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Exploring Afrocentric Themes and Illustrations in South African Children's Literature with Human Characters from 2010-2020

Sibusiso Tshuma - Student number: 2132369

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, School of Literature, Language and Media, University of the Witwatersrand in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Publishing Studies.

Johannesburg, June 2021

Abstract

The principal objective of this research is to explore thematic concerns raised in Afrocentric children's literature and how illustrations are used in the making of such books. The research explored how general children's themes are presented in an Afrocentric way to make the children's books Afrocentric to cater to the African child's values. This research is concerned primarily with themes of Afrocentricity in its broader sense which mainly look at social, political, racial and cultural identities as portrayed in children's literature. The central goal of the discussion is to show how these texts reflect an African perspective on African children. It is in this context that the research examines the ideological foundations of Afrocentrism as developed by Asante as it attempts to provide a framework for exploring societal, sociological, cultural and political problems of the black children in South Africa, post-apartheid as outlined in selected texts. Afrocentric children's literature will loosely mean children's literature written for African children, by a South African author regardless of race provided its narrative is centred on the African child. The research therefore analyses how general themes of Afrocentricity have been incorporated into post-apartheid South African children's books that feature human characters. This was achieved through triangulation of three forms of qualitative data: interviews, textual analysis and foregrounding the study on the Afrocentric theoretical framework. The findings show that use of Afrocentric themes is centred on rewriting the history, politics, social relations, religion and culture of the black people in the best interest of African children. African values were consistently present in the selected texts with more elaborate and dignified closer to life illustrations of the black child. The study recommended that there is need for production of more of such books and that these should be made available and easily accessible.

Keywords

Afrocentrism, African children's literature, themes, illustrations.

Plagiarism declaration

I, **Sibusiso Tshuma…….** Student number**: 2132369**
registered for the degree of Master's in Publishing studies in the academic year 2020
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: 01 June 2021

Dedication

This research is dedicated to all African children. My hope is that they embrace their differences from other races, that they are comfortable in their own skin, their beauty, their intelligence and above all, that they develop a positive worldview of their circumstances. I hope that they know that they are equally good, equally important and equally capable of doing what children of other races can do.

Special dedication to my little brother Amen Tshuma and my little sister Omega Tshuma.

“No race has a monopoly on beauty, or intelligence, or strength and there will be a place for all at the rendezvous of victory.” Aimé Césaire.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information

Afrocentric children's literature is an often-neglected area of study in publishing with African children being introduced to reading through books they cannot identify themselves in (Adichie, 2009). I argue that if children's books are written in an Afrocentric fashion, with Afrocentric themes and illustrations, African children would easily identify with the texts that are read to them by their parents, family members or as they read the texts themselves at an early age. This could generate interest in reading since reading will not appear to be a tedious formal activity but a fun-filled one as they will be relating with the texts and seeing characters they are familiar with. This could generate interest in reading and improve comprehension skills among the lower primary grades in South Africa as indicated by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies report (PIRLS, 2016).

Children are introduced to literacy way before formal schooling with research showing that they are sensitive to speech even before birth (Moon, Lagercrantz & Kuhl, 2013). Studies further show that children first acquire literacy skills that equip them to make sense of, describe, and participate in the world at home (Liebeskind, Piotrowski, Lapierre & Linebarger, 2014; Niklas & Schneider, 2013). As children grow, comprehension becomes increasingly important as they encounter more complicated literature which requires them to have built good comprehension skills prior. Since language and literacy experiences in the first three years of a child's life lay a foundation for their literacy competencies in the future (Niklas, Cohrssen & Tayler, 2016), these experiences are critical and should be implemented at an early age in children's readings. I posit that this skill would be sharpened by using books that talk about objects and experiences that African children are familiar with through the use of Afrocentric themes and illustrations that they can easily identify with.

Most children are only exposed to reading through schoolbooks meaning reading would have been made a compulsory task and Myers (2016) argues that when children start looking at reading that way, reading becomes a tedious exercise and they begin to fear reading unless a primary caregiver introduces them to exciting, reading material that is not for school-reading and encourages them to read for fun. This makes non-school trade books very important in a child's reading growth. Through reading, children are introduced to characters, concepts, and relationships in their daily lives and beyond. That broader worldview, encourages curiosity, and fosters communication skills and an inquiring mind. If they start reading using illustrations and content that they interact with on a daily basis then build on by introducing new and foreign content and illustrations, reading becomes fun (Nolen, 2007).

Chawane (2016) defines Afrocentricity as a cry for recognition of an African point of view and inclusion of Africans in their own narratives, while Asante (2007) adds that Afrocentricity is a paradigm, a concept, a research method and a research framework that puts the African at the centre of research and their narratives. Afrocentric children's literature is a special genre that needs to be analysed on its own; not under African writing and also not under general children's literature because doing so will not be exploiting all the elements that make up African children's literature. Afrocentric children's literature finds itself as a convergence of African literature and general children's literature, but it is neither of the two, having elements of both yet neither of the two separated.

In this research, I explore children's literature as being a mirror to an African child as suggested by Blaska (2004) who describes children's books as both a window and a mirror; a window when a child is able to experience something new regardless of their own experiences and a mirror when the child can see themselves in a character who shares similar experiences and feelings. It is therefore important that children are accorded literature that enables them to see themselves on that mirror before they can experience something new and that they are able to have the mirror experience before they have the window experience. Ngozi (2014) further adds that because of its ability to inculcate moral and ethical principles, children's books have the ability to impact on a child in such a way that they can identify with the book in their own personality, worldview, identity and self-perception and their relationship with their surrounding environment. These books should also be able to help children grow in humanity and understanding of their circumstances (Stood-Hill & Amspaugh-Carson, 2009) and in that regard would therefore be seen as a true mirror reflection of their society.

Ukam (2006) states that if one accepts that children's literature does to a certain degree reveal aspects of society, then one needs to consider how these norms are revealed. One way of doing this is through exploring thematic concerns and use of illustrations when it comes to children's literature as wa Thiong'o (1993) once argued that there is often no relationship in written literature and that of African children's immediate home and community life, with most of the literature not reflecting what the African child knows.

1.2 Purpose

This research examined the use of Afrocentric themes and illustrations in South African books for five- to ten-year-olds which are the foundational phases of education. The books used in this study were trade fiction, with human illustrations. In so doing, the research revealed aspects of the society as portrayed in the selected texts and how this could impact on children's growth in pursuit of identity and pride in being Africans. This was achieved through interviewing two publishers and two book distributors to get a glimpse into what themes have been trending in the past 10 years. Their responses were then used

to analyse the children's books which were purposively selected to fit into the Afrocentric theoretical framework (refer to Table 3.1).

1.3 Problem statement

Adichie, (2009) highlights that Africa does not have enough children's books that tell African realities, stating that the children's books that she read growing up as is the case with many African countries that were formerly colonised, did not reflect her realities. Afrocentric writing through use of Afrocentric themes and illustrations could cover that gap by introducing stories that reflect a life that they are familiar with.

1.4 Research questions

1. What are the thematic concerns in Afrocentric children's literature?
2. How are illustrations used in the making of an Afrocentric book?
3. How do the selected texts reflect lived experiences of African children in South Africa?

In answering these questions, I triangulated two forms of qualitative research: interviews and textual analysis while foregrounding the study on the Afrocentric theoretical framework. I interviewed two publishers and two book distributors and analysed ten purposively selected Afrocentric children's books published between 2010 and 2020. The research methods used are defined in detail in Chapter three.

1.5 Objectives

- To analyse thematic concerns in selected texts.
- To explore the use of illustrations in the selected texts.
- To analyse how these texts show the lived experiences of the African children and their interaction with the world around them.

1.6 Assumptions

That native writers are now able to write about their own authentic familial, cultural, societal and historical experiences and as such give a true reflection of their social, political and economic experiences in South Africa.

1.7 Rationale

This study is important as it will add to the development of better African children's books that reflect African children in a more positive light. I believe that if children are introduced to reading using themes

and illustrations that they are familiar with; regardless of the language used, they are bound to grasp comprehension skills quicker.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I looked at discussions on Afrocentric literature that have been dealt with in the past looking at issues of authorship, language, themes and illustrations. I also gave a detailed definition of Afrocentrism and how it was used for this research. Because there is little research around Afrocentric children's literature, this research borrowed from adult Afrocentric literature, general children's literature and African-American children's literature, as Afrocentric children's literature borrows literary elements from all three. For the same reason, some of the literature used is dated but relevant to the study.

Reading and literacy are some of the most important elements in this age of information. All formal learning and knowledge acquisition is centred on reading. It is therefore important to cultivate a reading culture amongst children as they grow up as this becomes a foundation for them to grasp important skills of reading and comprehension. This skill is sharpened through the use of among other things, language that children understand, pictorial aids of an environment that they are used to, a people that they know and characters that they can identify with (Smith, 2017). These elements make up a better book to a child in whatever part of the world as they can easily identify with the content and grasp the meaning faster.

2.2 What is Afrocentrism?

Chawane (2016) states that the origin of the Afrocentric philosophy cannot be established with certainty but the most influential book advocating it was published in 1954. Afrocentricity as an idea became widespread during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America with African scholars seeking to challenge the Eurocentric perspective of looking at the world which did not allow any other view but the Eurocentric way (Early, 2020). This ideology was further spread into all African countries as its premise was to argue that Africans and other non-white people had been dominated by Europeans through slavery and colonisation, (Chawane, 2016) and were forced to abandon their way of living. Afrocentrism is also sometimes called Africentrism (Early, 2020).

Mkabela (2005) states that Afrocentricity was further developed into a philosophical and theoretical paradigm whose original uses are attributed to *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987), *Afrocentricity* (1988), and

Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge (1990) all by Asante and as such the term has synonymously been associated with Asante. Asante (1998) proposed that although Afrocentrism is an antithesis of Eurocentrism, it does not call for the replacement but correction of existing Eurocentric perspectives that seek to exclude or downplay the contributions made by Africans in the development of the world and their way of living. Asante (1991) further defines Afrocentrism as a "frame of reference wherein African phenomena are viewed in the perspective of African people" (p.171) meaning that African people analyse and interpret their own realities from an African perspective.

Walker and Burbanks (2010) further add that Afrocentricity is the critical analysis and interpretation of culture, economy, history, language, philosophy, politics and society from a conceptual, methodological, and theoretical framework that centres Africa and privileges the agency of Africans and persons of African descent. Afrocentricity therefore means revisiting the present day and looking at how to correct the wrongs of the colonial times by not looking at African lives through the colonisers' eyes (Asante, 1998) but that of Africans. Asante (1991) further states that the use of the Afrocentric paradigm should place the African cultures, histories, experiences, and perceptions as the central axis that directs the frame of reference so that African people become the centre of analysis and synthesis. Afrocentricity therefore concerns itself with the identity of the African people, with African people viewing themselves as subjects of their own narratives. Afrocentrism looks into rewriting the history, politics, social relations, religion and culture of the black people (Dlamini, 2018) and asks if whatever is done is in the best interest of African people (Asante, 2003). I used this understanding of Afrocentrism to form the framework and a critical concept in analysing selected texts.

When Africans gained independence, the need to defend their freedom, humanity and dignity naturally metamorphosed into Afrocentric writing. A lot of positive black people literature started coming up in African countries. However, the development of such literature in children's genres remained stunted (Moller, 2015). Osaki (2003) propounds that it is surprising that not much research has been done on African children's literature as African children's literature books remain unparalleled in their ability to nurture the imagination and provide relevant instruction to the African child and conscientize them into what Africans believe in as a people. There is need therefore to look at the form, nature and source of material for African children's literature to see if it aligns with the new kind of writing post-independence. In looking at Afrocentricity as a theory in writing children's books, some of the elements I explored include themes, language, illustrations, characters, motifs and black consciousness in all its spheres.

Asante (1998) further states that the Afrocentric method is concerned with establishing a worldview about the writing and speaking of oppressed people. This method therefore should give a voice to the formerly colonised in a system that has a history of depriving them of a voice in all the aspects of their

life, where they were disenfranchised and had no voice of their own (Sarpong, 2002). Most South African scholars in the apartheid era avoided questions relating to cultural, ethnic and racial identities because apartheid laws suppressed freedom of expression and scholars were "confined to the ideas that sustained and supported the apartheid regime," (Bekker, 1999, p. 3). However, after independence, with the freedom of expression, the South African black community should thus be able to write narratives of their own experiences and authentically so, revealing true depictions of their societies.

In this study, Afrocentrism is used interchangeably to either mean a suitable paradigm or as a methodology to explore African children's literature as used in one Afrocentric study by Dlamini (2018) where he explored African values in African literature books recommended in the school curriculum for students at Matric level. Afrocentric texts refer to texts that celebrate the African child written or illustrated by any South African regardless of race and language, published in South Africa. This will therefore be a study of South African children's texts regardless of the race of the writer and illustrator. These definitions were provided to the participants as the meaning of Afrocentric literature and Afrocentrism may differ from one person to the other.

While Afrocentric rhetoric is in opposition to the negative in Western culture, it allows other cultures to coexist in harmony with it (Asante, 2009). Since the Afrocentric paradigm is based on a cultural and historical perspective, the critic must understand both the cultural and historical bases of the discourse to relate well with the history and put it into context when analysing text and discourse (Asante, 1998). Wilentz, (2006) further adds that in understanding literatures and cultures of black people world over, Afrocentrism places itself as a major expressive theory to understand black people and all sociological aspects that pertain to their well-being after independence with some texts still negatively portraying the African child.

Negative portrayal is not the only problem faced by minority characters in children's books. Roethler (1998) states that there is a time when minority children could not find themselves at all in the books they read in America and as such there is need to explore the content of post-colonial writings to see if they address this absence and misrepresentations in the form of prejudices and stereotypes in other black communities outside America. It is in this context that the research examines the ideological foundations of Afrocentrism as developed by Asante as it attempts to provide a framework for exploring societal, sociological, cultural and political problems of the black children in South Africa, post-apartheid as outlined in selected texts.

2.3 What is African children's literature?

Osa (1985) notes that it is difficult to define what African children's literature is because not much attention has been given to that which is called African children's literature. Though children's literature has long been neglected in Africa, recent developments have encouraged new book production and critical study of the genre itself (Moller, 2015). African children's literature for this research will loosely refer to work of fiction written for children in the age range of five to 10 years, written and illustrated by any South African regardless of race but celebrating black lives with black children characters and illustrations. These are trade children's books, not prescribed primary school textbooks.
The working definition of African children's literature will therefore be children's literature written for African children, by a South African author regardless of race whose narrative is centred on the African child.

In an interview, at the 2016 African Literature Association conference in Atlanta, when asked why he featured African children's literature in the latest issue of *African Literature Today*, Asante mentioned that publishers continue to ignore the genre and it is usually at the bottom of their publishing budgets (Africa in Words Guest, 2016). African children's literature continues to be trivialised, yet it is supposed to be instructive, educative and entertaining. Muponde and Stein (2010) state that the study of children's literature in Africa has been shown little support in major African universities and there is no journal that specifically looks at the study of African children's literature. However, this has since improved a little over the years with journals like *Mousaion* and the *International Research in Children's Literature* having special features on African children's literature. Oliver (1988) notes that Afrocentrism is interdisciplinary and should be incorporated into all areas of life and this ought to include children's books as they contribute to building their understanding of the world around them.

Ndebele (1994) posits that the state of literature reflects a great aspect of historical imbalances in South Africa and that in trying to find answers to some of the country's literary problems, the country has to explore ways in which to resolve the larger struggle for emancipation. Dlamini (2018) on exploring Afrocentric values in African novels selected for use in high schools suggests that the answer to these literary problems could be using literature that has African values and is centred around the cultural lives of Africans. If the prime mandate of literary works is repositioning Africans as agents of their own destinies (Asante, 2009), then Afrocentrism should give a resolution for the liberation of African children, not only at school but in most if not all literature they are subjected to. It is important that today's literary work should decolonise Afrocentric literature to benefit African children in the current and future generation of not just South Africa but Africa at large.

Afrocentrism in literature seeks to "convey the need for African people to relocate themselves historically, socially, politically and philosophically," (Mkabela, 2015, p.8). This stems from the school of African world view which includes wholeness, community and harmony in cultural values (Dlamini, 2018). African children's literature is thus, the kind of children's literature that puts the African child at the centre of the narrative, celebrating them and affirming them.

Afrocentrism is often associated with literature written in African languages. The words Afrocentric literature and indigenous literature are often used simultaneously, albeit wrongly. In as much as it is true that often literature written in African languages may be Afrocentric, it does not mean that literature written in English is not Afrocentric. It also does not mean that all literature written in African languages is Afrocentric. This is especially true considering that most children's books are often translated (Puku, 2020). If a book is written in a native language for instance but lacking the essence of Afrocentrism it therefore loses its essence of being Afrocentric. It is just another children's book, nothing more.

2.3.1 Authorship

African children's literature is defined by Meniru (1992) as literature that is written for African children by African authors either in vernacular or a foreign language. However, it would be wrong to conclude that only Africans can write African literature for Africans because of the global village we live in. That the definition is based on the author's "Africanness" is a problem on its own because the state of being an African can be acquired in so many ways; for instance, by being born in Africa. If this person then later grows up in a different continent, they will not give a fully authentic account of the African experience in Africa. There are people who acquire the "African" title by marriage at a later stage of their lives usually after marriage and their account of Africa may be different too and only starting at a time they got married into "Africanism." Then there are Africans who are not necessarily black, like Indians and mixed races also known as "Coloureds" in South Africa (Khaya, 2016). This already poses a problem to that definition which may be used to define authorship in African children's literature. Osaki (2003) suggests that African children's literature can thus be best defined as that literature that has specifically been written for an African child, "reflecting his experiences, socio-cultural environment and world-view." (Osaki, 2003, p.5). A black person's writing does not make the writing Afrocentric, no more than living in Africa makes a person Afrocentric, (Osaki, 2003). In as much as this is a different definition from the one put forward by Asante (1990) who says anything Afrocentric should follow black people; this is the definition that I used in this study as it is more wholesome and holistic, looking beyond just the skin colour to qualify a writer and an illustrator.

Most authors in this era - the post-apartheid era in South Africa, were born into a worldview which glorified the white man and saw him as a measure of success. The African writers find themselves with

a burden to make right their narrative and present the narrative of their lifetime in the best possible and most truthful way, centred on them, with other continents being a part of their narrative, but not the centre of it (Joseph, 2017). Having been born during apartheid in South Africa and highly likely to have experienced the brutality of the era in one way or the other, these authors became aware of a culture that classified them as second-class citizens and they question the previous portrayals of the natives and question colonial narratives centred around the colonial powers where they were seen as "the other" Ndebele (1994).

2.3.2 The language question in Afrocentric children's literature

The marginalisation of African languages before and during apartheid resulted in English and Afrikaans, being made the official languages and as such most children's books have been written in these languages over the years even after apartheid. Moller (2014) states that the racial discrimination before and during apartheid included a discrimination of languages and especially against African languages. Post-colonial Africa is still struggling with the hegemonic ideologies based on cultural and linguistic imperialism (Wolff, 2017). Africa has been in continuous debates regarding the implementation of multilingualism in its societies and the current colonial ideologies are still pertinent in its society. Dlamini (2018) argues that South African book publishing has been and will continue to be part of a biased cultural and economic society if adequate planning and change is not implemented in this regard.

There are thinkers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o who argue that African literature should be written in African languages for it to be considered purely African. Ngugi has suggested that African writers should always write in their first languages, avoiding the languages of the colonisers (Ukam, 2018); although he himself continues to write in English. Rigaud (2016) shares the same sentiments and further states that children who learn to read in their mother tongue first are usually able to transfer the skills acquired to a second language a few years later or as they grow. This coupled with a reading of their own environment and their cultures, is highly likely to open up their mind and worldview and give them a better understanding to the content they read. However, this may not be easy to implement considering that the language of education in Africa is English and it has been used as a "recurring decimal" in education and other public spaces (Bamgbose, 2003). African nations, through history, suddenly were confronted with situations that demanded acquiring and learning of foreign languages. As a result, Africans found themselves subjected to foreign cultures, ideologies, beliefs, practices and foreign education which has since been passed on to new generations (Ngozi, 2014) even after independence. This has produced generations of Africans that have internalized foreign cultural ideals and young generations who have lost their cultural understandings (Sarr, 2010). Any literature short of the

language and praise of the former colonisers has often been interpreted as illiteracy (Ngozi, 2014) and is often looked at with ridicule and is seen as less intelligent and of a lesser class.

Boahen (2000) states that it takes time for the formerly colonised to move over to appreciate their own languages when they eventually attain their independence. However, with time, when they get fully emancipated, they start to see that their own languages and cultural and spiritual systems are equally important and start to embrace them. It is a journey that cannot be attained over a few years of attaining independence.

While decolonial discourses have problematised the continued use of English as a relic of colonialism (Christie & McKinney, 2017), many explanations for the enduring status of English as an official language in formerly colonised African countries have been given (Kadenge & Nkomo, 2011), one of them being that English is easier to use owing to a combination of its demographic superiority, further buttressed by the political and economic power wielded by the English-speaking world and by English in general (Bamgbose, 2003).

The socio-linguistic dynamics at work in South Africa's linguistic ecology shape and maintain a language dispensation that follows what might be called a neo-colonial model (Wright, 2002) where the former colonial language such as English, is used in the central economy, in government and for national and international communication therefore forcing the languages to continue being used in schools and most literacy teaching. Saro-Wiwa (1992) argues that the language of the coloniser then becomes an easier tool to use for publishing. Because South Africa finds itself presented with the same language policy problem after attaining independence, most children's books are written in English as indicated by the Publishers Association of South Africa (2016) which concluded that African languages made up a total of 12%, while English made up 69% of the local market in 2015. The publishing industry is still dominated by English and Afrikaans but there has been a recent rise in African language publishing, though it is still underdeveloped and concentrated in the educational sector more than the trade sector (Moller, 2014). The South African Book Development Council (SABDC) also conducted a survey that indicated that the most preferred language for reading is still English (SABDC, 2016).
Saro-Wiwa (1992) further states that writing in English enables a writer to reach a wider readership, not only in his home country, but also internationally compared to native African languages that are only used by a certain ethnic group usually in just one African country. That a text is written in English or any foreign language should therefore not discount its Afrocentric value but should be seen as a result of the above-mentioned reasons.

As indicated by Publishers Association of South Africa statistics (PASA, 2016), most of the children's literature is still in English and Afrikaans because of many factors that may include preferences of the

market. A publisher publishes to serve the market and it only makes sense to publish for a ready market especially given the publishing model used by most South African publishing houses – the traditional publishing business model where the publisher has to invest into the whole publishing process then wait for profits and returns to pay the author through royalties, (Molapo, 2020). Mda (2017) states that the issue of local Afrocentric book consumption especially the ones in local languages is a catch 22 situation in South Africa where bookstores will say they do not stock such books because there are no buyers and buyers will say they cannot find the books because the bookstores do not have that kind of literature, thus continued use of English.

Because of the reasons stated above, most South African parents have found themselves with the need to teach their children to read in English even before they start going to school, to prepare them for formal education (Dlamini, 2018). The texts used for this research were all written in English because most children's books are written in that language; including trade books as parents use them in preparation for early years of education (Gordon & Harvey, 2019). The other reason English texts were used is because of my limited knowledge of most of the South African languages. Using texts written in indigenous languages was going to be more taxing as I would have to rely on the services of a translator. It would also prove to be difficult to strictly use black illustrators as there are few books illustrated by black illustrators in South Africa, (Design Indaba, 2015).

2.3.3 Fiction genre

Albers (2008) states that the publication of fiction for African children began in the early 20th century as fiction for Euro-American children, but what was produced for African children was out of touch with the intended audience. Schmidt (1981) further adds that the literature produced for the African child did not concentrate on appropriateness for African readers, with most of the literature written to cater to Africans' level of literacy, for the aim of teachers and missionaries was to Europeanize African children and not to provide literature related to their needs and interests. Yenika-Agbaw (2007) posits that it is important to explore that which is classified as "African children's books" to see if it captures the complexities of their experiences as African children and human beings and if they can identify themselves in either fiction or nonfiction of such books.

Yenika-Agbaw (2007) further argues that the African art form has evolved to the point where it is hard to tell what is African anymore, as there is imitation of the West with the African educational systems tailored after the Europeans' way of living, beliefs and cultures. African children have found themselves in a cultural confusion being citizens of a global culture susceptible to cultural images from entertainment in media and fictional books that undermine their heritage in subtle and even direct ways.

African fiction has persistently explored the dialectic between the promise of change and the pressures of compromise (Smith, 1993). As concerned writers try to correct their narratives and experiences of African children, some of the narratives are not necessarily correct and do not depict the South African child's experiences and may be questionable. For instance, the African child is not only in the rural areas, but the African child is also found in the city. The African child is travelling and is exposed to other countries and cultures. Depiction of an all rural and backward South African child is not true. Children's literature by now should have evolved to depict even children in the cities and help demystify the myth that Africa is a huge jungle where children stay with animals that roam the streets (Kuntz, 1997).

The South African child has experienced changes politically, culturally and religiously. It is important to explore how these are depicted in the literature they are exposed to. Mitsch (2010) states that destructive colonial practices persist in the post-colony because most educational systems are modelled upon the European systems and some works of fiction are modelled on this as the writers try to stay as close to the educational syllabus as possible. It is therefore up to the African writer to correct this literature and reveal a realistic and authentic South Africa to the children and the world at large even in fictional writing.

Oliver (1988) further states that most of the Afrocentric literature looks only at the message and ignores illustrations, style, characterisation and form yet these are the elements that contribute to the Afrocentricity of a text.

Most literature in this age range of five to 10 years is mostly fictional as the aim is to encourage imagination at this stage of learning to read. By introducing children to new ideas and ways of thinking about the world, fiction has a powerful potential as it boosts creativity and allows children to imagine intended meanings (Edge, 2018). They are able to explore fiction and expand on their worldview thus the need for a true depiction of their surroundings and the need for affirmative literature. Using fiction with facts is one of the best ways to teach children how to read and leave them with an impression that lasts forever (Smith, 1993).

According to Martin (2019), studies indicate that the better and more captivating the story, the more effective it is at changing assumptions and challenging stereotypes. Research shows that fiction is more effective than nonfiction at changing our views about people different from ourselves (Seiter, 2018). While non-fiction is simply meant to convey information, fiction is different. It allows children to reach to implied meanings using their imagination, their worldview and information in their surroundings, (Norton & Norton, 2010). This makes it crucial then that they read literature that gives a positive perception of their own environment so that they are conscientized of their environment at an early age.

2.3.4 Human characters

Oliver (1988) states that it has been proven that regardless of age, children take interest in what they are reading if it has something to do with them and they can relate to the characters' experiences. Children develop more interest and positive attitude towards reading when they can relate to what they are reading. As such, it is important to present children with literature that they can relate with especially that with human characters that look like them.

Floyd (2019) highlights that more children's books with cartoon and animal characters continue to be published world over; way more than books with black children characters with only 10% of children's books featuring black characters in 2018, while 27 percent of them featured animals or aliens. Osaki (2003) further states that only a few children in Africa have access to literature that they are familiar with; with most children being introduced to written literature through foreign children's literature like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, Beauty and the Beast*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Walking into a mainstream bookstore like Exclusive Books in South Africa, one feels that this has not changed much with children's aisles still dominated by foreign and Eurocentric children's literature dominated by foreign human beings and animals they are not familiar with. However, this seems to be improving over the last few years with writers introducing black human characters in their literature, introducing Afrocentric thematic concerns and use of close to life depiction of illustrations of the black child (Muller, 2019).

Afrocentric books look at African pride and how to make the African child the main character who is also in control of his surroundings (McBride, 2019). Research shows that there has been more inclusion of human characters in South African literature from all folklore storytelling pattern that existed in African children literature readerships (van Vuuren, 1994). There has been a move from concentrating most children's literature on animal characters, with inclusion of human protagonists who co-exist with other races. The development from an almost all animal character and folklore literature has been replaced by day-to-day experiences of the African child who is an all-rounder, goes to church, goes to school, visits other countries and interacts with other races. These African human characters are identifiable from the text, through skin colour, hair colour and texture and physical body features among other things. They even speak their indigenous languages amongst themselves at times even in English texts.

2.4 What constitutes an Afrocentric reading?

Dlamini (2018) notes that African values are more abstract and challenging to find in literature corpus. Afrocentrism in literature exists and has meaning primarily in the context of a recognizable corpus of texts and works by Africans, situated in relation to a global experience that embraces both a precolonial

and modern frame of reference (Irele, 2001). It is a mechanism for an entire people, who have always placed literature at the centre of their learning experiences, to regard their place in the world and to teach (Ngozi, 2014). Books written for children should therefore reflect their history, traditional life and some customs that are fast losing practise but are still relevant to the African people.

Writing tends to take a certain pattern with certain themes characterising writing eras. African writing has taken a lot of changes from neo-colonial writing to colonial writing, to post-colonial writing. In all these phases, the thematic concerns change thus influencing the way of writing and topical issues addressed in the writings (Hakibou, 2018). Joseph (2017) further states that most African literature is an expression of its country's social change. The writers are concerned about the past and present history of their country and this concern is reflected in their works. The social changes that non-white South Africans were subjected to since the colonisation of the country; the cultural, political and missionary influences and its present state of achieved independence with a growing awareness of both national identity and modern problems should be explored in literature written post-apartheid in South Africa (Ndebele 1994). Liberation in literature challenges people, community and the continent to identify the positive elements in their heritage and inspires them to find solutions to their problems (Mkabela, 2005). Identity has been identified as an important theme in racial studies (Ponterotto & Sabnani, 1989). Identifiers include race, colour, beliefs, culture and traditions among other things. However, because of living together and interactions with other races, there has been a lot of acculturation and hybridization of culture (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002). As such, Afrocentric analysis tends to explore how these elements are addressed in any narrative. An Afrocentric reading should respect the elements that make up the African community, their values, their cultures and their perspective of the world (Mkabela, 2005).

The Afrocentric approach is a culture of the African people. Literature and culture should not be separated as they have an interlinked relationship (Dlamini, 2018). Literature texts should therefore play a fundamental role to make sure that the two work in harmony. If we agree that culture is the social programming of the mind, then literature becomes an important tool that should accommodate African readers to see themselves and their cultures in it (Ngozi, 2014). Culture refers to the totality of the pattern of behaviour of a particular group of people. It includes everything that makes them distinct from any other group of people for instance, "their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philosophical beliefs," (Aziza, 2001, p.5). Afrocentric reading should therefore look at cultural aspects that include, moral, religious, political and economic values from the point of view of an African.

Tanyanyiwa and Chikwanha (2011) highlight that African knowledge and literature methods have successfully guided its peoples in all spheres of functioning, including the spiritual, social, educational,

agricultural, political and economic ways before the advent of Western methods of literature inquiry and Ngozi (2014) argues that if this is the case, then the ability to do the above has been underutilised by Africans in their current literature, even more so in African children's literature as it should be a basis for their understanding of their world. African worldview in literature and education includes wholeness, community participation and unity and harmony which are deeply embedded in cultural values (Sarpong, 2002). An Afrocentric framework should therefore explore these and African values as lived and experienced by characters in a literary work.

The essence of Afrocentrism is for Africans to help each other grow and to look out for each other in what is commonly known as "ubuntu" (Mkabela, 2005). Ubuntu is derived from isiZulu: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, loosely translated to mean "a person is a person because of or through others" (Tutu, 2004, p.25). Ubuntu can be described as the capacity in an African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities with justice and mutual caring (Khoza, 2012).

The African community has always been a communalist kind where people share their means of living and look out for each other (Venter, 2004). Africans are known for their strong collective values with a collective sense of responsibility. In an African framework, the definition of an individual is community-based and not individualist. Anybody who does not identify themselves with the community is regarded as an outcast, which is contrary to western ideologies (Mkhize, 2004). They believe in a philosophical approach which makes everyone responsible for the other's welfare. Tutu (2004, p.25) says "A person is a person through other persons. None of us comes into the world fully formed and we rely on others to grow." This is what the Afrocentric framework emphasises especially on raising children.

The Afrocentric method emphasises this value of ubuntu characterised by love, hospitality, humility, understanding and politeness among other things (Mkabela & Luthuli, 1997). When it comes to taking care of children, Africans have an adage that says, "it takes a village to raise a child." In the African context, a child is everyone's child and can be taken care of, chastised, sent to do duties and nurtured by all elderly people around them, in and outside their homestead. Africans believe children are born out of and into the community and as such an African remains a part of the community for the rest of their life. Interdependence, communalism, sensitivity towards others and caring for others are all aspects of ubuntu as a philosophy of life (Le Roux, 2000).

Kwame (2011) states that good character is the essence of the African moral system. A society is meant to impart moral knowledge to its members, making them aware of the moral values and principles of that society through imparting moral education of various forms, including, as in African societies,

telling morally freighted proverbs and folktales to its younger members. Moral values are therefore explored in an Afrocentric reading with good triumphing over bad as stated by Norton and Norton (2010). Social values are therefore an essential element to explore in Afrocentric writing.

African pride is explored in Afrocentric writing in different forms. The sources of pride could be physical beauty, intellectual beauty or achievements by Africans (Mkabela, 2015). Over the years, Africans have embraced the beauty of their own hair and it has been used as one of the defining characteristics of African pride. Masekela on his website (2015) explained how African people's hair is "an amazing psychological jigsaw puzzle regarding…identity, image, self-esteem and heritage" of Africans and how it ought to be celebrated in song, literature and daily existence of black people. Hair has always been seen as a symbol of race and Afrocentricity even in adult Afrocentric reading. It has been portrayed as a symbol of power and identity. Hair is not just a theme that stands on its own. It has underlying undertones of other themes including race, sexuality, gender, power and beauty (Netshia, 2011). The politics of hair have been felt in schools too with some schools, at some point saying black children could not wear their hair in certain ways. One is reminded of the black boy, Anathi Marhea a Grade 11 student who was suspended from Mfuleni High School in 2016 for wearing dreadlocks to school after insisting he had a right to wear is hair the way he wants just like white children are allowed to wear their hair the way they want ((Khaya, 2016). The student was later allowed back to school when the department of education agreed they had to respect everyone's choice of religion and cultural practices.

With most African people having adopted the Eurocentric lifestyle which often shuns the African cultures and traditions as backword and associates them with backwardness and portrays it as less civilised, Afrocentricity seeks to fight this mentality and bring out the good in the African ways of living (Dlamini, 2018). Children have lost their connection with culture and they only get to experience some of their cultural values and traditions only on reading books, on television or when they celebrate the youth day at school on National Youth Day and on Heritage Day. Afrocentric children's literature should therefore give a platform for children to learn about their own cultural heritage and the cultures of other people. This is important because developing positive attitudes towards our own culture and the cultures of others is necessary for both social and personal development of children (Norton & Norton, 2010).

In the African culture, like in Biblical times, names carry a lot of meaning with them and are assumed to give character to human beings (Arthur, 2016). Dlamini (2018) states that in African communities during colonial times, Africans were given European names that lacked meaning in their societies. The system mostly stripped Africans of their native names so as to accommodate the white supremacy and for the whites to be able to call them when they then grew up and worked for them. Afrocentric writing thus promotes the use of native names most of which prophesy good things on the name bearer. Naming

is such an important part of the African culture such that some tribes hold a ceremony to name their children (Tembo, 2021).

The Afrocentric paradigm also seeks to address issues of identity. The colonial times brought racial injustices with them but there are more injustices done by blacks to blacks where one tribe deems itself better than other groups and thinks the other ethnic groups should speak their own language (Ndebele, 1994). Afrocentrism in African societies then seeks to teach tolerance of each other and the importance of respecting other people's languages and that all tribes and ethnic groups should be respected given the same respect and relevance. The apartheid regime over-emphasised the differences in the different ethnic groups and turned tribes against each other by trying to make it appear like one tribe was more superior than the rest and until this day, South Africa still has to deal with the consequences of such thinking from the apartheid times (Baloyi, 2018).

Asante (1998) states that religion is one of the most defining elements of Afrocentrism. Idang (2015) further adds that religion in African societies is portrayed as the fulcrum around which every activity revolves. African traditional religion, wherever it is practised, has some defining characteristics which may differ from place to place. In as much as African traditional religion (ATR) is viewed as the original Afrocentric religion, children's literature in South Africa seems to glorify Christianity more. Only a few children know about ATR, with most South Africans being introduced to ATR in their old age or only when they are thought to have a calling to serve the ancestors.

In Africa, knowledge is not imparted to the young children at school only. Ngozi (2014) states that Africans used the instrumentality of their indigenous languages before the introduction of formal education to teach their children. The African ideologies, culture, beliefs, practices and education were "incised into the skin, and written in their hearts, veins, and senses right from infancy…" (Ejiofor 2002, p.70). By so doing, Africans were able to transfer their history, culture and education to posterity and Ngozi (2014) posits that any Afrocentric written literature should have traces of this.

As children grow up, they are taught responsibility through assisting with chores around the home. There are some chores that are gender specific and others that can be done by anyone regardless of gender. Africans have these in their everyday living. African writing ought to show the ideal ways of bringing up children and the ideologies embedded therein. The African society has a systematic way of division of labour (Akanle & Oluwakemi, 2012) with girls being taught nurturing duties like cleaning, cooking and cleaning the house while boys are taught to herd domesticated animals and hunt in the rural areas in preparation for them to assume elderly gendered roles when they grow up. Children even know this when they play as they observe their parents and divide roles accordingly during playtime.

Family is at the core of African living. It is often made up of the patrilineal and matrilineal families (Tembo, 2021). Genealogy and extended families are one important value in African storytelling because Africans believe in the oneness of the family and African extended families are treated as part of the nuclear family (Idang, 2015). Grandparents stay with the family as they grow old and are taken care of by their children and they in turn help nurture the grandchildren. Eurocentrism in yesteryears did not treat the African extended family as legitimate but rather as curiosities that were to succumb to the superior European nuclear values legitimated by Christianity and Eurocentric ideologies (Tembo, 2021).

The African family dynamics have however kept evolving with time and interaction with other races (Bernadi, 2013).For instance, children are no longer just taken care of by heterosexual, married parents and as such, literature that touches on this subject helps such children who are taken care of by same - sex parents to identify themselves in the books they read and at the same time teaching their colleagues to accept them even when they come from different family structures from theirs. There are same-sex led families, single-parent-headed families, child-headed families and interracial families which were not commonly known in African societies. This in essence also teaches traditional African parents who often have difficulty accepting the new kind of families and marriages as this is new in their society to accept the change. This is one way of driving change to parents - using children's literature to teach adults (White, 2015).

In analysing Afrocentric children's literature, one should therefore be on the lookout of what constitutes the African values, ideologies, philosophies and communally accepted ways of their upbringing. Texts fashioned along Afrocentric thinking should reflect the ways of the people and their beliefs. These social, moral and religious values are to be explored on analysing the selected ten texts as foregrounded on the Afrocentric theoretical framework. Irele (1981) suggests that the imaginative use of language in literature should be analysed in any Afrocentric reading because it points out the political, ideological, social and cultural beliefs and motives of all stakeholders. It does not only look at what is learnt, by whom, and how quickly it is learnt, but it further explores questions of how knowledge being disseminated is structured and applied to bring understanding to cultural relevance (Dlamini, 2018).

Chawane (2016) states that Afrocentricity has been seen as a defensive countermove against Eurocentricity seeking to replace the European view of the world. However, the Afrocentric method seeks to embrace other races as long as they do not undermine Africans and their development (Asante, 2007). According to Asante (2007), Afrocentricity is constructive primarily because it does not deny others their place. It is based on harmonious coexistence of an endless variety of cultures. Afrocentrism does not seek to make other races inferior by over-glorifying Africa yet at the same time states that

Afrocentrism… does not violently confront any person or people but is a resolute attempt to put the records right. It is about placing African people within their own historical framework. It is a demand

that the contributions of Africans in all areas of civilization be reflected in world history. (Chukwuokolo, 2009, p. 33).

Because there are no specific studies that have outlined themes in Afrocentric children's literature, this study partly seeks to document these themes by interviewing publishers and distributors and exploring these in selected texts using the Afrocentric theoretical framework and picking African values as outlined above on 2.4 on what makes up an Afrocentric reading.

2.5 Recurrent themes in Afrocentric children's literature

Osa (1985) states that there have been developments on thematic concerns in children's literature to embody African heritage with most conferences held in Africa for children's literature emphasising that children's literature should not be taken for granted. The chief concern is creating literature that stimulates imagination through Afrocentric themes that restore African pride and identity (Osaki, 2003). The most recent such conference is the International Board for Books for Young People (IBBYP) held in Ghana in 2019 focusing on the importance of use of African children's illustrations in children's literature.

Afrocentrism as a paradigm seeks to celebrate the African way of living and Afrocentric children's literature should therefore uphold the same values illustrated in adult Afrocentric writing. These children's books should seek to reaffirm communal observations and experiences, convey particular cultural, spiritual and social values (Poon, 2016) and look at the world through the lenses of an African child.

Smith (1993) states that post-colonial literature in all its forms calls for the creation of something new: a social order that will heal the scars of colonisation, either by returning to pre-colonial values or by breaking free into a truly egalitarian policy where all gender, religion, economic status, and political beliefs are given equality and equal treatment. While they envision this national rebirth, these works also inscribe the powerful resistance to change of specific social collectivities and ideologies. Children's books should become a representation of people's imagination of themselves. They should show the way Africans imagine themselves to themselves (Asante, 1990). When these books fight social struggles, they open up new possibilities for understanding how political consciousness and literary expression work upon each other even on children's literature. Most of the themes explored in post-colonial times are therefore to empower the formerly colonised and make them focus on themselves and see themselves as equal to their coloniser or even better.

As indicated earlier, there are no studies that have specifically looked at themes in Afrocentric children's literature and as such, themes in Afrocentric children's books seem to borrow from adult Afrocentric literature and children's literature in general. The recurring themes in these books are in

celebration of the African culture, traditions and the African worldview. The Afrocentric paradigm seeks to address issues of power, privilege and position in relation with other races (Sarpong, 2002). Afrocentricity in children's literature seeks to challenge social ills such as racism, marginalisation of the blacks, prejudice and race-pride (Mahasha, 2014) at an early age.

Norton and Norton (2010) state that children's literature provides children with opportunities to respond to literature at their disposal, giving them appreciation of their own environment, their cultures and those of others. Children's literature also provides enjoyment and relaxation and as such it is a "recommendable way to impart moral and ethical principles, norms, cultural ideals, identity and heritage into children" (Ngozi, 2014, p. 63). A good children's book should be able to impact on children such that they can identify with it in their personality, identity, worldview and their immediate environment. Smith (2017) further adds that Africans do not demarcate art from education. They use entertainment and quality of art as means to educate and inform the general community of their values and what they believe in; children's literature should therefore address such issues.

Themes in this Afrocentric children's literature are generally themes that look at affirmation of the African child. Like Afrocentric adult literature, Afrocentric children's literature puts the African child to be the centre of the narrative. It serves as an empirical method rooted in the active agency of the African people (Pellerin, 2012).

Finding themes in these Afrocentric texts needs more than just what the usual Afrocentric writers consider Afrocentric themes considering the writer is writing for a younger audience. Most of the themes are themes that are meant for children in all kinds of literature ranging from empathy, tackling issues of bullying, obedience and helping, (Norton & Norton, 2010) as all these are ideal themes taught to children as they grow up regardless of the community they grow up in. It is in the delivery of these themes that the Afrocentric values are then imparted. Most of the themes in Afrocentric children's books, especially the ones explored in the study, reflect that most of the literature is influenced by the ethnicity, cultural upbringing and societal influences experienced by the author and the community they grew up in.

Children's literature should cater for all children including the disabled. Although disabled people children still face numerous barriers when attempting to be a part of mainstream society, children's books could help to change attitudes and knowledge about disability (Dyches, Prater & Jenson, 2006). Asante (1990) concludes that African children are made to question their self-worth as they are marginalised by reading literature where their peoples' stories are seldom understood from their African perspectives. By seeing themselves as the subject rather than the object of what they are reading, African

children come to see themselves as not foreign seekers of knowledge but as owners of those narratives (Dlamini, 2018).

2.6 Illustrations in children's literature

Reading illustrated books to children introduces them to reading strategies that will be used to develop and extend comprehension skills. As the child is introduced to reading, the first books are often picture books carefully written in such a way that most words can be sounded out with an illustration made to help the child recall (Fang, 1996). Illustrations help children find meaning when they get to a stage when they are able to read for themselves too (Glenberg & Langston, 1992) and they provide children with ideas about things that were completely unknown to them (Brookshire, Scharff & Moses, 2018). Getting children to enjoy stories is an important part of teaching them to read because once children come to enjoy stories, they are more motivated to pick up books and work their way through the words to enjoy the story. The transaction between what is viewed, in relation to lived experiences is both physical and intellectual and becomes significant as children learn to read, interpret, and reproduce their world (Sinha, 2009).

There are theories that have been put forward regarding the use of illustrations in children's books. Some researchers argue that illustrations may distort meaning because children and parents may be focusing on different aspects of the book (Strouse, Nyhout & Ganea, 2012). Greenhoot, Beyer and Curtis (2014) are also in partial agreement with this view highlighting that most adults perceive content and message as the focal point with language awareness perceived as more beneficial and significant, compared to visual accompaniments in illustrated books. However, most research suggests illustrations aid children to understand text better.

This research follows the understanding that illustrations enhance comprehension in children's books reading, basing on the motivation hypothesis by Glenberg and Langston (1992), the repetition hypothesis and the dual-code theory by Gyselinck and Tardieu (1999). The motivation hypothesis suggests that children enjoy stories better if the stories have illustrations and they are motivated to look for the textual meaning (Glenberg & Langston, 1992). Children therefore get excited and find intrinsic value out of being able to discover a story based on the illustrations. The repetition hypothesis by Gyselinck and Tardieu (1999) states that the integration of information from text and from illustrations means information is being presented twice, thereby enhancing comprehension and memory. This happens because illustrations give meaning to text. (Glenberg & Langston, 1992). The dual-code theory works like the repetition hypothesis and emphasises on the double-coding of information through combined use of text and illustration. This theory further suggests that text and illustrations produce two different kinds of conceptual representations, one in a verbal form and one in a nonverbal form and

by having two representations, comprehension is thus improved (Glenberg & Langston, 1992). It therefore becomes important to have illustrations that resemble the text as much as possible. Cianciolo (1970) also believed that illustrations facilitate reading and that surrounding children with attractive books about things of interest is one of the most effective ways to stimulate learning. Cianciolo further illustrated that books provide a literary and cultural heritage and help children build their vocabulary by allowing them to form various concepts about the world around them.

Using illustrations is also of much assistance to children with learning disabilities, with the illustrations giving active sensorial stimulation and facilitating emergent literacy (Justice & Kaderavek, 2002) and also for struggling readers who could get assistance to get to the intended meaning using illustrations. Brookshire, Scharff and Moses (2018) also conducted a research to show how illustrations help in the making of children's books and the preferences of children in the age zero to eight years. Participants were asked comprehension and illustration preference questions using 1) text only books, 2) illustration only books and 3) text plus illustration books. The results showed highest comprehension for the text-plus illustrations book content. Participants preferred the bright realistic book stimuli significantly more than any other book stimuli. This shows how important it is to have good illustrations in children's books as they stimulate imagination thereby improving comprehension and bringing fun to the reading of the text.

More studies of children in the age range in this study show that children's visual attention during storybook reading are mostly focused on the illustrations rather than the text (Evans & Saint-Aubin, 2005; Justice & Pullen, 2005). Memory for prose that is presented in written or auditory form is enhanced by illustrations (Carney & Levin, 2002). Carr (1999) concurs by stating that illustrated books are more interesting to children and increase a firm foundation to build reading theories in and outside the classroom. Illustrations thus serve as conduits for reading and oral language skills development, comprehension skills, phonological awareness, development of vocabulary and content-area concepts for children (Massey, 2015). The contribution of illustrators should not be taken lightly as seen from the cited studies. An illustrated book is the sum output of both the illustrator and the writer setting out to convey a message in words and illustrations and aid quick delivery of the intended meaning to the child. The writer and illustrator are equally important as much as text and illustration are equally important.

Albers (2008) states that illustrations embody stable representations of culture. She further states that these illustrations in children's literature help children learn to read characters, events and action and then build assumptions about the world and the people in it. Children often see their world and begin to recognize patterns before they learn oral or written language. At five to ten years of age, they make connections between pictures and text, with their main source being the picture, then text being

secondary (Feathers & Arya, 2012). Children's understanding of the world therefore comes through looking and seeing. Schmidt (1985) concurs and states that words in an illustrated children's book are primarily for the adult or any other person who can read the text to the child while illustrations are for the children who are the main recipients of the children's text and the importance of illustrations cannot be emphasised enough.

Khorana (1994) states that precise images used in African children's writings then, were not known because not much research had been done though there is popular agreement that the images were largely negative. Yenika-Agbaw (2007) argues that children can be manipulated by these images to accept their positions in society as communicated by symbolic forms from these books as second-class citizens if the African writer does not correct this.

Fang (1996) states that the most important use of illustrations in children's books is to provide mental images for child readers so that they can understand the written text easily and remember it longer. Considering how limited a child's vocabulary, syntax, and world knowledge are, pictures lessen the complexity of the written text by helping develop the plot and characters (Brookshire, Scharff & Moses, 2018). As such, with illustration use, the text uses fewer words and less difficult words that can be processed by the child reader. Vividness, compactness, and inexpressibility are three ways by which illustrations aid the child to attain the message the author is portraying (Gordon, 2008). An illustration can be used in a book to replace a large number of complicated words which may especially be important in Afrocentric reading for children reading in a second language who are often faced with books that have vocabulary control constraints. In this case, characters, objects, and situations essential to the story can be portrayed in the illustrations instead of using text.

Illustrations have a psychological effect on children as they use these illustrations to think and give meaning to text (Schwarcz, 1982). Roethler (1998) builds on this assumption and states that illustrations have an effect on children from the minority cultures as they seek to identify themselves in books and other sources of media and entertainment. In so doing and trying to identify themselves in text through images, children in the minority groups are faced with "double-consciousness," (Gordon, 2008) as they try to understand themselves against other races portrayed as superior to theirs.

Schwarcz (1982) suggests that illustrations have an effect on a child's schemata stating that illustrations influence the child as the illustrations develop the child's self-perception, world view, ability to understand their own intimate experience and how to relate to others through books. Schemata are patterns that represent how experience is organised and categorised in the mind. It is a theory that states that children understand their surroundings by building on blocks of what they are exposed to as they grow up (Gombrich, 1994). The meaning becomes embedded in their brain and they use this

interpretation of text through illustration to understand the world around them. If this is the case, it then becomes important that the black children should read positive books with positive illustrations that portray them in good light and as equal citizens with other races at an early age so that their worldview is positive at a young age. Exposure to illustrations creates a lasting positive or negative impression and they become the child's schemata (Catte, 1998). Use of negative illustrations in books will lead to low self-esteem in children who are trying to understand their place in a society with many races and they may continue to think they are second class citizens if they are introduced to literature that portrays them as such. Research has shown that black children often recognise themselves racially later than children of other races do (Davis, 2006) because of lack of literature that is interesting to them, where they can identify themselves.

Roethler (1998) argues, that some of the schemata of minority children will be those negative images which will partially inform their understanding of themselves. Using familiar and positive illustrations in Afrocentric children's books will therefore motivate children to find reading enjoyable and thus spend more time on reading and sharpening comprehension skills (Massey, 2015). This would also have a positive impact on the adult reader if they can identify with the affirmative literature they read to their children.

Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer (2013) further state that there is a fundamental relatedness of illustrated books to the cognitive development of children. Since they prototypically consist of illustration-text relations, they are systematically engaged with the child's maturing cognitive abilities and open up the way children view themselves and the world around them. The illustrations in these books foster these abilities through being used in situations of joint reading and attention.

2.7 Afrocentric theoretical perspective

This research is concerned primarily with themes of Afrocentricity in its broader sense which mainly look at social, political, racial and cultural identities as portrayed in children's literature. The Afrocentric method celebrates the once oppressed African societies and does not see the African as "The Other" or other colonial terms used for the colonised but as the main subject of discussion and owners of their own narratives, (Asante, 1998). Asante discusses this theory as an emancipation tool in the American context, looking at how to liberate Africans from a system that makes them feel less about themselves. This same theory can be used in other African setups where colonisation has taken place and hindered progress on African natives' lives outside of America (Early, 2020). It essentially advocates an inner, individual transformation from one of cultural dislocation to cultural relocation (Dlamini, 2018). Through this Afrocentric lens, a true understanding of the fundamental challenges to

the realisation of potential of the African and by extension, the community, can be realised free from the distortions of Eurocentrism (Gadsden, 1996) which has evaded the African society in all its forms. Phatshwane and Faimau (2019) further state that Afrocentricity focuses on making sure meaningful contributions to the development and study of Africa include Africa's own history, narratives, perspectives and interests especially from the Africans themselves. Without paying attention to African ownership of values, knowledge, and culture, it is impossible to interpret an Afrocentric text. This therefore is the value of Afrocentric method for this study.

Within the Afrocentric theoretical framework, there are fundamental elements that should be used for literary critiquing. Baldwin (1981) states that the framework assumes that race contributes to an individual's fundamental social definition and is original, concrete and constant from birth to death and as such, race should be used as one of the main points of this theoretical framework. The theoretical perspective of Afrocentricity also assumes that an individual's worldview and collective reality evolves directly from their primary social definition as does their culture, (Schiele, 1997).

Attention to the nature, functions, and categories of literature provides a theoretical framework which joins the past text to the experience of present readers (Escote, 2008). When studying the impact of literature on its audience, a critic should be keenly aware of how cultural expectations shape experience. As such, when I examined the selected literary texts, I also examined the relationship between truth and fiction in the different texts and the relationship between the themes and illustrations. The Afrocentric framework is therefore suitable for this study as it links the past and the present experiences of South African literature experiences.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed existing literature on Afrocentric writing in Africa and the African diaspora in a bid to define what African children's literature is. In explaining what African children's literature is about, I explored issues to do with authorship, the language used, the use of human characters and came to a conclusion that for this research, Afrocentric children's literature will loosely mean children's literature written for African children, by a South African author regardless of race provided its narrative is centred on the African child. I also explored the elements that make up for an Afrocentric reading and how these are often explored in children's writing. These elements will be used in Chapter four to analyse the selected texts.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Establishing an adequate research methodology is an important part of the research process as it focuses the research. The methodology helps the researcher look at validity of what they are looking at and how to collect, analyse and present the data collected (Caulfield, 2020).

This chapter outlines the methodology and design used to conduct this study. It displays the instruments, data collection as well as the analysis methods while discussing the stages of the research process and validity of the study. I used Afrocentrism interchangeably to either mean a paradigm, methodology or a focal reference point for the study as it suited the discussion at each level. As a methodological frame, Afrocentricity serves as a foundation for exploratory, explanatory and descriptive research (Dlamini, 2018). These research approaches are basic modes of inquiry that function within the realms of Afrocentricity when used to investigate African phenomena (Sarpong, 2002).

3.2 Research design and methodology

This research took a qualitative approach. A qualitative research approach was suitable for this kind of research as I sought to explore and understand a phenomenon and apply research findings according to different people's experiences (Skultans, 2001). The different people's experiences used were that of experts in the form of publishers and distributors. Thody (2006) adds that qualitative research unlike quantitative research, allows for polyvocality. This enabled me to explore as many dimensions of the research question as possible and it allowed me to have a holistic approach which allowed for varied and expansive views and inclusion of respondents. Skultans (2001) further states that qualitative research allows the researcher to even explore the silences in between the voices. These voices included earlier research done by other researchers through interviews and informed observations and included my own understanding of the ten texts that I used for textual analysis.

According to Morgan (2017), it is not enough to observe only and not give one's insights when doing a research. If one is to have a meaningful argument, then they must give their own insights too. Most of this research observed what is taking place currently in children's books publishing then subsequently built-up on the little existing information on African children's literature with the help of patterns in Afrocentric adult literature, general children's literature and studies on African American children's literature. Publishers have a better understanding of recurrent themes as they are the known gatekeepers when it comes to publishing (Molapo, 2020). They decide what books are published and in what manner. They have informed understanding of the patterns followed in publishing certain genres and can therefore be seen as authentic informants. Book distributors on the other hand, distribute a number

of books, not just from one publisher, but from different publishing houses and therefore have a clear understanding of trends and latest developments in the literary space. Hosting African writers in discussing African children's literature from time to time, these distributors have vast experience in dealing with Afrocentric children's literature and interviewing them added value to this research. Responses from the four interviewees were used to analyse the 10 texts which were used for textual analysis to answer the main two research questions; exploring the thematic concerns in Afrocentric children's literature and how illustrations enhance the making of an Afrocentric book.

I selected books that celebrate African life in all its forms; socially, culturally, economically and spiritually then analysed them using the Afrocentric theoretical framework, using the tenets as outlined in the definition of Afrocentrism on 2.3.2**.** Some of the themes were from my reading of black children's literature in South Africa and African adult post-colonial and Afrocentric literature. I then showed what illustrations were used to portray these themes in the different texts, using textual analysis to compare and contrast themes and illustrations in the selected texts.

The Afrocentric research approach and style was used in this methodology because it "emerges as a methodology that consciously operates with African ways of knowing and existence and results in the implementation of principles, methods, concepts, and ideas that are derived from African cultural experiences," (Mazama, 2001, p.25).

There are five basic characteristics to be used on any Afrocentric analysis as outlined by Asante (2007). In this regard, there are five characteristics to be explored in any analysis. These five characteristics were used to analyse data collected from textual analysis and responses from the interviews done with the two publishers and two book distributors. To answer the research questions outlined in chapter one, data analysis followed these five characteristics:

1) interest in psychological location,
2) commitment to finding the African subject place,
3) defence of African cultural elements,
4) commitment to lexical refinement and
5) commitment to a new African narrative

As a methodological approach, Afrocentricity serves as a foundation for exploratory, explanatory and descriptive research. Pellerin (2012) and Babbie (2010) note that these research approaches are basic modes of inquiry that function within the realm of Afrocentricity when used to investigate African phenomenon. This study has used an exploratory approach because it sought to understand and explore African values in children's literature. Employing an Afrocentric methodology in exploratory research involves investigating African phenomenon for the purpose of developing a culturally accurate

understanding of African realities (Babbie, 2010). This study used these African values as outlined by Dlamini (2018) to explore whether they are present in the selected children's books.

In addition to the Afrocentric theoretical framework, I used textual analysis as an interpretation tool and method of analysis. Textual analysis is a method which includes analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of literary works (Mahasha, 2014). Escote, (2008) states that text analysis can be used to challenge the dominant definitions of literature and literary criticism that seem too general, too narrow, or unworkable for any other reason. In so doing, using text analysis together with Afrocentric theoretical framework, the themes in the selected texts were analysed and qualified under Afrocentric values and illustrations were checked against these themes. Shklovsky (2001) further adds that literary critic pays special attention to these important aspects; the intended purpose, its effect on an audience, its language and structure, and the information and worldview it conveys and this was used in the analysis of the texts. Textual analysis of the selected books therefore sought to bring out these positive elements as portrayed through thematic concerns as used by writers of the selected texts. I went further to look at negative stereotypes recurrent in these texts to show how they would likely impact an African child's worldview and perceptions of themselves. As stated earlier, Afrocentrism is used as both a paradigm and as a research methodology. I analysed the 10 Afrocentric children's books published in South Africa in the past ten years using the Afrocentric theoretical framework by identifying the themes in the texts, discussing them and qualifying for or against the tenets of Afrocentrism. The books were selected purposively with emphasis on elements that make up for Afrocentric reading with recurrent Afrocentric themes in line with responses from the responses from interviews.

3.3 Research instruments

I used ten trade books for textual analysis and interview questionnaires, one set for the two distributors and another for the two publishers (see attached Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 respectively). The list of books is supplied below and was selected purposively to suit the recurrent themes found in Afrocentric children's books as picked from my readings of Afrocentric children's literature and from the responses I got from the interviews.

Findings from the research were tabulated to summarise similarities and differences in the texts that were analysed (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 – List of books analysed

Title	**Author and Illustrator**	**Publisher and Year of Publishing**	**Target Age Group**
Boipelo's Family Tree	Mantedieng Mantis Mamabolo Illustrated by Yamkela Mayisela	Mantedieng Mantis Mamabolo 2019 (self-published)	5-7 years
Wanda	Sihle Nontshokeni and Matabo Tlali. Illustrated by Chantelle and Burgen Thorne.	Jacana 2019	5-7 years
Mpumi's Magic Beads	Lebogang Masango Illustrated by Masego Morulane	David Philip Publishers 2018	8-10 years
We Are One	Refiloe Moahloli Illustrated by Zineld McDonald	Pan Macmillan South Africa 2020	8 -10 years
Why Ndanaka Hid Her Face	Yamkela Khoza-Tywakadi Illustrated by Johan Strauss	Sifiso Publishers 2019	5 -7 years
I Have Brown Skin and Curly Hair	Karen Theunissen Illustrated by Charles Gibbons	Jacana Media 2020	8-10 years
Blissful Life At Gogo And Mkhulu's Village	Mmmaphefo Thwala Illustrated by Simon Mahlo	Mmmaphefo Thwala 2018 (self-published)	8-10 years
Skin We Are In	Sindiwe Magona and Nina G Jabonski illustrated by Lynn Fellman	David Philip Publishers 2018	8-10 years
How Many Ways To Say Hello	Refiloe Moahloli. Illustrated by Anja Stoeckgit	Puffin, a PRH imprint 2017	5-7 years
The Best Meal Ever	Sindiwe Magona Illustrated by Paddy Bouma	David Philip Publishers 2016	8-10 years

3.4 Procedure for data collection

Data collection was mainly done using the instruments outlined in 3.3 as follows:

3.4.1. Interviews

An interview is defined as a face-to-face situation in which an interviewer asks questions to one or more interviewees, (Bolderstone, 2002). Interviews are the most predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research. It is where the interviewee and researcher interact through a conversation between the two with the researcher establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the interviewee with the interviewee doing most of the talking (Rubbin & Babbie, 2001).

Bolderstone (2002) states that interviews in qualitative research may be structured through an interview schedule which consists of a list of questions. I used a semi-structured interview which is defined as questions around areas of interest which still allow "considerable flexibility in scope and depth," (Greeff, 2005, p. 292).

I sent semi-structured questionnaires (attached as appendix 4 for distributors and appendix 5 for publishers) to two children's book publishers and two local distributors beforehand so they would think explicitly about what I hoped to cover in the interview and to allow them to expand on their answers and give a wider account of their experience. I then made follow up online interviews via MS Teams and Zoom depending on what the interviewees had access to. With the permission of the interviewees, I recorded the interviews. On getting to the data analysis stage, I realised that I needed more information on some of the questions and I sent follow up emails to seek clarity and more information.

(i)Sample

The Afrocentric objective has always been to create space for conscious human beings who are, "by virtue of their centeredness are committed to sanity" (Asante, 2007, p. 34). This is the key to repositioning Africans so that they act as agents and not as victims. This means that Afrocentric sampling is not only sensitive to the psychological will of the sample, but also views the sample as a deliberately chosen centred group with a valid role to play in their enquiry (Mkabela, 2005). Afrocentric sampling is not only done to a sample, but by a member of the sample, for the good of the sample (Dlamini, 2018). It is important that the sample size must be inclusive of all parties involved and cannot neglect any portion of the population. In order to have a balanced discussion, I made sure to balance the racial mix of the participants because failure to do so would invite biased racial responses to the interview question and would render the study racist, either on the blacks or on the whites. As such, I interviewed one white publisher and one black publisher. However, the distributors were both black as

they seemed to be the most active distributors of Afrocentric children's books. Efforts to find a white distributor who mainly distributes this kind of literature were in vain.
Two publishers, using pseudonyms Ndosakusa and Sunrise publishers and two distributors using pseudonyms Ingwalo distributors and Fundani distributors were interviewed.

Sunrise publishers has been publishing children's Afrocentric children's literature since 1996 while Ndosakusa publishers has been publishing since 2008. This period covers beyond the ten years of study and the informants are therefore qualified to give detailed insights into the study. Sunrise publishers states that all of the children's books they produce are Afrocentric as this was a deliberate decision by the company to start publishing Afrocentric books in English and indigenous languages. However, the company later kept with English because indigenous languages were not selling. The company has resorted to having versions of the English titles which are often published in fewer quantities. On the other hand, Ndosakusa publishers' list is made up of about 60% Afrocentric children's literature. Ndosakusa publishers' publishing company built on an already existing list of books which though already existing, were few and not giving much attention as much as their publishing company does now. Ndosakusa publishers states that in doing this, they wanted to produce books that could compete with the European market and their list has grown over the years. They wanted something imaginative, creative, of good quality and relatable to the African child.

Ingwalo distributors has been distributing Afrocentric children's books since 2016 while Fundani distributors started publishing in 2000. Ingwalo distributors' experience does not cover the 10 years of the study but they have been more involved in the book distribution sphere more than Fundani distributors. Fundani distributors on the other hand, has been in the distribution industry for long though business has been low for them.

(ii) Demographics of authors and publishers of books analysed

Demographic representation of authors and illustrators help the researcher understand other factors that may be at play in the representation of characters in the analysed texts. Writers often write their own lived experiences.

The distribution of illustrators is almost 50/50 though this may not be an absolute true representation of the Afrocentric children's book illustrators in the South African industry.

Over the years, Black writers have continued to emerge, writing their authentic stories, from their own lenses and mirroring their own experiences as highlighted by both publishers and distributors interviewed. This is also true from the above information on the texts that were taken into consideration

for textual analysis. Below is the breakdown of the demographic representation from the texts use for analysis:

Table 3.2 Demographics of writers and illustrators

Title	Author	Illustrator	Publisher
Why Ndanaka Hid Her Face	Black	White	Black
The Best Meal Ever	Black	White	White
Boipelo's Family Tree	Black	Black	Self-published Black
Mpumi's Magic Beads	Black	Black	White
Blissful Life At Gogo And Mkhulu's Village	Black	Black	Self-published, Black
I Have Brown Skin and Curly Hair	Mixed (White Indian)	White	White
How Many Ways Can You Say Hello	Black	White	White
Wanda	White	White	White
We Are One	Black	White	White
Hair Love	White	White	White

3.4.2. Textual analysis

Textual analysis is one of the most important methods in literary studies. Caulfield (2020) states that almost all work in literary studies involves in-depth analysis of texts in novels, poems, stories or plays. Textual analysis is a methodology that involves understanding language, symbols and pictures present in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense of and communicate life and life experiences (Oliver, 1988). Visual, written, or spoken messages provide cues to ways through which communication should be understood. Often the messages are understood as influenced by and reflective of larger social structures. Messages reflect or challenge historical, cultural, political, ethical contexts for which they exist. This then works well with Afrocentric theoretical framework as the framework analyses the structures of the society. Allen (2016) emphasises that textual analysis allows the researcher to understand the broader social structures that influence the messages present in the text under investigation. This therefore works well with the Afrocentric theoretical framework as it seeks to explore text in that regard.

Selection of books

Mkabela (2005) states that the Afrocentric method of research requires that the researcher has prior knowledge of the African community and its experiences. A majority of knowledge comes from my experience as an African child, having grown up in Africa and having been exposed to literature that I failed to identify myself in. My experience as an avid reader of Afrocentric literature for both children and adults helped me to select the books that explored the common themes as portrayed mostly in Afrocentric adult reading. This was also in addition to my reading of African literature from my English degree in literature and from my experience as an intern publisher at a company that publishes Afrocentric children's books.

3.5 Data analysis

Babbie (2010) suggests that an exploratory research works better with the Afrocentric methodology when the research involves investigating African phenomenon for the purpose of developing a culturally accurate understanding of African realities. The use of Afrocentrism should involve the placement of African cultures, histories, experiences, and perceptions as the central axis that reorganizes our frame of reference so that African people become the centre of analysis and synthesis as stated by Asante (1991). Pellerin (2012) further notes that an exploratory Afrocentric research is initially conducted to examine a specific aspect of the African community and serve as preliminary data collection. Chawane (2016) further adds that Afrocentricity serves as a foundation for exploratory, explanatory and descriptive research.

Of the five elements to be used in Afrocentric research as listed by Asante (2007), I used three which were relevant to the study as listed below:

(a) commitment to finding the African subject place,
(b) defence of African cultural elements,
(c) commitment to a new African narrative

The research endeavoured to place the themes of the study and also explored how these values were related between the literature and the consumer of the literature. The study highlighted the relationship between the African values in the literature and the reality and experience of the African community consuming the literature.

Summary of data analysis

Results from interview ⟶ Discuss using Afrocentric theoretical framework ⟶ tie with textual analysis with examples.

3.6 Ethics clearance

The Faculty of Humanities cleared the proposal for this research for any ethics issues. The research stuck as close to the proposal outline as possible. The ethics clearance form is attached as appendix 6.

3.7 Reliability

One problem I encountered on using the Afrocentric method is that it allows one to use their personal experiences and intuition (Asante, 1998) and as such I feared having the research taking a racist turn. However, I put measures in place for subjectivity so that I would not influence the findings of the research and that my research tools would measure accurately what I set out to measure (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996) by making sure to draw conclusions from the data generated and analysed to ensure validity of the research.

3.8 Limitations of the study

The main stakeholders of children's literature who are teachers, children and parents were not included in the research.

The number of interviewees and number of books analysed were also a limitation. The samples are too small to make comprehensive conclusions about Afrocentrism in children's books.

The other main limitation is that I only looked at English texts due to my inability to read local languages. The study would be of more value had it also looked at books written in local languages.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research problem and the research questions were revisited to lay a context for chosen methodology. I outlined textual analysis as the research design. I discussed and explained the different uses of the term Afrocentricity and how it is used interchangeably for different purposes. I also discussed my sample and criteria used to choose both the sample and books used for the research. Data was collected through textual analysis using responses from the four respondents looking at themes explored in the selected texts and analysed using the Afrocentric theoretical framework, in the form of the three of the five elements that should be used in analysing Afrocentric texts. I also highlighted that data was going to be analysed using three of the five Afrocentric elements as outlined by Asante (2007). I also qualified reliability and reliability of the research by attaching the ethics clearance and showed the reliability of the research by outlining measures taken in drawing correct conclusions.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS, DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The results of the study have been presented in narrative and tabular forms where applicable for ease of interpretation. The publishing companies interviewed have been renamed using pseudonyms, as Sunrise publishers, Ndosakusa publishers, Ingwalo distributors and Fundani distributors for participant anonymity and confidentiality as promised to the participants.

Analysis of the results from the interviews from both the distributors and publishers was organised along the themes discussed in the literature review: exploring the thematic concerns and the use of illustrations in Afrocentric books from the view of the publishers and distributors using textual analysis of selected texts. The intention was to get themes that publishers have used in their books, seen in other publishers' books or have envisaged to be the recurrent themes in Afrocentric children's books from their own reading, planning and commissioning of such books. Distributors were interviewed as they have access to a wider range of books from different publishers and can thus be a good source of information on what themes and illustrations have been in use for the stated period of study. These themes were then used in analysing the selected texts. Results were tabulated with each book being analysed against a stated theme. Since illustrations represent the meaning of text, they were thus listed against each theme as represented in the texts.

Responses from the interviews from both the publishers and distributors are attached as appendices (1 and 2) and these were used to analyse the 10 selected texts. Results were then presented, discussed in the Afrocentric theoretical framework then qualified for or against the Afrocentric perspective with reference to the literature review. The participants were made to understand that for this study, Afrocentric children's literature means literature that is centred on African children of black, Indian and coloured descent, published in South Africa by any South African author regardless of colour as defined in 2.3.1 definition of authorship and definition of Afrocentric children's literature in 2.5.

4.2 Analysis of themes and illustrations

I tabulated my findings under a table with common themes of African values and how these were portrayed in each book (table 4.1) guided by responses from participants' on the questions sent to them through the questionnaire. These themes were used to analyse the 10 selected books using the Afrocentric theoretical framework, and they were then qualified for or against the Afrocentric values that constitute Afrocentric reading as outlined in 2.4. In Afrocentric research, the researcher's intuition,

historical knowledge and affiliation to the African culture is a valid instrument of research (Asante, 1999) and as such I used my historical knowledge for some of the themes in this study to make certain assertions about African culture and the study of African people. The list of books is outlined in table 3.1 under research instruments.

The second section explored how illustrations are used in developing an Afrocentric children's book, mostly basing on the experience of the interviewed publishers and using examples from the selected texts.

The recurrent themes are summarised with the aid of a table. I identified a theme from the interviews and my general knowledge, explored how it was portrayed in a text and showed how illustrations were used to depict the theme.

The collective recurring main themes as picked from the responses from Sunrise publishers and Ndosakusa publishers, Ingwalo distributors and Fundani distributors include race, colonial freedom, good versus bad, ubuntu, empowerment, race, skin, ethnicity, hair, family, religion and black empowerment. What emerged from the responses is that there is a rise in books with underlying patterns to empower and affirm not just the African children but their parents too and their ways of living. These are common post-colonial themes as explored by African writers, not only in adult African literature but in their children's literature too as I cited Hakibou (2018) in Chapter 2.

More themes were picked from reading the selected texts around hair, skin, new family dynamics, ethnicity, apartheid, empowerment, religion, black empowerment for both parents and children, change in family structures, religion, school settings with more books taking an urban setting. All these themes point to a pro-Afrocentric writing.

Themes that were picked from the interviews carried out with publishers and distributors as outlined above were used to analyse the 10 texts selected for analysis.

Table 4.1 Analysis of themes and illustrations

Theme	Title of Book	Portrayal of theme in the text	Illustrations used
African pride	*Why Ndanaka Hid Her Face*	Celebrates the beauty of the continent	Natural rivers and landscapes
		African food	images of African traditional food
		Use of African instruments eg mbira	mbira picture
	Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village	African food, self-sustained rural life.	Milking cow, food in the form of peanuts, samp and beans
	The best meal ever	Use of African symbolisms "heart beats louder than a cowhide drum,"	N/A
	Wanda	Wanda's mother always tells her to be proud of who she is, saying "intombi mayizethembe," meaning she has to be confident in herself.	Neatly done hair
		African beauty, mama and makhulu always remind Wanda that "…*ubuhle buyasetyenzelwa*," meaning that she has to put an effort to look good, a consolation that even if combing her hair is difficult, after putting an effort she will get a good result.	Beautiful hair with combs and oils for natural African hair
Race	*Mpumi's magic beads*	White boy is surprised at the characters' black hair with beads.	No illustration
Skin	*Why Ndanaka hid her face*	Explores race, colour and vitiligo teaching differences in colour including "grey" of albinism	Highly illustrated characters of black descent and one with vitiligo.
Hair	*Mpumi's magic beads*	Mpumi's hair and that of her friends, even portrayed as magical	Natural African hair, beads with glorified powers.
		Typical stereotypes of African hair as seen from a white child's eyes. "hair looks like worms covered in beads."	Lack of illustrations (no white child with the mother)
	Why Ndanaka hid her face	Pride in African hair; Ndanaka, Nobuhle and Bontle wear their natural kinky hair which they comb every morning and they have natural hair products that work for their type of hair.	Pictures of the three girls wearing their natural hair through the entire trip.
Culture	*How many ways can you say hello*	Sara the main character is in a quest to learn the many different ways to say hello around the country in all 11 official languages	Children from different ethnic groups, some wearing their ethnic garbs.
		Multicultural diversity, shown in different cultures and names	Same as above
Names	*Boipelo's family tree*	Boipelo, friends Kholo, Lesego, Tara, Janiq (mixed races)	
	Mpumi's magic beads	Boiphelo, Tshiamo, Tshego, Asante.	N/A

Names Cont'	*How many ways can you say hello*	Sara, Brenda, Sazi, Lulu, Frans, Tonga, Bhele, Fedi, Nana, Itu and Nomsa. (Most named in their own native languages).	N/A
	Wanda	Wanda, Makhulu,	N/A
	Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village	Gogo, Mkhulu,Lihle, Ntando	N/A
	The best meal ever	Sisa, Nosisa, Luntu, Linda, Siziwe, Tata, Sango the dog	N/A
	Why Ndanaka hid her face	Ndanaka, Nobuhle, Bontle.	N/A
Identity Crisis	*I have brown skin and curly hair*	The main character is confused of the different dynamics of their skin colour and hair texture, just like people around her.	A family with different hair textures, length and colour. Different skin colour of the same family members confusing
	Wanda	Wanda begins to question if she really is as beautiful and a queen that her mother says she is because the boys at school seem not to like her because of her hair.	A sad Wanda walking back home from school
	Boipelo's family tree	Boipelo is confused as to why her parents are both female	N/A
Religion	*The best meal ever*	Christianity is portrayed as an authentic religion when Siziwe prays to God and her prayer request is instantly granted	Siziwe kneeling and praying in a typical Christian way
Education	*Why Ndanaka hid her face*	Not only taught at school but by parents at home during the visit in Zimbabwe	Images of parents teaching the characters.
	I have brown skin and curly hair	Education in the form of history is taught at home by the parents who in turn learnt from their own parents and grandparents	Historical pictures of the original tribes and genealogy of both the maternal and paternal sides of the narrator.
History	*I have brown skin and curly hair*	The main character is taught the family history by both the mother and father	N/A
Relation with international world, science and technology	*Why Ndanaka hid her face*	Travel, the characters travel through African countries from SA to Zimbabwe	Characters have passports and travel bags with them as they check in at the airport
Empowerment	*Why Ndanaka hid her face*	Characters are young but travel on their own from South Africa to Zimbabwe	Characters checking in on their own at the airport.
	Mpumi's magic beads	Characters understand the solar system	Planetarium
Bullying	*Why Ndanaka hid her face*	Boys laugh at Ndanaka's face when her skin condition is exposed.	A group of boys laughing at Ndanaka

	Wanda	Boys laugh at Wanda when she is late to get to the bus and make fun of her untied hair.	Boys laughing and pointing at Wanda
Bullying (cont')	*Mpumi's magic beads*	White boy likens Mpumi's hair to worms	No illustration
Ubuntu	*The Best Meal Ever*	Mama leaves her children in the custody of her friend as she goes to visit her sick father in the village	Mama's friend coming to deliver groceries for the children.
Theme	**Title of book**	**Portrayal of theme in the text**	**Illustrations used**
Empathy	*Why Ndanaka hid her face*	Bontle and Nontle empathise with Ndanaka when the boys laugh at her skin condition.	The girls hugging each other
	We are one	Children play together and are taught to empathise with each other, to see each other the way they would like to be seen and treated by others.	Children of different sexes, ages, heights and skin colour playing together, hugging and kissing.
	Wanda	Wanda helps other girls make their hair look presentable so that they do not get into trouble with the teacher.	No illustration.
Helping	*Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village*	Lihle milks cows with Lihle mkhulu while Ntando cooks and prepares food for the picnic with Gogo.	Gogo with a basket of fruits and traditional foods, Mkhulu milking cow, Lihle and Ntando picking peanuts
Rural Setting	*Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village*	Celebration of a better, more peaceful and self-sustainable rural life.	Rural setting with cattle, crops, huts and dusty roads.
Urban setting	*Mpumi's magic beads*	Urban life	Tall buildings including skyscrapers.
School setting	*Mpumi's magic beads*	Typical poor African school set up on a busy street with poor facilities, "no grass, no field or pool." (p.1).	Lack of illustrations of busy street and poor facilities.
	How many ways can you say hello	Classroom setting	School grounds
	Boipelo's Family Tree	Classroom setting	
	Wanda	Journey from home to school	School bus with children
Parenting	*Boipelo's Family Tree*	Boipelo is raised by lesbian parents.	Picture of a female dressed in panties, almost looking like a man.
	Wanda	Wanda is taken care of by Makhulu.	An old woman doing Wanda's hair
	Hair Love	Involvement of male figures in raising children	The father playing with child at the park, walking her to school and doing her hair.
Communal Life	*The best meal ever*	Mama leaves her children with the neighbours as she goes to grandpa in the village	N/A
	Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village	Lihle and Ntando come back home after herding cattle with gogo to play with other children.	Children playing in an open dusty street.

4.2.1 Thematic concerns

The table above outlines recurrent themes in selected texts. I explored the themes by giving examples and analysing them in the context of an Afrocentric theoretical framework. This theory as explained earlier, places the African at the centre of the narrative (Asante, 2009). The African is the subject of the narrative and is therefore seen as an active participant in their world, as the subject of the text and as the protagonist (Asante, 2007). All analysis is around the black characters in the texts.

(i) African pride

Ndosakusa publishers highlighted that all Afrocentric books should have one thing in common: the love for Africa and celebration of African ways of living. *Why Ndanaka hid her face* celebrates the beauty of the continent. The characters travel from South Africa on their own at their young age to the neighbouring country Zimbabwe. They are portrayed as intelligent enough to find their way to other countries on their own. Their lives are centred around eating organic traditional food, they play African musical instruments, and they take pride in the beauty of their continent. In *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village*, the characters also take pride in eating their own home-grown food in the form of samp, milk and peanuts. Life in the rural area is self-sustained and the children learn that food does not come from the shops but from being grown on the farm and in their rural areas where their grandparents stay. In this way, Africans are presented as producers and not just consumers. Africans are portrayed as living a self-sustainable life.

The use of African symbolisms in *The best meal ever* "heart beats louder than a cowhide drum," (p. 10) draws the reader to African pride and use of commonly known African images. Mama in *The best meal ever* also uses "my *tshongololos*" (p. 2) as a term of endearment for her children. This is different from the use of "my unicorn" (p. 8) used by Mama in *Boipelo's family tree* to refer to Boipelo; a unicorn that is a foreign image and is not known to most African children save for those in well-to-do households who have access to the television and foreign children's books. The very basis of Afrocentrism as highlighted in 2.4 and 2.5 is taking pride in being African and celebrating African values, pride and embracing all things African (Asante, 2007).

(ii) Race

Both Sunrise publishers and Ndosakusa publishers highlight that there has been growth in titles that address issues to do with race. In *Mpumi's magic beads* (p.18), the white boy is surprised at Mpumi's black hair with beads and likens her hair to worms! This could be a genuine surprise as to the differences in their hair especially with Mpumi's beads which could just as well freak out other black children, but this could also be interpreted as racism, especially coming from a white child. Most of the children's books do not seem to touch on this in depth, maybe because of the age range. Ndosakusa publishers

mentioned that some of the Afrocentric themes are too strong for children to understand and at times by trying to teach them such, one ends up instilling hatred in children against each other. *We are one* teaches children to embrace the differences they see in other children around them and live with them regardless of their different races. Chukwuokolo (2009) supports this by stating that Afrocentrism does not confront people of other races but embraces them and learns from them and coexists with other races peacefully like the children in *We are one* do.

(iii) Skin

All four interviewees stated that the skin theme has been explored in most Afrocentric books. Skin, just like hair, is one of the main recurrent themes in race studies, Afrocentric studies included. The skin defines the people and sets them apart from other races. *I have brown skin and curly hair* explores different skin colours tracing them back to their forefathers origins where they inherited those skin types and colours from. *Why Ndanaka hid her face* explores the grey area of skin colour. It teaches children that there are other skin colours beyond black and white by exploring a skin condition called vitiligo which is a pigmentation of the normal black skin. This should help children realise that skin colour comes in different shades and they should embrace their own but at the same time not making fun of others' shades. Sarpong (2002) on discussing skin in racial studies states that skin is the fundamental difference between races and as such is used to differentiate them and there is no way a racial awareness literature cannot tackle issues on skin.

(iv) Hair

Hair is one of the most recurrent themes in the selected texts. Ingwalo distributors stated that most buyers associate hair with Afrocentric books and often select children's books for African reading by picking books that have African hair illustrations on the cover.

There is a lot of positive portrayal of African hair in the selected texts, especially in *Why Ndanaka hid her face, Wanda, Hair love* and *Mpumi's magic beads*. In *Why Ndanaka hid her face,* the characters, Ndanaka, Nobuhle and Bontle all have their natural African hair, nicely tied. Their hair is in its natural kinky condition and they comb it in the mornings to keep it tidy. They even have natural hair products that specifically work for their type of hair. Wanda's Makhulu in *Wanda* gives her secrets on how to take good care of her hair and gives her information on what products work for her type of hair. In *Hair love*, Zuri's hair kinks and coils and curls whichever way it likes, but it is a source of her identity and she takes pride in having it done the right way in anticipation of mommy's return.

A typical stereotype of African hair is seen from a white child's eyes in *Mpumi's magic beads* when he says Mpumi's hair looks like "worms covered in beads," (p. 18). This upsets her and even takes her

powers off, metaphorically representing loss of self-worth because of the way she has been belittled by the white boy. However, Mpumi's hair is portrayed as having powers, similar to that of Samson's in the Bible. Wanda in *Wanda* is bullied by boys because of her hair. Her teacher also makes a naughty corner for black girls who come to school with uncombed hair.

These representation of stories about hair make for a good Afrocentric reading as they are about emancipation and empowerment of the African child to love their hair, their identity and to be comfortable in who they are as highlighted by Masekela (2015).

(v) Culture and traditions

From the interviews, it emerged that all four participants agreed that culture and traditions are fast fading away as Africans survive in a global village where they interact with other cultures and traditions. Ingwalo distributors highlighted the need for Afrocentric books to teach children about the importance of their culture and traditions. In *How many ways can you say hello*, Sara is in a quest to learn how to say greetings in all eleven official languages of South Africa so that she does not feel out of place as she plays with her peers. Celebration of multicultural diversity in the same book is shown through the use of different cultures, names and ethnicities. The children Sara encounters in her journey are all clothed in their cultural ethnic garbs for easy identification of what tribe they come from and almost all of them have their names in their ethnic languages, most of which are beautiful names with beautiful affirming messages.

The Afrocentric paradigm seeks to celebrate the humanity of Africans even in the dignity of their cultures and traditions as cited from Dlamini's (2018) research on discussing what constitutes an African reading. Afrocentrism as a paradigm believes in co-existence of Africans with other races. In as much as the Afrocentric rhetoric is in opposition to the negative portrayal of the African culture, it does allow other cultures to coexist with the black population (Asante, 2007). This is seen in adoption of Christian values in the African society in *Why Ndanaka hid her face*, *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village* and *The best meal ever*.

(vi) Characterisation/naming

Ingwalo distributors stated that the use of native names in Afrocentric books is one thing to be embraced and celebrated. In the selected texts, the Afrocentric value of naming is experienced as most of the characters have native affirming vernacular names. All vernacular names seem to be affirmative and beautiful in their own way. In *Why Ndanaka hid her face*, for instance, Bontle means "beautiful," Ndanaka means "I have been made beautiful" and Nobuhle means "mother of beautiful things." This is a purposed and conscious way of naming the characters by the writer to affirm the characters. In

Mpumi's magic beads there is Boiphelo, Tshiamo, Tshego, Asante, all African names. In *How many ways can you say hello*, there is Sara the main character whose name maybe influenced by Christianity. Sara speaks English, Brenda is Venda, Frans is Afrikaner, Nomsa is Xhosa, Sazi is Swati and Lulu is Zulu, Tonga is Tsonga, Anele is Ndebele, Fedi is Pedi, Nana is Tswana while Itu is Sotho. All the children have their names in their languages from their tribes except for Brenda and Sara.

Naming in *Boipelo's Family Tree* shows interaction of many cultures, ethnicities and races. Boipelo, is Tswana, with friends Kholo, a Zulu, Lesego, Pedi and Tara and Janiq from Korea. It shows an African child co-existing with other races but still being able to identify with her people through the use of native names. As Dlamini (2018) outlines, Africans are trying to correct the mistakes of yesteryear where they had names they did not understand and which they often struggled to even pronounce. The cited texts show this important element of Afrocentric writing and reading while some Biblical names are a result of cultural hybridization and acculturalisation that came with colonialism as stated by Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (2002).

The characters in some of the books are still able to address members of the families using their local languages; Mkhulu and gogo in *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village* and Makhulu in *Wanda*.

(vii) Identity

Sunrise publishers and Fundani distributors mentioned that Afrocentric books are books of identity. The books should help African children identify themselves in both themes and illustrations so that the children can relate with the story. Identity in Afrocentric studies goes beyond racial identities. It also touches on tribal groups. In *How many ways can you say hello*, it is easy to identify the tribes of the characters as all of them are given names from their own tribes. This way it is easy to recall the names and tribes the characters belong to. Sara learning the many ways to greet others in different languages shows appreciation of the different tribes and ethnicities and an appreciation of the importance of people from other groups different from her own.

Identity and setting seem to influence each other. Some of the settings seem to have an all-black populace, while other books have a mixture of many races, nationalities and tribes. In the selected texts, books set in the rural South Africa and high-density areas seem to take on an all-black population as portrayed in *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's place*, *Mpumi's magic beads*, *The best meal ever* and *Wanda*. The ones with a medium to low density take on a wider racial interaction, with black children interacting with other races and nationalities like in *Boipelo's family tree* and *I have brown skin and curly hair*. *How many ways can you say hello* explores a setting with a balanced identity ecosystem culturally and with diversity in languages and ethnicity owing to the wider circumference of the setting.

However, Ingwalo distributors mentioned that some books end up losing their meaning because of a complicated storyline that children may not easily understand. The theme may be appropriate for an Afrocentric reading, but the storyline may be too complicated for a children's book. In *I have brown skin and curly hair* the theme of identity follows a complicated storyline and tries to incorporate too many differences in South African people into one family and it ends up being ridiculous and hard to believe. The main character - who also does not have a name - is confused about the differences in skin colour and hair texture among her immediate family members. They all have different skin colour, hair texture and have no resemblance of each other in anyway. In as much as representation of races and history is important, the young mind may struggle to understand the story if the storyline is complicated and brings in too many themes at once.

As mentioned in section 2.4, race studies are studies of identity, race and colour and racial identity is typically the group identity most often examined, (Ponterotto & Sabnani, 1989). Indeed, racial identity has been identified as one of the most important themes in the selected books with all the 10 selected books portraying the black race as the centre of the narration and presenting the black child as owners of their narrative. The relations of tribe as stated by Ndebele (1994) are equally important and they are explored in the examples given above.

(viii) Religion

Ingwalo distributors mentioned that exploration of religion is important in Afrocentric texts while Indosakusa publishers stated that it is often easy to use Christianity when talking about religion and spirituality in children's literature because children can easily identify with Christianity because that is what most of them are acquainted to as South Africa's population is mostly Christian. In *The best meal ever*, Siziwe prays for God to provide them with food and their prayer is answered the following morning when their mother's friend brings them food. In *Why Ndanaka Hid Her Face*, like what most children are taught at school, the characters bless their food the Christian way before eating, just like Siziwe does with her siblings when they sit down to eat their food in *The best meal ever*. This is a result of cross-culturalization and adaptation of other religions (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002). While it is true that African traditional religion is the religion of Africa, most children are exposed to Christianity because of their parents' preferences and this is true of what the selected texts depict.

(ix) Education and history

Sunrise publishers highlighted that children's books in Africa have taken the place of traditional tales told by grandparents to their grandchildren as they grew up. In the selected texts, children are taught about their history, their ancestry and other non-academic important life lessons by their parents and grandparents at home. In *Why Ndanaka hid her face*, the characters are taught about the history and

beauty of Africa by Ndanaka's parents. They learn about how Zimbabwe relates with other African countries and the geography of the country in relation to its neighbouring countries. In *Blissful life at gogo and Mkhulu's Village* Gogo and Mkhulu teach Ntando and Lihle how food is grown from the land and not just bought from the shops showing Africans as producers and not just consumers. In *Wanda,* Makhulu teaches Wanda how to make her hair and the essential oils that she can use to make her hair easy to maintain. In the African context, any day any story or situation can be used to educate the African child by adults who are reservoirs of culture and history (Dlamini, 2018). In *I have brown skin and curly hair,* the main character is taught the family history by both the mother and father. In *Why Ndanaka hid her face,* Ndanaka's parents teach Nobuhle, Ndanaka and Bontle the history of Zimbabwe and Africa at large. History is not taught at school only but at home too, at times in the most casual of ways and teaching children some of the information left out in school prescribed textbooks. Ngozi (2014) as cited in 2.4 mentions that elders should be used to revive culture and traditions by sharing their stories with children as they grow up because some of the important elements of history are left out in the history books.

(x) Connection with international world, technology, science and geography

Ingwalo distributors highlighted that black children in the current Afrocentric texts are empowered and have a good understanding of technology, science and geography compared to those in the yesteryears in Africa and the African diaspora. In *Why Ndanaka hid her face,* Bontle and Nobuhle travel from South Africa to Zimbabwe all by themselves, portraying wholesome children who are aware of international travel and are in touch with the rest of the continent. They also know how to use technology on checking in at the airport without the help of an elderly person. The children are enlightened and understand the geography of Africa and the world at large. In *Mpumi's magic beads,* Mpumi and her friends understand the solar system when they visit the planetarium. They already understand that the earth orbits the sun and not the other way round. They understand how day and night come to be. This is the essence of Afrocentrism, to bring up empowered children who can relate with what is happening in their surroundings and the world at large as stated by Early (2020).

(xi) Bullying

Ndosakusa publishers stated that most of the books in this age category deal with bullying as it is mostly made up of children in their first years of primary school education who must learn to fight for themselves against bullies. Fundani distributors further added that reading literature that talks about bullying and how to deal with it prepares the young children for such encounters. In *Boipelo's family tree,* Boipelo has to transfer from her first school because her former schoolmates hated her because she had lesbian parents. The white boy in *Mpumi's magic beads* emotionally bullies Mpumi by likening her hair and beads to worms. The boys in *Why Ndanaka hid her face* also tease Ndanaka because she

has vitiligo. In *Wanda*, Wanda is also bullied by the boys because of her kinky hair and for always being late to get to the bus. Being different in any way seems to attract shame and bullying amongst this age group. For some reason, all the bullies whose gender is specified seem to be all boys in these texts; *Why Ndanaka hid her face*, *Boipelo's family tree*, *Mpumi's magic beads* and *Wanda*.

This is the essence of children's books as highlighted by Norton and Norton (2010), to teach children not to bully each other and equip the weaker ones with solutions of what to do when faced with a bully. While this is a universal children's literature theme, in the selected texts, the theme is tailormade to suit the African child's mind. For instance, the things that the African child is teased about is issues to do with their hair in *Wanda* and skin in *Why Ndanaka Hid her face*.

(xii) Empathy

Fundani distributors and Ndosakusa publishers highlighted that the theme of empathy is often juxtaposed with bullying in children's books in general. In *Why Ndanaka hid her face,* Bontle and Nobuhle empathise with their friend Ndanaka as the naughty boys laugh at her. Boipelo's new classmates in *Boipelo's family tree* are all loving compared to the ones from her former school who were bullies, including their teacher who did not sympathise with her. The new teacher is loving and even goes beyond her classroom duties to make her comfortable and fit in with other children. She even makes sure to expose the weaknesses in their families as they all have different and not the usual mother, father, siblings kind of families just to make sure Boipelo is also comfortable and does not feel out of place. Mpumi's friends in *Mpumi's magic beads* help her cheer up after being teased for her hair until she is happy and regains her magic powers to fly them back to school. *We are one* emphasises the need to empathise with other children, to love them and see them in the same way one would like to be seen by others despite the many differences that include sex, height, race and tribe. Empathy is one example of Ubuntu which is what Afrocentrism is all about as outlined by Mkabela (2005).

(xiii Ubuntu/communal life

Sunrise publishers highlighted that most of the books classified as Afrocentric are books about Ubuntu. Mama in *The best meal ever* leaves children with their sister but in care of her friend who comes to check on them and brings them food when she is away to nurse grandpa in the village. Lihle and Ntando in *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village* play with other children in the village, where there is communal play for all children while the elders do the elderly chores. Children in *We are one*, play together despite their differences in colour, race and sex. They love and care for each other regardless of all these differences and live in one harmonious community. Ubuntu is defined as one of the key elements of Africanism as it seeks to unite people (Mkabela, 2005) by acts of kindness among

individuals and the examples from the selected texts show that ubuntu is explored in Afrocentric children's books, not just by children but by their parents too.

(xiv) Helping

Fundani distributors and Ndosakusa publishers stated that African children are taught to help at an early age. Hard work is encouraged and children are made to participate in household chores. Some of these chores are gendered while others are done by both girls and boys. In *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village*, Mkhulu milks cows with Lihle, while gogo cooks with Ntando and prepares food for the picnic. In *Why Ndanaka hid her face*, Ndanaka, Bontle and Nobuhle help Ndanaka's mother to set the table because that is what is expected of girls. Ingwalo distributors suggests that the gender roles portrayed in children's books may play into stereotypes that may be influential in children's thinking of different careers but in as much as there are gender defined roles, these should not be seen as a way of influencing future career choices. The African culture has these in place because of their ideologies, philosophy and way of life. Girlchildren are taught housekeeping chores so that they grow up into responsible women who can take care of their families. Men are taught male chores as defined by the African society. This is the African philosophy and ideals of bringing up children into responsible adults as stated in 2.4.

(xv) Setting

Both Sunrise publishers and Ndosakusa publishers mentioned that settings of Afrocentric children's literature have changed over the past few years from a previously rural area setting to an urban setting. Of the ten texts used for this study, six are set in urban areas: *Wanda*, *The best meal ever*, *Hair love*, *Mpumi's magic beads*, *I have brown skin and curly hair* and *We are one*. Two are set between rural and urban settings; *Why Ndanaka hid her face* and *How many ways can you say hello* as they are travel books while only one is set in the village; *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village* and only because the characters had gone to visit their grandparents. Afrocentrism values the rural areas and life in the communal areas because as it stands, Africa is still mostly rural but that should not suggest backwardness.

The classroom set up in *Boipelo's family tree* is of a middle to high class environment with only 10 students in the class, with a wide range of racial demography ranging from black, white, Asian and all from different kinds of family setups from the usual ones that are common in South Africa; that of a mother, father, child and siblings; or father and children; or mother and children; or grandparent(s) and children. *Boipelo's family tree* compared to *Mpumi's magic beads* shows the juxtaposition of settings. In *Mpumi's magic beads*, the characters learn in a squalid, old and boring school "…in the middle of a busy township," (p.10) in a typical poor African school set up on a busy street with poor facilities, "no grass, no field or pool." (p. 5) while *Boipelo's family tree* is set in the medium to low density suburbs.

Fundani distributors further mentioned that there are times when the setting is too exclusive in Afrocentric children's book with a set-up of only black people and children. This is sometimes questionable as it does not give a true depiction of the current society. For instance, some of the books have no white children at all as if blacks are living in a society where white people no longer exist in their communities and in their narratives. The narratives make it appear as if they do not interact with children from other races. Of all the ten books, only *Boipelo's family tree*, *We are one* and *How many ways can you say hello* have children of other races. The other seven only have black children.

(xvi) Home/family setting

Family dynamics are changing in the African environment as stated by Ingwalo distributors. There are some cultures that may be seen as foreign to the African way of living but they have been incorporated in some African countries. These include LGBTQI+ in South Africa. Boipelo in *Boipelo's family tree* is raised by lesbian parents, something new in the African setting. Change in African family dynamics is also felt in *Hair Love*, where Zuri's father takes an active part in nurturing Zuri, helping with daily chores at home and even helps in preparing her hair for them to meet her mother who had gone on a trip. Daddy is the one who makes breakfast, takes Zuri to school, picks her and takes her to the park for rides around the park. The book portrays an involved father who is not defined by gender roles and does not feel emasculated by doing chores that have often been seen as feminine. The world is evolving and African men are stepping up to help women bring up children with love and all care they can provide, not just financially but by being present in their nurturing too.

As mentioned in section 2.4, the extended family in the African culture is important. The elderly stay with their families and are taken care of by their children as they in turn take care of their grandchildren when their children go to work. Fundani distributors highlighted that the elderly are an important aspect of Afrocentrism because they are the ones who usually tell children their history, family secrets and stories about how the children's parents grew up. In *Wanda*, makhulu stays with the family and lets in Wanda on her secrets on how to take good care of the black African hair the way she knows how. In *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village*, Lihle and Ntando go to the rural areas to be with their grandparents and have a connection with them. In *The best meal ever*, mama goes to the village to nurse Grandpa who is not feeling well. The old people go to the village when they cannot go to work anymore but are still capable of taking care of themselves but when they are old and cannot take care of themselves anymore, they come and stay with their children, as seen in *Wanda*, where Makhulu comes to join the family. In *I have brown skin and curly hair*, the main character's mother says she was told about her history by her grandmother and the father was also told about his history by his grandparents. The elderly are a great historical reservoir of history, knowledge and culture and a true source of what Afrocentric values are (Ngozi, 2014).

(xvii) Superhero characters

Ndosakusa publishers highlighted that there are Afrocentric children's books fashioned in this way to give children their own African superhero characters. Ingwalo distributors further added that this could be because book characters are meant to compete with other superhero characters in other sources of entertainment. Mpumi in *Mpumi's magic beads* is one such character whose powers come from the beads in her hair. Afrocentric books have taken on supernatural, fantasy themes –magic items and superheroes fashioned after movies like *Black Panther* where the main character is given larger than life powers, the equivalent of the Western characters like *Superman, Batman* and *Wonder Woman*.

4.2.2 Use of illustrations in the making of Afrocentric children's books

As discussed in the literature review, illustrations are a big element in book production in the five- to ten-year-old age group. Although illustrations are informed by content it is from these illustrations that children in this age group of readers get most of the meaning. They then marry the illustrations to the text. It is therefore of great importance that the illustrations be as close to the meaning of the text as possible. With this understanding, the illustrator has an important task to make sure that the main themes and message to be conveyed in the book are captured through both the illustrations and text. Since it has been ascertained that Afrocentric children's literature is children's literature with general children's themes but fashioned after adult Afrocentric literature, illustrations are therefore centred around these themes but with an Afrocentric feel to them.

This section explored how illustrations are used in the making of Afrocentric children's books based on responses from the participants while giving examples from selected books guided by responses from participants.

Sunrise publishers, Ndosakusa publishers, Ingwalo distributors and Fundani distributors all highlighted that the illustrations of black children have improved over the years. They all agree that a shift was felt with illustrations moving from derogatory, less thought through illustrations with malnourished black children, mostly living in rural areas and under squalid conditions, to a fuller African child who is clean, presentable and lives in modern day South Africa.

(i) Identifying books

As stated by Ingwalo distributors, illustrations help parents identify Afrocentric children's books. This is often through the use of pictorial illustrations of black people. Ingwalo distributors and Fundani distributors outlined the following to be the most recurrent illustrations used in the making of an Afrocentric children's book. Brown girls with afros and natural hairstyles such as two puffy pom-poms,

healthy young girls with clean afro hair, boys with clean haircuts, children with uniforms, well-illustrated African parents and proper believable illustrations of African children.

Sunrise publishers pointed out that illustrators are becoming better with more black illustrators coming up who seem to portray Africans better than "the middle-aged white woman illustrators from yesteryear," who would portray the African child with slim legs, malnourished and with unkempt hair. Both distributors agree that there have been positive changes in illustrations over the years and they both attribute most of the changes to the advent of technology. These illustrations therefore work as an advertising tool to attract buyers.

(ii) Colourful illustrations

Ingwalo distributors stated that colourful illustrations are one of the most important elements of book illustration as they are a main attraction in children's books. Of the 10 selected books, nine had lively and colourful illustrations except for one, *Boipelo's family tree* which is black and white and could be less appealing to the young reader. Colourful illustrations help children recall new items they may have encountered in the text for the first time. Ndosakusa publishers further added that while Afrocentric books were largely very brown and dull in the past years, there has been great improvement in images which have become brighter, with a more modern aesthetic with Fundani distributors attributing the change to the fact that there is more involvement of black writers and illustrators who are able to portray children in the best possible way. However, statistics still show less involvement of blacks in illustration of children's books (Design Indaba, 2015). The positive change of portrayal of Afrocentric children's books may therefore be attributed to the fact that illustrators, regardless of race are now exposed to better technology and are exposed to more books and illustrations from other black communities.

(iii) Illustrations give meaning to text

Both Sunrise publishers and Ndosakusa publishers agreed that illustrations are informed by themes. In making a book, illustrators use the text and brief provided to them by the publishers or authors to make illustrations that best portray the story. Though publishers give illustrators freedom to think how best to represent the text through illustrations after having been provided with artwork briefs, if the theme is not correctly illustrated, they have to intervene and guide the illustrator to what would portray the story more accurately, for instance; to balance the racial divide per setting, to get the right hair texture or to get the right setting and portray the story the way it should come out.

All illustrations in the selected books attest to this though some texts do not have illustrations that would have added better understanding to the book. For instance, the white boy who makes fun of Mpumi in *Mpumi's magic beads* is not included in illustrations. However, the meaning of the story in *Blissful life*

at gogo and mkhulu's village is enhanced by use of illustrations to involve other characters who are not mentioned in the text to add to the meaning of the story. This agrees with what the dual-code theory advocates for; meaning to be derived from both the text and illustrations to enhance comprehension (Glenberg & Langston, 1992) and aid children with learning disabilities by compressing dense and complicated storylines into illustrations accompanied by a few words (Justice & Kaderavek, 2002).

Ndosakusa publishers mentioned that illustrations should be appropriate with the setting; for instance, is it urban, or rural? If it is in a rural area, round huts become the primary source of understanding and enhance understanding like in *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village*. What are the people wearing? It would be misleading and inappropriate to have adults wearing bum shorts for instance in a rural setting because of the African perspective of decent clothes being clothes that cover the whole body except if they are traditional regalia. Is it appropriate for that setting? What do they look like? What is the racial mix? Each book is looked at with fresh eyes and the illustrator has to work around the setting and environment to give out the best suited illustration to portray what the text says.

(iv)Illustrations add aesthetics to the book

All the Afrocentric children's books produced by David Phillips publishers and Penguin Random House for instance, which were selected for analysis use digital creation of illustrations which come out better than the oil paint illustrations from yesteryears. The illustrations for *Hair love, Why Ndanaka hid her face, Wanda, I have brown skin and curly hair* and *The best meal ever* were all digitally created and they thus have beautiful illustrations. However, some of the digitally created illustrations seem to be too artificial and do not seem to represent known African tribes like Wanda's hair in *Wanda*. Some of the books that have proved to have the best quality of illustrations use high-tech machines and technology. However, this does not mean that for books to be aesthetically illustrated, illustrators always have to create their illustrations digitally. Some of the texts used in this research still have hand-drawn but beautiful illustrations, *Mpumi's magic beads*, *How many ways can you say hello*, *We are one* and *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village* still have beautiful and well-thought-out illustrations though they use old methods of illustration; for instance, water colour painting in *Boipelo's family tree* is dull in colour but paints a beautiful picture of the characters.

The texture of black hair varies across Africa ranges from loose curls to kinks and coils, (Netshia, 2011). However, even if that is the case, there are some illustrations that do not seem to look like African hair at all. The storyline may be good like in *Wanda*, but the execution of the illustration takes away the beauty of the story because of illustrations that do not seem to give a clear picture of what the story talks about. Wanda's hair is too coiled to be of any South African black group, almost appearing to be braids and yet the story says it is her natural hair.

Ndosakusa publishers further mentioned that there is a positive trend of normal children with combed hair in children's books, which adds to the aesthetics of both the characters and the book as a final product. From a usually puffy hairstyle, books have now evolved to have lots of different hairstyles of braids, cornrows, bantu knots for girls while boys' haircuts range from plain to stylish ones. Sunrise publishers also added that like Ndosakusa publishers they do not want to have the same hairstyle for all characters and a lot of investment has gone into hair illustrations. The hair illustrations are more elaborate especially for young girl characters. This is felt in the selected texts. There are two pom poms in *Wanda*, numerous pom poms in *We are one*, curly hair in *I have brown skin and curly hair*, braided hair in *Mpumi's magic beads*, *We are one* and *Wanda*, short hair for boys in *We are one* and *How many ways can you say hello*, dreadlocks for the father in *Hair love* and grey hair for Makhulu in *Wanda*. As proposed by Marley (2006), the aesthetic value of books draw children to read and make it fun and not a tedious task.

(v) Illustrations enhance creativity in the writer and reader

Creativity helps bring out themes in books and this is essential in the age group in discussion. This element is seen in *How many ways can you say hello* where children from different ethnic groups are illustrated by their many different traditional attires. The picture becomes indelible in the children's mind and they can easily identify other tribes as they meet them in the streets or see them on television as they are meant to differentiate one culture from the other. Girls learn how to do their own hair with the help of illustrations from the book especially in *Wanda*, where Makhulu elaborates how to make the hair, in *Hair Love* where Daddy follows steps to part Zuri's hair and beads in *Mpumi's magic beads*.

In *I have brown skin and curly hair*, illustrations of a family with different hair textures and colour, different skin colour and tones make it hard to believe the characters are from the same family. At a first glance one is tempted to think the parents adopted the children but the text tells a different story, which is why Fang (1996) states that if illustrations are not properly done, they may distort the understanding of a book. This is an important element of book creation as it stimulates imagination and understanding for both the reader and writer as stated by Brookshire, Scharff and Moses (2018).

(vi) Illustrations are an effective learning tool

Ingwalo distributors mentioned that black children may have limited access to what is taught in primary school because of the primary school educational policies that are foreign centred. Illustrations therefore provide children with ideas about things that were completely unknown to them previously and they thus help children learn new things as stated by Brookshire, Scharff and Moses (2018). The reader learns about travelling in *Why Ndanaka hid her face* through use of an illustration of an airport (p. 4)

and illustrations of travel documents like the passport (p. 3). This is also true of books with a rural setting for children in urban areas like *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village*, where children are introduced to rural life through illustrations of cattle and milking them, (p. 9) using firewood to cook, (p. 7), milk, groundnuts and other traditional foods (p. 13) and rural rondavel huts (p. 18).

However, some of the books seem to put more emphasis on the written text and ignore the illustration that should enhance the understanding of the book. For instance, in *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village* and *Wanda* where the illustrations only seem to follow the story of the main characters and ignore the other characters who are equally important to the narration of the story. However, some of the texts incorporated illustrations of minor characters in the texts thereby making the story fuller and more comprehensive.

Illustrations also help bring out compactness on complex issues and themes as shown through illustrations in *We are one*, which tackles complex theme of race, but breaks it down by using child-friendly illustrations with less difficult syntax. The vividness, compactness, and inexpressibility are used to get to the meaning quicker and more efficiently (Gordon, 2008).

(vii) Illustrations help build up a vocabulary

Ndosakusa publishers and Ingwalo distributors highlighted that there are concerns of language levels used in Afrocentric children's literature especially in texts written by English L1 users. While that is a valid point, it is also true that children build their vocabulary from reading. Illustrations help children understand the new words that may be deemed too big for their level by using illustrations. It is easy for children to understand what a planetarium is when they see the illustration of one in *Mpumi's magic beads,* (pp. 11-12). Children learn about different places of entertainment and activities done there. In this case, children follow illustrations and they begin to understand things slowly through the illustration and when they encounter such things in life, they can go back in time and recall what they read from the book. New words catch their line of sight too often and they connect them with the pictures given as stated by (Gyselinck & Tardieu, 1999). A planetarium may be too big a concept but the illustration of it is so vivid in *Mpumi's magic beads* (p. 12) and becomes indelible in the child's mind. Such books are fun to read for children and they often revisit them as suggested by Glenberg and Langston (1992). This thus builds their vocabulary in an effective and fun way.

(viii) Illustrations create self-awareness

Ingwalo distributors reported that most books have shown a remarkable level of self-awareness. This is especially true with all the 10 books which seek to affirm the African child. This is one of the most important uses of illustrations as highlighted by (Catte, 1998) that a positive world outlook and

perception of self is created through reading of books with positive illustrations of beautiful, clean and well-rounded children as portrayed in all the books that were analysed for this research. If children can identify their colour, hair and common people among other common features, then they become aware of themselves and as such they know how important they are and are also drawn to read more. All the selected books have illustrations of black children of the same colour and same bodily features with them and people who look like their parents and grandparents.

The disability in colour in *Why Ndanaka hid her face* is to emphasise differences in other skin colours and to teach tolerance and the illustrations are made in such a way that if a child with vitiligo sees the illustrations, they can also identify with the book and create their own self-awareness, knowing that there is nothing wrong with them, that they have a skin condition but that should not stop them from enjoying playing with other children.

4.3 Conclusion

The selected texts tackled different themes, some a few and others a wide range of them. It is understandable that one text could run with only one theme because of the age range catered for. Five- to ten-year-olds are still young and should not be bombarded with a lot of information as this would get boring and confusing to their young minds and they may also lose concentration. Having too many themes at the same time trying to make books "too Afrocentric" by having all Afrocentric themes at once pauses a problem as this could touch on too many issues and confuse the reader. The themes explored placed the African child in the centre of the narrative and showed relations with their own community, people of different races and ethnicities and looked at the general African way of living as fitting into the Afrocentric paradigm. Most of the books analysed proved to be pro-Afrocentric and valued the African way of living. Illustrations proved to either give meaning to text, got meaning from text or enhanced the meaning of the text with relatable pictures of black children and black community as we know it.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research has outlined the changes that have been taking place in the making of Afrocentric children's books over the past decade (2010-2020). Thematic concerns have evolved from the South Africans' need post-Apartheid to be seen as subjects to being the actual subjects of their narratives. Illustrations have improved over the years and seem to portray a well-rounded and believable picture of an African child. Improved illustrations have enhanced the writing of Afrocentric children's literature significantly.

It emerged from the interviews that there are a lot of positive changes in the publishing industry in South Africa and that publishers are busy making changes to empower the African child through this genre of literature. This was felt in all the selected texts as they were mostly pro-Afrocentric.

5.1 What the results say about problem statement and assumptions

While the problem statement indicated that Africa does not have enough children's books that tell African realities and do not reflect realities of the African child, it has emerged that this gap has since been covered over the years through publishing of literature that addresses the lives of African children, albeit at a smaller scale.

The assumption that native writers are now able to write about their own authentic familial, cultural, societal and historical experiences and as such give a true reflection of their social, political and economic experiences in South Africa proved to be correct on exploring the selected books. It has to be understood though that the selected books were a mix of books written by all races in South Africa. The two publishers who were interviewed highlighted that there has been a rise in the inclusion of black writers and illustrators which they assumed would give an authentic voice of lived experiences when writing children's literature. It also turned out that writers who are not necessarily black represented the black child in a positive way which qualified their books to fall under the definition used for Afrocentric children's literature for the study.

5.2 Recommendations to publishers

Based on what participants reported back on my questionnaires and from my textual analysis of the selected texts using the Afrocentric theoretical framework, I have the following recommendations for publishers interested in improving Afrocentric children's literature:

5.2.1 Age appropriateness of themes and language

It is of much concern that there seems to be neglect of age appropriateness when authors and publishers work on Afrocentric children's literature as highlighted by Sunrise publishers. Themes that should be addressed in a certain age category may differ. If, however, they are age universal themes, then the language and examples used should be different and suitable to be comprehended by children at that age level.

Language level is an important aspect to look at when looking at children's literature. The texts that are written by white authors proved to be written at a high language level which could present as a problem for a second language readers. This was felt in the reading of *Wanda*, *Hair love* and *I have brown skin and curly hair* as compared to *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village*. I would therefore encourage use of plain simple language and use of common symbols that children are familiar with; or at least that parents are familiar with and can easily explain to children. However, this could also be combatted through use of illustrations that explain whatever is said in complicated language or concept.

5.2.2 Boy/girl representation

There appears to be more books on the girl child and a few on boys as stated by all participants and from the analysis of selected texts. For instance, none of the 10 selected texts used for analysis had the main character as the boy child except for *Blissful life at gogo and mkhulu's village*, where there were two characters, a boy and a girl whose roles were the same. It emerged from the research that boys are presented as bullies who make the lives of young girls at school miserable. This needs revisiting and correction as it may have a negative impact on the boy child. The boy child cannot identify himself in the books and as such may not be attracted to reading. It would be commendable to have authentic representation of African children in their books regardless of gender. There is need therefore to correct this imbalance by writing books for boys too and stop the gendered writing and reading as it deprives the boychild.

5.2.3 Disability representation

There seems to be less books that take the narrative of a disabled child. The disabled children always feel out of place and excluded in these narratives. Only one of the 10 texts used for analysis had a disabled character; *Why Ndanaka hid her face*. Disabled children often have low self-esteem and find it hard to make friends, but if there is literature that affirms them then they would feel included and embrace their disabilities. The other children would also learn to embrace their disabled friends and not bully them or shun them because of their disabilities. One disabled character may not be adequate impact on readers so there is need for multiple characters with disabilities in children's books.

5.2.4 Setting issues

Analysis of the texts showed that most of the books are written for the urban African child. Only a few books are set in the rural areas. Writers seem to try so hard to move away from the predefined Africa of yesteryears that made Africa look like a big jungle but in so doing, the rural African child is left out of the recent developments in literature. Whereas most of the Afrocentric books were set in rural areas in the past, most books published in the past decade have shifted to look at urban settings, to the extent that village set books are dwindling save for the ones on folklore and tales or with urban children visiting their grandparents in the village during school holidays. The rural child is "othered" in the process of moving with civilisation and urbanisation. I would therefore recommend publishing of more books with rural settings because most children in African countries grow up in the rural areas and they need to find themselves in published literature too.

5.2.5 Language

The issue of language as highlighted in section 2.3.2 has been a bone of contention in most parts of Africa especially when it comes to qualifying any form of literary work as Afrocentric or not. Some thinkers posit that for a literary work to be considered Afrocentric it has to be written in native languages while others argue it is not the language that determines that but the content therein. This has shaped the way authors, publishers and buyers look at Afrocentric children's literature too. Ndosakusa publishers had a problem with my definition of Afrocentric literature (2.3) and insisted Afrocentric literature should mean literature for black people, by black writers and if possible, published by a black publisher. This would only be seen as racist and yet the Afrocentric paradigm seeks to co-exist with other races.

I therefore recommend that publishers should go on writing in English if it is cheaper and viable to do so, while making sure the themes are Afrocentric and the language level is child friendly.

5.2.6 Change in attitudes

Responses from all participants show that attitudes towards Afrocentric books are changing with writers coming up and wishing to write books that are Afrocentric. However, Sunrise publishers highlighted that there is need for proper writing and coaching because what publishers receive most of the times does not match publishing standards, citing that most authors prefer writing in their own style and correcting this often rubs the writers the wrong way as they feel censored, moreso if it is a white publisher correcting a black writer as they may be deemed offensive or trying to change the African narrative. There is need therefore for the two races to work together for the common good which is creating books for the African child.

5.3 Recommendations for further study

5.3.1 The same research using vernacular texts

The same study done using vernacular texts would be ideal as it would add to my findings and dig a little deeper into other nuances that affect dynamics to do with such books. These could be original vernacular texts or translated texts. Vernacular texts of the same nature could present with the same themes and illustrations but could bring different aspects which could include different players in publishing of such and the use of translation and complications which come with it.

5.3.2 A participatory analysis on how African children respond to Afrocentric texts

A participatory research could be helpful as it would measure the response of African children when they have Afrocentric books read to them. I feel that this could be one of the many solutions that could correct the low comprehension rates in lower grades in South Africa as reported by PIRLS (2016).

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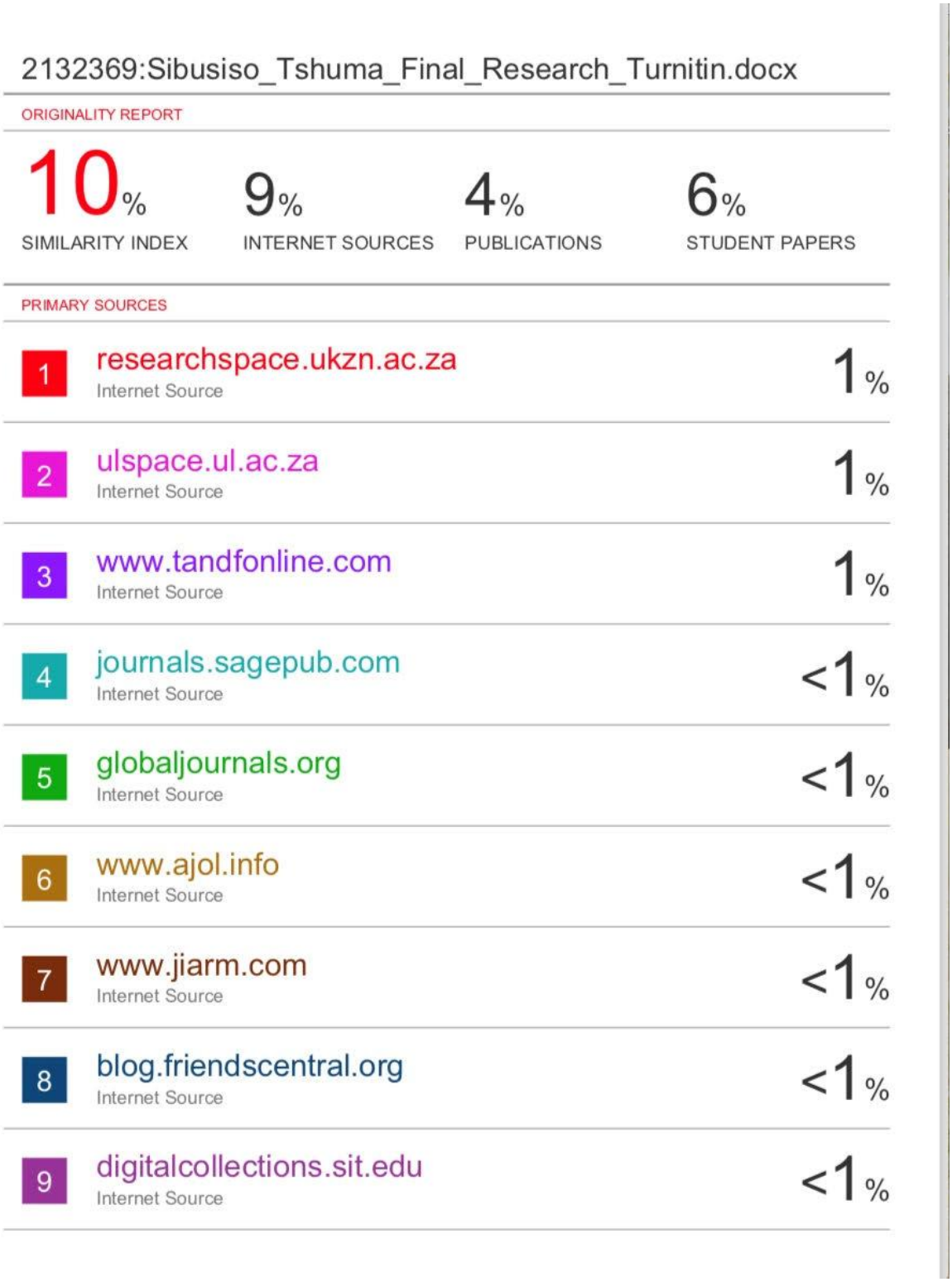
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Appendix 1: Turnitin report



2132369:Sibusiso_Tshuma_Final_Research_Turnitin.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

10%	9%	4%	6%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
2	ulspace.ul.ac.za Internet Source	1%
3	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	1%
4	journals.sagepub.com Internet Source	<1%
5	globaljournals.org Internet Source	<1%
6	www.ajol.info Internet Source	<1%
7	www.jiarm.com Internet Source	<1%
8	blog.friendscentral.org Internet Source	<1%
9	digitalcollections.sit.edu Internet Source	<1%

Appendix 2: Consent form

Consent to take part in research

I _____voluntarily agree to participate in this research study being done by Sibusiso Tshuma student number 2132369 at Witwatersrand university in South Africa. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question(s) without any consequences of any kind. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

That my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
That the researcher may use symbols in her research report to provide anonymity	YES	NO
That the interview may be audio or video recorded and be treated with privacy	YES	NO

Research Topic: "*Exploring Afrocentric Themes and Illustrations in South African Children's Literature with Human Characters from 2010-2020."*

Supervisor: Lorraine Nyamapfene

Signature of participant_____ Date _____

Signature of researcher_____ Date _____

Appendix 3: Participant information sheet

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Sibusiso Tshuma. I am currently enrolled for a Master's in Publishing Studies at University of the Witwatersrand. I am interested in finding out about Afrocentric children's literature in South Africa. My research title is "Exploring Afrocentric themes and illustrations in South African Children's Literature with Human Characters from 2010-2020."

I would like to interview you for this research project and get your perspective on the above topic. The interview will take approximately an hour. I will send a set of semi-structured questions for you to look at before we have an online video or audio interview which I hope to record then transcribe at a later date. These interviews can either be held via Zoom or MS Teams depending on what you prefer.

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 anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information. The information shared with me will be held securely and treated with due respect and privacy. I will be using symbols to represent your participation in my final research report.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. The data collected from this research project will be stored in my password secure laptop and will be kept for 5 years. 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.

Kind Regards,

Sibusiso Tshuma 2132369@students.wits.ac.za Mobile: 0672780051

Supervisor: Lorraine Nyamapfene Contact Number: 011 717 4140

Appendix 4: Questionnaire for distributors

1. How long have you been involved in the Afrocentric children's book distribution in South Africa?
2. What are the main themes that are recurrent in Afrocentric children's books you have distributed between 2010 and 2020?
3. What changing patterns have you noticed in themes in Afrocentric children's books?
4. What changes have you noticed in illustrations over the years?
5. What could be motivating these changes?
6. What are the recurring illustrations in Afrocentric children's books?
7. What has been your experience with local writers when it comes to the language used for publishing children's books?
8. What percentage of the titles you distributed per year is in indigenous languages?
9. What is the role of the government in promoting writing of Afrocentric children's books?
10. What positive changes would you like to see happening in the writing, illustration, distribution and sales of Afrocentric children's books?

Appendix 5: Questionnaire for publishers

1. How long have you published Afrocentric children's literature?
2. In your children's books list, what percentage is Afrocentric and why?
3. What themes are recurrent in African children's books in this era?
4. Do you find illustrations in these books to be portraying a believable picture of the present-day South Africa?
5. What has been your experience working with children's book writers and illustrators when it comes to Afrocentric books?
6. What is the attitude towards Afrocentric children's books from distributors and consumers?
7. What has been your experience with local writers when it comes to the language used for publishing children's books?
8. Do you think the government has a role in promoting the publishing of Afrocentric children's books?
9. What other powers and forces determine the publishing of children's literature in South Africa?
10. What positive changes would you like to see happening in the writing, illustration, distribution and sales of Afrocentric children's books?

Appendix 6: Ethics clearance

SCHOOL OF Literature, Language and Media RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER:** SLLM-M20-04
PROJECT TITLE Children's Literature with Human Characters	Exploring Afrocentric themes and illustrations in South African Trade
INVESTIGATOR	Sibusiso Tshuma
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	SLLM/ SLLS
DATE CONSIDERED	Septemer 2020
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application.

EXPIRY DATE Date of submission of the project report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE October 2020 **CHAIRPERSON**

Colleen Dawson

cc: Supervisor : Lorraine Nyamapfene & Colleen Dawson

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Shuma

Signature

05 / 10 / 2020

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES