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Exploring the Editor-Author Relationship in a Multi-Cultural Context: The Influence of Editorial Interventions and How the Author Experiences Them in the Process of Finalising and Producing the Published Book

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Plagiarism Declaration

I, **Megan Winifred Mance**, student number: **2251884,** registered for the degree of **MA Publishing Studies** in the academic year 2022, hereby declare the following:

- I am aware that plagiarism, that is the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source, is wrong.

- I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above degree is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.

- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the words, thoughts and ideas of others.

- I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

Signature  **Date: 24 March 2025**

Abstract

This research project investigates the editor-author relationship in a multi-cultural context, focusing on the influence of editorial interventions and how the author experiences them in the process of finalising and producing the published book. The central question in this study of the cultural dynamic of an older white editor and a young Black author is about the effect on the final work of the interactions between them.

This study was informed by an interpretivist ontology and epistemology, and a qualitative methodology. The research design incorporated multiple interviews to determine the experiences and views of editors on the one hand and Likert scale statements to determine the experiences and views of authors on the other. The research on the editors is fully qualitative in that their views are analysed through one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

The findings from this research illuminate the differences between editor and author opinions of the editing process. Publishers, it seems, need to have a more hands-on approach to editing so that the author feels supported and the editor feels validated. This research is but one example of the development required for editing to be a truly beneficial and respectful industry with clear goals and with the author's best interests as the primary goal.

The key finding from this research highlights the mutual respect and harmony experienced and proclaimed in interactions between white editors and Black authors in South Africa.

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

This research project investigates the editor-author relationship in a multi-cultural context, focusing on the influence of editorial interventions and how the author experiences them in the process of finalising and producing the published book. The central question in this study of the cultural dynamic of an older white editor and a young Black author is about the effect of the interactions between them on the final work.

This chapter introduces the topic, provides the background to the research and lists the research questions that were explored. This is followed by a brief description of the rationale and the approach to data collection. The final sections give the limitations of the study, followed by a breakdown of chapters.

1.1 Background Information

In the context of this study the editor is the person involved in working on a completed manuscript to correct errors and other weaknesses and assist in improving the manuscript in multiple ways at the word, sentence, paragraph and discourse levels. The role of the editor is to pay meticulous attention to detail in order to bring out the best possible version of the published work and the best way to serve the writer's intentions (Rasch, 2021: 11). For the purposes of this research, the language in question is English.

This limited idea of editing does not take into account the author and their unique, authentic authorial voice. In this context, voice is closely related to the author's identity, encapsulating both individual and social perspectives (Prior, 2001 in Mhilli, 2023: 2), something an author may fear the editor will not respect or take into account. This is a potential issue specific to the South African publishing landscape because there is still a notable lack of diversity in this industry with regards to authorship and the languages in which the majority of books are written (PASA, 2022). This research came about from a need to highlight the importance of authorial voice to fill a gap as there is not much literature on this aspect of editing, especially in the South African context.

This research project is significant because it will add to the body of research on the relationship dynamics between author and editor. In South Africa there is currently a dearth of research on this topic, although Perkins (2016) contributes significantly to it in the South African context, as her research addressed the ethics of editing and respecting the authorial voice in South African literature. Her study was qualitative, focusing on one editor and three authors. One of her recommendations was that further research is required in the South African context, as she also noted the lack of research in this area (Perkins, 2016). The more research conducted in this field, the more complexity and depth can be achieved. In the trade sector in South Africa, 88 per cent of books are written in English; fewer than one per cent are written in languages other than English or Afrikaans (PASA, 2024 26), implying that a significant number of authors are not writing in their first language. This is crucially significant in the context of writing that reflects the author's cultural and language specificities, where the author's writing is particularly intended to reflect their thoughts, feelings and experiences in the language they have chosen to portray them in.

Editing can be defined as removing "any obstacles between the reader and what the author wants to convey" (Butcher, 2006: 1). Furthermore, an editor checks for "sense, repetition and ambiguity … libel, errors of fact or misleading and potentially dangerous information" (Butcher, 2006: 1). This involves various levels of editing, from correcting spelling and language errors (Rasch, 2021:2) to helping an author achieve what they set out to achieve (Saller, 2009: xvii). This study will include an overview of what editing is thought to encompass, starting with general definitions of editing, including those proposed by Butcher (2006), Clark (2011) and Hill (2013).

The landscape of publishing in South Africa is examined to better understand the dynamics that are likely to be at play between author and editor. This study therefore includes a brief examination of the South African publishing industry in terms of language, diversity, transformation and cross-cultural dynamics.

Only 8.1 per cent of South Africans speak English inside their homes (Galal, 2022), whereas isiZulu, the most widely spoken language in South Africa, is spoken by 25.3 per cent of South Africans. Of the 76 per cent of the South African population who speak a Black language at home, 45.2 per cent speak one of the Nguni languages (isiZulu, isiXhosa, isNdebele and siSwati) and 30.8 per cent speak a Sotho language (Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana) (Stats SA, 2022). Figures for how much South African English fiction is written by exophonic writers drawn from this large cohort are hard to come by; it is likely a great number. Perkins (2016) focused on one white, first-language English-speaking editor and three authors whose first language was not English, but who opted to write in English. She acknowledged that this sample did not provide an abundance of data, but her participants echo this likelihood.

As stated above, the trade publishing industry is dominated by English books; most authors choose to publish in English as it is then most likely to sell. Because English is very widely spoken as a second language in South Africa, there are naturally multiple spoken and written English dialects. An author writing a work that involves their own cultural lived experiences, may want to convey this in their writing and may fear the editorial process will compromise their voice. In this context, voice can be closely linked to identity (Mhilli, 2023:1).

In terms of language, the trade sector focuses on English-language-speaking readers, with a small percentage of Afrikaans book-buying readers (PASA, 2024: 26).

Voice plays a role in presenting "depth and richness of personal experience" (Stewart, 1992 in Mhilli, 2023:2). Mhilli (2023: 7) argues that individual voice in writing is closely tied to voice in speech and is therefore "unique, distinct and identifiable". This is especially true when the writer is using their voice to illustrate cultural specificities.

There are therefore often cultural dynamics at play between author and editor when the author is a second-language English-speaking South African and the editor is a first-language English-speaking South African (McDonell, 2004: 85 in Perkins, 2016). This might result in the author wanting to represent a non-standard dialect of English and the editor wanting to 'correct' it, even though it is merely different, not incorrect. Research discussing where the relationship between author and editor may fall apart suggests it is because authors do not understand editing as well as an editor does and they are concerned about what will happen to their work once it is in someone else's hands (Schwartz, 2017).

This research report also addresses the publisher's role in facilitating rapport between editor and author in their common quest to optimise the merits of the published book. 'Publisher' in the context of this research is a role sometimes referred to as 'commissioning editor', i.e. the person whose main role is finding new authors, books and ideas to publish (Publishers Association, n.d.). They are responsible for the author and for the success of the finished project (the sales of the book). The publisher therefore has a key role in linking an author with an editor.

1.2 Research Questions

When the author knows that the editor is "the reader's advocate and the author's ambassador" (Butcher, 2006: 1), a good rapport based on trust and mutual purpose can be developed, which will result in not just an error-free text, but the best possible version of the book, with the author's authentic voice intact. The cultural dynamics that impact this 'ideal' relationship described by Butcher (2006) arise when an author perceives an editor to be imposing their voice on the book. If the author perceives the editor to be removing "personal style, recognisable and distinct voice" (Elbow, 2007 in Mhilli, 2023: 2), they may feel that their culture and personal style are not being respected. Tension that arises may lead the author to reject the editor's interventions, regardless of their merit, implying a lack of trust in the editor's intentions and a breakdown in their relationship. Griffin (2023) points out that while both authors and editors might have the same end goal – "to produce a successful book" – differences may occur in how they each plan to get there. A lack of trust can then occur when the author feels the editor does not understand their work or respect their vision or voice.

Based on the above, the central question for this research project, within the topic of the role of the editor, is how the rapport established between author and editor affects the final work. So, the primary question in this research is:

- In what ways does the professional rapport between editor and author developed during the editing process support the author in the process of finalising the book for publication?

The following sub-questions narrow the focus of the central question:

  - What is the impact of the cultural dynamics between editor and author on how the author feels the final work reflects their authentic voice?
  - What aspects of this relationship between author and editor are revealed in the opinions, perceptions and experiences of the authors and editors?
  - What role does the publisher play in facilitating the relationship between author and editor?

This research project is significant because it will add to the body of research on the relationship dynamics between author and editor, as called for by other prominent researchers in this field, such as Perkins (2016).

1.3 Rationale

This study investigates the ways in which the professional rapport between authors and editors influences the final stages of the writing of a book, i.e. after the author has completed a first draft and before the book goes to print. It includes the hazards and benefits that arise during the editorial process, particularly when the author is writing in a second language. The focus is on the impact that cultural dynamics may have on how the author feels the final work reflects their authentic voice. This is important because the editor's interventions can significantly alter the way the author writes in English. This study explores the extent to which the relationship between editor and author can be measured by comparing their perceptions of the editorial interventions. Finally, this study considers the role the publisher can play in facilitating this process and relationship. These objectives underscore the rationale behind this study.

This research informs publishers of the scope of the editing mandate and of considerations for briefing an editor and an author before and during the editing process and alerting them to the potential pitfalls in interfering with the author's voice. It presents ways in which the rapport between author and editor can be disclosed and reported. This will assist the publishing field in understanding how the publisher can facilitate the editing process so that authors have a better understanding of the purpose and intention of editors (Shah, 2007), which is essentially that editors "add sufficient value" to an author's text (Clarke and Phillips, 2014 in Perkins, 2016: 13) and mitigate the impact of cultural diversity in this process. Furthermore, this research builds on the research conducted by Perkins in her master's dissertation in 2016, adding to the body of literature specific to South Africa on this topic.

The patterns and themes that emerge could provide a better understanding for authors and editors of how to build a valuable relationship based on mutual trust and respect and a shared purpose.

1.4 Overview of Methodology

The methodology for this research is designed to collect qualitative data, as the findings are based on the thoughts, opinions and experiences (Caulfield, 2020) of South African authors and editors. Data from the authors is derived from a Likert scale questionnaire. This will provide a numerical basis for making generalisations about their collective experience of the editing process. Semi-structured interviews will be held with the editors. This will allow them to expand on their answers and provide an in-depth understanding of their insights on the challenges of editing across a cultural divide. Interviews allow the researcher to approach the research question from multiple angles.

Qualitative research data is usually collected through interviews and personal experience (Stumpfegger, 2017). Interviewing participants is the best method to follow because experiences and thoughts cannot be quantified. The Likert scale statements provide measurable data in a way that interview questions cannot, but, unlike the interviews, provide no opportunity for the respondents to expand on their answers. See section 3.3.1 for details on sampling.

Chapter two supports the qualitative research by highlighting gaps in the literature and aligning existing research with editors' and authors' lived experiences.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

A limitation in this research, for both authors and editors, is responder bias. Authors might avoid saying anything negative on record lest they be perceived as complaining or being critical of their editor. It is important to reassure them that their responses remain confidential, as guaranteed in the consent forms.

The findings presented in Chapter 4 illustrate that authors do in fact report having had positive experiences with their editors, although, as discussed in that chapter, it is not possible to determine whether this is completely accurate or whether this reflects the authors' opinions of what they thought was expected from them in participating in this research.

A potential limitation regarding the editors was that the depth and richness of their responses depended on the researcher's rapport with them. A positive here is that the researcher has commissioned work from each of these freelance editors over the last fifteen years. Here too there is a risk of responder bias, as the editors may provide answers that they believe the interviewer wishes to hear instead of answering truthfully.

Another limitation is the small size of the research group. Because of the nature of the research, the group of editors interviewed was necessarily small. Although the data they provided had richness and depth, their views are not generalisable to all editors. This is mitigated through an in-depth literature review.

A potential limitation arising from using voluntary response sampling to select the author sample is self-selection bias because some people are inherently more likely to volunteer than others. For example, authors who had positive editing experiences may be more willing to share them than those who had negative experiences.

A final limitation is the researcher's own subjectivity regarding views and beliefs about the research. It is therefore essential that the researcher remains unbiased.

1.6 Breakdown per Chapter

Chapter 1 presented the background and purpose of this research.

Chapter 2 presents relevant literature that provides further background on this topic as well as related research based on cultural dynamics in South Africa and the changes that are happening in the publishing landscape in this country. Chapter 2 is crucial for mitigating the limitations mentioned above.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to conduct this research, discussing why this methodology was chosen as suitable for conducting this type of qualitative research study.

Chapter 4 presents the research results, including an analysis of the themes, similarities and difference that arose during the interviews with editors. It also analyses the Likert scale results from the authors who participated in the research.

Chapter 5 concludes this report, linking back to the purpose of the research as discussed in this chapter and how the literature review informed the methodology and questions asked.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This research project discusses the categories that inform scholarship around representations of the editor-author relationship in a multi-cultural context, specifically with regard to the influence of editorial interventions and how the author experiences them in the process of finalising and producing the published book. This literature review is therefore a discussion on various articles concerning the role of the editor in the book production process and factors that may influence it. This literature review begins by defining editing and then reviews the literature on industry standards (or the lack thereof). This is followed by an overview of three main levels of editing. Voice and what is meant by it in this research is reviewed. Diversity within the South African publishing industry is examined, followed by literature discussing conflict between authors and editors and how their expectations reportedly differ. Positive and negative editing experiences are examined, with the chapter ending on a review of the author-editor relationship.

2.2 Definition of Editing

The following paragraphs discuss some definitions of editing in order to clarify terms used in this research paper and gain a deeper understanding of the role of the editor. These definitions are crucial for an understanding of the participants and the role of the editor in getting a book through the final stages of production prior to layout. For example, Robert Gottlieb, one of the "most celebrated editors of recent decades", describes editing as "simply the application of the common sense of any good reader" (1994, in Clark, 2011). Page (2019) adds to this by stating that editing is a "process that involves revising the content, organization, grammar, and presentation of a piece of writing". The purpose of editing is to ensure that the author's ideas are presented to the reader as clearly as possible (Page, 2019). The research in this investigation includes three levels of editing: copy editing at word or sentence level (common errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and usage; Plain English; word choices); stylistic editing at sentence and paragraph level (clarity, cohesion, coherence) and developmental editing (structure, story, plot, pacing, characterisation, theme and consistency). The level of editing required may depend on the author's submission but also on the type of work, for example fiction versus academic writing. This research looks in particular at the kind of editing that occurs when editing a book written by an author who is not a first-language English speaker. These levels encompass the main role of the editor for this type of publication.

Common sense may not be all that is required of an editor. Hill (2013) describes editing as refining and polishing a manuscript, ensuring the best possible final product using the resources and time available. An editor can therefore not rewrite a manuscript to turn it into something it is not. An editor's role is to work with an existing manuscript and weed out grammatical and typographical errors, check facts where possible, remove repetition, and suggest improvements in word choice and sentence construction. The editor also checks for consistency, logic, flow and organisation, but never rewrites (Hill, 2013).

This is confirmed by Green, who states that "We help make their good books better, but the editorial work we do shouldn't ever compromise an author's vision for a book" (Green, 2015: 1). This alludes to one of the sub-questions in this research, regarding whether the author feels that the final work reflects their authentic voice. This includes the author's perceptions

of the editor's role in finalising the manuscript, in that the author may be wary that the editor may try to overrule their authentic voice. Editing is therefore defined here as removing "any obstacles between the reader and what the author wants to convey" (Butcher, 2006: 1). While there are computer programs available today that check for errors in spelling and grammar, a computer cannot check for "sense, repetition and ambiguity. It will not pick up libel, errors of fact or misleading and potentially dangerous information" (Butcher, 2006: 1).

Most of the literature available on the role of the editor and the relationship between editor and author were from outside of South Africa (Durham & Weber, 1991; Canty, 2012; O'Moore-Klopf, 2014; Cortada, 2017; Shea, 2018); there is no research on this topic in South Africa apart from Perkins' study in 2016. It is important to look specifically at South African authors and editors both because of this dearth in literature and because the South African situation is unique and South African voices are unique, and the cultural nuances and language usage are culturally specific.

South Africa's linguistic demographics account at least partially for this uniqueness. For example, as earlier stated, only 8.7 per cent of South Africans speak English inside their homes (Galal, 2022), whereas isiZulu, the most widely spoken language in South Africa, is spoken by 25.3 per cent of South Africans. This means that a significant proportion of South Africans writing in English are writing in a language that is not their first language. This is supported by PASA's South African Book Publishing Survey 2021–2022, which recorded that 89 per cent of revenue for trade books during this period came from books written in English, with 11 per cent from Afrikaans, leaving less than 1 per cent (recorded as 0 per cent due no doubt to the rounding of numbers) to all other official South African languages (PASA, 2023). With 11 official languages, many South African authors writing in English bring a unique voice to their writing (a discussion on voice follows later in this chapter) and may be concerned that an editor might try to 'correct' language to the point that the author's voice is lost or erased. Because it is very widely spoken as a second language (Galal, 2022) there are naturally multiple dialects spoken and used, and slang that is regionally or culturally used that may be unfamiliar to anyone outside of that group. An author, especially those writing about personal experience, may want to convey this in their writing and may fear the editorial process will compromise their voice. This is especially true when the editor is a first-language English speaker.

According to Dempsey (2021), a writer can expect their editor to correct typos and grammatical errors but not to compel them to change "substantial matters such as plot, structure, story flow and character development" (Dempsey, 2021:1). Editors should suggest possible solutions to problems in the text for the writer to consider and provide a clear explanation for changing something at the copy-editing level, for example correcting a grammatical error. Editors should set an example of correct writing in their feedback to the writer, such as making suggestions for how something could be reworked, and be very careful not to introduce errors into the manuscript.

Research conducted in the South African context has shown that the industry is unregulated and that not much research has drawn attention to cross-cultural editing (Perkins, 2016: 2). Perkins notes that concerns have been raised about the challenges of editing voices considered "historically sidelined", where the role of the editor is to determine the balance between "the experiential and expressive authenticity" of these historically sidelined voices and "the stringent demands or established literary convention" (Bregin, 2007 in Perkins, 2016: 2).

2.3 Standards of Editing

This section examines some of the research that has been conducted on the standards of editing, most notably the lack of industry standards in South Africa, as mentioned in the previous section, with the industry in South Africa being unregulated. This is important because it speaks to how an author may perceive the editor and may or may not be willing to trust an editor. Furthermore, as identified by Perkins (2016:2), there is a need to define what literary conventions demand and how, or whether, this can be balanced with the author's use of language to express themselves and their experiences.

2.3.1 Research on the Standards of Editing

Bloomsbury (2020) points to the current notion that the standard of editing has gone down in recent years, with many book reviews in the media complaining of "sloppy presentation and poor grammar", and publishers frequently seeing editing as a cost rather than a necessity. This is a notion that needs to be seriously considered. Time constraints placed on the publication of a book will inevitably impact on the quality of the writing and the quality of the editing – as mentioned above, editors aim to produce the best possible final product within the time available to them. However, if the editor is not permitted to rewrite anything or insert their own voice into a manuscript, they are constrained by the manuscript itself.

Although the editor-author relationship is "fundamental to a good book … publishing houses have not encouraged editors to edit" (Scott Berg in Shea, 2018: 111). In discussing the role of the editor, Shea (2018: 111) comments that "time constraints have influenced what an editor's job is and how they do it", suggesting that publishing houses may indeed, as mentioned earlier, see editing more as a cost than a necessity.

In contrast, Alison Hennessey (Dead Good Books, 2015) states that the biggest myth about publishing is that "books aren't edited anymore". She says that "anyone who is in this job is passionate about editing and helping an author to get their book into the very best shape possible".

Saletan (in Neary, 2015) points out that she was told over thirty years ago that "people don't really edit anymore" and as such has learned to take such statements with "a big grain of salt". This was in the context of what editors were like many years ago, when editors like Max Perkins (Neary, 2015), who worked on the books of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe and Ernest Hemingway, provided ideas and structure for their novels, working closely with authors to shape their books from the start. This is seldom done today, with editors stepping in after the manuscript has been drafted, when the author is happy with what they consider to be the final product. Note here that there is a distinction between 'editor' meaning publisher (commissioning editor, for example) and editor in the context of this research, meaning copy editor. But the source of the term is the same, and this is perhaps the source of the notion that people do not in actual fact edit anymore. Furthermore, Saleton (in Neary, 2015) supports the notion of 'invisible editing', stating that "when all is said and done … readers shouldn't know exactly what role the editor played in shaping the final book".

Further support for this notion comes from Clark (2011) who also notes the current belief that books are not edited anymore: "For some years now – almost as long as people have been predicting the death of the book – there have been murmurs throughout publishing that books are simply not edited in the way they once were …" But Clark's article leaves this as a

question for the reader. He does, however, point out that while some readers may become 'enraged' when they spot a spelling or grammatical error, others may feel that "speed and economy" are more important than "care and quality".

In response to a comment that "there is no editing anymore", Baron (2010) states that in general "the editor today is working hard, late at night and on the weekends, trying to get the best possible book from the writer". Baron is referring to a commissioning editor or publisher, but in this particular comment she is responding specifically to copy editing, a role that is not taken on by the publisher.

These two points – that books are no longer edited and that an editor's impact on a manuscript should be invisible – are summed up by Blake Morrison (2005, in Clark, 2011) as follows: "[D]espite the inherent fuzziness of the line between facilitating a writer's work … and the kind of over-editing that can result in a loss of authenticity and spontaneity, editing was vital to the business of writing and publishing. 'When a book appears,' he concluded, 'the author must take the credit. But if editing disappears, as it seems to be doing, there'll be no books worth taking the credit for.'" Perkins notes that research in South Africa has focused on the professionalisation and accreditation of editors but also points out that the industry is unregulated (Perkins, 2016: 2). industry. One factor contributing to this lack of regulation is the absence of clear standards that define the role of the editor and demarcate the tasks and skills required to work in the various sectors of the industry (Law, 2011).

2.3.2 Lack of Industry Standards in South Africa

There are no industry standards in South Africa. Law (2012: 275) argues that a significant additional problem that is a possible cause for this belief about editing is the lack of regulation in the industry, but that it is possible to develop a set of core standards that are specific to the South African editing industry. This is affirmed by Kruger and Bevan-Dye (2010: 153) who state that there is a "general lack of explicit policy guidelines for editing". As a result, "any person (regardless of competence) can work as an editor" (Law, 2012: 275).

While some progress has been made towards standardisation of editing in South Africa, the situation has not changed much from when, in 2005 (Law & Kruger, 2008: 479), "the Standards Generating Body for Translation, Interpreting and Language Editing of the South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA) issued an NQF Level 7 qualification and unit standards in editing". As per the SAQA Board decision/s at that time, this qualification was reregistered in 2012 and 2015. However, one does not need this qualification to work as an editor and "there is no legally enforceable regulation of the industry", implying that it is not necessary just because it is available. As a result of this, "unqualified and incompetent editors lower standards and clients' expectations, which have the potential effect of undermining the perceived importance" of the editing process (Law & Kruger, 2008: 479). Law (2012) also notes that when editing is perceived as just "spelling and grammar errors", it makes it difficult for editors to gain recognition for their work. This notion is supported by Kruger and Bevan-Dye (2010), who state that the "general lack of explicit policy guidelines" for editing is a problem. Law (2014:286) reiterates what she pointed out in her 2012 article, stating that there is "very little clarity on the role of the editor" and that as a result of this editors in South Africa "face a number of challenges [which] … often leads to dissatisfaction".

2.4 Three Levels of Editing

This section of the literature review briefly considers the three levels of editing that apply to editing a written text intended for the general trade industry, and which inform some of the interview questions for the participating editors. These are: copy editing at word or sentence level (common errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and usage; Plain English; word choices); stylistic editing at sentence and paragraph level (clarity, cohesion, coherence) and developmental editing (structure, story, plot, pacing, characterisation, theme and consistency). It is important to note that, although there are three distinct levels of editing, they are frequently not done in isolation and there is an overlap in the levels.

The three levels require some further definition. While in the above description developmental editing is the third level, it would be the form of editing done first, on the rawest version of the manuscript. Max (2019) describes developmental editing as conceptual, meaning it involves suggestions on organisation, structure, consistency and flow. Reedsy Blog (2021) adds feedback on major strengths and weaknesses as well as plot and also mentions a focus on structure. Hill (2013) adds point of view and pace to this list. So, this level encompasses the 'big-picture', although Max (2019) includes ensuring the voice is the author's and that the tone is suitable for the intended audience. This is interesting because if a large part of the focus of this research project involves voice, it would mean that editors would look at voice at this stage, although refining word choice is placed by both Reedsy Blog (2021) and Hill (2013) at the level of line editing ('stylistic editing' in the three levels given in the interview questions for this research project).

Stylistic editing involves a closer look at the sentence and paragraph level, assuming the overall structure and narrative have been resolved, and deals with clarity, cohesion and coherence within the text.

The final copy-editing stage involves correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar (Max, 2015), repetition, word usage and inconsistencies (Reedsy Blog, 2021) and, according to Hill (2013), fact-checking. This level of editing might well be the source of comments regarding publishing houses not editing books anymore, as a reader is more likely to pick up on these types of errors rather than on weaknesses in organisation, structure and flow.

2.5 Defining Voice

It is necessary at this point to clarify what is meant by "voice" as it is used throughout this chapter and Chapter 4. Bregin (2007 in Perkins, 2016) discusses the challenge of editing voices that have been "historically marginalised". These authors often do not follow 'standard' literary conventions, and this poses a problem for editors who are likely to want to change language to a more grammatically correct version, although this takes away the authenticity of the author's way of using the language that is closely and purposefully linked to their culture or community. Voice is therefore closely linked to identity (Mhilli, 2023). Voice is used by the author as an intentional feature of their writing. It is used to express their individuality (Stewart, 1992 in Mhilli, 2023). It also plays a role in promoting the "richness and depth of personal experience" (Stewart, 1992 in Mhilli, 2023). This contributes to an understanding of why an author may fear an editor's intervention: their voice is so crucial to the message they are intending to convey. This is all the more relevant in a country like South Africa, where so many authors are not writing in their first language. As such, it is also

important to look at the diversity (or lack of diversity) within the publishing industry itself, which is addressed in the next section.

2.6 Diversity and Transformation in the Publishing Industry

The Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA) produced a report on transformation in the South African book publishing industry for the year 2022. This very detailed report deals specifically with perceptions of transformation in the publishing industry in South Africa. With regards to demographic representation, many respondents (34%) felt that the industry was not yet representative of the country's demographics, but was getting there (PASA, 2022: 15). On the question of whether Black authors were sufficiently represented, 24% of respondents said that Black authors were not sufficiently represented and 47% said there was room for improvement (PASA, 2022: 25). One of the reasons cited for these opinions was that Black authors were excluded; others thought that prospective authors did not have education around the publishing process. This is relevant in terms of the negative fears an author may have around the editing process – not knowing what to expect from the editor and fearing that the editor will change their voice. When this same question was posed to publishers in the industry, more than half of the respondents also cited a lack of education around the publishing process as a reason for the low Black author representation (PASA, 2022: 26). When asked what would help transform the industry, 53% felt that more emphasis was needed on diversity and inclusion (PASA, 2022: 29), again linking to the idea that the industry is not sufficiently representative of the demographics of the country, leading to exclusion and the loss of historically marginalised voices.

2.7 Conflict between Expectations and Experiences of Editing

"Conflict that occurs across cultural boundaries … is especially susceptible to problems of intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding" (Avruch, 2002: 1). In this section the expectations of both authors and editors are examined in the context of intercultural communication, specifically looking at how miscommunication can lead to conflict.

2.7.1 Author Expectations of Editing

Editors bring knowledge and expertise to the manuscript that the author may not have (Hill, 2013). What is important to note here is that the editor's role is to enhance the writing, not to override the author. Editing should be an absolutely silent enhancement, so that the author's work is presented at its very best and the editor's work is invisible. It is easy to spot when something has not been proofread properly – when typos are evident, for example – but it should be impossible to tell when something has been well edited. This seems to imply that an edited book should be flawless, i.e. that no further changes are possible. Instead it can be understood to mean it should not be evident to the reader where the editor has rewritten or reworked a passage.

This notion is supported by Bloomsbury (2020), who contends that "Book editors face the difficulty that if well done, their job is absolutely invisible; the author's meaning shines through and the reader is never exposed to the stylistic problems that got in the way in the original manuscript". Gottlieb (1994, in Clark, 2011) affirms that the "editor's relationship to a book should be an invisible one". Essentially, the work that goes into the editing of a manuscript should be invisible to the end user – the reader – and this is what the author expects from the editing process, or perhaps what the author fears will not happen.

2.7.2 Editor Expectations

It is important to consider both the positive and negative editing experiences that have been documented as they will directly inform some of the questions asked in the interviews for this research.

2.7.3 Positive Editing Experiences

Clark's (2011) article ends with a discussion of positive experiences authors have had with editors and copy editors and of the challenges faced by editors, most notably constraints of time. Pieter Straus notes (in Clark, 2011) that "it's good to keep the shelves steadily and plentifully supplied", implying, as alluded to above, that the demand for new works reduces the time available to turn a manuscript into its best possible version. Perkins (2016: 11) describes the importance of editing in the production of a book, stating that editing is "an activity that improves the quality of a text" and that editorial work adds value to the manuscript.

Grant (in Clark, 2011) has spoken about her positive experiences of editing, explaining that the editor's job involves "finding out what the writer thought they wanted to do". Leith (in Clark, 2011) is another example of an author happy with the editing of his book, saying that he was "hugely grateful and impressed" by his copy-editor, and that "I think everybody benefits from being edited".

2.7.4 Negative Editing Experiences

While these authors express positive sentiments around their editing experiences, Cortada (2017) describes how writers "argue emotionally that editors do not appreciate the importance of the text they are proposing to cut or know too little about the topic about which the author is a 'leading authority'".

Another critical opinion of the editor comes from Zeller (1975, in Shea, 2018), who, in discussing how an editor's changes to a text can impact the manuscript as a whole, explains that an editor's choice of variants "will not only affect the particular phrase of sentence or paragraph of text, but potentially the entire work … creating a new version of the manuscript with every change", implying that an editor's input can have severe consequences on a work. Shea (2018) suggests that editors need to edit in a way that "preserves, honors, and promotes literature of value". A deeper understanding of their role will prevent editors from making editing decisions that negatively impact the work itself.

2.7.5 The Author-Editor Relationship

The relationship between author and editor can easily break down if the author does not feel that their work is safe in the hands of an overzealous editor who may want to bring their own voice into the work. McGarry (2009) notes what an author should expect from an editor: "Your copyeditor should not be rewriting your sentences for political correctness or because she thinks it sounds better her way, or rewriting ungrammatical sentences that are complex enough to require a phrasing decision." An editor can therefore fail in their job in the following ways: "Because copyeditors are trained for consistency, some become inflexible and allow the writer insufficient leeway for personal style and poetic license. Some

copyeditors are too passionate about their political agendas and impose them on the author's work" (McGarry, 2009).

In discussing editorial bias, Shea (2018: 112), points out that "every editor is prone to incorporating and enforcing personal preferences", which supports many authors' fears that editors' choices could affect the entire work. This shows how important it is for an editor to understand the author's voice and aim to stay as true to it as possible.

Shah (2007) points out that "the relationship between editor and author can become quite tense"; it is such an important relationship that it really is necessary for both the author and the editor to approach their roles with care. As a rule, editors are usually tactful, polite and respectful. This is confirmed by Shah who says that copy editors should recognise that an author's work deserves to be treated with respect. So what causes tension? Shah says that an "experienced writer interprets their copy editor's changes as suggestions" which means that if a writer approaches an editor's work with hostility, there are going to be issues, but when the writer and editor are both clear that they have the same aim – the best possible version of the book – it becomes easier to focus on the work at hand rather than allowing possible misinterpretations or lack of clarity to get in the way of the intended outcome.

Editors need to build relationships with authors "to keep them coming back to us and to make it clear why editors are necessary for all publications" (O'Moore-Klopf, 2014). This is important, especially in light of the perception that editing does not happen any longer, as discussed previously. It makes sense therefore to build a good relationship between author and editor because that is the only way to get the best end result – a better book. Focusing on how editorial changes benefit the author makes for a better relationship (O'Moore-Klopf, 2014).

Research discussing this relationship suggests that it may fall apart because authors do not understand editing as well as an editor does and they are "incredibly nervous about handing over their book – a piece of their soul – to someone and not knowing what happens next" (Schwartz, 2017). This really is the crux of why the relationship between author and editor can sometimes go awry, and why the editor's role includes being respectful, patient and tactful. The editor-author relationship should be collaborative.

2.8 Conclusion

The role of the editor should ideally be invisible, so that the author's work shines through in its best form. Any doubts or accusations that editors do not edit any longer damage the important work an editor does, often unseen. It is a lot easier to spot a poorly edited work than an excellently edited one. Finally, the relationship between author and editor is of utmost importance because only when an editor and author work together towards a common goal is it possible for the best version of the book to be published.

On the other hand, when this relationship fails through conflict, misunderstanding or miscommunication, the published book is not the best possible version of itself. New, unique and important voices are muted, misrepresented and quite possibly lost altogether. Initiating a good relationship is an editor's crucial responsibility.

The following chapter is a discussion of the methodology that was used in this research, including methods of data capturing, and how the participants were selected.

Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction

It is essential to select the appropriate methodology before embarking on any research project because this determines how to focus the research process. This study was informed by an interpretivist ontology and epistemology, and a qualitative methodology, as discussed in more detail below.

The research on the editors is fully qualitative in that their views are analysed through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each of the six editors. The research on the authors was based on their responses to 11 questions in a Likert scale questionnaire. This involved mixed-method research in that it was qualitative in dealing with attitudes, beliefs and opinions rather than discrete facts. The responses to the Likert scale statements are quantifiable, however, allowing the researcher to make numerical generalisations about the group as a whole.

The patterns and themes that have emerged could provide other authors and editors, but more relevant, publishers, with a better understanding of how to build a valuable relationship based on, mutual trust and respect, and a shared purpose.

3.2 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is the set of beliefs a person holds about the world (Donmoyer, Donmoyer & Gage, 2008). Paradigms consist of ontology, epistemology and methodology. The researcher's ontological position reveals their views and beliefs about what their research study involves, which does make it subjective so it is imperative that the researcher maintains an unbiased stance. Paradigms therefore define the researcher's thoughts and assumptions about how the research should be conducted, and helps the researcher explain the choice of research methods (Bell et al., 2019:5), in this case the choice of semi-structured interviews and Likert scale statements.

Ethical considerations should be made to ensure that participants are not harmed. This research was guided by the ethical principles of the University of the Witwatersrand.

3.2.1 Interpretivist Ontology

Ontology is the study of the nature of being – the properties of concepts and categories and the relations between them. An interpretivist ontological position is that reality is perceived subjectively, considering meaning in research and an understanding of social aspects (Junjie and Yingxin, 2022:11). This means that editing a book is an entirely subjective task.

3.2.2 Interpretivist Epistemology

Epistemology is the theory of how knowledge is gathered and what sources are used to do so. Interpretivism means that knowledge cannot be separated from how human interpret that knowledge (Jujie and Yingxin, 2022:11). It is therefore about the meanings and interpretations given, in this research, to the editing process in order to describe and explain their behaviour (Iacob, Popescu & Ristea, 2015:248). In other words, the readers themselves are going to bring their own subjective experiences to the reading of the book. In short, the researcher's view of

the world and of knowledge can and does influence how data is interpreted, so it is important to make the researcher's standpoint clear from the beginning.

3.2.3 Qualitative Methodology

The appropriate methodology for this study is qualitative research, as the findings are subjective, based on the thoughts, opinions and experiences (Caulfield, 2020) of South African authors and editors. The aim was to identify patterns and insights that could guide publishers and other researchers in guiding authors and editors in future on how to build a valuable relationship based on mutual trust and respect, and a shared purpose.

Qualitative research encompasses different approaches of collecting and analysing data, taking into account the cultural and contextual nature of social phenomenon. Bhandari (2020) provides a fuller definition:

> Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research.

The aim in data collection and analysis is not to establish causal relationships between variables, numbers and frequencies, but to capture the opinions and values respondents attach to the issue under investigation (Bell et al., 2019:355–375; Shani et al., 2020:64).

Qualitative research is predominantly inductive in its approach to the development of theory. This means that the formulation of theory is ongoing because social reality is constantly changing. A deductive approach uses general ideas to reach specific conclusions in terms of a model, theory or hypotheses (Shani, Coghlan & Benjamin, 2020:64–66; Bell et al., 2019:22–23).

This study meets the requirements of a qualitative study as defined above in as far as it seeks to understand how editors on the one hand assume that their interactions with the text and its author are experienced and perceived by the authors whose books they edit and how authors on the other experience and interpret these interactions and interventions.

This study used a mixed-method approach in that the data derived from the Likert scale questionnaire completed by the authors is qualitative in its focus on their experiences and views and quantitative in the sense that it yields numerical data that provide for the generalisations that provide for the generalisations provided in Chapter 4 (Stumpfegger, 2017; Caulfield, 2020).

3.3 Research Design

A research design is a detailed plan of how the research is to be carried out. It outlines the procedures and instruments for data collection and analysis. The design for this study is discussed below under the headings of sampling, data collection methods and analysis and design quality.

3.3.1 Sampling

In line with the practice in qualitative research, purposive sampling was used to select "information-rich cases for in-depth study" (Rajasinghe et al., 2021:13). Purposive sampling can be classified as non-probability sampling, since the respondents were not selected randomly (Bell et al., 2019:389). The aim of purposive sampling is to obtain thorough insights into the topic of interest and thereby to increase the opportunity to generalise to other similar cases rather than to the total population of editors and authors (Alharahsheh & Piu, 2020: 42). In other words, the main objective is to achieve 'phenomenon representation' rather than 'population representation' (Rajasinghe et al., 2021:13). The guidelines for the selection of cases were the deductive rather than observational ones of convenience and accessibility (Miller et al., 2016: 6; Shaheen et al., 2019: 27).

The sampling for this research was purposeful and convenient. A convenient sample includes the individuals who happen to be most accessible to the researcher. There is no way to tell if the sample is representative of the population, so it cannot produce generalisable results.

Voluntary response samples are always at least somewhat biased, as some people will inherently be more likely to volunteer than others, leading to self-selection bias (McCombes, 2023).

Purposive sampling involves the researcher using their expertise to select a sample that is most useful to the purposes of the research. It is often used in qualitative research, where the researcher wants to gain detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon rather than make statistical inferences, or where the population is very small and specific.

3.3.1.1 Sample Size. Emmel (2013:137–155), Fusch and Ness (2015:1408–16) and Saunders et al. (2018:1894–5) all dismiss the pursuit of the right sample size in qualitative research, where sample size is determined by the purpose of the research and the depth of information one wants the participants to provide. Emmel argues that "[C]ases are chosen because they contribute to creatively solving the puzzle under investigation and present as convincing a case as can be mastered with the resources to hand" (Emmel, 2013: 141).

3.3.1.2 Participant Selection Criteria. The sample comprised six editors and seven authors. Fewer than five would have been too few to find patterns and similarities. This allowed enough data to identify patterns in their experiences, views and suggestions, which may inform the work of other editors, authors and, more especially, of other publishers. This research looked for common themes that allowed the researcher to make generalisations based on the overall research.

The editors selected for this study were all South African freelance editors who have edited books for a range of South African publishing houses in South Africa, both trade and educational, thereby reflecting differences between publishing houses. The editors selected are known to the researcher; and have been in the industry for many years (detailed in table 3.1). A novice editor would not have been able to contribute meaningfully to this research.

Both first-time and veteran authors were approached to obtain their views on the experience of having their novel edited. A range of publishing houses in South Africa were approached to assist with sourcing authors who were willing to participate and who fit the criteria as young Black authors published by South African publishing houses. Because of the nature of

Google Doc questionnaires, there is no way to determine which publishing house provided the most respondents.

Differences between editors' interview responses and authors' responses to the Likert scale illustrated how differently the editing process is perceived between author and editor. The identity of other participants was kept confidential so that no author or editor knew who else was interviewed. This was both to protect participants and to promote honest answers.

3.4.1.3 Sourcing of Participants. Invitations to participate were sent to the six editors (Appendix A). For authors, invitations were sent to South African publishing houses (Appendix B) with a request to pass on a Google Forms link to the Likert scale questionnaire. The purpose of the research was made clear so that they understood why they had been invited to participate. The editors were informed that the interviews would be transcribed and that the transcriptions would be kept confidential and deleted after five years. The authors were given the same assurance of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses to questions in the Likert scale.

3.3.1.4 Profiles of Research Participants. This section give brief profiles of the six editors interviewed for this research. All six editors are white South Africans. Because the Likert scale was sent on using Google Forms, and the researcher approached publishing houses and not individual authors, this researcher has no way of knowing who completed the Likert scale as they remain anonymous and no personal data were captured. The interviews were all conducted via Zoom and all the participants were known to the researcher. The selection was made in order to answer the research questions related to intercultural editing and diversity.

Table 3.1 Summary of Editor Research Participant Profiles

	Gender	Years' experience	Type of editing	Background
Ed 1	Male	43 years	predominantly biography	history
Ed 2	Female	16 years	fiction and memoir	magazine journalism
Ed 3	Female	25 years	multi-author volumes, biographies, memoirs and fiction	indexing
Ed 4	Female	30 years	fiction and memoir	academic teaching
Ed 5	Female	10 years	non-fiction	journalism
Ed 6	Female	37 years	educational publishing	academic teaching

3.3.2 Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Two methods of data collection were used for this research – interviews and Likert scale statements. These two methods and their analysis are discussed in the section below.

3.3.2.1 Interviews. Interviews are a type of survey used to collect data from a group of people by asking them questions and analysing the results (McCombes, 2020). Interviews were the primary source of data collection from editors, providing this researcher with in-depth information on their experiences and views on editing fiction written by Black South African novelists (McCombes, 2020).

The introductory part of the interview was intended to put the interviewee at ease and to elicit relevant background information about their editing experience. These questions were closed-ended, such as "How long have you been a book editor?" The rest of the interview was structured as an open-ended discussion with questions designed to elicit information on common thoughts, ideas, experiences and interpretations of the editing process, expressed in the participants' own words (Volchok, 2015). This allowed for multiple possible answers as well as an opportunity to "clarify and ask for follow-up information" (McCombes, 2020).

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed and analysed. The analysis involved looking for useful insights and also for patterns that emerged – what common thoughts, ideas, experiences and interpretations are there among interviewees?

The results of the interviews are reported and discussed in Chapter 4. Qualitative research is seldom represented by graphs or figures because of its verbal and exploratory nature (Streefkerk, 2019). The aim of the analysis was to find common themes that emerged across interviews to assist in developing an overall picture of the editor–author relationship seen from the point of view of the editors.

3.3.2.2 Likert Scale Questionnaire. The Likert scale is an ordinal psychometric measurement of attitudes, beliefs and opinions. Each item consists of a statement to which a respondent must respond with (in this case) one of five degrees of agreement or disagreement in a multiple-choice format.

Using a Likert scale has several advantages. As the most universal method for survey collection, it is readily understood. The responses are easily quantifiable and therefore subject to mathematical analysis. The respondent is allowed to respond in a degree of agreement, disagreement or neutrality, which makes answering easier on them. These responses are easy to code since a single number represents the participant's response. A Likert scale survey is also an efficient and inexpensive method for data collection; in this case a link was emailed and responses were captured by Google Forms.

Attitudes of the respondents for one particular item in reality exist on a continuum. The Likert scale gives only five options of choice, however, and the space between the choices cannot be equidistant. In this it fails to measure the true attitudes of respondents. It is also possible that an answer will be influenced by previous questions or by a respondent avoiding the 'extremes' options on the scale, even if an extreme choice would be the most accurate. These doubts are outweighed by the more obvious advantages.

For each of the 11 questions participants were asked to respond by selecting their choice of Agree strongly/Agree/Neutral/Disagree/Disagree strongly.

3.3.3 Data Capturing, Analysis and Presentation Methods

This section briefly discusses how data was captured and analysed.

3.3.3.1 Data Capturing and Processing. Interviews were conducted via Zoom and recorded. Thereafter they were transcribed. This enabled the researcher to review the information gathered during the interview and also to identify key words, terms, phrases and other shared codes that occurred across the different interviews. Recorded interviews and their transcriptions were saved in a password protected personal computer.

3.3.3.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation. By identifying codes it became possible to identify themes and interchangeable terms, where an interviewee used a different term or phrase to talk about the same code. This then allowed the researcher to identify those recurring terms to apply them to relevant literature and answer the research questions. Coding is an essential means of processing and interpreting information to clarify the analysis and prove its validity, giving research participants a voice (Kinnenberg & Korsgaard, 2019:7–9).

3.3.3.3 Writing Up and Presentation of Findings. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the findings from the analysis and interpretation as detailed above. Chapter 5 then links this analysis to the literature review detailed in Chapter 2.

3.4 Reflections on the Researcher's Experience

Interviews took place in July 2024 via Zoom. All interviewees were known to the researcher and the interviewees were forthcoming and supportive of the research topic.

3.4.1 Reflexivity as a Tool for Mitigating Research Bias

Reflexivity is understood to mean the examination of a researcher's own beliefs, judgements and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced the research. It is important for the researcher to mitigate against bias during the research process.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided on overview of the research techniques used to gather the data that will be presented in Chapter 4 in a discussion of the analysis arrived at for the interviews and the results of the Likert scale questionnaire responses.

Chapter 4

This chapter presents and discusses the interviews held with the six editors and the authors' responses to the Likert scale statements. As illustrated in the discussion that follows, on the one hand, the majority of editors who participated showed an awareness of the consequences of their editorial input and of the authors' attitudes or fears towards these changes. The authors, on the other hand, were not able to expand on their answers to the Likert scale statements.

4.1 Editors' Interviews

This section of the chapter is an analysis of the interviews conducted with six experienced, white South African editors. The chapter has been divided by question, so that each question is discussed individually, linking back to the literature discussed in Chapter 2.

The researcher approached editors who were known to her in the industry, contacting them directly via email, including information about herself. See Appendix A for the complete email. The email included a consent form (Appendix E) and an information sheet (Appendix D).

All editors approached agreed to be interviewed, except one, who said that a negative past experience had dissuaded him from participation in any future research projects.

4.2 Author Questionnaire

Instead of being interviewed, the authors who participated in this research were asked to rate a series of statements on a Likert scale questionnaire as strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree or strongly disagree.

The production managers or publishers of local publishing houses were approached with an invitation to participate (Appendices B and C). Authors were then supplied with the Google Forms link to the Likert scale statements and a letter that included an information sheet (Appendix D).

4.3 The Findings

Each of the sections that follow deals first with the editors' responses during the interviews, followed by the corresponding responses in the authors' Likert scale questionnaire and concluding with literature discussed in Chapter 2.

4.3.1 Experience as Editors

The first question in the interviews was how long the participants had been editors. The purpose of this question was to establish their credibility. Respondents' answers ranged from 12 to 43 years, indicating that they were all editors of considerable experience, but from different backgrounds and with different reasons for moving from their initial career choice to editing. One had a journalistic background, another was a historian, several had teaching experience. The lack of uniformity in their preparation for a career in editing may account for the view that there is a lack of industry standards.

No question was put to the authors about how many books they had published, although the invitation went out inviting first-time authors.

4.3.2 Getting the Right Editor

4.3.2.1 Editors' Views. The second question was really the beginning of the interview. Interviewees were asked if it was important to get the right editor for a book and/or author. The answers were a resounding yes, but the reasons differed. Ed 1 said, "I think experience counts first and that one sort of gets along. … Some relationships with authors are more successful than with others. Some respond better; some can be difficult." He concluded that experience as an editor was more important than trying to match personalities.

Ed 2 said that sympathy was essential. One might assume that matching the demographic of the author was important but that being able to put oneself in the shoes of the author mattered more, and that mismatches could happen if an editor or an author found themselves irritated by the other person. This is significant because PASA (2022) has pointed out that Black authors are not sufficiently represented and therefore may perceive this lack of sympathy.

Ed 3 commented on knowledge, worldliness, gravitas and that the older an editor was the greater their breadth of knowledge and that apart from being good with language you needed to be able to take the frustrations along the way.

Ed 4 stated that the editor needed to care as much as the author about the project, "You have to have buy in; you have to believe in the importance of the project". Ed 4 said it was important to pick clients carefully because if it was not something "hugely important or meaningful or significant or necessary" she would decline the job. Ed 6 said that an editor might need to be able to second guess an author.

Responses to this question indicated that the editors felt that experience and sympathy were key to matching an author with an editor. As noted in Chapter 2, McGarry (2009) confirms that editors should not be inflexible and should avoid personal preferences.

4.3.2.1 Authors' Views. The authors were asked separately about matching editor and book and matching editor and author. Statement 1 read: "It is very important to get the right editor for a book." With one exception the authors were strongly in favour of this. It is impossible to know whether this reflects their relief at an excellent association of editor and book or dismay at a disastrous one.

The response to Statement 2 – "It is very important to get the right editor for an author" – is almost as positive about finding a good match of editor and author, with five strongly in favour and the others simply in favour of it. Here too, this could reflect a positive experience, but it may mean quite the opposite.

4.3.3 The Role of the Publisher

The next series of questions dealt specifically with the role of the publisher in the editing process.

4.3.3.1 Publisher as Matchmaker. The next question required interviewees to consider the role of the publisher – did the publisher play a 'matchmaker' role in pairing an author with an editor, with a follow-up question as to whether this was important, and if so, why. This was important because, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2, the editor is not the publisher and the separation of roles is important.

Ed 1 pointed out that freelance editors often did not get to deal directly with authors but communicated via the publisher so that the relationship was immaterial, acknowledging that "in this situation the editor is cleaning up a manuscript rather than shaping it, which is much better if you are dealing directly".

Ed 1 agreed with the question, that it should be the publisher's role to play matchmaker, but that in practice it did not always work out that way. The publisher's role was confirmed by Ed 3, who said, "in a nutshell, I think it's very important to get that match".

Ed 4 was forthcoming and insightful:

> So, I think, you know, if you're working for a publisher you need to have a whole range of editors and you do need to find – I think one also needs to have a sense of what the author feels about his or her own work before you even start looking for an editor or deciding whether you're a good match or not or whether you have somebody else in mind who's a better match. So it needs to be worked on before people are put together. You've got to have somebody you can ask very direct questions without being offensive. Well, that's with any author; but you have to be careful not to give the impression that you're making assumptions about them. Because, often people – in the context – people are used to having assumptions made about them. And I think as an older white woman I have to be particularly careful not to give off that vibe. I'm not like that. I've got to be sure I'm not coming across that way.

Overall, while it seems it was not always possible for the publisher to play matchmaker, editors did think it was important to find a match that worked, even if the publisher played an intermediary role, because the queries asked and the suggestions made were still coming from the editor.

4.3.3.2 Publisher's Briefing. The fourth question asked whether the publisher briefed the editor with background information on the author and whether there were any special considerations, or whether it was a more formal process that just involved the house style guide and the level of edit required.

Ed 2 said there was usually a brief but that her long-standing relationship with the publisher often meant that the brief did not need to be very detailed and that they always felt they had the freedom to ask the publisher questions.

Ed 3 said that there was usually a bit of background, but that "you don't want to know too much; you don't want to be too involved in how it all came together, all the trials and tribulations because that might influence how you approach it". But it was important to know what the expectations were, what the publisher required, who the audience was and deadlines. She also noted that the publisher would mention it if the author was 'difficult'.

In support of this view, Ed 4 said that some publishers provided a very detailed brief; that sometimes they

> held a telephonic conversation if the author was particularly anxious or presents particular – I don't want to say challenges – but if there's background information that I need to know. But also that sometimes it's just "Here's the author's email address, here's their manuscript, crack on with it". And then I sort of interview the author at the start of the process … usually we dive straight in and we build the aeroplane as we fly it.

4.3.3.3 Author Given Background on the Editor. The third Likert scale statement read: "My publisher gave me sufficient background on the editor beforehand." Three authors agreed strongly that they had been briefed about their editor; three were equivocal about it and one, who had perhaps not been briefed at all, disagreed strongly.

This question could lead to considerations of further research as to whether this is perceived to be important. What is unclear here is what is considered 'sufficient' by the authors and this in itself may vary, meaning the range in responses may be as a result of authors' perceptions of what is sufficient background.

4.3.3.4 Editors' Views on the Publisher's Role During the Editing Process. Two question here were what role the publisher played in the editing process itself and whether the publisher encouraged interaction between author and editor.

Ed 2 said that it depended on the author, but that often the publisher had more influence with the author and was therefore in a better position to liaise. There were contrasting views among the respondents, with some saying that it could sometimes be very tiring to deal with an author and, as Ed 1 put it, "I'm quite happy not to have to deal with them, but other times one develops wonderful relationships that turn into friendships".

Ed 2 said that it was important to establish a relationship with an author:

> It's always what is the most productive way of working, and sometimes you kind of read between the lines and you realise that the publisher is the person who has the most clout, is able to negotiate with the author.

Ed 3 gave an anecdotal response that was very insightful. She said she had had absolutely no contact with the author until she met him at a social event (a breakfast held by the publishing house).

> It was just such a surprise, and it was delightful, you know, to meet him, because you suddenly put a face and a character to just words and thinking to myself, would it have made a difference if I'd met him earlier? It might have. It probably would have endeared me more to him. You can be more critical, more frustrated, when you're just dealing with words and especially with second language or third language and you really don't know what they're saying, you know, you stick at it. But if you *meet* the people you might be a bit more patient, a bit more accommodating. It's just an interesting thing.

4.3.3.5 Authors' Views on the Role of the Publisher in the Editing Process. Statement 4 read "I prefer my editor to interact directly with me rather than through my publisher." Five of the authors favoured direct dealings with their editor, three of them strongly. Two were ambivalent, which might imply that the publisher acted as the go-between, but they would have preferred to interact directly with their editor.

4.3.4 The Need to Build a Relationship between Author and Editor

The next series of questions dealt with opinions on the importance or necessity to build rapport between author and editor during the editing process.

4.3.4.1 Editors' Views on Building a Relationship. The degree to which editors opted to build a relationship with an author varied, depending on editing style and preference but also very much on a case-by-case basis, depending on who the author was. Ed 4 was the only editor who insisted on building a relationship with the author. Overall, it was clear that personal, direct interaction with an author was an important element in building a relationship.

Ed 4 said very firmly "We liaise directly. I won't work any other way." She said that if the publisher played a liaising role it became very cumbersome and it was impossible to build a relationship. Ed 4 stated unequivocally, "I can't think of an example where you might not need it [a relationship with the author] … it's *critical*: the project's not going to succeed without it."

Ed 6 added that she had to try her best in whatever context to find out what the story really was and that the environment was very important.

This was confirmed by Ed 2 who said that it was very important to establish a relationship with the author. She explained that it was always the most productive way of working, but that sometimes the editor needed the publisher to intervene, and that sometimes the publisher could assist by playing 'bad cop' in the relationship, meaning that the publisher performed the difficult parts of setting boundaries and coaxing an author into accepting edits they would not be open to accepting directly from the editor.

Ed 1 was ambivalent:

> There are positives and negatives to both kinds of relationships. Sometimes it can be very tiring to deal with an author and I'm quite happy not to have to deal with them, but other times one develops wonderful relationships … the indirect way of relating there's less chance as it were to develop the manuscript. When you're dealing with them indirectly it's really just cleaning up the manuscript rather than shaping it, which you can do much better if dealing directly.

In support of *not* building a relationship, Ed 1 said that it was better for the publisher

> to play … middle person … just to keep things professional, just so as not to confuse the roles and so as to keep it very clean and fairly clinical and not to be swayed by the fact that they're such a nice person, or you've got to give them a break, or they're a terrible person and really you just want to finish this thing quickly.

Ed 3 also used the analogy of a policeman, saying that it was useful for the publisher to "be the policeman … because if the editor has to do that as well it gets quite messy… When the editor starts messing around with that relationship the wheels can come off a little bit."

The differences in opinion in response to questions 5 and 6 were interesting. There was overall agreement that the publisher had an important role to play as the authority in the process, managing both expectations and relationships, and that both author and editor could

turn to the publisher during the editing process. However, the degree to which editors opted to build a relationship with an author varied, depending on editing style and preference but also very much on a case-by-case basis, depending on who the author was. Ed 4 was the only editor who insisted on building a relationship with the author. Overall, it was clear that personal, direct interaction with an author was an important element in building a relationship to find a mutual goal. What differed was whether it was the publisher or the editor who needed that direct contact.

4.3.4.2 Authors' Views on Building a Relationship. Statement 5 read: "It is important to build a close relationship with the editor of my book." Six of the authors agreed with this, three of them strongly. One was ambivalent.

4.3.5 Interaction Between Editor and Author

On the question of how the relationship was built, phone calls, emails and in-person meetings all played a part, depending on what was needed and preferred, so this question did not present any valuable findings. This question was not put to the authors.

4.3.6 Conflict and Tension

The next questions were intended to determine experiences that editors and authors had had during the editing process that involved any conflict or tension, specifically with editors wanting to make or suggesting changes that may have impacted the author's voice.

4.3.6.1 The Editors' Views. The next question, question 8, asked respondents about conflict and tension that had arisen during the editing process.

All editors were able to give examples or anecdotes to illustrate conflict or tension that arose during editing, briefly provided in the next few paragraphs.

Ed 1 gave the example of an author having "very decided views about what he wanted and didn't want inside the book", and gave an example of a cultural practice that was puzzling to a white South African:

> He was what we would call in the west a child born out of wedlock … but in his culture, according to him (I never know – when people say "this is my culture" – how valid that claim is) what happens in situations where there is no father is that the mother's father adopts the child as his own. So I was very puzzled because I worked out that he had a mother and his mother's father was his father! And I tried to make this clear to readers by saying "and in our custom I was adopted by my grandfather". But [the author] wouldn't take this… I didn't argue with him because this is a personal matter. He wanted it that way. It was not an editorial matter; it was a sort of a cultural understanding…

Ed 1 went on to describe another source of tension or conflict:

> I also find that with biographies, new writers especially don't know the boundaries or what they should say and what they shouldn't say… Sometimes I'm quite amazed how unself-aware people are … and they seem oblivious to the facts or how they are actually exposing themselves… So I often feel the role I play … is to save people from themselves.

Ed 1 gave two other interesting examples – a Black South African author who made "terrible generalisations" about Indian shopkeepers who she claimed were all out to just make money and 'screw you' as much as possible. Another author who grew up in the Transvaal claimed that "all Afrikaners there during the war had been Nazis". To avoid conflict, Ed 1 simply deleted these generalisations without engaging with the author.

Ed 2 mentioned situations where a recommendation was not taken on board. If the author solved a problem a different way to the one suggested, "that's okay … they just can't see the problem that you can see." In such a situation the options were to "retreat from the project" or to involve the publisher.

Ed 4 described a situation where the author and editor had to part ways over tension. She explained she might say "'Is this feasible? Is this realistic?' and the author would ROAR back at me, 'This actually happened! How dare you question me?' and I've learned to avoid that sort of scenario." Ed 4 concluded this question saying, "conflicts do arise, disagreements do arise, there's ongoing debate and discussions all the time."

Ed 6 commented on how important the environment was, explaining that everyone thinks

> what pertains in their own little world pertains across the board, but it's not… Trying to get information about your environment takes time, patience and tact and the kinds of questions that you ask often come out of the blue for people … [they have] never given it any thought, don't really know … why aren't you just looking at language and fixing it up and returning it?

A final comment from Ed 2 concerned her preference to use "I know you already know this, but…" or "You might not realise this, but…" to preface any queries or feedback that may cause tension. The editor needed to be diplomatic in how concerns around content were raised with the author.

In response to this question, it seemed that all editors interviewed had experienced some form of tension or conflict with an author during the editing phase, most commonly to do with raising concerns that required the author to make content changes to the manuscript, especially when the author was reluctant to do so, or was inexperienced and unaware of the editor's role or the editor's responsibility towards the author and the manuscript.

4.3.6.2 The Authors' Views on Conflict and Tension. Two statements were put to the authors in this regard. Statement 10 read: I sometimes felt angry/hurt/offended about suggested changes in material that had a particular cultural context.

None of the authors affirmed this statement. All seven disagreed with it; four of them disagreed very strongly.

The second statement reversed polarity on the question. Statement 11 read: No disagreement, conflict or tension arose with the editor.

Responses here were even more unequivocal in denying that any conflict or tension had arisen, with six agreeing very strongly and only one feeling less certain about it. Because the identities of the respondents for the Likert scale were completely anonymous, it is possible that the respondents were a more diverse group than intended, and therefore responses aren't all necessarily from the intended cohort.

4.3.7 Cultural Differences

This part of the interviews looked specifically at opinions regarding cultural differences – between an older white editor and a younger Black author. Statements probing this were also included in the Likert scale for the authors.

4.3.7.1 Editors' Views on the Influence of Cultural Differences

The question on conflict and tension was followed up with a more direct question regarding cultural differences between the author and the editor and how this impacted on the editor's ability to communicate with the author.

More than one of the respondents commented on how aware they were of their race and position as editor. Ed 2 mentioned an author who used colloquialisms, but inconsistently, and she wondered whether this had been done deliberately and in the end commented on this tentatively, worried that it was a sensitive issue.

> If I edit a Black person's book or a person that's of a different race or a different group than I am, I'm very aware of my privilege, I'm aware of the status of editors – that editors are seen as correcting stuff that is wrong and I spend a lot of time in my head and also in the community trying to explain … that I'm not there to make the language 'better' … I'm not there to correct things; I'm there to make the author's voice sing and shine, and the author's message. That is my role.

Ed 3 said, in response to this question, that she did not find it about culture so much as about ideology, although

> culture breeds ideology. If the ideology is a bit different you just have to suck it up. This is the author's work and you make it the best. If it's inflammatory, if it's vile, if it's really offensive, you would probably point something out.

Ed 4 said that she experienced cultural differences all the time and as an editor it was important to be aware of them – "I have to be non-defensive about it and I have to be humble about it all the time". She went on to explain, "I have to say, 'Listen, I'm a middle-aged white woman sitting down at the tip of the African continent; I speak only two languages, you speak four or five. I know nothing about that culture.'" She would tell the author that

> "I'm going to trust you. You're going to have to explain x, y and z to me … I will do the best technical job I possibly can … but I'm going to trust you entirely on how certain idioms are going to land, how certain dialogue needs to be written out, etc."

Ed 6 commented specifically on ancestral beliefs.

> I raise a lot of queries, I try to have a lot of online meetings … and that works really well… Often what I encounter is amazing gratitude for, you know, the questions I raise … or I'd say something and they'll say "this and this and that" and I'll say "yes but it's not in the book. It needs to be in the book, you know, you need to write that, you need to supply it" or "You're *not* saying anything about this. Is it because you don't want to say anything, or do you want to say something?" I say, "I'm acting as your reader and I'm curious … where is this going, what am I understanding here, what am I not understanding?"

In short, the editors seemed to be very aware of cultural differences and that they needed to be addressed in the sense that what may seem clear or of general knowledge to the author may not be common knowledge to the editor.

What is important here is twofold: does it matter if the editor does not understand a cultural reference if the target market will understand it; and should the editor interfere in order to get the author to explain cultural references and make the book accessible to a wider audience or might this actually be offensive to the intended reader.

4.3.7.2 Authors' Views on Cultural Differences. Statement 9 put the issue of culture less directly: "I felt comfortable receiving suggestions, doubts and queries from a white editor." All seven authors agreed with this, six of them strongly. This can be interpreted as an indication that the editors treated their authors with respect, diplomacy and due deference.

Without the benefit of knowing what the thinking was behind their choices one can assume that those who chose "Strongly agree" were confident about their own control of dialect and voice and were prepared to defend it. Those who were less assertive (Agree/Not sure) may have thought "It depends on how incomprehensible it is". The authors who disagreed strongly might be those the editors said were grateful for language editing.

That said, all respondents felt comfortable receiving suggestions, doubts and queries from their editor. The statement specified 'white' editor, which was of particular interest in this research, so it is interesting that there were no participants who disagreed with this statement. This does raise a question about whether there was any responder bias with their answers here, in that they were giving answers they thought were required.

4.3.8 Levels of Editing

The next question had to do with levels of editing and where the editors felt they had to spend more time when the author was not a first language English speaker. The categories given to the editors were:

1. Word and sentence level – common errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and usage; Plain English; word choices;
2. Sentence and paragraph level – clarity, cohesion, coherence; and
3. Developmental level – structure, story, plot, pacing, characterisation, theme and consistency.

The researcher thought answers for this question would be more consistent than they were, but the range of opinions was very diverse, making it a very interesting and valuable question, and certainly one that requires further research.

Ed 1 said that with second-language speakers it was often necessary to spend a lot of time on the first level, looking at spelling and grammar, because the writer was not a first-language speaker. He expanded on this, explaining that

> clarity is not a matter of language. The problem with second-language speakers is the limited vocabulary and also the limited range of sentence structures that they have and they don't know how to vary sentences, short and long, complicated and simple, turning them around,

> flowing from one to the next. So I would say, for second-language scripts, it's mostly a case of close attention to the spelling and grammar but also to making sure the shape it right.

When asked whether the answer would be different for a first-language speaker, the answer was that the editor would not need to spend as much time on the lower level. But, with all authors, Ed 1 has found that authors tended to get side tracked and jump back in time so that with all authors a lot of time was spent "putting things in the right place".

Ed 2 said that she spent most time dealing with the third level – the substantive edit. She noted that

> standard language is problematic for me … I realised that there are different ways, and as long as your message comes across coherently, or your voice comes across coherently – that's what I want to achieve as an editor – to make sure that this is what you want to achieve … that your manuscript achieves what you set out for it to achieve. So there the whole thing of standard, you know, that all of us speak a standard language – we can't say that.

Ed 3 felt that most time editing was spent at the second level, "but of course quite a lot of level three too, because when you're looking at it with a fresh eye … its needs quite a lot of structural rearrangement or removal of repetition" and concluded that the second level is "the safest zone without altering too much".

This was confirmed by Ed 4 who spends the least time "on the technical stuff" and the most time

> in the middle, crafting, using track changes, writing comments in the margin, asking backwards and forwards with the author, saying "there seems to be a continuity gap in this dialogue" or "we seem to have jumped to the next week without any indication in the structure of the narrative: I need you to write two or three lines of transition".

Ed 4 said "to me, logic is where so many authors need help because it's not going to be a good read for the reader."

There was not a lot of overlap in the answers to this question, with respondents touching on all three levels but narrowing it down to what they felt ended up as a priority when editing. This diversity in answers is interesting as it perhaps says more about the editors' preoccupations than any generalisation possible for the authors in question. Especially worth noting is Ed 2's view that level one is not the editor's job. Although this was a minority view among the participant editors, it is not unexpected in the absence of editing standards or an editing policy in South Africa. With no clear definition of what the editor's role is, it becomes a matter of opinion and experience for each editor.

This question was not included in the Likert scale questionnaire, which may have been beneficial to the research.

4.3.9 Authentic Voice

The next questions probed opinions on the author's authentic voice – what this meant and how to preserve it.

4.3.9.1 Editors' Views. The final question before drawing the interview to a close was "To what degree does the author's voice hold sway at the expense of standard language or comprehensibility?" This question was linked to the previous question regarding levels of editing, but also to earlier questions regarding cultural differences between the author and editor. What the researcher wanted to hear from the editors was whether they made exceptions regarding language that would not be considered Standard English when the author felt the way the language being presented was closer to their own usage and was therefore more authentic because Standard English would not be used in that context.

An interesting initial response was that "second-language speakers are only too grateful to be corrected". Ed 1 clarified this by concluding, "I don't have too many problems in that way. I don't have people saying 'you're drowning my voice' or things like that."

Ed 2 commented that the idea of standard language was a problem for her. She explained that what is important is getting the message across so that the reader finishes the book. As an editor, she wants the manuscript to achieve what it set out to achieve.

She concluded that "the whole thing of standard, you know, that all of us speak a standard language – we can't say that."

An interesting comment by Ed 3 was

> If I were to choose I would probably wade into sense and comprehension … I'd be thinking about the whole work, I'd be thinking about the value of the publication, and if the author's voice changes a bit along the way, well, that's tough. I'm a bit harsh in that respect. I wouldn't retain the author's voice at the expense of the other things. The other things would be more important and hopefully the author would be very happy with the way his voice has changed in the process, because it's also his voice, but just a bit different.

In contrast, Ed 4 noted that

> there's nothing more dispiriting than a sanitised edit, you know, where every single sentence is perfect but something of the author's voice, tone, spirit has been rubbed out. So in some respects I don't usually allow obvious errors to stand in the text, but there are cases when the voice does overrule.

She let certain speech patterns stand "even if they involve so-called grammatical errors".

This was confirmed by Ed 6 who said that her attitude was "I say, because you are writing beautiful things that haven't been said before, and they're perfectly understandable, everybody can understand what you're *saying* … even if it's not correct it needs to be kept."

She concluded that

> To be a good editor for a Black South African … you need to be politically sussed … you need to respect the experiences of people, you need to have an ear for a dialect that's outside of your own, you know, everyday lingo, even the pacing of things, even the way things move through time.

Interestingly, Ed 6 ended this statement by saying “people will express gratitude … which is one of the nicest aspects of being an editor … because you feel, you know, you’re making a difference.”

As noted in Chapter 2, there is a notion that editors ‘interfere’ with the author’s work. Some of these answers are startling examples of just that, coupled with a notion of self-awareness that this is a concern. Based on these findings, this is worth further research.

4.3.9.2 Authors’ Views on Authentic Voice. Statement 7 in the Likert scale questionnaire included culture and voice in a single statement, which read: “My editor did not raise issues relating to cultural expression or interfere with my authentic voice.” Two authors were strongly in favour of the prior claim of the author’s voice; two agreed, but less strongly; and one took a neutral position.

Statement 9 dealt with the competing demands of voice and comprehensibility. It read: “The author’s voice holds sway at the expense of standard language/comprehensibility.” There was more division here than on any other statement, with two responses each for agree strongly, agree and not sure. One author disagreed strongly. One can only speculate about why this author favoured comprehensibility above authorial voice. It may well represent the view that being understood is of first importance.

4.3.10 The Significance of the Editor’s Interventions

The editors were not asked to evaluate their contribution to the merits of the published book.

The authors were asked to respond to this statement: “My editor’s interventions contributed significantly to the merits of the published book.” Three agreed strongly with this, three were less convinced and one was not sure that the editor had made any difference at all. Interviewing the authors after receiving their Likert scale statements would have been an opportunity for them to expand on their position here. This statement gave the most diverse range of answers to the Likert scale questionnaire and is very interesting because it may mean that the authors who agreed strongly acknowledge that they really needed the help of the editors, perhaps especially from a language perspective, whereas the others may not have noticed, or needed, much intervention. Again, with no knowledge of who the respondents were, it is not possible to do anything but speculate

4.4 Conclusion

The findings from this research illuminate the differences between editor and author opinions of the editing process. Publishers, it seems, need to have a more hands-on approach to editing so that the author feels supported and the editor feels validated. This research is but one example of the development required for editing to be a truly beneficial and respectful industry with clear goals and with the author’s best interests as the primary goal.

Chapter 5 reviews the research questions that were the foundation for this project. The chapter shows that the research questions were all answered. An overview of the relevant findings, shortcomings and recommendations for further research follows after that.

Chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this research project, reflecting on the process and providing recommendations for future research. It revisits the research questions that formed the basis for this project, indicating that the questions were answered, and linking the findings to the relevant literature. It further identifies what new knowledge has been contributed to the field.

5.2 Summary and Reflection on the Research Process

This research project set out to answer the following questions:

- In what ways does the professional rapport between editor and author developed during the editing process support the author in the process of finalising the book for publication?

The following sub-questions narrow the focus of the central question:

- What is the impact of the cultural dynamics between editor and author on how the author feels the final work reflects their authentic voice?
- What aspects of this relationship between author and editor are revealed in the opinions, perceptions and experiences of the authors and editors?
- What role does the publisher play in facilitating the relationship between author and editor?

The process involved a detailed literature review, a series of Likert scale statements for authors to respond to, and in-depth interviews with six editors. Please see the appendices for the questions.

5.2.1 The impact of the cultural dynamics between editor and author on how the author feels the final work reflects their authentic voice

While the editors all expressed an awareness of cultural differences when editing the work of a Black author, neither the editors nor the authors indicated that their cultural dynamics affected the final work or interfered with the authors' authentic voice.

Perkins (2016) noted that Bregin (2007) wrote about the challenge of editing historically marginalised voices. While the editors raised this, the authors did not, implying either that they hadn't experienced it or that they were reluctant to criticise.

5.2.2 The aspects of the relationship between author and editor that are revealed in the opinions, perceptions and experiences of the authors and editors

The editors varied in their answers, with some saying they spend a lot of time in conversation and others saying they communicate via the publisher. This was revealing in the sense that the opinions, perceptions and experiences of the individual editors differed. The authors all,

bar one, agreed that the relationship is important, showing that it is important to build some rapport during the editing process.

As noted by Hill (2013), editors bring expertise and knowledge to the editing process that the author may not have, which may cause an imbalance in the relationship as the author is the expert on their own work but the editor has a different skill set. Cortada (2017) adds that authors may feel that editors don't appreciate the importance of parts of the text or that the author is an authority on what they are writing about. This points to how building the relationship can mitigate these fears.

5.2.3 The role the publisher plays in facilitating the relationship between author and editor

The publisher plays an important but varied role for both authors and editors. When the editor wants direct contact with the author, the publisher becomes a project manager, but when the editor depends on the publisher, the publisher has an important role—when there are disagreements, it is the publisher who is in a position to mediate and guide, and this is seen as crucial in the relationship between author and editor. However, both authors and editors can use this role to their advantage when disputes arise.

It was important for the editors to receive a brief from the publisher about the author. What is interesting is that the authors seldom get a brief on the editor—editors are usually selected and then presented, with no input from the author.

5.2.4 Professional rapport between author and editor supports the author in the process of finalising the book for publication

It was unequivocal amongst authors and editors that the relationship between them supports the process of finalising a book for production. The editors interviewed gave examples of when conflict and tension had arisen—differences of opinion, mostly. This is important because the role of the publisher becomes clearer when issues arise.

Perkins (2016) commented on the importance of editing in the production of a book: it improves the book's quality and value. The Likert scale answers from the authors suggest an awareness of this.

Shea (2018) points to how editors may enforce their own personal preferences, supporting a common authorial fear that editorial interventions may affect the work, but this was not evident in authors' responses.

The relationship between editor and author is crucial, and Shah (2007) notes that it can become quite tense, but that editors should always treat authors' writing with respect and tact. All editors interviewed shared this view.

5.2.5 Reflections

While the research questions were answered, there was an imbalance in the research method in that the editors did not answer a Likert scale questionnaire before their interview and the authors answered a Likert scale questionnaire but were not interviewed afterwards.

The editors' interviews would have been more focused if the points of discussion started from the position each of them had taken in the Likert scale questionnaire. This would have directed the discussion on each of the points at issue. Instead, the editors would begin by discussing the question I'd put to them but then expand their discussion to related issues. I should have been stricter in getting them to clarify their point of view on each issue. This would have been easier if I'd had their answers to the Likert scale questions to guide the discussion.

The authors, on the other hand, responded to Likert scale statements but were not given the opportunity to expand on their answers in a subsequent interview. I had to guess why they had answered as they did and could not explore this further.

So, if both groups – editors and authors – were given Likert scale statements and both had been interviewed on the basis of those answers, the interview questions could have been better targeted at understanding the Likert scale responses and answers could have had more depth and clarity.

Despite the imbalance, it was impractical to give both groups both types of questions, and the information received was pertinent and does contribute to this field, although it gives more feedback on editors than it does on authors.

I was surprised at how little evidence there was of the conflict and friction that I know from 15 years of experience arises all too often in editor-author relationships. The reason might be that the authors who volunteered to participate in this study may have self-selected themselves on the basis of their own positive experience of being edited. Others with negative experiences may for that very reason have declined to participate.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research on the Topic

The real point of interest in research on this topic is what goes wrong and why, and this can best be investigated by sampling editor-author relationships that have failed.

A suggestion would be to identify pairs that have been conflicted and analyse both points of view: what went wrong? Further research may benefit from pairing an editor and an author who have worked together where the situation did involve some conflict to explore both sides of the relationship and to compare their experiences.

Research ethics requires that participants' identities are not revealed. This would be crucial in research involving editor/author pairs who had experienced conflict. Their responses may well be influenced if they knew that their counterpart were going to be giving a possibly different point of view on what had occurred.

This research would be more accurate in identifying what goes wrong during the editing process and may assist publishers in future with better selection and better briefing and better managing of the process.

There was great disparity in answers regarding the levels of editing and this could be useful further research. One editor felt that level one (spelling, punctuation, etc.) was not the job of the editor. This speaks to the lack of industry standards as the expectations of the role of the editor are not defined.

Additional questions for further research is whether it matters if the editor does not understand a cultural reference if the intended reader will understand it, or should books be made more accessible to a wider audience than that, or might this be offensive to the intended reader and the author him/herself?

This research did not investigate the self-publishing industry, an industry that is growing fast (Gibixego, 2021). In my experience, the editor is at the mercy of the author, whereas with traditional publishing the publisher has the final say. It may therefore be very interesting to explore the experiences freelance editors have had within this industry. Most self-publishing companies in South Africa are SMMEs with only one or two staff members and therefore make use of freelancers to outsource the services they provide (PASA, 2024: 35), so there should be a large number of potential editors to involve in this research.

ChatGPT and other AI was not part of the scope of this research, but it could be very interesting to include, not just what people in the industry are experiencing, but what ChatGPT might do to a text written with a specific voice. Day et al. (2024) conducted an experiment asking ChatGPT to edit a short story and one of the noted outcomes is that it changed the Australian English to US English – so what would it make of a South African voice? They pointed out that what editors have, through lived experience, technical skills and industry expertise, what they call ‘editorial intelligence’, is something that ChatGPT did not have.

Finally, I intentionally selected white editors for my research because I was interested in the cultural dynamic between a white editor and a Black author. I think it would be very interesting to interview Black editors to hear how their experience of editing differs and what Black authors have to say.

5.4 New Knowledge This Research Project Has Contributed to the Field

Although research on the topic of the editor-author relationship has been conducted elsewhere, especially in South America, very little research appears to have been done in South Africa, especially regarding a white editor and a Black author.

Racism persists in post-apartheid South Africa. One might assume from this that some white editors might reveal this in how they interact with a Black author and Black authors in turn might be expected to be hostile to any criticism of their writing from a white editor, however valid and well intentioned.

As I mentioned earlier, when I embarked on this research project I was expecting authors and editors to reveal conflict and difficulties, but my participants did not indicate any signs of tension or discomfort during the editing process.

What might therefore stand as new knowledge is the evidence in my study of the mutual respect and harmony in interactions between white editors and Black authors in South Africa.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, I was disappointed not to find the difficulties I know occur during the editing process. As an editor for over 15 years, I have not personally experienced conflict with an author, but as a production manager, a position I held for four years, I was privy to many

instances of conflict arising between author and editor, especially regarding how the author felt about what the editor was doing to change or dilute their authentic voice. My experience differs from the findings of this research. However, it was very interesting to observe in other editors' points of view and experiences how very differently each of them perceived the role of the editor to be.

The findings from this research illuminate the differences between editor and author opinions of the editing process. Publishers, it seems, need to have a more hands-on approach to editing so that the author feels supported and the editor feels validated. This research is but one example of the development required for editing to be a truly beneficial and respectful industry with clear goals and with the author's best interests as the primary goal.

The key finding from this research highlights the mutual respect and harmony experienced and proclaimed in interactions between white editors and Black authors in South Africa.

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Appendices

Appendix A Email to Participants

> I am a Master's student in Publishing Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, under the supervision of Laetitia Cassells and Lorraine Nyamapfene. I am investigating the editor-author relationship in a multi-cultural context, specifically with regard to the influence of editorial interventions on the merit of the published book. The central question I wish to investigate is how the rapport established between author and editor affects the final work. The aim of this research project is to find out the impact of the cultural dynamics between editor and author, specifically in the context of diversity in South Africa, on how the author feels the final work reflects their authentic voice; explore the opinions, perceptions and experiences of the authors and editors when reflecting on the editing process; and examine the role the publisher can play in facilitating the relationship between author and editor.
>
> As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in an interview.

The email concluded with administrative details regarding what the interview would entail and how the interviews would be recorded. I attached an information sheet (see Appendix D) and consent form.

Appendix B Email to Publishing Houses

I am completing my MA coursework research project on the practice of ethical editing and the intercultural relationship between editor and author in South Africa under the supervision of Lorraine Nyamapfene and Laetitia Cassells. I would appreciate if you could circulate the attached information and invitation below to suitable authors.

I am hoping to reach specifically Black South African authors who write in English as mother-tongue speakers of an indigenous language. My study hopes to highlight how the publishers involved in promoting these authors can ensure that the editing performed by White editors in English preserves the authorial voice, by balancing the interests of the editor (and by extension, publisher) with the authentic experiences of authors in my study.

I will be able to provide any further information required and have already conducted extensive interviews with editors to provide context for this enquiry, which has been approved by the Wits Ethics Committee.

Please feel free to share the invitation with colleagues as well. I thank you in advance for your assistance and support.

Appendix C

Letter to Authors for Publishing Houses to Forward to Suitable Authors

Dear author

I am looking for participants for my research project (MA Publishing Studies at Wits) on the editor-author relationship in a multi-cultural context.

Please take five minutes to respond to the statements in the link below if

- you are a published Black South African author
- English is not your first language
- your book is written in English
- it was edited by a White editor.

Appendix D

Information Sheet

My name is Megan Winifred Mance and I am a Masters student in Publishing Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, under the supervision of Laetitia Cassells and Lorraine Nyamapfene, and I am investigating the editor-author relationship in a multi-cultural context, specifically with regard to the influence of editorial interventions on the merit of the published book. The central question I wish to investigate is how the rapport established between author and editor affects the final work. The aim of this research project is to find out the impact of the cultural dynamics between editor and author, specifically in the context of diversity within South Africa, on how the author feels the final work reflects their authentic voice; explore the opinions, perceptions and experiences of the authors and editors when reflecting on the editing process; and examine the role the publisher can play in facilitating the relationship between author and editor.

As part of this project, I would like send you a list of 12 statements with response options (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, strongly disagree) for you to respond to. Following this step I would like to invite you to take part in an interview. This one-off activity will involve answering a list of open-ended questions and will take around 30 minutes. The interview will be conducted in person or telephonically. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interview using a digital device. This recording will be stored in a password-protected computer and only I will have access to this recording. It will be deleted after 5 years.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project. You will not receive any direct benefits from participation but there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and identifying information, such as your name, will only be known by me. The information you give to me will be held securely on a password protected computer and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time.

This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you agree to participate, please complete the attached consent form and send it back to me? I will then send you the 12 statements to respond to and we can set up a suitable time for the interview.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Appendix E

Participant Consent Form

Title of project: ***Exploring the editor-author relationship in a multi-cultural context: The influence of editorial interventions on the merit of the published book***

Name of researcher: Megan Winifred Mance

I, …….., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide will be treated confidentially	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his / her research report	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO

Appendix F

Editor Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a book editor?

2. a. When editing a book, is it important to get the right editor for a book and/or author?
   b. Why/why not?

3. a. Publishers try to act as 'match-makers', getting the right editor for a particular book or author. Do you agree?

   b. How important is this and why?

4. a. When being briefed on a new book for editing, does the publisher give you any background on the author and whether there are any special considerations, or is it a more formal process that just involves style guide and level of edit required?

5. a. Do you engage directly with authors when editing or do you liaise via the publisher or production manager?

   b. Does the publisher play a role during the editing process?

   c. Does the publisher encourage interaction between author and editor during the editing process?

6. a. Do you feel there is a need to build a relationship with the author while editing?

   b. Why/why not?

7. a. If yes, in what ways do you build this relationship?

   b. Do you set up regular meetings with the author during editing or only as needed?

   c. Is there anything you feel is essential to building this relationship?

8. a. What tension, if any, has arisen during the editing process between yourself and an author?

   b. What worked well?

   c. Can you identify what created tension?

9. Can you suggest a way in which this could have been avoided?

10. What challenges have you experienced with communicating suggestions to an author?

11. a. Did the cultural differences between you and the author impact on your ability to communicate changes with your author?

    b. If yes, please describe.

12. I'd like you to think about the levels at which you (found you) directed most of your editorial interventions. The first is at word and sentence level – common errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and usage; Plain English; word choices. The second would be at sentences and paragraph level – clarity, cohesion, coherence; and the third is at the developmental level – structure, story, plot, pacing, characterisation, theme and consistency.

    Would your response to this question be very different with the first-language English authors you've edited?

12. To what degree does the author's voice hold sway at the expense of standard language/comprehensibility?

13. Are there any factors from the publishing house that impact your ability to edit a book properly?

14. To what degree and in what ways did your editorial interactions with the author contribute significantly to the merits of the published book?

15. Are there any other factors that impact your ability to edit a book properly?

16. Is there anything else, from your editing experiences, that you would like to add that you think is an important consideration that hasn't been addressed in the questions during this interview?

Appendix G

Likert Scale Statements

1. It is very important to get the right editor for a book.
2. It is very important to get the right editor for an author.
3. My publisher gave me sufficient background on the editor beforehand.
4. I prefer my editor to interact directly with me rather than through my publisher.
5. It is important to build a close relationship with the editor of my book.
6. My editor's interventions contributed significantly to the merits of the published book.
7. My editor did not raise issues relating to cultural expression or interfere with my authentic voice.
8. The author's voice holds sway at the expense of standard language/comprehensibility.
9. I felt comfortable receiving suggestions, doubts and queries from a white editor.
10. I sometimes felt angry/hurt/offended about suggested changes in material that had a particular cultural context.
11. No disagreement, conflict or tension arose with the editor.