culture without commodifying it, it is also crucial to contextualise the racialisation of the multiracial body within global capitalism.

Multiraciality within Racialised Embodiment Scholarship

Racial categories, albeit unstable and porous, are often ascribed to individuals based on sociocultural assumptions tied to geno-phenotypical traits. This surface-level approach of projecting sociocultural and racial meaning onto an individual's body plays a large part in the racialisation and production of multiracial identity. Individuals of ambiguous racial, ethnic, and cultural descent are often subjected to questions that attempt to situate, categorise, and

contextualise their bodies within the normative boundaries that surround racial differences. In other words, "the multiracial body acts as an intersubjective racial signifier" (Curington, 2020, p.2). This creates a contentious ground within CMRS and the arguments for specific representation when proposed changes towards a utopian ideal "though perhaps desirable in itself" are disregarded because there is a risk of "unacceptable costs or consequences of one sort or another" (Hirschman, 1991, p.81). How can the advocation for multiracial representation argue for the blurring of racial boundaries when there is a danger of upholding racial difference based on appearances?

There exist a few studies that examine identity through the lens of cultural performativity and body theory, particularly in relation to gender identity (Butler, 1988, 1993, 1997). Judith Butler's notion that gender is socially constructed and "is real only to the extent that it is performed" (1988, p.527) is analogous to the issues surrounding racial discourse. Following a similar line of enquiry, whereby gender identity emerges from the body's positionality within a heteronormative hegemony, it is crucial to consider the role that the racialised body plays in a homogeneous hegemonic context. The intersectionality of gender studies and body theory with racial discourse reveals a wealth of theoretical frameworks that could be adapted but for the sake of simplicity and due to the constraints of my research, I will highlight the key studies that constitute the basis of my analysis.

The first instance of an intersectional theoretical framework of CMRS and gender studies is Minelle Mahtani's (2015) *Mixed Race Amnesia: Resisting the Romanticization of Multiraciality*. Mahtani's compilation of personal accounts from multiracial women is an ambitiously extensive body of work that provides nuanced accounts of the interconnected role that society, gender, and race play in their self-perception of their identity. With a focus on the Canadian female context, *Mixed Race Amnesia* details how the romanticised embodiment of the multiracial experience is often superficially used to promote a multicultural and "post-race" society, at the expense of the complex diasporic, family, and colonial history. Broadening the scope further is Celeste Vaughan Curington's (2020) 'We're the Show at the Circus: Racially Dissecting the Multiracial Body', a notable and recent development in multiracial and racialisation discourse. Building upon scholarship about racialised embodiment (DuBois [1903] 1965; Fanon, 1986; Ahmed, 2002; Haritaworn, 2009; Waring, 2013; Newman, 2017) and the symbolic interactionist project (Goffman, 1983; Rawls, 2000; Rosino, 2017), Curington conducted a series of interviews to analyse the performativity of multiracial female and male bodies in online dating. During this process,

Curington coins the term "multiracial dissection" to describe the "intersubjective racialization process that invests bodies with racial and gendered meanings" (Curington, 2020, p.21). Appling the theory of the racialised interaction order (Rosino, 2017; Meghji, 2018) to illustrate how multiracial bodies are established within "the intersubjective identity formation process embedded in white dominance" (Curington, 2020, p.3), she reinforces DuBois's ([1903], 1965) research that the racialised self is established through the externalised gaze of the racially dominant group located outside of the Other. Curington's study reveals the role gender and sex can play in racial hierarchies of multiracial bodies.

The multiracial body adds another layer to the paradoxical nature of race. Molly Littlewood McKibbin (2014) in 'The Current State of Multiracial Discourse' points out that because "racial identity has always been linked to both phenotype and a history of shared experiences as a race, multiraciality poses a problem as a racial identity because it possesses neither" (p.184). This creates a contentious ground where multiracial bodies challenge the socially constructed "classificatory schemes" whilst "providing more of an imperative for racial categorization" due to their "contraventions" (Thompson, 2020, p.263). This exposes a pitfall with multiraciality being "treated as evidence of postracial boundary blurring" when Curington's findings reveal that "racial and gendered desirability hierarchies in dating" simultaneously reinforce boundaries and stereotypes (Curington, 2020, p.21). McKibbin likewise found the use of language and racial classification methods regarding multiracial bodies sometimes reaffirmed problematic ideologies. Although CMRS argues for "breaking down racial hierarchies, challenging race categories, and combating discrimination," McKibbin points out that it runs the risk "of doing the opposite" (2014, p.187).

The consensus of Curington and Mahtani's interviews suggest the social perception of race and the prescribed idea of "the exotic Other" is a main area of concern. However, as McKibbin points out: "official classification and the social perception of race shape and are shaped by one another … having identity recognized and understood is a multi-faceted yet essential challenge" (2014, p.196). This challenge has the added layers when considering the multiracial body in a global, international, and transnational context. Multiraciality straddles and permeates racial, cultural, and ideological borders, and so, to engage in literary criticism we must also negotiate these blurred and overlapping lines when engaging with multiracial representation discourse.

Existing Multiracial Representation Scholarship

Literary studies into diverse representation and reader responses are generally well-intentioned, but as society attempts to move towards a progressive and inclusive ideal there are often cries of political correctness. It can be said that such accusations are a reactionary response when a minority group "tries to regain control over its descriptors" (Reynolds, 2009, p.xxii). The argument of society devolving into a *too* politically correct (PC) state aligns itself with the perversity rhetoric of utopian concerns. This belief attempts to discourage change by claiming it will backfire and invoke a "counterintuitive, counterproductive, or … perverse effect" that is more dystopian than utopian (Hirschman, 1991, p.12). So how can we negate PC accusations when engaging with constructive and critical discourse surrounding multiraciality, while advocating for more multiracial picturebooks in circulation and in a pedagogical role? At what point does the didactic nature of some multiracial texts exacerbate the problem?

In the last two decades, there has been a call for more research into multiraciality – and by extension, multiculturalism - in children's literature (Banks, 2004; Temple et al., 2006). Research with a focus on multiracial themes or characters in young adult or children's literature continues to be limited. During my research, I could only source four articles (Smith, 2001; Sands-O'Connor, 2001; Yokota & Frost, 2002; Chaudhri & Teale, 2013) and two books (Reynolds, 2009; Chaudhri, 2017). I highlight the limited number of available scholarships without the intention to diminish the meritorious work of the scholars, but instead bring attention to the modest quantity and highlight the area of opportunity for more research in this field.

Credited as the first scholarly attempt that utilised CRT to examine literary depictions of multiracial identity is *Mixed Race Literature* (2002), edited by Jonathan Brennan. This critical collection examines multiracial literature written by authors from multiple racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Rather than contributing to the discourse of multiracial lived experiences, Brennan's volume tracks the historical representation of the multiracial character in literature and how it subsequently seeped into the cultural consciousness of race, sexuality, gender, and culture. This study is mostly U.S centric but does includes two studies on analysis about French-Vietnamese writer Kim Lefevre, and another on the Māori-Pākehā writing in Aotearoa (the Māori name for New Zealand). What differentiates *Mixed Race Literature* from previous research on multiracial identity is the focus *solely* on the

historical and contemporary depictions of multiracial tropes; from tragic mulatto to trickster, Brennan's collection of essays maps out how these stereotypes continue to permeate popular culture in various forms. By shifting the scope of the study, the contributors offer a new reading of the visual and textual depictions of work featuring explicit and implicit multiraciality, such as Werner Sollors essay 'Was Roxy Black? Race as Stereotype in Mark Twain, Edward Windsor, and Paul Laurence Dunbar'. I draw attention to this essay, as Sollors offers a different perspective to Mark Twain's textual characterisation of Roxy from *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894) and the controversial visual translation by illustrator Edward Windsor in which Roxy, a multiracial character, has been often reduced as ascribing to the historic and racist "mammy" stereotype. Kemble's depiction of Roxy appears incongruous with Twain's written description and thus, Sollor's raises valuable questions regarding the translation and interconnected relationship of text and image in literature. Sollar disputes and offers a revised reading of Kemble's art while concluding with a thought-provoking question that highlights the nuances of analysis and intentional fallacy: "May our own stereotyping lie in expecting and hastily identifying mistakes of the kind Kemble has been accused of making in *Pudd'nhead Wilson?"* (Sollor, as cited in Brennan, 2002, p.83).

In 2009, the first critical exploration of multiracial literature in relation to the young adult (YA) field of literary studies was published. *Mixed Heritage in Young Adult Literature* by Nancy Thalia Reynolds is broad in scope and examines literary classic texts featuring multiracial characters written by authors who are renowned in the American education curriculum. Reynolds, when tracing the historical depictions of multiraciality raises an interesting point regarding the literary criticism towards works by White authors and by Black writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Reynolds points out that, although the multiracial character first prominently appeared in the notable eighteenth-century works of White authors such as Tobias Smollett, Jane Austen, James Fenimore Cooper, Charlotte Brontë, William Makepeace Thackeray, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner, the majority of "the critical attention directed at the literary mulatto" has gone to their Black counterparts such as works by Jean Toomer, Nella Larsen, and Zora Neale Hurston (Reynolds, 2009, p.1). Reynolds (2009) explains that this is for the following reason:

> A product of its society, like other cultural institutions, literary criticism has followed the dictates of the binary caste system and consigned the study of multiracial characters to black or ethnic studies. (p.1)

By acknowledging the racial binary's pervading presence that overshadows the complexities of identity, Reynolds has strengthened the *need* for CMRS as a counter space to confront and contest the social construction and evolution of race and multiracial representation in literary criticism. What differentiates Reynolds study from the collection by Brennan is that Reynolds moves away from scholarship studies aimed at academics to creating a framework for young people to do a critical analysis of multiracial characters they tend to encounter in the classroom. A crucial argument that Reynolds makes is that "even failed attempts [at representation] can contribute in a meaningful way to the evolving cultural dialogue that fiction has always been a part of and that it influences its own evolution" (Reynolds, 2009, p..xx). "Confronting issues of race in fiction takes courage" acknowledges Reynolds (2009) however, there is an opportunity to utilise failed attempts as transformative tools for learning, but this requires the educators to be "culturally competent" (p.20). Reynolds maps out the ways educators and young people could do close readings to challenge and unpack these depictions of multiraciality in YA texts specifically, as such analysis is often absent in the high school curriculum. However, she does acknowledge that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe is a common – if the only - exception within the classroom.

Reynolds, adding weight to the conclusion of Curington's interviews and McKibbin's article, stresses the cultural and "social consequences of being multiracial" as the leading problem in the lived experiences of multiracial individuals. Contesting the usual representation of multiracial individuals *suffering* on account of an identity crisis, Reynolds refutes such depictions and highlights the lack of evidence that suggests multiracial youths struggle with their internal dialogue more. Reynolds (2009) makes it clear that she acknowledges the challenges that arise when writing about "the complexity of race and heritage" and that children's authors often fall into "oversimplification or suggesting finality exists when the reality of the subject matter is in flux" (2009, p.88). One could draw parallels between the terminology and nebulous definition of children's literature and multiracial discourse. Perry Nodelman (1992) in *The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature* substitutes Said's notion of "the Orient" and "orientalism" for "childhood" and "children's literature" respectfully. By dissecting children's literature using the Orientalist methodology, Nodelman infers an analogy between the power dynamics and othering of racial minorities with the representations of childhood. In a similar vein, and coinciding with the vexatious definitions that plague CMRS, Antero Garcia (2013) in *Critical Foundations in Young Adult Literature* describes the YA genre as a "genre in motion" with its role in wider

society constantly shifting (Garcia, 2013, p.3). Garcia, similar to Reynolds, focuses on critically analysing YA diversity in an American context. Although the focus is not solely on multiracial characters, he underlines the importance of literary criticism since literature can act as a "zeitgeist of the current climate … politically, civically, and culturally" (Garcia, 2013, p.3). Adopting the CRT lens in a pedagogical capacity, Garcia reinforces this by highlighting that the semiotics that literature *depicts* can shape young people's "public opinion, cultural understandings of race, class, and power, and ways to engage" and thus, *defines* and *reinforces* meaning and messages (Garcia, 2013, p.5). Acknowledging a gap in scope and recognition for multicultural writers, Garcia attempts to bridge that gap by listing a selection of writers that she considers YA multicultural canon because their text engages in multiculturalism and/or exist as counter-narratives. A common curation of recommended diverse multicultural books, according to Garcia (2013, p.43), often found in classrooms or libraries belong to a handful of YA authors such as Walter Dean Myers; Sherman Alexies; Sandra Cisneros; and Sharon Drapers. Although these authors are renowned and highlighted for their "important texts that need to be read and recognized," Garcia (2013) is under no illusion that "writers of and about youth of color that are validated by the publishing industry can be easily listed in a single sentence" and so, identifies a gap in "in name recognition of multicultural writers" in the education curriculum (p.5).

Synthesising Garcia's study with Reynolds highlights the impetus to consider the implications of "racial (or racist) stereotypes" that exposes "a stunning ignorance of mixed-heritage identity and experience" that is imbued in the construction of multiracial characters (Reynolds, 2009, p.19). Reynolds underscores Sollor's implication of artistic fallacy and states that, although "it is not the duty of fiction writers" to be liable for the identity formation of young people when they create narratives that include multiracial characters then they play a part of identification development "regardless of their intention" (Reynolds, 2009, p.153). The focus on YA fiction is a justifiable and worthy route of study, on account of the role YA fiction has in driving "cultural engagement" in education along with Hollywood's compulsion to adapt YA texts to a wider audience means that "the potential of young adult literature to guide hegemonic understanding of society increases exponentially" (Garcia, 2013, p.3). But what available research has been done on texts out with the YA genre?

Undertaking a different perspective, Anna Katrina Gutierrez's *Mixed Magic: Global-Local Dialogues in Fairy Tales for Young Readers* (2017) focuses on the narrative patterns of

fairy tales in a worldwide and local context and the subsequent fusions of discourses. Although the focus is on the coalescing of Eastern and Western influences on children's literary texts and animations, and not necessarily on identity politics, her glocal paradigm can be applied to the scrutinization of representation. Contextualising the importance of her research, Gutierrez points out that people – particularly children – today are "increasingly exposed to glocal material" and so it is imperative to "interpret cultural artifacts from a global-local scale of reference" (Gutierrez, 2017, p.xv). Gutierrez's intermedial study of prevailing narratives does not attempt to predict reader response or the influence that will have on identity formation. Instead, what is particularly valiant of Gutierrez's analytical deconstructions is her presenting glocalization research as an educational tool for teachers and researchers. This glocal paradigm synthesises CMRS and literary criticism, offering a new hybrid perspective that is inclusive and aware of the specific hegemonies of global and local discourses. The potential of this new hybrid perspective from Gutierrez is that it reframes how we look at fairy tales, how they can become transformative texts, and how they can be utilised so that the "next generation will learn not to fear diversity and hybridity and see it as essential to the development and to creating brave new worlds" (Gutierrez, 2017, p.208). Blending both Reynold's CRT analysis of multiracial characters and Gutierrez's framework of glocalisation in pedagogy would provide a solid foundation for further research into a critical analysis of the representation of multiracial identity in literature.

Setting the Stage

There exists a flourishing but volatile body of CMRS research that sometimes constructs, contests and contradicts each other, which Brennan (2002) cautioned in the preface of *Mixed Race Literature:* "Negotiating the field of mixed race studies can be tricky. Only a millipede has more toes to step on" (p.x). So how can we use these studies as guideposts to navigate this research with minimum upset?

There has been a focus on the social construction of multiraciality in this chapter but I acknowledge the constraint of this dissertation could only shed light on a small portion of the research, with a focus on key works that set the stage for the critical content analysis. Returning to the question futility question (how do you represent an identity that is not monolithic? What counts as an authentic representation?) it becomes apparent from the extensive studies within a global paradigm of CMRS that it is a momentous – and possibly futile – task to create a textual and visual representation of multiraciality that is reflective of a

universal experience. It would also be irresponsible to represent the multiracial experience and individuals of such group as a "single, unified, world-wide entity" because it erases and denies the "tremendous richness of economic, cultural, linguistic, national, political, social and religious diversity" that exists in the overlapping of cultural groups (Wardle, as cited in Sands-O'Connor, 2001, p. 413). On a global scale, King-O'Riain et al. (2014) sought to examine how multiracial images are:

> … used to sell … ideas premised on unrealistic ideas of multiculturalism [and] used to further neoliberal ideologies of choice and multiculturalism without tackling the lived experiences of marginalization and discrimination that people of mixed descent may encounter. (p.xii)

Given the constraints of my dissertation, I intend to adopt a smaller scale investigation to highlight the pedagogical potential that could be transferable across transnational and international borders. I will proceed by investigating how multiracial bodies are depicted in picturebook form, and if the affordance of this modality can reflect the lived experiences of multiracial individuals and be utilised as a tool to transform perceptions of multiraciality.

The theoretical frameworks that formed the critical analysis of multiracial literature allow us to view texts as tools in the construction of meaning, identity, and power; what Botelho and Rudman (2009) call the "sociopolitical function of texts" (p.108). The theoretical grounding of CMRS provides the foundations for critical inquiry into multiracial narratives; what Ladson- Billings (2006) refers to as the "context for understanding the way inequity manifests in policy, practice, and people's experience" (p.11). Examining the theoretical frameworks and analytical methods of the scholars within CMRS, and applying them to children's picturebooks, will provide the basis for a conscious examination of the visual and textual construction of the multiracial body. By adopting and applying a similar framework to Reynold's deconstruction of YA, Curington's notion of multiracial dissection and Gutierrez's glocal pedagogical paradigm, the inquiry into multiracial representation in children's picturebooks is situated in the wider CMRS discourse and within a contemporary and educational context.

CMRS literature will place multiraciality at the centre of my analysis while providing the necessary theoretical framework to unravel the literary tapestry of multiracial bodies. The application of the utopian abstract ideal as a method to interrogate the pedagogical and transformative possibilities of the identified picturebooks will provide a lens through which

the representations of multiracial bodies can be critiqued. This situates and underpins the nature of my dissertation as, rather than attempting to *solve* racism or provide *definitive* solutions to *oscillating* racial boundaries, my intention is for my analysis to act as a dialogue catalyst that fosters critical reflection through questioning. Rather than offering "ready-made answers [or] solutions", I hope that questions that emerge in my analysis will serve as "guideposts" towards the utopian ideal of a multiracial inclusive curriculum (Bregman, 2017, p.26). Now that the theoretical grounding to allow for extensive dissection on the multiracial body's construction and representation has been established, the methodology of the content analysis will now be outlined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Literature is a valuable tool that has the potential to navigate racial identity discourse. Just as there is "not one version of multiraciality", the "thousands of stories that can be told by thousands of people in thousands of different ways" (King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p.209) stresses the need for a transferrable method to read, translate and discuss multiracial identity. Returning to the utopian thought of abstract ideals, children's literature is not the overall solution to sociopolitical disparities however, it has the potential to construct, deconstruct and transform the human experience by acting as mirrors, windows, and doors (Sims Bishop, 1990). Sims Bishop's scholarship is foundational to analysing the values of diversity in children's literature. The conceptual metaphors, methodological model, and analytical framework that Sims Bishop created continue to remain applicable today; often cited in the discourse surrounding multiculturalism and children's literature, the oft-used metaphor of mirrors, windows and doors has become ubiquitous in scholarship that calls attention to the transformative potential of diverse literature. Multicultural literature can manifest as transformative, according to Sims Bishop (1997), when adults and educators:

> … ensure that students have the opportunity to reflect on it in all its rich diversity, to prompt them to ask questions about who we are now as a society and how we arrived at our present state, and to inspire them to actions that will create and maintain social justice. (p.19)

This critical questioning approach is fundamental in exploring picturebooks ability to stimulate transformative social discourse and echoes Bregman's (2017) view that utopian thinking relies on asking "the right questions" rather than knowing the answers (p.26). For the purpose of my analysis, I adapted the analytical structure created by Sims Bishop (1982) to develop my own framework that draws on the utopian theory of abstract ideals. An abstract ideal — the offering of guideposts to inspire change rather than solutions —coincides with the realistic expectation that children's literature may not "demolish frontiers, but they can punch holes in our mental walls" (Shafak, 2010, 04:05). And through these holes, we may see a vague outline of a utopia where multiracial children can celebrate their identity.

Sims Bishop approached her analysis by categorising the books into three groups: "Social Conscience" books; "Melting Pot" books; and finally, "Culturally Conscious" books

(1982, pp.17-49). Many scholars have since adapted Sims Bishop's approach of dividing a large corpus into three categories and then examining the characteristics of each before situating them in the wider body of analytical work. I have no qualms in my approach being a derivative of Sims Bishop's methodology.

For clarity, I will outline my process. I begin with establishing an analytical structure that categorises critical questioning regarding multiracial representation within the schema of futility, danger, and perversity. My process of analysis will draw on utopian theory but for the purpose to unpack textual and visual meaning, I will also draw upon and acknowledge the fundamental semiotic theories. Next, I outline my search parameters and selection process. Applying Sims Bishop's approach by dividing the corpus, I define and explain my three categories: Explicit Representation, Implicit Representation, and Abstract Representation. Finally, I will introduce the selected picturebooks that I believe are conducive to transformative social discourse before delving into the analysis.

Process of Analysis

For this dissertation, the content analysis will be essentially rooted in the theoretical framework of CMRS but the method of which to unpack the semiotic systems of transposition between text and illustrative depictions of multiracial bodies will be additionally framed on picturebook codes that unpack the visual messages. Scholarly works that examine picturebooks are abundant and cover a broad scope of disciplines (picture theory, developmental psychology, cognitive studies, education, art history and narratology, to name a few). To visually analyse the transposition between text and illustration in compositions that are significant in their depiction of the multiracial body and experience, it is necessary to lean on narrative theories that focus on the text-picture interaction. Strictly speaking, because "there is an integration of what is seen involuntarily and what is looked at intentionally" (Passeron as cited in Dressel, 1984, p.110), it is necessary to consider the affordances of this visual medium. Moebius' (1986) theories on picturebook semiotics and codes will be applied when deciphering and explicating the text-picture and reader response relationship and subsequently reviewed according to the established utopia schema.

Synthesising picturebook theory with the intersectional scholarly work in the areas of gender, body and race will create a synergistic paradigm and an imperative for the identity-based critical content analysis of picturebooks. Even though it is well documented that "stories change the world" or at least, has the potential to be transformative, "we should also

see how the world of identity politics affects the way stories are being circulated, read and reviewed" (Shafak, 2010, 11:13). Thus, my analysis will examine the semiotics of multiracial bodies through both images and text, with a focus on identity formation, characterisation, worldbuilding descriptors and family contexts. As I construct and deconstruct the pedagogical implications of the meanings conveyed, I will adhere to Hirschman's utopian concerns as a measure for the transformative potential of the picture books chosen.

I began with initial readings of the available picturebooks, noting down the publishing information and first observations. To assist in this process, a form was created (see Appendix B) to collate my findings. Consideration was made on the racial identity of authors, illustrators, and their families when such information was readily available. The purpose of this was to not include or exclude texts based on racial classifications but to be perceptive that their perspectives and experiences may emerge within their work. That is to say, picturebooks could reflect (with or without the author or illustrator's intent) "the socio-cultural background of those that produced them and the times and context in which they were produced" (Anstey & Bull, 2006, p.153). With this in mind, the next step was a deeper close reading of the texts to identify any explicit and implicit ideological content. This facilitated my investigation of the racial representation and identity formation of the characters. This part of the critical content analysis is where the utopian schema is utilised as a critical lens. I employed the schema of futility, danger, and perversity to develop research questions that formulated the line of enquiries for investigation. In the interest of maintaining clarity, the line of enquiries will be outlined.

Futility

What this analysis concerns itself with, is whether or not it is possible to represent multiracial bodies in a manner that "rejects delineated temporal boundaries but also mediates, fractures, and reframes them" (Daniel, 2014, p.2). Rendering multiracial bodies in this manner can form the catalyst of which the texts become transformative critical discourse can be engaged with will come down to reviewing the selection of picturebooks on the following metrics:

- Has the author explicitly placed multiracial or multicultural descriptors in the text? Or is it implicitly depicted in the visuals? Or both?
- Are the characters depicted in a racially homogeneous context? Does this extend to a larger context i.e., out with their family unit?

<u>Danger</u>

The paradox of multiracial identity blurring and reinforcing racial boundaries creates a dangerous precedent that needs to be considered. Although the intention is to embrace multiracial bodies and use picturebooks to "validate one's existence and declare visibility" (Root, 2004, p.145), there is a risk in reinforcing problematic misconceptions and stereotypes.

- Is the textual or visual narrative representing the multiracial body in an accessible way for a young audience? Is multiraciality framed in a simplistic way that is crude and subsequently reductive and/or harmful?
- If the representation is implicit, what preconceived notions of racialised embodiment or racialised interaction order are being applied to conclude multiraciality?
- What is the crux of the narrative? Is multiracial identity treated as a "problem" to solve?
- Is the language used and surrounding the multiracial body negative? How are they described by the author and/or other characters?

<u>Perversity</u>

With the intent to advocate a selection of picturebooks as transformative texts, considerations on the use of language that reinforce difference will be made. As multiracial protagonists are often situated in a family context, the denotations and connotations of their depiction need to be reviewed.

- Are characters depicted in a way that conveys unity? Or is there a tension with the notion of difference being emphasised?
- Does the narrative reflect the lived experiences of multiracial individuals (as outlined in case studies)? Or does it perpetuate harmful narratives related to race and/or multiraciality?
- Does the narrative have a didactic tone? What are the moral implications of the messages it is conveying?

Thus, my analysis will be broad in scope and critically explore the messages – whether explicitly or implicitly conveyed – regarding multiracial bodies through both text and visuals. All these developed critical questions will be applied to the selected corpus however, the futility, danger, and perversity schema will apply to some analysis' more than others. The

following sections will explain how this schema is applied and describes my selection process.

Selection Process

Before my analysis, I developed a set of criteria and parameters to aid in the identification and categorisation of multiracial picturebooks. My search began with collating the picturebooks featured in Yokota and Frost's (2002) review. From there, I searched a myriad of library databases for picturebooks with broad terms such as; "multiracial", "mixed", "biracial", "racially mixed", "racial identity", "interracial", "diverse" and "multicultural". A major limitation was the criteria for texts to be available either natively or translated into English. Although there was an inclination to include picturebooks published in cultural contexts outside the Western context, it just so happened that the majority of texts available in English were published in the United States or Britain. This was an unintentional consequence given the limitations however, it accentuates the imperative for further examination into other languages and cultural contexts. The capacity to unpack the signification of the multiracial body using Gutierrez's (2017) glocal paradigm could yield results that I will be unable to attain given my positionality.

An important caveat to my search was the inclusion of picturebooks that were not overtly or explicitly didactic in their multiracial themes, either in text or visual form. Operating with the belief that "all pictures will have a decorative, narrative and interpretive potential, even those that appear to stick resolutely to the task of depicting in line and colour what it is that the words say" (Lewis, 2001, p.25), allows for a large site of critical analysis and interrogation. As Lewis (2001) illustrates:

> A graceful line in a tiny monochrome vignette tucked into a corner of a page will possess a charm of its own independent of the extent to which it reflects, or offers an interpretation of, verbal meanings and even the most straightforward of representations may invite a degree or two of interpretation. In any case, 'what words say' is rarely straightforward. (p.25)

This interpretive process of reading each semiotic system will leave gaps that will provoke the production and reading of textual and visual interpretation separately and concurrently (Iser, 1978, pp.165-169). The potential of picturebooks to "produce an ideological conjunction", according to Stephens (2018), is derived from three reader interactions: readers

fill "the gaps between visual and verbal discourses [;] or in instantiating the third meaning prompted by the interaction will have an ideological effect [;] or because where the interaction is ironic the ideological effect will be more marked" (p.138). Applying Moebius' (1986) theories on semiotic codes will unfurl the visual side of the intermedial interaction between text and image, so a more cohesive analysis of the picturebook can be executed. The layers of added intricacy and varied avenues for interpretations incited the search for picturebooks that were implicit with metaphorical or allegorical references to multiraciality and/or the multiracial experience. Thus, I put forth three categories that multiracial picturebooks can be catalogued as. In the interest of clarity, I describe my categories in this way:

- **Explicit Representation**: Picturebooks that are advertised as didactically multiracial in their themes, characters, or world, with clear and definitive multiracial descriptors.
- **Implicit Representation**: Picturebooks that can be inferred as having multiracial characters or a world based on the preconceived and constructed notions of multiracial bodies?
- **Abstract Representa**tion: Picturebooks that do not feature human depictions of multiracial bodies, but instead are conceptually metaphorical or allegorical to the multiracial experience.
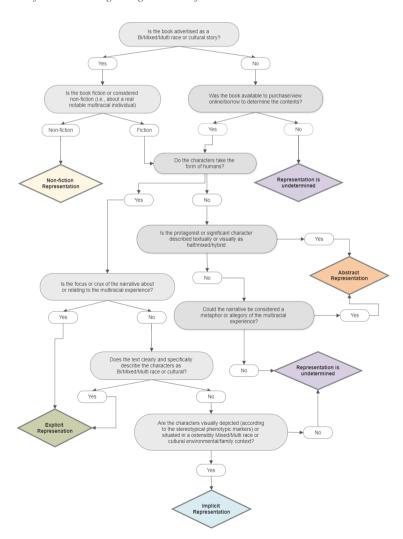
These categories expanded the available corpus considerably. The increased scope of multiracial books that were implicit or abstract in their representations created a challenge in the selection and identification process. To streamline the selection process an organisational diagram for categorisation was created. This categorisation process is outlined in figure 1 (see Appendix C for larger graphic). As mentioned previously, the developed critical questions from the utopian schema will apply to some categories more than others. Futility is addressed in the books identified as having explicit representation. Identifying implicit representation was filled with risks and so, the Danger questions are more prominent for that category. Abstract representation reduces multiraciality to its core conceptual and theoretical forms and so, the Perversity questions are more relevant here.

A valuable resource in assembling my text set was the Diverse Book Finder and the Colours of Us database, with searchable catalogues with possibly relevant books tagged as "Bi/Multiracial/Mixed Race". When possible and to aid in identifying themes or content, I read the jacket blurbs and summaries, reviews on websites such as Kirkus Reviews,

Waterstones, Amazon, Apple, and Google's bookstore. When listed picturebooks were unable to be purchased or borrowed, I would seek out "read along" videos on YouTube that showcased the picturebook in its entirety. In the event that a listed picturebook was unable to be viewed online or had no well-informed published reviews, I rendered their representation as *undetermined* and thus, unsuitable for analysis. Another instance where picturebooks were deemed as unsuitable for my analysis was non-fiction stories, historical fiction or texts featuring real people. To fit the constraints of this research, I chose to exclude these narratives. There is a trend where multicultural writers are often "expected to tell real stories, not so much the imaginary" because "function is attributed to fiction … a means to an end" (Shafak, 2010, 13:03). Although the intention is to review narratives that reflect realistic experiences, I chose to focus on fictional texts featuring multiracial bodies that would otherwise be overlooked in a pedagogical environment.

Figure 1.

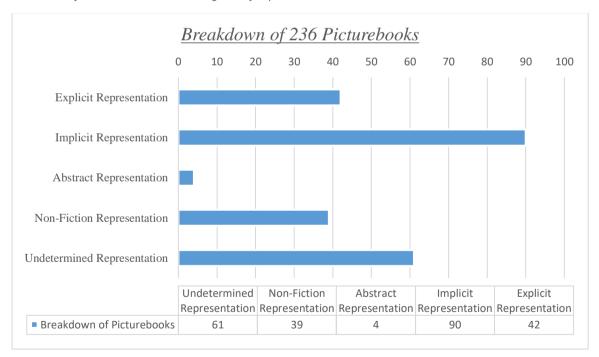*Process for Determining Categorisation of Data.*

CHAPTER 5

CORPUS

The picturebooks chosen for a deeper analysis were selected for their potential to stimulate transformative discourse on the constructed nature of race, embrace the multiplicity and intricacies of multiraciality and promising characteristics that position them as a site for transformation within a pedagogical role. Within the last two decades, since Yokota and Frost's (2002) review of 31 books was published, there has been an influx of published multiracial texts. During my initial search, I was not particularly concerned with reader reviews, nor did I favour picturebooks based on recommendations from awarding bodies. Rather, my focus was purely on synthesising results from the available databases to identify and get a sense of the number of multiracial picturebooks available. I identified a total of 236 picturebooks that were advertised and/or labelled "bi/multi/mixed race". The breakdown of these picturebooks into my established representation categories can be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2.

Breakdown of 236 Picturebooks into Categories of Representation.

Breakdown of 236 Picturebooks

	Undetermined Representation	Non-Fiction Representation	Abstract Representation	Implicit Representation	Explicit Representation
■ Breakdown of Picturebooks	61	39	4	90	42

Fifteen of the titles were published before the year 2000 with 194 of the listed titles being published within the last decade. This reveals there is a growth in multiracial bodies appearing in picturebooks which arguably puts the argument for my utopian proposal of a multiracial pedagogy in good standing; however, I repeat Levitas' (2013) sentiment that: "utopia also entails refusal, the refusal to accept that what is given is enough" (p.17). The

refusal, in this case, can manifest in two ways; the reactionary rhetoric outlined by Hirschman (1991) that argues against the imaginary multiracial utopian futures out of concern that it will degenerate into dystopia or, what I propose, as the resistance rhetoric of insisting that it is not enough that multiracial picturebooks exist in large quantities, but we also examine the content quality.

Due to access limitations, many possibly relevant picturebooks were deemed undetermined and thus, not selected for further analysis. As previously mentioned, I constrained my search to exclude non-fiction or historical fiction that feature real people and so, a further thirty-eight books were removed. This left a total of 136 books for the initial analysis. I do not deny that my search parameters and/or selection process may have overlooked relevant picturebooks. Likewise, I recognise that it is highly probable that the texts I have chosen to not perform a deeper analysis on could stimulate compelling dialogue. However, to endeavour to include *all* texts would be a considerable undertaking. As a result, I chose to examine and compare two books and one series that I defined as an exemplary indication for their respective categories and conducive to critical questioning. Rather than undergoing a literary review on the selected corpus, I reiterate what Sands-O'Connor (2001) eloquently said:

> All the people involved with producing these books – authors, illustrators, and publishers – clearly have at heart a desire to create positive picture books for children about multiracial families. For this, they should right be praised. But … they do certainly leave room for innovation. (p.419)

What am I suggesting by innovation? I intend on focusing my content analysis on the messages that the text and visuals convey and proposing how they can be used by adults and educators to elicit critical discussion that makes them susceptible to transformative social discourse regarding sociocultural understanding of multiraciality. The starting point before I begin the analysis, then, is to introduce the selected books. I chose to include each books respective covers (see figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) to coincide with the brief plot summary with the belief that a "book cover is a distillation … a haiku, if you will, of the story" (Kidd, 2012, 10:57).
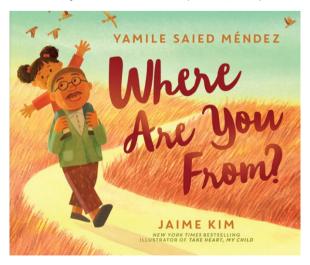
Explicit Representation

When a picturebook is advertised as didactically multiracial in its themes, characters, or world, one would assume (and hope) that it handles the complexities of its subject matter sensitively. However, like Reynolds (2009) said, even the less than favourable attempts "can contribute in a meaningful way to the evolving cultural dialogue" (p.xx). This cultural dialogue can be the stimulant for critical discussion, making even the less than favourable texts conducive to transformative discourse. Returning to the metrics I set out in the methodology chapter (see Process of Analysis), all the critical questions will be applied to the selected corpus. However, in assessing the explicit representations of the multiracial body, the schema of Futility is of particular interest. These questions will determine how *successful* the text is in its intent to explicitly construct a multiracial body. As a reminder, they are as follows:

- Has the author explicitly placed multiracial or multicultural descriptors in the text? Or is it implicitly depicted in the visuals? Or both?
- Are the characters depicted in a racially homogeneous context? Does this extend to a larger context i.e., out with their family unit?

I have chosen to apply these questions to my analysis of *Where Are You From?* by Yamile Saied Méndez, with illustrations by Jaime Kim (2020). *Where Are You From?* is a picturebook published in the United States featuring a multiracial Latinx girl and was released simultaneously in 2020 in English and Spanish as *¿De Dónde Eres?*. The title itself takes ownership of the common question that many immigrants, POCs and racially and ethnically ambiguous individuals face.

Figure 3.

Book cover of Where Are You From? (Méndez, 2020).

I chose this picturebook specifically for the Explicit Representation category on two grounds; it is a very recent publication and is advertised as a "great conversation starter in the home or classroom" by the publishers who recommended it as a text that can promote critical and transformative discussion regarding our perception of cultural identity (HarperCollins, 2019). The unnamed protagonist is asked where she is from and when those questioning her are not satisfied with her answer, she turns to her grandfather who takes her on a journey through various landscapes that weave her ancestral tales. Writing from her experiences, Méndez recalls an interaction between her son and an author at a book signing (Méndez, as cited in Dutton, 2019):

> We were speaking in Spanish, when, unexpectedly, the author asked my son, "Where are you from?" Singled out in front of strangers, questioned by a person he deeply admired, my child looked at me, taken aback. In his big, brown eyes I saw a cry for help. He didn't know how to reply.

Méndez illustrates how her son and many others have to arduously and often embarrassingly "explain and even excuse their identity and existence to complete strangers" when provoked with the follow up of where they are *really* from (Méndez, as cited in Dutton, 2019). Méndez wrote in an open letter to readers published by Harper Collins that "not a day goes by in which I'm not asked a simple question for which there's not a simple answer: **Where are you from?"** (Méndez, as cited in Dutton, 2019). This open letter provides optional context to the reader; providing additional information of what instigated and inspired the picturebooks. Continuing, Méndez wrote: "the question reminds me that I'm not fully seen as an American, but rather still a foreigner, no matter what my documents say" (Méndez, as cited in Dutton, 2019). She continues by highlighting the "emotional cost" that emerges "from having to sort through confusing concepts of origin, belonging, and identity, all on display in a public setting" (Méndez, as cited in Dutton, 2019). As an Argentinian immigrant turned American citizen and POC herself, it can be inferred that Méndez will know of the porosity of racial, ethnic, cultural borders. Dedicating the books to her five multiracial children on the dedication page, the story of *Where Are You From?* will resonate with multiracial and multicultural children who are often asked this question.

Returning to Curington's (2020) conclusion that "the multiracial body acts as an intersubjective racial signifier" that is imbued with racial and gendered meaning through the othering gaze of the observers (p.2). Curington refers to this as a process of multiracial

dissection. It is easy to classify *Where Are You From?* as a multiracial text featuring a multiracial child on the basis of the title being reflective of the ubiquitous multiracial dissection experience for many multiracial individuals, how the publishers advertise it and the explicit descriptors within the text. It is possible to represent the multiracial body, as evident by the mere existence of *Where Are You From?* and the other multiracial books, but is it possible to do it without situating them in relation to an externalised and othering gaze?

Implicit Representation

In assessing the implicit representations of the multiracial body, the schema of Danger is a crucial concern (see Process of Analysis). McKibbin asserted the complications of proclaiming multiracial identity is because "multiraciality is much more difficult to classify than monoraciality, and multiplicity can be articulated and understood in any number of ways – including monoracially" (McKibbin, 2014, p.185). I acknowledge the risk of jeopardising my argument by categorising books based on my racial bias and judging on the geno-phenotypical characteristics the human protagonists present. The critical questions developed from the Danger schema will determine how *successful* the text is in its implicit depiction of the multiracial body. Again, as a reminder, they are as follows:

- Is the textual or visual narrative representing the multiracial body in an accessible way for a young audience? Is multiraciality framed in a simplistic way that is crude and subsequently reductive and/or harmful?
- If the representation is implicit, what preconceived notions of racialised embodiment or racialised interaction order are being applied to conclude multiraciality?
- What is the crux of the narrative? Is multiracial identity treated as a "problem" to solve?
- Is the language used and surrounding the multiracial body negative? How are they described by the author and/or other characters?

I have chosen to analyse the following for their implicit representation: *One Word from Sophia* (2015*); Two Problems for Sophia* (2018*); and Love by Sophia* (2020) by Jim Averbeck with illustrations by Yasmeen Ismail. The *Sophia* series follows the life of the irrepressible Sophia, her judicious family and unconventional pet giraffe Noodle. The narrative of each book does not revolve around Sophia's identity. I chose this series for analysis because Sophia's identity was concluded on the basis of the illustrator's geno-phenotypical interpretation of the family. Sophia's multiraciality and the diverse family unit

was incidental according to Averbeck (cited in Danielson, 2015) who, in an interview, explains:

> I saw her art in sketch form and liked it, but I was completely blown away when I saw the finishes. So gorgeous! I was surprised by the multi-racial cast because it wasn't evident in the line sketches. But I was also completely delighted since I actually believe that #WeNeedDiverseBooks.

He further praised this incidental artist choice by explaining "the multi-racial family in the book reflects my own family, to whom I've dedicated *One Word from Sophia*. I wondered how Yasmeen knew that" (Averbeck, as cited in Danielson, 2015). When asked if it was predetermined for Sophia to be a person of colour (POC), Ismail explained that she interpreted it from the text on her own and further explained: "I think I just wanted her to be mixed race. It was a natural response… Someone from Atheneum mentioned that that was how Jim saw her, and I took it from there" (Ismail, as cited in The Bright Agency, 2016). Multiracial individuals and families do exist and can coexist in happy unity.

Figure 4.

Book cover of One Word from Sophia (Averbeck, 2015).

Figure 5.

Book cover of Two Problems for Sophia (Averbeck, 2018).

In *One Word from Sophia,* Sophia has "five things on her mind" as her birthday approaches; she yearns for a giraffe (her "One True Desire") and her family members (the "four problems") stand in her way (p.6). Sophia is introduced to us as a high-spirited little girl who is highly determined; she learns the art of negotiating and the importance of the word "*please.*" She succeeds in her quest, delightfully naming the giraffe Noodle and thus, Noodle becomes a key part of the household and features in the following books. In *Two Problems for Sophia*, the family struggle with the integration logistics of having a pet giraffe in the household. The main area of conflict for the whole family being Noodle's loud snoring and

the other being Noodle's fondness for Grand-mamá, which he expresses through sloppy kisses.

In terms of narrative, perhaps the most pertinent is *Love by Sophia*, where the underlying commentary is about differing perspectives of abstract art. Sophia has been presented an assignment by her teacher, Ms Paradigm, to create a piece of artwork about something she loves. After many attempts, Sophia cries out that "Art is hard!" because anything she creates "doesn't look right … doesn't feel real" (pp.9-10). Ms Paradigm advises that: "To make your art feel real, you must see all the dimensions. Look closely" (p.13). Eventually, Sophia creates an abstract painting she titles "Love" in which she reduces her family to their basic shapes and colours from a birds-eye (or Noodle eye view). In her spirited ways, Sophia wishes to proudly display her piece on the most prized space of all, the refrigerator. However, like the previous books, she must win the approval of her family.

Abstract Representation

Multiracial individuals have widely shared and universal experiences but, as exemplified through King-O'Riain et al.'s (2014) studies, the "multiracial experience" is not a global collective experience. Pushing towards the utopian ideal of authentic representation for every child can and has proven to be difficult, particularly so for multiracial individuals when there exist so many combinations and variables. When multiraciality is inexplicably linked to the racialised geno-phenotypical markers engraved onto the multiracial body, is it possible to circumvent these preconceived notions of racialised embodiment through abstraction? What incited early abstractionist artists was the pursuit to create art that ubiquitously conveyed "the universals of the human condition" (Dressel, 1984, p.104). Considering that "abstract and often archetypal motifs were … used to make visible that

which seemed inexpressible through any other means" (Dressel, 1984, p.104), is the abstraction of the multiracial body in children's picturebooks the answer to, or rather, the way around representing an identity that is not monoracial? Can abstract representation of the multiracial body reflect the universal experiences of multiraciality?
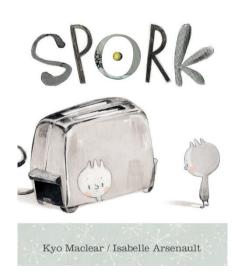
Again, returning to the analytical metrics (see Process of Analysis), the schema of Perversity is pertinent to examine the abstracted multiracial body. The critical questions developed from the Perversity schema will determine how *successful* the text is in its implicit depiction of the multiracial body. Again, I list the questions as a reminder. They are as follows:

- Are characters depicted in a way that conveys unity? Or is there a tension with the notion of difference being emphasised?
- Does the narrative reflect the lived experiences of multiracial individuals (as outlined in case studies)? Or does it perpetuate harmful narratives related to race and/or multiraciality?
- Does the narrative have a didactic tone? What are the moral implications of the messages it is conveying?

An example of a text that straddles and permeates the boundaries between my *explicit* and *abstract* categories is *Spork*, the 2010 picturebook by Kyo Maclear with illustrations by Isabelle Arsenault. Published in Canada, this "multi-cutlery" picturebook continues the *half and half* idea by portraying the product of a mixed marriage as the non-human Spork – the perfect split between spoon and fork.

Figure 7.

Book cover of Spork (Maclear, 2010).

Ultimately, *Spork* was categorised as Abstract Representation as it does not feature a human depiction of a multiracial body, but instead, the Spork utensil is conceptually used as an abstracted and metaphorical representation of a multiraciality. Abstraction as a process relies on reducing elements to their core conceptual and theoretical forms. The book itself is an allegorical exploration of the experiences of a multiracial child. This is further reinforced by its aesthetics which emphasises mixedness; Arsenault has crafted a world with a blend of collaged mixed-media artwork in muted greys. The usage of colour could be reflective of the isolation and gloominess that Spork feels, but correlations could be made to the Black and White racial binary; Spork being the grey mix. Maclear herself is the offspring of a British father and a Japanese mother. In the endpaper at the back of the book, Maclear has dedicated Spork to her children and "all the amazing sporks and misfits" in her life (Maclear, 2020, p.34).

CHAPTER

CONTENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The following chapter will unravelling and reveal the threads and patterns that convey multiraciality in each picturebook tapestry. The values of diversity shared by each picturebook, each presented in various narrative forms that frame the multiracial body in a variety of ways, will be used to indicate pedagogical methods for transformative discourse. A crucial part of Méndez's story that highlights the *need* for multiracial picturebooks to open up a critical dialogue of identity is when she makes the following distinction: "unlike me, he hadn't yet developed a repertoire of answers" (Méndez, as cited in Dutton, 2019). The potential of *Where Are You From?* along with the rest of the corpus to exist as a tool to help multiracial children to navigate their identity and develop their repertoire of answers shall be explored next.

For the sake of clarity and to avoid tangling the complex knots of this research any further, I will outline the structure of this chapter. I will be analysing each picturebook one by one and reporting my findings. The findings have stemmed from the developed questions from the adapted schema of futility, danger, and perversity. Using this structure, I will analyse how each picturebook answers the metrics and questions outlined in the methodology chapter (see Process of Analysis). Condensing this approach, I will investigate and conclude with a comparison between the selected picturebooks abilities in an oscillating manner to address whether or not they represent multiracial bodies authentically (futility), without reinforcing harmful stereotypes (danger) and without exacerbating notions of racial boundaries (perversity). Finally, I will then present how these findings position these texts as potential transformative tools to facilitate critical discussion and additional opportunities to promote self-reflection regarding multiraciality and racial ideologies.

Unravelling the Identity Spool in *Where Are You From?*

Where Are You From? (or¿*De Dónde Eres?*) begins with text that reads: "Where are you from? they ask. Is your mom from here? Is your dad from there? They ask", to which the unnamed little girl responds: "I'm from here, from today, same as everyone else, I say" (pp.6-8). This question – where are you from? – and the subsequent follow-up – where are you *really* from? – is part of the racialised interaction order process. The "categorization of people based on phenotypical markers that are tied to social categories of ascribed racial

difference" cultivates a society that, when presented with a body with ambiguous or conflicting phenotypical markers, begin to question such embodiments (Curington, 2020, p.2). The group of people asking the little girl where she is from is a diverse group. There appears to adults and children of a variety of skin colours, hair textures, hair colours and gender expressions. I find it interesting that, in such a diverse group, the little girl has been singled out in a very isolating manner. Visually, she is situated on the left page on her own while the group are bundled together on the right (see figure 8). There is a difference in textures and colour; the little girl is foregrounded by painterly strokes with a very distinct large shadow that is cast from her tiny frame, while the group are on a lighter and flat in colour background. The stature of the group is slightly bent towards the little girl, with the taller members giving the appearance of towering over her. The little girl is standing straight with her mouth wide open and, although the text clearly states that she responds, "I'm from here … **I say**" (emphasis added, p.8), the open mouth and large distance between her and the group visually gives the impression that she is shouting.

Figure 8.

The little girl stands alone on the left page, forced to explain her identity to the crowd of people on the right page (Méndez, 2020).

Although the unnamed girl is facing microaggressions, the text and visuals do not explicitly depict scenes of overt bullying. Instead, the author and illustrator create scenes that highlight the nuances of asking someone to explain their multifaceted background; is it genuine curiosity or are the questions of a hostile nature? Curington's research of "multiracial dissection" (2020, p.2) explicates how the meaning and consequence of multiracial identity formation is derived within the body's placing in the racialised interaction order (Rosino 2017; Meghji 2018). This "intersubjective … process embedded in white dominance"

suggests that the multiracial body is "constructed in relation to the externalized gaze of the … dominant group" (Curington, 2020, p.3). The individuals who are posing the question in *Where Are You From?* may not have malicious intent but to disregard the girl's answer and repeat: "No, where are you *really* from?" (p.9) on the basis that she has a racially ambiguous body that dictates her place in the world as an Other, an outsider to the group. King-O'Riain et al.'s (2014) research highlights the questioning of someone's geno-phenotypical characteristics is ubiquitous across the globe; however, they conclude that:

> This sense of difference has not always resulted in a negative marginality, but it has been a trigger for self-reflection, and, at its best, leads to a celebration of mixedness and a recognition of the diversity of … identities. (pp.129-130)

The little girl then approaches and asks her grandfather, or "Abuelo", for the answer because "like [her], he looks like he doesn't belong" (p.11). The emphasis on her physical appearance being the differing factor is emphasised here. In her open letter, Méndez explained her desire to create *Where Are You From?* was to assist in answering this difficult question by reframing the nuances of racial, ethnic and cultural identity, stating (Méndez, as cited in Dutton, 2019):

> Borders on a map move. Countries disappear … Some of us had to run away from oppressive governments or after natural disasters, leaving family pictures and loved ones behind. But the love of the family from whence we come is stronger than ideologies, more powerful than changing laws and hurricanes. Our legacy isn't only the citizenship stated on our passports, but also the unspoken attributes that were passed down from generation to generation.
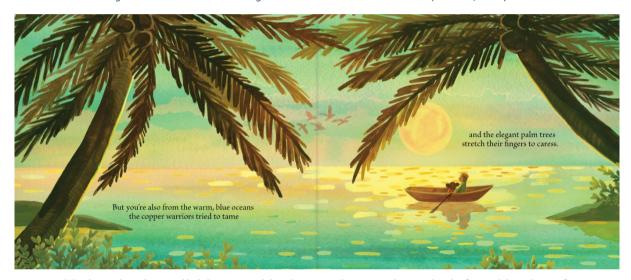
Méndez's passion for ancestral heritage being important threads that uphold the multiracial tapestry is apparent in her author's note and it is inherently imbued in her writing. Rather than naming a singular place or explaining the racial identity of the parents, Abuelo contextualises by thoughtfully tracing the varied geographic histories of the little girl's ancestors. This does not satiate the little girl. In a dynamic shift, the girl reverts back to the question and asks: "But, Abuelo … **where am I really from?**" which amuses him and he responds: "You want a place?" (p.28-29). The narrative arc reaches its climax here and, while pointing to his heart, Abuelo lyrically responds:

You're from here, from my love and the love of all those before us, from those who dreamed of you because of a song sung under the Southern Cross or the words in a book written under the light of the North Star. (pp.30-33)

Through reframing how the little girl "sees" her identity, Abuelo highlights the complexities of racial heritage and broadens her understanding of how to reflect on her origins. Abuelo's explanation encourages readers to think beyond physical geographical locations and instead, include the natural environments, ecosystems and the sociopolitical history of the places and cultures from which our ancestors came from.

Figure 9.

Abuelo and the little girl are in a rowboat watching the sunset over the ocean horizon (Méndez, 2020).

and the elegant palm trees
stretch their fingers to caress.

But you're also from the warm, blue oceans
the copper warriors tried to tame

No location is explicitly named in the text, but much can be inferred by the references being made. The Southern Cross constellation is emblematic of the lands that lie below the equator and the emphasis on song corresponds to this geographic area of land that has traditions of oral history. This is juxtaposed with the Northern Star constellation and historiographical tradition of writing. Visually, each location is juxtaposed in an oscillating manner throughout the book. In these double-page spreads, the girl and her Abuelo are small in scale so the environments around them become the focal points (see figure 9). This composition also conveys a feeling of vastness that coincides with how far-reaching a person's identity can be. Bell (2017) posits that "the state, capitalism, identity and colonialism" must be challenged as the "structuring forced through which the here-and-now is (re)produced" when working towards a utopian vision (Bell, 2017, p.140). The text in *Where Are You From?* has specific allusions to historical and geographical moments, such as the colonial and slavery history in Puerto Rico ("From this land where our ancestors built a home for all, even when they were in chains because of the color of their skin") and the

human rights organisation of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo ("You're from the grandmothers who search for their grandchildren, waiting, always waiting in a plaza, their white handkerchiefs wrapping the sorrow of their thoughts") who formed during the Argentine military dictatorship (pp.24-26). These references are subtle enough to not exclude readers from being able to resonate with the story, while also lending itself to the discussion of difficult historical subject matters. This is an interesting solution to the issues of representing multiraciality while not erasing individualised identities that McKibbin (2014) outlined:

> The arguments about the need to recognize the growing practice of identifying with multiple races on the one hand and the need to observe historical oppression against racialized groups and continued white supremacy on the other tend to be polarizing. (p.186)

Méndez and Kim, rather than reduce the girl's racial identity to aligning her geno-phenotypical characteristics to her parents, invite readers on the intricate interweaving of histories and heritages. If we are to imagine a utopia where understanding of racial identity is transformed from binary thinking to something more complex it is crucial, according to Bell (2017), to challenge the sociopolitical and cultural structures that uphold racial boundaries. The resolution of the story ends with the girl's self-affirmation ("**I am**") where she, rather than justifying or seeking acceptance from the wider community, accepts herself (p.37). Rather than claiming a specific identification, either by leaning towards a particular heritage or by explicitly claiming the multiracial label, the little girl's self-affirmation achieves the crux of what CMRS advocates for, the understanding that multiraciality is more than claiming "more than one ethno-racial heritage" but "also a social acknowledgement of belonging to more than one monoracial group regardless of how one identifies" (McKibbin, 2014, p.187). What *Where Are You From?* does well, is create an accessible narrative that is not reductive in its language or messaging. The narrative weaves the complexities of her racial, political, and cultural heritage and history without erasing or rendering the significance simplistically. This approach reframes how multiraciality is defined, employed, and contested by decentering the body as the signifier; as Curington (2020) argued, there is a danger that multiracial identity can reinforce binaries through multiracial dissection of the body. I align myself with McKibbin's (2014) assertion that "multiracialism must still engage with that history and the continued struggle for racial equality or else risk affirming the racial ideology it purports to challenge" (p.187). In summary, *Where Are You From?* is successful in

portraying a multiracial identity that is authentic to the author and her family; however, the textual and visual lyrical juxtaposition creates a structure that can elicit a new way of approaching how we contextualise multiraciality that resonates to a wider audience.

Interrogating the Familial Seams in the *Sophia* Series

Sophia is depicted in an extended and racially mixed household. Studies show that the family model in picturebooks is largely homogenous with the dominant model being a White, heterosexual, two-parent family, whereas racially mixed books "will feature minoritized family models rather than a heteronormative nuclear family" (Skrlac Lo, 2019, p.25). The interracial family is described in "traditional family studies" as not a "stable source of microgovernmentality and normativity" however, "nor is it a site of partiality, non-identity, and lack" as it is often depicted in "traditional multicultural studies" (Luke & Luke, as cited in King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p,138). Luke and Luke (as cited in King-O'Riain et al., 2014) argue that interracial families are:

> … nothing less than sites of fluctuating hybridity, mimicry, heteroglossia, and transformation – where identities, relations of power, cultural practices, and intergenerational continuities are reconstructed and reframed in historically grounded but unprecedented ways, and where "new" human subjects are innovatively crafting themselves. (p.138)

In *One Word,* the family are introduced in a dinner scene (see figure 10). Textually, there are no descriptors on the physical and genetic make-up of the family members. Instead, the family members are described by their professions and personalities.

Figure 10.

Sophia and her family at the dinner table (Averbeck, 2015).

Mother, Father and Uncle Conrad are described in *One Word from Sophia* and *Love by Sophia* as a judge, businessman and politician, respectively. "Grand-mamá" however, plays an important role in the *Sophia's* books and is described as someone who is "very strict" (2015, p.9) and who holds "severe attitudes about art" (2020, p.21). Visually, there is a mixture of poses, the adults have happy expressions, and the family dog is invited to sit at the table. This conveys a dynamically lively scene.

Discussing the characteristics of the family, the interviewer brought forward discussions from readers on whether Sophia's family is "racially blended or just illustrated with a variety of skin tones" in which Ismail (as cited in The Bright Agency, 2016) responded: "Well, what's the difference?! If they have a variety of skin tones they are racially blended, and if they are racially blended they will have a variety of skin tones". Ismail goes on to explain that Sophia, in her mind, is multiracial as a result of the blending of Black and White families but she does not "really feel comfortable explaining that in such plain terms" (Ismail, as cited in The Bright Agency, 2016). Ismail raises an interesting point; should the family's race be simplified in virtue of skin colour and should the racial make-up of the family be a point of contention? Ismail (as cited in The Bright Agency, 2016) continues:

> They are a modern, normal family. They love each other and love their daughter. I don't think it should be highlighted… LOOK A MIXED RACE FAMILY!
>
> It just is what it is.

The author and illustrator interviews are not pertinent to the narrative but, they reveal the underpinning intention to reflect multiracial families tacitly to convey a sense of normativity. There is a danger in falling into the "post-race" mentality by not acknowledging race at all in the picturebook when race plays a salient role in many aspects of social, cultural, political, and family life. There is a utopian desire to be *beyond* racism and *beyond* the *need* to point out particular racial representation; however, dismissing the importance of highlighting the visibility of identity runs the risk of invalidating such identity. Multiracial families do exist and yes, they can be modern and normal. This I do not refute. However, it would be disingenuous to claim that the *Sophia* family should not be highlighted because such dismissal betrays the very intent of such action by obscuring the "questions … most deserving of our attention" (Hollinger, 2011, p.175). The very questions developed from the utopian schema (see Process of Analysis) such as, "what preconceived notions of racialised embodiment or racialised interaction order are being applied to conclude multiraciality?" is

precisely the sort of critical self-reflection and challenging question that gets overlooked when there is a rush to dismiss normativity.

Sands-O'Connor (2001) in her analysis of multiracial families in picturebooks acknowledged that when the narrative is not designed "solely about multiracial families" then "it is perhaps unfair to criticize it based on the pictures" (p.413). However, I maintain that the visual depiction of multiracial bodies whether or not they are intentional or necessary to the narrative have the potential to delineate sociocultural meaning that can percolate into collective subconsciousness. Sands-O'Connor concludes that "even when the parents in multiracial stories are from the same country, differences are emphasized over similarities" and there is a tendency by illustrators to present interracial couples "as differently as possible" (2001, p.416). In the *Sophia* series, there are no textual indications or descriptors that emphasise difference. There is, however, an observable diversity. The contrasting characterisation of the Mother, with her seemingly curly black hair and extremely dark skin, accentuates the juxtaposition of the Father's straight grey hair and pale pink complexion. Removing the textual indication within the books that they are parents and Ismail's interviews, it makes sense to infer (as problematic it as it is to judge an individual based on their skin colour) that Sophia with her dark curly hair and lighter skin colour is their biological multiracial child. This reinforces a narrow understanding of interracial relationships being a dichotomous union and the multiracial child being the visual composite of the two. Such conflation with multiraciality with the Black and White binary does not "disrupt the racial ideology that upholds the troubling system of categorization" but instead, "homogenizes experiences" (McKibbin, 2014, p.186). Despite their aesthetic differences, the parents are often depicted together, on the same pages, looking the same way with and without Sophia. This indicates that Sophia is not just their *only* commonality they share. In *Two Problems* however, visually there is a distinct division of the family dynamic in the bedtime double-page spread (see figure 11). Father and Mother share a bed that is split down the middle by the page binding, with the Mother and Grand-mamá on the right and Father and Uncle Conrad on the left. Perhaps the characters were separated by family ties (Father and Uncle Conrad being brothers, Mother being the daughter of Grand-mamá) but the placing of the binding also separates by skin colour. This, perhaps unintentional, reinforces racial differences.

In *Love,* the illustrations become more fantastical in their depictions. The readers understanding of proportion and realism is stretched with the playful experimentation of perspective during Sophia and Ms. Paradigm's exploration of Noodle's figure. The playful rendering of reality coincides with the Sophia's journey in creating an expressive art piece that reduces her family to their essential and recognisable elements. Unfortunately, the family do not initially respond to the piece in the way Sophia had hoped. Sophia's Mother says that the finished piece is "incomplete" because she reads it as "a fancy letter O"; Sophia's father says, "Abstract art doesn't hold value"; while Uncle Conrad reads it a zero and suggests that Sophia is conveying that "love is nothing" (pp.22-28). Sophia protests that her family are misinterpreting her artistic intentions. Grand-mamá, the toughest critic of all, declares that she "can't abide abstract art" because "art should express emotion and elevate us. It should look realistic like something you see every day" (p.32). In order for Sophia to show the value of her work and share her perspective, Noodle must elevate Grand-mamá up high. Sophia's tribulations strengthen Dressel's (1984) point that "just as the creation of a work of art is an arduous task, so the perceiving of a work of art involves time and effort" (p.110). The dejection Sophia faces from her family is not because her creation is necessarily bad rather, they have not taken the time to perceive it. This is also not to say that the family are wrong in their interpretations but instead, their critique aligns with the intentional fallacy notion: the intended meaning of art has multiple possible interpretations, rather than a singular one based on the artist's intentions. "Seldom are young children exposed to abstract art" and this is because according to Dressel (1984):

> While abstract images are particularly appropriate for illustrating ideas and emotions
> which are by their very nature abstract and cannot be drawn literally, abstract art
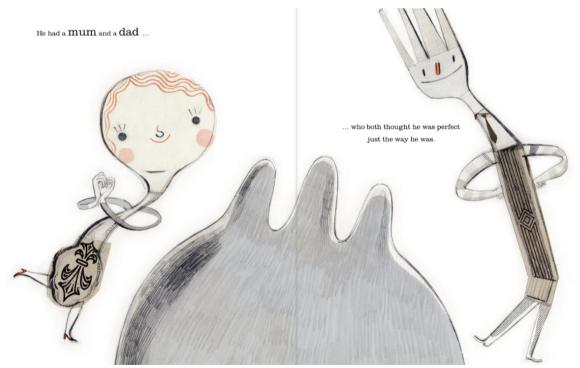
requires an audience aware of its nature and willing to respond in light of that nature. (p.110)

Arguments can be made about who gets to decide what art means and if there even is a definitive answer or "correct interpretation" but, rather than delving deep into that line of thought, Dressel's argument highlights the need to develop visual literacy skills in young children so they *can* interpret abstract images. In a similar vein, comparisons can be made with the *Sophia* texts and the fallacy of ascribing racial meaning to bodies based on geno-phenotypical traits. Sophia cries out: "What you see depends on where you are looking from!" and this is correct with both her artwork and multiracial individuals (p.17). Considering that "appearance tends to be the first marker through which [young children] recognise difference" (Elliott et al., 2021, p.22), a broader lens in which we view multiracial bodies is needed which does not reinforce a marginalised status based on phenotypical markers.

The Prevailing Patterns of Stereotypes in *Spork*

Figure 12.

Introduction to Mother Spoon and Father Fork, with Spork between them (Maclear, 2010).

Spork begins with a realistic rendering of a spoon and a fork on one page, and the character Spork (referred to using he/him pronouns) on the other. This composition creates a visual vernacular; introducing the cutlery in a way that is recognisable and applying the

elements (roundness of the spoon and tines of the fork) to the stylised anthropomorphism of Spork, emphasises the difference. His parents appear only once on a double-page spread that immediately follows the visual vernacular introduced of the spoon and fork. Mother spoon and Father fork are on different pages with Spork in-between them, back turned and fully split down the middle (see figure 12). The parents are further separated by their contrasting silhouettes; the smooth curves of the spoon and sharp angles of the fork are magnified on the plain background. Arsenault redesigns the cutlery from the previous page by taking the visual vernacular of the spoon and fork – the curved head of a spoon, the handle designs, the angular tines of a fork – and reducing them to their most essential parts.

Spork himself, throughout the book, is depicted with a sad expression and is often isolated from the rest of the cutlery. In the introductory pages with his mother and father, Spork is facing away from the viewer (see figure 12) and, in absence of a facial expression for the only time in the book, his silhouette is rendered with linework that provides shading and texture to simulate silverware. The shading of Spork here, in comparison to the rest of the book and the context of his flatly rendered parents, can be analysed as an intentional artistic design to represent a particular feeling. As one of the rudimentary components of art, Moebius suggests that "a character's experience may be represented by the thickness or thinness … smoothness or jaggedness … sheer number or profusion or by their sparseness, and by whether they run parallel to each other or at sharp angles" (Moebius, 1986, p.151). The composition of the smiling parents with their figures facing the reader, deliberately parallel on separate pages evokes a "comfortable stasis" at first glance while Spork's shadowed figure that is created by an abundance of busy and harsh lines can signify "troubled emotions" (Moebius, 1986, p.151). The deliberate hatching style of shading draws attention to the page; positioning Spork as the commanding focus between the double-page spread which steers the readers eyes to meander between the Mother spoon and Father fork. The dark hatching that, considering Moebius' analysis of picturebook codes, constitutes a "high degree of capillarity, of nervous energy", could be representative of Spork's identity anxiety (Moebius, 1986, p.151). Both Mother Spoon and Father Fork are raised higher on the page and with a bent posture, signifying their height and stature over Spork but also can metaphorically signify Spork being "of low spirits … of unfavourable social status" (Moebius, 1986, p.146).

Spork's introductory pages are the only occurrence where Spork's identity is framed in the context of a familial relationship; the pages that follow focus on Spork's individuality

and place in the kitchen among other utensils. Spork's hybrid self is illuminated textually and visually in, what I would like to call, the first establishing double-page spread. This double page reads:
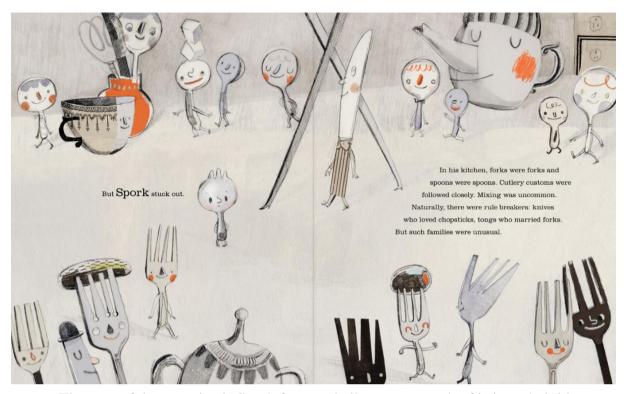
> But Spork **stuck out**.
>
> In his kitchen, forks were forks and spoons were spoons. Cutlery customs were followed closely. **Mixing was uncommon**. Naturally, there were **rule breakers**: knives who loved chopsticks, tongs who married forks. But such families were **unusual**. (emphasis added, pp.8-9)

The text uses descriptors that exemplify difference. Phrases such as "stuck out", "mixing was uncommon", "rule breakers" and "unusual" create a troubling sense of disapproval and exoticism. Rather than celebrating difference, these phrases carry negative connotations that suggest mixing is unconventional and thus, frowned upon. *Spork* is incidentally perpetuating the problematic notion that interracial love is "taboo" and representations of such unions were not seen "unless the emphasis happened to be on the 'exotic' or 'erotic' nature of interracial unions" (Gay, 1987, p.11).

Visually, Spork is situated on the left page, with a lot of space between him and the crowd of cutlery existing around him (see figure 13). Occupying the left page and aligned in the middle of the space; Spork exists in the middle ground between the top that is largely populated by spoons and the bottom which is predominantly populated by forks. The kitchen environment appears homogeneous with extraordinarily little diversity; the dominant framework of this specific cutlery drawer appears to be spoon and forks, with only two table knives being visible in this setting. Spork's depiction here reflects the notion that multiracial individuals have "no place in the dominant racial framework" because historically, individuals that exist between and out with the racial paradigm were often "forced into monoracial categories of identification through a process of hypodescent" (Gonzales, 2019, p.2). The isolation of Spork, his body existing in the liminal space on the page between the spoons and forks, is exemplified further by being the only hybrid-like utensil. The only other "multi-cutlery" pairings visible in this double-page spread is a knife looking upwards to what could be inferred to be the tall body of chopsticks, walking side by side across the gutter of the page which incidentally creates a divide between them.

In his kitchen, forks were forks and spoons were spoons. Cutlery customs were followed closely. Mixing was uncommon. Naturally, there were rule breakers: knives who loved chopsticks, tongs who married forks. But such families were unusual.

But **Spork** stuck out.

The crux of the narrative is Spork faces a challenge as a result of being a hybrid utensil and by extension, struggles to self-accept himself. Realistically speaking, this makes sense given that Spork is a utensil and utensils are typically designed to serve a purpose. Spork's existential identity crisis reflects the basic modernist principle often attributed to product design; the belief that form *follows* function. The essence of such principle is to distinguish art (form) and design (function). Of course, there are overlaps between art and design, but a kitchen utensil is a designed product whose functionality and usability are integral to its nature. Now, returning to the text that described families like Spork's as "unusual" (p.9), an equivalence can be made to Spork's hybrid body and the racist ideologies that affiliated biological differences with racial superiority. Many have attempted to "assert that unions between blacks and whites would be barren or biologically flawed" (Reynolds, 2009, p.7) based on biased descriptors and generalisations from "soldiers, slave trades, and plantation owners" (Anemone, 2010, p.57). This belief gave was the catalyst for the archetype of the "tragic mulatto", the idea that those born from such "flawed" unions are inherently tragic and unfortunate. This prevailing eighteenth century literary archetype and stereotype has:

> … always reflected societal fears, longing, desperation, anger, lust, and racism. … Abolitionists used mulattos to epitomize the horrors of slavery; racists used them to

illustrate the horrors of desegregation; black writers used them to assuage white fears. (Reynolds, 2009, p.2)

The simplistic abstracted form of the multiracial body in *Spork* renders it in a way that can be accessible to children but at the cost of reflecting the societal belief that the multiracial individual is the perfect *half and half* that longs to be a *whole*. This reaches a climax in the double-page spread which reads:

One day, after the billionth time he was asked "What are you, anyway?" and the zillionth time he was passed over when the table was being set…

…Spork sighed and thought, "It must be easier to be a single thing." And he decided he'd try to pick just one thing to be. (p.11)

Returning to Curington (2020) and Mahtani's (2015) case studies, the issues of multiraciality do not necessarily emerge from an internal conflict; rather, the sociocultural meaning of race that is assigned to bodies and the subsequent social consequences from being multiracial create the "socially and culturally based" dilemmas (Reynolds, 2009, p.22). Spork's parents "both thought he was perfect just the way he was" (p.7) but unfortunately, Spork's "multi-cutlery" identity and place in the wider kitchen society is reflective of the racialised embodiment process. Embodiment refers to the "active process through which individuals make meaning out of their bodies through interactions with others" (Gonzales, 2019, p.3) and in this instance, Spork internalises his Otherness and struggles to integrate himself amongst the utensil binary. Reinforcing Spork's inability to integrate is the dinnertime scene. During this double-page spread, the text illuminates Spork's detachment from the others and his feeling of seclusion. The passage reads: "At dinnertime, he watched from the drawer … He sat off to the side … And at the end of this and every other meal, Spork looked on…" (p.19). This scene, whereby Spork has no place at the dinner table, reinforces the idea that "multiracial people have no place within the existing racial structure" because their "existence and political consciousness … threatens the established racial order of white supremacy" (Gonzales, 2019, p.2). Does Spork's hybrid existence and double function threaten the cutlery hierarchy?

Following this is the narratives *falling action* – the plot point where characters attempt to resolve problems and conflicts – where, in this case, Spork attempts to *fix* himself by negating his hybridity. Spork wears a round bowler hat with the hope it would make him look "more spoonish" (p.12). When this attempt was not well-received, Spork fashions himself a

paper crown to look "more forkish" (p.15) which was met with the same derision from the spoon community. Again, this follows the narrative pattern of the "tragic mulatto" who, according to Reynolds (2009), was written in a way to uphold a racial hierarchy by reassuring "readers that the color line is, if not impassable, close to it, and that efforts to cross or eradicate it are bound to end badly" (Reynolds, 2009, p.2). Spork's endeavours fail and this is visually depicted with Spork on one page and a group of either spoon or fork on the other page. In both cases, there appears to be a collective dismay in the spoon and fork community. Furrowed brows, mouths agape in shock, hands covering mouths to stifle laughter, backs turned, and accusatory pointing are apparent in the illustrations (see figure 14). This contrasts greatly with Spork's hopeful expression and determined stance which diminishes over time as he is continuously outcasted from both cutlery groups. Spork embodies the "tragic mulatto" idea that no matter how hard he tries, he will never cross the cutlery lines.

Figure 14.

Spork wearing a round hat to look more like a spoon, much to the dismay of the fork community (Maclear, 2010).

Spork's pursuit to be "a single thing" (p.11) is an allegory of the concept of racial "passing". This term is highly "emotionally weighted" that embodies "the idea that individuals are trying to acquire race privilege to which they are not entitled, or equally, that individuals are renouncing their true heritage instead of taking pride in it" (Reynolds, 2009, p.48). Spork attempts to distance himself from his mixed identity by disguising his physical body; hiding and covering up the materiality signifiers that would categorise him as either

spoon or fork. "Power is instilled in the materiality of bodies" argued Thompson in her analysis of "racial aesthetics" which she encapsulates as "a mode of observing the body . . . the emphasis on aesthetics and appearance within biological racialism negates the existence of mixed-race individuals" (Thompson, as cited in Gonzales, 2019, p.2). King-O'Riain et al.'s (2014) research demonstrated that many multiracial individuals feel forced into choosing and/or siding with one part of their racial identity "even where there is state valorization of mixedness … there are still racial hierarchies that are unequal along racial lines and in some cases mixed people lose out" (p.xx). Spork's attempt to "pass" as either fork or spoon reflects the pervasive act that many multiracial bodies undergo, but this universality does not necessarily "make a global mixed-race community or collective identity across the globe" (King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p.xx). Advertised as an "unconventional celebration of individuality" (KidsCanPress, n.d.), Spork's self-acceptance relies on wider society embracing him as he ponders about his place in the world (in this instance, the dining table).

The elision of the words "spoon" and "fork" to create the composite term "spork" is demonstrative of the alternative to claiming multiracial as a group identity, by creating an amalgamation term that encompasses an individual's specific identity. However, many scholars have voiced their concerns regarding individualism, "usually citing the threat posed to the socio-political strength and/or protection of non-white groups" because "a too-narrow focus on the individual can end up doing more harm than good" (McKibbin, 2014, p.185). There is rationale to the adage of having "strength in numbers", with Walsh (as cited in McKibbin, 2014) asserting that the perverse effect of individualism is that rather than achieving "the systemic elimination of racial hierarchies", the shift from multiraciality will degenerate and "sustain existing hierarchies, albeit along a color continuum instead of through a fictional race dichotomy" (p.186). A distinction must be made so that there is recognition of individualism without disregarding the collective experience. King-O'Riain et al. (2014) acknowledge that "issues of global discrimination, commodification, and commercialization … have rallied and united mixed people … through the global flow of racial ideas" (p.xx).

Spork does not necessarily resist the hegemonic homogenous structures that exist within the cutlery drawer. Nor are we as readers shown Spork being accepted by the other utensils. Instead, the narrative is resolved when Spork's hybrid identity serves a function. *Spork* falls into the trap of oversimplifying or suggesting that "finality exists when the reality of the subject matter is in flux" (Reynolds, 2009, p.88). Spork's happiness and self-worth are

inexplicably linked to whether he serves a purpose at the hands of a human baby, with Spork's double-function bringing peace to the chaotic kitchen scenes. Such celebration of Spork's individuality is conveyed as an uplifting "celebration of difference"; however, it risks becoming an "assumption of superiority of the mixed-race person as the person of the future and as biologically advantaged" (King-O'Riain et al., 2014, p.137). The addition to the baby in the household is conveyed as a harbinger of new beginnings for the kitchen dynamic, but what happens when the baby grows up and no longer needs a spork? Spork's individuality is momentarily accepted in the kitchen community, but this ending suggests a finality when the reality is it does not tackle the "multi-cutlery" narratives that echo the systematic racial hierarchies.

Figure 15.

The conclusion with Spork being accepted by the "messy thing" (Maclear, 2010).

And that's how Spork finally and happily found his way to the table.

The baby is visually rendered in a more realistic art style that echoes the early introduction to the spoon and fork (see figure 15). The baby is only ever referred to as the "messy thing" with no visual descriptors (pp.21-26). However, it is interesting to note the rendering of the baby presents what one can assume or infer from the pale skin and blue eyes, a White presenting human. I make this assumption while recognising my own ingrained bias of conflating specific phenotypical aesthetics to racial signifiers. However, I believe there was potential to illustrate the child's physical appearance in a way that disrupts our notions of race. Much could be inferred by this choice; was Spork's journey towards an "embodied

multiracial consciousness" a narrative that resisted the cutlery and racial norms or "fraught with contradictions that in some cases also upheld the monoracial hierarchy"? (Gonzales, 2019, p.11). I would infer the latter; however, this does not invalidate the potential of the text for transformative discourse and so the risk of perversity can be negated through challenging these messages and stimulating critical dialogue. In other words, "engagement is the first step in healing … we will never achieve racial healing if we do not confront one another [and] take risks" (Dalton, 1995, p.97).

Stitching Together Transformation

The analysis findings expose the problematic ideological underpinnings regarding the construction of multiracial bodies within picturebooks; however, this is not to say that multiracial picturebooks such as the *Sophia* series or *Spork* are dangerous to implement in a pedagogical capacity for their dichotomous and stereotypical portrayals. If navigated correctly, the nuanced synergy of the text and image can be utilised to challenge these problematic messages, rather than diminishing the utopian goal of a multiracial pedagogy that utilises picturebooks. This utopia, with all the complexities and danger of reinforcing boundaries or backfiring CMRS progress, is still achievable and will always be "on the horizon" as Galeano (as cited in Bregman, 2017) affirms.

If we were to imagine a curriculum that implements multiracial picturebooks, there is the risk that adults, teachers, and instructors will be unable to navigate discussions or engage in "helpful intervention" out of fear of being politically correct (Shulman, 2016, p.385). It is safe to assume that educational institutions want to foster a positive classroom culture and thus, topics deemed as contentious or "taboo … often create an emotional response and as a result are often avoided by students and faculty" (Shulman, 2016. p.385). Teachers and students are "not used to talking about race in this personal manner" asserts Mohamud (as cited in Elliott et al., 2021), who continues to highlight the importance of extensive engagement with diverse literature in the classroom can play in racial discourse:

> If we [can't] address, unpick and learn about what made these issues so intensely uncomfortable to begin with, how could we learn at all? (p.16)

I subscribe to Mohamud's claim and agree that in order to progress sociocultural meanings of race and multiraciality challenging, difficult and uncomfortable conversations must occur so

that the "constructed nature of race and … racial categories are … continuously being created, inhabited, contested, transformed, and destroyed" (Daniel, 2014, p.2).

Picturebooks can be the springboard to such critical dialogues. *Where Are You From?* introduces the reader to the little girl through the Othering by her social circle however, as mentioned previously, such questioning is a form of microaggression. Although not necessarily posed by others with malicious intent but instead with abject curiosity, this does not change the effect it has on the girl's self-perception. These microaggressions establish the girl as an Other. Adults and teachers could allow an intercultural discussion on perceptions of race, with encouragement to freely discuss questions such as: "Why are they questioning the girl? Do they have the right to ask this question? What do you think it means that no one accepted the girl's first answer? Why did that happen?" Such open discussions have no easy answer and in order to navigate this critical dialogue, educators must ensure they have cultivated a safe space to address sensitive and contentious topics. Rather than avoiding the topic out of fear of not being politically correct, children should be allowed to possibly make mistakes and "not be angrily criticized for doing so" (Shulman, 2016, p.385). Adults and educators should step in with helpful intervention to correct any misconceptions and ensure there is no undue burden on other students to be "representatives of their race" (Shulman, 2016, p.385).

The narrative structure of *Where Are You From?* can be utilised as a prompt for students to explore their backgrounds in a similar manner; either through a writing exercise that applies a similar lyrical use of vivid verbs to describe their ecological, geographical and sociopolitical ancestral environments. This discursive form of pedagogy within a positive classroom environment could give rise to a transformative social discourse and new intercultural understanding of race and multiraciality. It is also vital to recognise that affordances that the modality of picturebooks provides for transformative discourse and that the "expression and reception of the aesthetic is always dependent upon transmission of meaning through perceptible form" (Dressel, 1984, p.104). We indeed exist in an increasingly visual world and there are increased calls for the development of visual literacy in the classrooms (Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Kress, 2003, 2009; Youngs, 2012). There is a pedagogical disparity with "the verbal text is too often privileged in classrooms" and so, to cultivate visual literacy to read images beyond a superficial level requires that "more attention needs to be given to supporting children in developing visual literacy" (Martinez et al., 2020). Eisner (as cited in Dressel, 1984) argued that children demonstrate "a primary

interest not in the creation of a preconceived image or idea, but in the visual and kinesthetic stimulation emanating from the use of materials" (p.108). Following this, I contend that the visual content of *Where Are You From?,* The *Sophia* Series and *Spork* contain elements conducive to the development of practical activities that can stimulate self-reflection to coincide with the critical and discursive questions.

Combining the visual juxtapositions of *Where Are You From?* with the artistic depth introduced in *Love by Sophia*, with the mixed media collages of *Spork* could promote the exploration of multiraciality and race through visual means. The author's note at the end of *Love by Sophia* says "Sometimes 'perspective' means looking at things from a different direction …" (p.38) which can be used as the prompt for children to approach their understanding of multiraciality from another perspective. When considering children's ability to engage with the abstraction of the multiracial figure of Spork, it is not a question of "whether children can be sensitive observers, but rather, how teachers and other adults can facilitate such sensitivity" like Ms Paradigm did with Sophia in *Love* (Dressel, 1984, p.108). In lieu of facilitating workshops with children to gauge reader response, one could only speculate how children would interpret the abstraction of the multiracial body. I return to Dressel's (1984) idea of abstraction representing a unified puzzle that requires the skills and patience to piece together. Adults and teachers must guide children to piece the puzzle together in a free manner. By decentering the adult or teacher as the expert who knows the puzzling outcome, it is crucial to facilitate intercultural and social dialogue rather than issuing instructions. To reiterate:

> While limits are imposed by the materials, the final interpretation comes from within the child, by choices the child makes, relationships the child sees, and feelings the child is encouraged to express. (Dressel, 1984, p.109)

The child's intellectual and emotional skills can be constructed through art and literature, and with this in mind, I would also like to propose practical art activities that foster embodied learning through physical engagement to coincide with the critical questions. Embracing the notion that "feelings come from the mind at work, just as do answers to academic-type questions" (Forman & Kuschner, as cited in Dressel, 1984, p.108), developing learning activities to foster self-reflection through physical engagement with materials is a powerful teaching aid. Educators could use Sophia's abstract rendering of her family (see figure 16) as an inspirational prompt to encourage children to construct their own abstract perspectives.

Through the exploration of key art elements (line, shape or form, colour, use of space, texture, materiality, and so forth) children enter a non-verbal form of collaborative discussion in a group setting or individually explore self-expression.

Figure 16.

On the left page Grand-mamá is looking at the family from atop Noodle's head. On the right, Grand-mamá is proudly holding happy little Sophia's art (Averbeck, 2020).

In other words, I agree with Haring et al.'s (2020) idea that when entering the process of creating art, children enter an "integrative process" that can lead to "change, transition and transformation" (p.17). This non-verbal "integrative process" requires "total involvement [and] gives different persons a voice to express emotions which need to be released" (Haring et al., 2020, p.33).

A particular double-page spread from *Spork* (see figure 17) could easily be adapted into an expressive exercise. There is an opportunity to "support the increased use of abstract forms with children" (Dressel, 1984, p.108) through the medium of collage. If we consider Dressel's (1984) notion that it "may be imperative that we permit children to deal with the structure of things rather than the details" (p.109), children could recycle old materials (such as family photographs, magazines, posters, newspapers, and so forth) that reflect how they see their own racial identity (such as the colours, cultural artefacts, environments, and so forth) to create their own abstract forms. By encouraging the child to "become sensitive to shape and to the character of the forms they create as forms rather than as representations of natural objects" (Eisner, as cited in Dressel, 1984, p.109). Rather than placing emphasis on representing realistic forms, adults and educators should take care in allowing children to develop visual literacy through the exploration of abstract symbols. Shulman (2016) stresses that educators need training in order to implement sensitive and helpful interventions. In other words, it is necessary to have:

Training and support … that can help create a supportive class culture where students

can say what they think rather than saying what they think others want to hear.

(p.385)

Similarly, multiracial individuals should be able to express how they identify rather than feeling pressured to saying what they think others would categorise them as. Following a similar encouragement of Ms. Paradigm in *Love by Sophia*, educators should encourage children to paint, collage and create an artistic exploration of their own racial and cultural heritage and in response to the critical dialogue of multiraciality and race without constraining themselves to render a realistic depiction.

Figure 17.

Spork floating in an existential crisis while imagining other hybrid utensils (Maclear, 2010).

Spork wondered if there were other lonely creatures out there with no matching kind, who never got chosen to be at the table.

Sophia's Uncle Conrad declared that "abstract art doesn't hold value", but I disagree and instead side with Vastokas (as cited in Dressel, 1984) that "abstract paintings like all art, embody the very process of thought itself" (p.109). Although the critical questions can stimulate transformative discussion with the mediation of helpful intervention, there is a power in engaging with artful expression to encourage self-reflection. As Averbeck (2020) said in the endpapers of *Love*: "paper is flat. But our world is wider, higher, and deeper than that" (p.12) and so, creative workshops that fosters visual literacy in a positive and encouraging environment could develop children's ability to read and unpick the semiotic messages regarding multiracial bodies. The critical questions developed during the process of

analysis could be utilised in a pedagogical capacity to stimulate deeper dialogue, through critical discursive exchange or visual expression in the classroom, while unpacking other multiracial literature.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This dissertation, through a critical content analysis framed within an adapted utopian schema, sought to examine the explicit and implicit depictions of multiracial bodies in picturebooks. While existing scholarship has mentioned multiraciality in YA literature and popular culture, there is a gap in the field of picturebooks. I propose a new perspective that highlights the dearth of multiracial bodies in picturebooks through a framework that can be applied to promote critical dialogue and self-reflection.

While many picturebooks make attempts to embrace multiraciality or diversity, either through didacticism or self-effacing normativity, some verge on constructing and perpetuating problematic notions of race. Acknowledging the probability that the selected corpus - *Where Are You From?,* the *Sophia* series and *Spork* – was created with the best of intentions, I did not intend to pass judgement on whether or not they make for *good* or *entertaining* picturebooks. The overall intention was to develop a framework that can be utilised by adults and educators for identifying, analysing, and proposing picturebooks for children that were conducive to transformative social and critical discourse within the field of CRT and CMRS.

I investigated if it was possible to propose ways to reimagine multiraciality through the modality of picturebooks by developing the following research question: How can picturebooks with explicit and implicit messages regarding multiracial identity be utilised as transformative texts? that reimagines understanding of multiraciality? This was investigated along the following line of enquiries:

- **Futility** – Is it possible to represent an identity that is not monolithic in an authentic way?
- **Danger** – By focusing on "multiracial" as a concept that blurs racial boundaries, are we also risking reinforcing problematic boundaries and the construction of racial binaries?
- **Perversity** – How can the advocation for the implementation of multiracial picturebooks in an educational role, counter-accusations of political correctness?

So, is it a futile endeavour to try representing and discussing an identity that is not monolithic in an authentic way? Can we avoid the dangers of focusing on "multiracial" as a concept that

blurs racial boundaries without being reductive or reinforcing problematic racial boundaries? Will there be perverse effects as a consequence of advocating the implementation of multiracial picturebooks in an educational role?

Futility, Danger and Perversity

Where Are You From? is a meritorious piece of work that demonstrates a possible avenue in authentically representing a multiracial identity. The little girl's identity, although established as an Other through racialised embodiment process, is refocused away from her appearance and instead, her multiraciality is contextualised by her Abuelo who refrains from equating racial classifications with explanations of her or the parent's geno-phenotypical traits. There is a celebration of the little girls specific Argentine and Puerto-Rican ancestry through ecological, geographical and sociopolitical environments while not erasing an acknowledgement of "historical contexts, system or institutional injustices, and interlocking discourses that perpetuate injustice" (Walsh, as cited in McKibbin, 2014, p.186). The peritextual authors note published by Méndez establishes the authenticity of the writing; it is a cultural context deeply personal to her and reflective of her and her children's ancestral background.

I take the stance that utilising *Where Are You From?* as a catalyst for critical questioning and transformative discourse can have two outcomes; multiracial children from the specific cultural contexts set in the narrative will resonate on a deep level and/or multiracial children from other cultural contexts can be inspired to navigate the nuances their identities. The former outcome falls under Bregman's (2017) definition of the utopia of the blueprint (a clear solution for a specific problem) that "consist of immutable rules that tolerate no dissension" and thus, transgressions from the blueprint ideal can be seen as catastrophic to progress (p.16). The latter offers more freedom and accessibility to a wider audience by aligning with the utopia of abstract ideals (a vague outline that inspires innovation). In either scenario, there is potential for the multiracial child to feel validated.

The *Sophia* series contextualises Sophia's multiraciality within her family unit. Although the *Sophia* series challenges racial norms, it perpetuates heteronormativity with the two heterosexual parental units while contesting the idea of a "nuclear family" by including extended members (in this case, the Mother's mother and Father's brother) in the immediate household. In an attempt to establish this, the *Sophia* series unwittingly reinforces racial boundaries by establishing Sophia as an easy to identify multiracial child in the context of a

dichotomous interracial family. Establishing Sophia's racial status through multiracial dissection of her body in this context elicits the racial binary and exposes the tricky nature of conflating multiraciality with a *specific* blended look. The *Sophia* series invites complexity and multiplicity in the strive for conveying normativity. Critical dialogue can be facilitated by questioning our own bias in identifying the text as multiracial through the racialised embodiment process. The imagery does fluctuate between celebrating difference and accentuating a conflation with interracial relationships to dichotomous appearances but such nuanced messaging, I propose, can be acknowledged for thought-provoking deeper dialogue. In a similar vein, *Spork* at a surface level is a clever approach to multiracial bodies with a narrative that will resonate with multiracial individuals and those who are struggling with acceptance. However, there is a troublesome undertone with the narrative teeters on the edge of a didacticism that inherently perpetuates the tragic mulatto stereotype. Furthermore, there is a danger with the shift toward individual identity in *Where Are You From?* and *Spork* that discussions move "away from the protection of historically oppressed groups" and instead, individualist perspectives become a "springboard for conservative efforts to abolish affirmative action … and even abolish racial data collection" sometimes to corroborate the cries of PC culture (McKibbin, 2014, p.186).

These findings highlighted the pedagogical potential to facilitate critical discourse and became the starting point to suggesting the ways transformative self-reflection could occur. I focused on creating embodied learning activities, inspired by the selected picturebooks, that evoked the idea of the utopia of abstract ideals, rather than blueprints. Although both serve a purpose, the fluctuating horizon of the abstract ideals renders it as better suited to a racial dialogue where classifications and terminology are also in flux. I proposed pedagogical ways that multiracial picturebooks can be engaged with to inspire change by existing as *guideposts* for readers to freely parse rather than strict *solutions*. I stress the importance of decentering the adult or teacher as the experts who have ready-made answers and instead, reposition them as guides who, in order for the learning environment to be conducive to children's navigation of self-expression, ask the right questions. Thus, for educators, I echo the advice of Brennan (2002): "Remember who you are, make no assumptions, and listen carefully" (p.x) with patience and grace so that children are encouraged to transform and explore their understandings of multiracial identity. Furthermore, for those within and outside the multiracial field; academics and students; and adults and children alike, I echo and stress

Bregman's (2017) advice that inspired this dissertation: "If we want to change the world, we need to be unrealistic, unreasonable, and impossible" (p.172).

Limitations and Next Steps

The breadth and nuances of the field of CMRS encompasses a wide variety of scholars who approach the field with their own "terminological lineages and associations" that can fluctuate over time (Daniel et al*.,* 2014, p.25). With the merging of racial studies and utopian visions, I acknowledge there are, as with many studies, several limitations to my dissertation. As mentioned in Chapter 3 (Literature Review), there is a "shortage of examinations of race and utopia" (Chan & Ventura, 2019, pp. 3-4) and rather than entering that field directly, I focused on CMRS solely and attempted to draw on the utopian schema when possible. This provided the theoretical backing to scrutinize the ideological implications that were explicitly or implicitly present in the multiracial picturebooks; however, I recognise if I were given the opportunity to pursue this further, then a more intricate weaving of utopian theory and transformative studies together with race is needed, given the overlaps.

Given the constraints of my dissertations and positionality, I consciously focused on what can be considered the biological multiracial children of interracial families. However, this was not intended to minimize the importance of investigating representations of interracial families who transracially adopted or invalidate their experiences. There is potential for additional studies that follow or replicate the same analytical framework and methodology I have established. If this dissertation were to be replicated in some form, the next steps could be to extend the scope to a larger sample size of multiracial picturebooks included in Appendix C, or perhaps extended to include picturebooks depicting transracial adoptees or out with a Western or Eurocentric context to include non-English texts. Furthermore, although the critical content analysis as a methodology is fruitful in generating critical questions for self-reflection that could lead to transformative thinking in regards to multiraciality, if I were to approach this research again, I believe the ideas produced in **Stitching Together Transformation** could provide valuable insights. It would be interesting to employ the different forms of critical questions developed from the futility, danger, and perversity schema into practice with fieldwork and workshops, and to see children engage directly with the multiracial picturebooks could facilitate proposals to widen the curriculum.

A study commissioned by Penguin Random House and the Runnymede Trust called 'Lit in Colour: Diversity in Literature in English Schools' was published in the late stages of my dissertation and their aims closely aligned with my research: "to find innovative and practical ways to give schools the support and tools they need to introduce more books by people of colour into the classroom for all ages" (Elliott et al., p.3). This study is encouraging; more exposure regarding inclusive education is needed and the bridging between publishers and education to advocate for a wider curriculum that reflects the rich tapestry of different narratives is welcome. There is a lot of key findings within the report that is relevant to my dissertation, and if given the chance to pursue further study, could serve as a springboard for further study. The statistics itself are particularly interesting, given the lack of my own empirical research. They reveal a shocking reality regarding the curriculum in England specifically, which can foreground further research by proposing a multiracial specific pedagogy within Britain. There is also potential for research collaboration that can adapt my framework while undergoing a similar qualitative and quantitative methodology into other geographic contexts.

I hope my approach has aided in furthering the field of CMRS by adding my voice to the growing dissemination of pertinent research that can assist in policymaking or creation of multiracial inclusive material guidelines for educators and teacher development programmes. The walk towards a utopian multiracial pedagogy was always going to be fraught with danger and concern for perversity, but it is certainly not a futile endeavour. Galeano (as cited in Bregman, 2017) elucidates the importance of not losing sight of the "horizon" no matter how long or how many meandering paths you may cross and double-back on:

> I move two steps closer; it moves two steps further away. I walk another ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further away. As much as I may walk, I'll never reach it. So what's the point of utopia? The point is this: to keep walking. (p.164).

Just like multiraciality and racial categories, the utopian horizon may always be in flux. Such endeavours that highlight the disparities in the curriculum and diverse representation continue to grow in support and numbers. It is crucial we embrace the mutability of abstract ideals and continue to navigate, challenge, and create guideposts that will take us one step closer to the utopian horizon of a diverse curriculum where every thread of the education and society tapestry are equal in value, no matter their colour.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Picturebooks identified* for this study**

*Books tagged as Bi/Multiracial/Mixed Race on various databases.

Books selected for further and deeper content analysis are appear in **bold

Categorisation of Representation				
Non-fiction	Explicit	Implicit	Abstract	Undetermined

Author	Illustrator/ *Photographers*	Title	Publication Date
Ada, Alma Flor	Savadier, Elivia	I Love Saturdays Y Domingos	2002
Adoff, Arnold	Arnold, Emily	Black is brown is tan	1973
Ahlberg, Janet and Allan	Ahlberg, Janet and Allan	Starting School	1988
Annino, Jan Godown	Desimini, Lisa	She Sang Promise	2010
Ashdown, Rebecca	Ashdown, Rebecca	How to Train the Perfect Parents	2019
Ashman, Linda	Boynton-Hughes, Brooke	Henry Wants More!	2020
Asim, Jabari	Collier, Bryan	Fifty Cents and a Dream	2012
Atinuke	Tobia, Lauren	Anna Hibiscus' Song	2012
Atinuke	Tobia, Lauren	Splash, Anna Hibiscus!	2013
Atinuke	Tobia, Lauren	Double Trouble for Anna Hibiscus!	2015
Atkinson, Cale		Where Oliver Fits	2017
Aurora, Uncle Ian	Moore, Natalia	Cheer: A Book to Celebrate Community	2020
Averbeck, Jim	**Ismail, Yasmeen**	**One Word from Sophia**	**2015**
Averbeck, Jim	**Ismail, Yasmeen**	**Two Problems for Sophia**	**2018**
Averbeck, Jim	**Ismail, Yasmeen**	**Love by Sophia**	**2020**
Barash, Chris	Iwai, Melissa	Fridays Are Special	2014
Barton, Chris	Tate, Don	The Amazing Age of John Roy Lynch	2015
Beaton, Kate	Beaton, Kate	The Princess and the Pony	2015
Beauvais, Garcelle and Jones, Sebastian A.	Webster, James C.	I am Mixed	2015
Benjamin, Floella	Chamberlain, Margaret	My Two Grannies	2008

Benjamin, Floella	Chamberlain, Margaret	My Two Grandads	2010
Berenger, Al	Berenger, Al	Pocket Bios: Martin Luther King, Jr.	2018
Binch, Caroline	Binch, Caroline	Silver Shoes	2001
Binczewski, Kim and Econopouly, Bethany	Choi, Hayelin	Bread Lab!	2018
Bismark, Rashmi	Huff, Morgan	Finding Om	2020
Boelts, Maribeth	Dominguez, Angela	Kaia and the Bees	2020
Booth, Tom	Booth, Tom	Day at the Beach	2018
Borden, Louise and Kroeger, Mary Kay	Flavin, Teresa	Fly High!	2001
Boswell, Addie	Boswell, Addie	Five on the Bed	2020
Bottner, Barbara	Chen, Yuyi	Amy is Famous	2019
Bradman, Tony	Browne, Eileen	Through My Window	1986
Bradman, Tony	Browne, Eileen	Wait and See	1988
Bradman, Tony	Browne, Eileen	In a Minute	1991
Brannen, Sarah S.	Soto, Lucia	Uncle Bobby's Wedding	2020
Braver, Vanita	Dirocco, Carl	Madison and the Two Wheeler	2007
Braver, Vanita	Brown, Jonathan	Madison and the New Neighbors	2014
Brenner, Tom	Christy, Jana	And Then Comes Christmas	2014
Brown, Lisa	Brown, Lisa	The Airport Book	2016
Brown, Monica	Palacios, Sara	Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match/Marisol McDonald No Combina	2011
Brown, Monica	Palacios, Sara	Marisol McDonald and the Clash Bash/Marisol McDonald y la fiesta sin igual	2013
Brown, Monica	Palacios, Sara	Marisol McDonald and the Monster/Marisol McDonald Y El Monstruo	2016
Brown, Monica	Parra, John	Frida Kahlo and her Animalitos	2017
Browne, Anthony		Little Frida	2019
Brownridge, Lucy	Dieckmann, Sandra	Portrait of an Artist: Frida Kahlo	2019
Bryant, Jen	Chapman, Cannaday	Feed Your Mind: A Story of August Wilson	2019
Carey, Mariah	Madden, Colleen	All I Want for Christmas is You	2015
Carney-Nunes, Charisse	Williams, Ann Marie	I am Barack Obama	2009

Cassie, Aidan	Cassie, Aidan	Sterling, Best Dog Ever	2018
Catledge, Tiffany	Rivière, Anissa	Mixed Me	2013
Chambers, Veronica	Baker, Rachelle	Shirley Chisholm is a Verb!	2020
Chen, Eva	Desierto, Derek	Juno Valentine and the Magical Shoes	2018
Chen, Eva	Desierto, Derek	Juno Valentine and the Fantastic Fashion Adventure	2019
Cheng, Andrea	Zhang, Ange	Grandfather Counts	2000
Cheng, Andrea	Young, Ed	Shanghai Messenger	2005
Chung, Arree	Chung, Arree	Ninja Claus!	2017
Chung, Arree	Chung, Arree	Mixed: A Colorful Story	2018
Coehlo, Joseph	Lumbers, Fiona	Luna Loves Library Day	2017
Coelho, Joseph	Colpoys, Allison	Grandpa's Stories	2019
Conan, James A.	Lalonde, Nicolle	Our Big Little Place	2019
Connors, Lisa	Jones, Karen	Oliver's Otter Phase	2018
Cordell, Matthew	Cordell, Matthew	King Alice	2018
Cottleston, B.D.	Piwowarski, Marcin	Who is Ana Dalt?	2020
Crockett-Corson, Kim	Brezovec, Jelena	My Good Morning	2017
Curtis, Jamie Lee	Cornell, Laura	Me, Myselfie & I	2018
Davies, Nicola	Sutton, Emily	Grow: Secrets of Our DNA	2021
Davol, Marguerite W.	Trivas, Irene	Black, White, Just Right!	1993
Dawson, Keila V.	Smith, Vernon	The King Cake Baby	2015
De Haes, Ian	De Haes, Ian	Superluminous	2020
Denise, Anika	Alvarez Gómez, Lorena	Starring Carmen!	2017
Denise, Anika	Alvarez Gómez, Lorena	Lights, Camera, Carmen!	2018
Depaola, Tomie	Salati, Doug	In a Small Kingdom	2018
Derting, Kimberly and Johannes, Shelli R.	Harrison, Vashti	Cece Loves Science	2018
Derting, Kimberly and Johannes, Shelli R.	Harrison, Vashti	Cece Loves Science and Adventure	2019
Dias, Hannah Carmona	Georgieva-Gode, Dolly	Beautiful, Wonderful, Strong Little Me!	2018
Diggs, Taye	Evans, Shane W.	Mixed Me!	2015
Dionne, Erin	Ebbeler, Jeffrey	Captain's log: snowbound	2018
DiOrio, Rana and Yoran, Elad	Mata, Nina	What Does it Mean to be American?	2019

Doerrfeld, Cori	Doerrfeld, Cori	Good Dog	2018
Dowd, Dineo	Merrill, Nadara	Summer Camping	2020
Eaton, Jason Carter	Petrik, Mike	Bad Brows	2020
Ehrenberg, Pamela	Sarkar, Anjan	Queen of the Hanukkah Dosas	2017
Ehrlich, Nikki	Abbott Wagner, Zoey	Twindergarten	2017
Ellison, Joy	Silver, Teshika	Sylvia and Marsha Start a Revolution!	2020
Fields, Monique	Moises, Yesenia	Honeysmoke: A Story of Finding Your Color	2019
Flansburg, Rebecca and Norrgard, Ba	Weber, Penny	Sissy Goes Tiny	2019
Fortune, Jeanne	Blueberry Illustrations	Mommy, I Need My Wheels	2020
Friedman, Ina	Say, Allen	How My Parents Learned to Eat	1984
Furstinger, Nancy	Bereciartu, Julia	The Duchess and Guy: A Rescue-to-Royalty Puppy Love Story	2019
Garland, Sarah	Garland, Sarah	Billy and Belle	1992
Gehl, Laura	Neonakis, Alexandria	Juniper Kai: Super Spy	2019
Genhart, Michael	Burris, Priscilla	Accordionly: Abuelo and Opa Make Music	2020
Gianferrari, Maria	Barton, Patrice	Hello Goodbye Dog	2017
Gilbert, Leah	Gilbert, Leah	A Couch for Llama	2018
Gonzales, Mark	Amini, Mehrdokht	Yo Soy Muslim	2017
Grimes, Nikki	Collier, Bryan	Barack Obama	2012
Grubman, Bonnie	Diederen, Suzanne	Just the Right Size	2018
Hale, Christy	Hale, Christy	The East-West House	2009
Harris, Robie H.	Westcott, Nadine Bernard	Who's in My Family?	2012
Harris, Robie H.	Westcott, Nadine Bernard	What's in There?	2013
Harris, Robie H.	Westcott, Nadine Bernard	What's so Yummy?	2014
Harris, Robie H.	Westcott, Nadine Bernard	Who We Are!	2016
Harvey, Jeanne Walker	Zunon, Elizabeth	My Hands Sing the Blues	2011
Harvey, Matt	Latimer, Miriam	Shopping With Dad	2008
Hill, Susanna Leonard	Joseph, John	Dear Santa	2019

Hoena, Blake	LeDoyen, Sam	Colin Kaepernick	2020
Hooker, Renee and Jones, Karl	Durst, Kathryn	Life with my Family	2018
Hosford, Kate	Halpin, Abigail	Mama's Belly	2018
Hughes, Vi	Shefrin, Sima Elizabeth	Once Upon a Bathtime	2008
Iijima, Geneva Cobb	Billin-Fyre, Paige	The Way We Do it in Japan	2002
J, Harris	Jenkins, Ward	Salam Alaikum	2017
James, Simon	James, Simon	Mr. Scruff	2019
Jane, Pamela	Gott, Barry	Trucks Zooming By	2019
Johnson, Angela	Samon, David	The Aunt in Our House	1996
Jones, Pip	Hughes, Laura	Quick Barney, Run!	2018
Juster, Norton	Raschka, Chris	The Hello, Goodbye Window	2005
Juster, Norton	Raschka	Sourpuss and Sweetie Pie	2008
Karst, Patrice	Lew-Vriethoff, Joanne	The Invisible Leash	2019
Keane, Dave	Campbell, K.G.	Who Wants a Tortoise?	2016
Keller, Shana	Stark, Kayla	Bread for Words	2020
Kent, Jane	Muñoz, Isabel	The Life of Frida Kahlo	2019
Khalil, Aya	Semirdzhyan	The Arabic Quilt: An Immigrant Story	2020
Khan, Hena	Jaleel, Aaliya	Under My Hijab	2019
Kissinger, Katie	*Bahnhoff, Chris*	All the Colors We Are / Todos los colores de nuestra piel	2014
Krishnaswami, Uma	Akib, Jamel	Bringing Asha Home	2006
Lara, Carrie	Battuz, Christine	Marvelous Maravilloso	2018
Lara, Carrie	Battuz, Christine	The Heart of Mi Familia	2020
Larsen, Andrew	Lee, Jacqui	Goodnight, Hockey Fans	2017
Ledyard, Stephanie Parsley	Chin, Jason	Pie is for Sharing	2018
Levis, Caron	Brantley-Newton, Vanessa	Mama's Work Shoes	2019
Light, Steve	Light, Steve	Builders & Breakers	2018
Lionni, Leo	Lionni, Leo	A Color of His Own	1975
Lukoff, Kyle	Juanita, Kaylani	When Aidan Became a Brother	2019
Lumbard, Rabiah York	Horton, Laura K.	The Gift of Ramadan	2019
MacFarlane, Rachael	Laudiero, Spencer	Harrison Dwight, Ballerina and Knight	2019
MacLachlan, Patricia	Graegin, Stephanie	You Were the First	2013

Maclear, Kyo	Arsenault, Isabelle	Spork	2010
Mair, J. Samia	Burgess, Omar	Zak and His Good Intentions	2014
Mair, J. Samia	Burgess, Omar	Zak and His Little Lies	2018
Mawhinney, Lynnette	Poh, Jennie	Lulu the One and Only	2020
Mayer, Pamela	Melmon, Deborah	Chicken Soup, Chicken Soup	2016
McAllister, Margaret	Sterling, Holly	15 Things Not to Do with a Baby	2015
McAllister, Margaret	Sterling, Holly	15 Things Not to Do with Grandma	2016
McAllister, Margaret	Sterling, Holly	15 Things Not to Do with a Puppy	2018
McCanna, Tim	Miller, Andy J.	So Many Sounds	2018
McGill, Alice	Soentpiet, Chris K.	Molly Bannaky	1999
McKay, Lawrence, Jr	Lee, Dom and Keunhee	Journey Home	1998
McKenna, Lori	Blackmore, Katherine	Humble and Kind	2021
McLean, Dirk	Brassard, France	Curtain Up!	2010
Meloy, Colin	Harris, Shawn	Everyone's Awake	2020
Méndez, Yamile Saied	Kim, Jaime	Where Are You From?	2020
Meshon, Aaron	Meshon, Aaron	Now That I'm Here	2018
Miller, Ryan	Aly, Hatem	How to Feed Your Parents	2018
Miller, Pat Zietlow	Marley, Alea	Loretta's Gift	2018
Mora, Pat	Parra, John	Gracias/Thanks	2009
Morales, Yuyi	Morales, Yuyi	Viva Frida!	2015
Mulford, Zoe	Scher, Jeff	The President Sang Amazing Grace	2019
Napoli, Donna Jo	Madsen, Jim	The Crossing	2011
Narh, Samuel	Loring-Fisher, Jo	Maisie's Scrapbook	2019
Newman, Lesléa	Mola, Maria	Sparkle Boy	2017
Novesky, Amy	Diaz, David	Me, Frida	2010
Novotny-Hunter, Jana	Widdowson, Kay	A Bear Hug at Bedtime	2018
Oliveros, Jessie	Wulfekotte, Dana	The Remember Balloons	2018
Olson, Jennifer Gray		A Little Space for Me	2020
Pak, Jiyeon	Pak, Jiyeon	Finding Grandma's Memories	2019
Paul, Miranda	Chin, Jason	Water is Water	2015
Pedersen, Laura	Weber, Penny	Ava's Adventure	2014
Petričić, Dušan	Petričić, Dušan	My Family Tree and Me	2015

Raczka, Bob	Shin, Simone	Niko Draws a Feeling	2017
Rappaport, Doreen	Kukuk, Linda	Wilma's Way Home	2019
Rattigan, Jama Kim	Hsu, Lillian	Dumpling Soup	1998
Ringgold, Faith	Ringgold, Faith	Bonjour Lonnie	1996
Robertson, Sebastian	Gustavson, Adam	Rock & Roll Highway	2014
Robeson, Susan	Brown, Rod	Grandpa Stops a War: A Paul Robeson Story	2019
Rocco, John		Blackout	2011
Roettiger, Laura	Boroff, Ariel	Aliana Reaches for the Moon	2019
Rumford, James		Sequoyah	2004
Quarmby, Katharine	Grobler, Piet	Fussy Freya	2008
Sanchez Vegara, Maria Isabel	Lozano, Luciano	Jean-Michel Basquiat	2020
Savageau, Cheryl	Hynes, Robert	Muskrat Will Be Swimming	2006
Say, Allen	Say, Allen	The Favorite Daughter	2013
Schmidt, Gary D.	Diaz, David	Martín de Porres	2012
Shanté, Angela	Hawkins, Alison	The Noisy Classroom	2020
Shin, Sun Yung	Cogan, Kim	Cooper's Lesson/쿠퍼의 레슨	2004
Simmons, Anthea	Birkett, Goergie	I'm Big Now!	2017
Singh, Komal	Konak, Ipek	Ara the Star Engineer	2018
Slade, Suzanne	Tadgell, Nicole	Friends For Freedom	2016
Sliwerski, Jessica Reid	Song, Mika	Cancer Hates Kisses	2017
Smiley, Jane	Castillo, Lauren	Twenty Yawns	2016
Smith, Crystal	*Satoshi Garcia, Michael*	I am Hapa/¡Soy Hapa!/我是 Hapa	2016
Smith, Dana Kessimakis	Freeman, Laura	A Wild Cowboy	2004
Smith, Heather	Carter, Alice	Angus All Aglow	2018
Smith, Tamara Ellis	Daviddi, Evelyn	Here and There	2019
Smith Hyde, Heidi	Prevost, Mikela	Elan, Son of Two Peoples	2014
Starishevsky, Jill	Padrón, Angela	My Body Belongs to Me / mi cuerpo me pertenece	2020
Stehlik, Tania		Violet	2009
Steptoe, Javaka	Steptoe, Javaka	Radiant Child	2016
Sternberg, Julie	Koehler, Fred	Puppy, Puppy, Puppy	2017
Stine, Matt and Weinberg, Elisabeth	Keiser, Paige	Little Chef	2018
Soetoro-Ng, Maya	Morales, Yuyi	Ladder to the Moon	2011
Sullivan, Rosana		Mommy Sayang	2019
Tarpley, Todd	Vogel, Vin	Naughty Ninja Takes a Bath	2020

Taylor, Gaylia	Morrison, Frank	George Crum and the Saratoga Chip	2006
Thoms, Susan Collins	Pilutti, Deb	The Twelve Days of Christmas in Michigan	2010
Thorn, Theresa	Grigni, Noah	It Feels Good to be Yourself	2019
Tobin, Jim	Coverly, Dave	The Very Inappropriate Word	2013
Toht, Patricia	Jarvis	Pick a Pumpkin	2019
Tra, Frank	Evans, Rebecca	Masterpiece Robot	2018
Uegaki, Chieri	Simms, Genevieve	Ojiichan's Gift	2019
Vega, Denise	Ohora, Zachariah	If Your Monster Won't Go to Bed	2017
Velasquez, Eric		Grandma's Gift	2013
Verde, Susan	Joyner, Andrew	Unstoppable Me	2019
Viña, Rose	Almon, Claire	Ice Breaker: How Mabel Fairbanks Changed Figure Skating	2019
Visram, Amy	Ryski, Dawid	My Four Seasons	2017
Wahl, Phoebe	Wahl, Phoebe	Sonya's Chickens	2015
Wellins, Candy	Eve Ryan, Charlie	Saturdays Are for Stella	2020
Weatherford, Carole Boston	Bates, Amy	First Pooch	2009
Weatherford, Carole Boston	Barrett, Robert	Obama	2010
Weatherford, Carole Boston	Zunon, Elizabeth	The Legendary Miss Lena Horne	2017
Wilbur, Helen L.	Uhles, Mary Reaves	A Tuba Christmas	2018
Williams, Laura E.	Orback	The Can Man	2010
Williams, Maggy	Agresta, Elizabeth Hasegawa	I'm Mixed!	2018
Wilson-Max, Ken		Lenny Has Lunch	2010
Wilson-Max, Ken		Lenny in the Garden	2010
Wing, Natasha	Casilla, Robert	Jalapeño Bagels	1996
Winstanley, Nicola	Nadeau, Janice	Cinnamon Baby	2011
Winter, Jonah	Juan, Ana	Frida	2002
Winter, Jonah		Barack	2008
Winter, Jonah		My Name is James Madison Hemings	2016
Winters, Kari-Lynn	Leist, Christina	On My Walk	2019
Winters, Kari-Lynn	Thisdale, François	French Toast	2016
Winters, Kari-Lynn	Leist, Christina	On My Skis	2017
Winters, Kari-Lynn	Leist, Christina	On My Bike	2017

Winters, Kari-Lynn	Leist, Christina	On My Swim	2018
Wyeth, Sharon Dennis	Ibatoulline, Bagram	The Granddaughter Necklace	2013
Yamasaki, Katie	Yamasaki, Katie	When the Cousins Came	2018
Yim, Natasha	Kim, Violet	Luna's Yum Yum Dim Sum	2020

APPENDIX B
Process for recording individual data

Title:	
Author:	
Does the author/their family identify as multiracial?	Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown ☐
Illustrator:	
Does the illustrator/their family identify as multiracial?	Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown ☐
Year:	
Publisher:	**Country:**
Plot Summary:	
Are the characters human?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Protagonist Name:	
Gender identity: Racial identity:	
Analysis of Other Characters:	
Family: Friends: Other:	
Categorised as:	☐ Non-Fiction Representation ☐ Explicit Representation ☐ Implicit Representation ☐ Abstract Representation ☐ Undetermined/Unknown

APPENDIX C
Process for determining categorisation of data