FEMALE REPRESENTATIONS IN SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN'S PICTUREBOOKS: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS

CARINA CRISTOVAO
1439224

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SUPERVISOR: DR. NAOMI NKEALAH

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DEDICATION

To all the girls who are told to sit like a lady and to stop being cheeky; this one is for you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Naomi Nkealah, who made this work possible. Through her guidance, I was able to work my way through all the stages of compiling this research report. I would also like to thank her for inspiring me to do this kind of research in the first place – after one third-year lecture with Dr. Naomi, my soul was set alight. She has inspired me profoundly.

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ABSTRACT

Children's literature serves as a means for the transmission of beliefs and values from one generation to the next; they shape children's perception of the world (Cherland, 2016; Tsao, 2008). When reading, children are often able to "identify themselves with the characters" (Cekiso, 2013, p. 202), meaning that they assimilate and learn cultural norms, values, beliefs, and even stereotypes through books. This study aimed to illustrate how a selection of South African picturebooks directly or indirectly challenge patriarchal ideologies commonly found in children's literature by providing alternative representations of female characters. It focused its lens on six picturebooks available on *Book Dash*, a free online South African social impact publisher, which were published between 2014 and 2021. The picturebooks chosen for analysis were: *And Also!* by Anja Venter, Nkosingiphile Mazibuko, and Lauren Beukes; *Graca's Dream* by Melissa Fagan, Karlien de Villiers, and Marike le Roux; *Katiiti's Song* by Philippa Kabali-Kagwa, Mary Marble, and Kirsten Walker; *Queen of Soweto* by Mia du Plessis, Jessica Taylor, and Marli Fourie; *There Must Be a Rainbow* by Sinomonde Ngwane, Nerissa Govender, and Thulisizwe Mamba; and *Yes You Can!* by Subi Bosa, Xolile Sepuru, and Georgia Demertzis.

Three main research questions were established for the study. The questions were: (1) how are female characters (children and women) represented in these selected picturebooks; (2) what meaning is produced from these representations; and (3) how are these meanings and representations similar or different to those produced in picturebooks in the past?

Through the utilization of a qualitative content analysis research design and a methodology that combined critical literacy, ideology, gender construction and identity, and African feminisms, it was found that these picturebooks do in fact provide positive and alternative representations of female characters.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Picturebooks are a powerful and popular form of children's literature. Picturebooks combine pictures with texts to tell a story; the two components present themselves differently from how they would in other circumstances as they rely on each other to communicate information to the reader (Nodelman, 1988). Moya-Guijarro and Ventola (2022) note that picturebooks consist of the product of complex multimodal components (text and illustration) that together create meaning. Conventionally, art's purpose is to enlighten our aesthetic sensibilities or to provide visual stimulation; however, picturebooks use art primarily to assist in telling the story (Nodelman, 1988). Similarly, narrative texts in picturebooks are also unique as they are characteristically undetailed due to their dependence on the accompanying pictures (Nodelman, 1988). Picturebooks allow children to "read and communicate multimodally through art and written language and also [grow] as critical thinkers" (Martens, Martens, Doyle, Loomis & Aghalarov, 2012, p. 285).

Children's literature serves as a means for the transmission of beliefs and values from one generation to the next; they shape children's perception of the world (Cherland, 2016; Tsao, 2008). When reading, children are often able to "identify themselves with the characters" (Cekiso, 2013, p. 202), meaning that they assimilate and learn cultural norms, values, beliefs, and even stereotypes through books. Picturebooks, a category of children's literature, often have children as main characters. Through the narrative of the story, children are given specific abilities, qualities, actions, and behaviours that speak to the child reader (Christensen, 2018). These behaviours, coming from a child or adult in the story, inform the child of how the child should behave in the real world. This can be both good and bad.

With the change in the lives of those in society, children's literature must mirror the advancements of society (Cherland, 2016). Children must learn behaviours and values that mirror society. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Issues such as placing patriarchal ideologies in picturebooks are still present. In addition to that, children are not always exposed

to newer, possibly more advanced/modern picturebooks. According to Kümmerling-Meibauer (2018), some picturebooks are timeless with universal messages that contribute to their longevity. This could be problematic. For example, if we look at "Red Riding Hood" (a so-called "timeless" children's story), the protagonist is told to keep to herself and not to wander about (i.e., not be curious); when she does not do this, she ends up being eaten by the wolf; fortunately, a man is there to save her! What this is teaching children is that the protagonist was punished for not listening to advice that seems to be quite sexist, then a man comes and saves her – at the end of the story Red Riding Hood vows never to wander again. Therefore, the story promotes oppressive 'female like' behaviour: "Little Red emerges from the wolf's stomach only after she learns that curiosity and independence are dangerous traits for a young girl to possess" (Marshall, 2004, p. 261). Constant exposure to stories that promote sexist ideas will result in a detrimental effect on the development of children; girls' self-esteem, their perceptions of self, and their perceptions of their abilities will be affected, while boys will begin to see these behaviours and values as the norm (Marshall, 2004; Cherland, 2016). This exposure will result in the perpetuation of patriarchal ideologies and continued sexism.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Females have perpetually been marginalised in society; because stories tend to mirror society, they have served to commonly misrepresent female characters in stereotypical and sexist roles. Patriarchal ideologies (whether explicit or implicit) are repeatedly found in children's picturebooks. In a study of a selection of 200 top-selling books, some from past Caldecott award-winning books and others from the year 2001, in comparison to a book sample from the 1980s and 1990s, it was found that sexism was not reduced at all; in fact, problematic standards of femininity and masculinity were present in these books (Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus & Young, 2006). Additionally, in a study done by Cekiso (2013), a selection of English and IsiXhosa fairy tales were critically analysed; the results of this study showed that females were presented in stereotypical submissive roles where they needed male rescue.

According to Marshall (2004), picturebooks often portray boys as active, independent characters while girls are presented as passive and dependent. Here we can see that children are taught and learn stereotypical values and sexist beliefs from picturebooks (Cekiso, 2013).

Marshal (2004, p. 261) notes that "children's texts no longer [contain] messages for the child *per se*; instead, a child's sex [becomes] synonymous with a gender that required specific behaviors." This is what we are seeing in many children's literature studies. The rules and structures of discourse (in this case texts) both shape and are shaped by socio-cultural contexts (Pole & Lampard as cited in Scott & Morrison, 2006). What children read shapes their views and understanding of the world. The representation of passive, submissive, and dependent females in picturebooks demonstrates how children's literature teaches children problematic gender-specific roles and behaviours. The recognition that the problem starts in the early years of a human's life is vital. As Hamilton et al. (2006, p. 757) argue, "sexist materials … strengthen children's biases".

However, with a growing field of feminist research and a focus on sexist gender roles, children's literature has advanced in some ways. Cherland (2016) reported that there is an increase in picturebooks being written with female main characters, although these characters are typically portrayed participating in 'traditional' roles. Cherland (2016) further claims that there remains a common theme of personality characteristics (women as passive and men as active) and feminine beauty ideals in popular children's literature. We can see this in many children's picturebooks – in illustrated fairy tales such as "Sleeping Beauty", "Red Riding Hood", "Beauty and the Beast", or "Snow White", and in series such as "Berenstain Bears" (just to name a few).

Having said this, some recent picturebooks address and challenge the repeated sexist and stereotypical roles female characters present in picturebooks. These picturebooks provide positive images of girls and woman that are empowered. Because texts shape the socio-cultural context of the world (Pole & Lampard as cited in Scott & Morrison, 2006), these picturebooks provide children with new perspectives of the world where female characters are empowered. The six local picturebooks chosen for this study all have female main characters. What this study seeks to do is to demonstrate how some new South African picturebooks challenge sexism and subvert sexist representations of girls. These chosen picturebooks are listed in the next section.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

RESEARCH AIM

This study aims to illustrate how a selection of South African picturebooks, directly or indirectly, challenge patriarchal ideologies commonly found in children's literature by providing alternative representations of female characters.

The selection of South African picturebooks used for this study all come from *Book Dash,* a free online South African social impact publisher that provides children with free books. The picturebooks chosen are as follows:

- *And Also!* by Anja Venter, Nkosingiphile Mazibuko, and Lauren Beukes;
- *Graca's Dream* by Melissa Fagan, Karlien de Villiers, and Marike le Roux;
- *Katiiti's Song* by Philippa Kabali-Kagwa, Mary Marble, and Kirsten Walker;
- *Queen of Soweto* by Mia du Plessis, Jessica Taylor, and Marli Fourie;
- *There Must Be a Rainbow* by Sinomonde Ngwane, Nerissa Govender, and Thulisizwe Mamba;
- *Yes You Can!* by Subi Bosa, Xolile Sepuru, and Georgia Demertzis.

This selection of picturebooks was published between 2014 and 2021.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are female characters (children and women) represented in these selected picturebooks?
2. What meaning is produced from these representations?
3. How are these meanings and representations similar or different to those produced in picturebooks in the past?

In order to answer these questions, the selected picturebooks are analysed in detail using a theoretical framework that combines critical literacy and African feminism. In addition, existing research from local academics, such as Candy Lynn Thyssen, continental academics such as Philomena Mathuvi, and international academics such as Mykol Hamilton and David

Anderson is used. These academics make a 21st century analysis of a variety of popular picturebooks (from the 1980s to approximately 2008) around the world.

RATIONALE

Female presentations and representations in children's picturebooks are an under-researched topic within South Africa (and I would argue, worldwide). Additionally, children's literature is often overlooked when it comes to literary topics. Feminist studies have been an interest of mine since my undergraduate degree. Childhood literacies have also been one of my main focuses throughout my studies. I have noticed the gap in these topics throughout my studies. The combination of both comes together well in this study. Feminist analysis is a useful model to use in this study as it provides the tools necessary to properly analyse how females are represented within these picturebooks and identify whether or not we are finding progress in these recently made picturebooks. This is a necessary and important study.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this research report, I will be able to identify whether or not the selected picturebooks depict positive and/or alternative representations of female characters.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

This study examines six picturebooks. This means that although we will be able to discover whether or not these selected stories depict positive and/or alternative representations of females, it is not a big enough selection of stories to accurately tell if all picturebooks provided by *Book Dash* are positive. The website has hundreds of stories available. Furthermore, it does not tell us if all South African picturebooks are advancing with these depictions. What this study is able to do, is tell whether or not these selected stories are advantageous to use for children – both within personal and educational spaces.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Owning books is a vital factor in the holistic development and the lifelong academic and economic success of the child. If my hypothesis is true, this study will show that South African picturebooks are challenging sexism. It will show that our children's literature is progressing and that we are paving the way for a better, equal future. This study will make way for future studies in the field of children's literary studies and children's education in South Africa. It will provide valuable knowledge on the topic of female representations in local children's literature and will provide an update on where we stand with this topic as a country. The knowledge conveyed in this study will be useful for parents, teachers, teachers in training, researchers, and authors. The study will make readers aware of the dangers of negative female representations in children's literature, will provide them with good alternatives, and will inform them on how to analyse books with the same African feminist lens I have used.

The next chapter will be analysing a variety of existing research that will give us an idea as to where these problems/concepts stand at this point in time and will later be used to help further dissect the picturebooks chosen, in the discussion.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have presented some background information that explains where my interest in this topic has come from. I have identified the research problem, purpose of the study, research aim, research questions, rationale, objectives, and the significance of this study.

The grand layout of this study will be as follows: Chapter Two will focus on the literature review; Chapter Three will focus on the theoretical framework used in this study; Chapter Four will focus on the research methodology; Chapter Five will focus on the analysis and findings; Chapter Six will focus on the discussion; and Chapter Seven will focus on the conclusion. Thereafter, the research report will present the study's recommendations, the implications for future research, the bibliography, and an appendix.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explore existing data and key ideas that relate to the topic of this study. The chapter will begin by looking at an overview of children's literature, followed by a look at picturebooks, thereafter a look at gender development, then a look at different relating studies completed locally, continentally, and globally, and lastly, a brief summary of the chapter will be provided. This chapter will foreground my analysis later in the study.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

There is no single definition of children's literature; a professor's opinion may be different from a teacher's, and a teacher's opinion may be different from a parent's. Hintz and Tribunella (2019) list many definitions; many of them have similarities – they are literature written for children, they are the books that children read, and they are their own literary genre. Most of these definitions are concerned with two main criteria: for whom the book is written and by whom it is read. However, I feel that Meigs's (1953) definition stands out – she agrees that this literary genre is written for children; however, she notes that it not only includes a range of texts, from fairy tales to songs to dull informative books, but is a vast body of literature that is adopted by the child, that is shared with their elders, and is sometimes completely monopolized by them. It is *their* literature.

However, one cannot simply define children's literature without looking at the act connected to literature – that of reading, as we have seen above. Without reading, any piece of literature would prove to be futile. Being a reader, as mentioned by Niland (2021), is not only about the skills needed to read; it is instead a way of being in the world. One's way of being is linked to one's identity (something we will look more deeply into during our discussion of picturebooks). Identity is shaped by deeply embedded social and cultural values. According to Luke (2013), all forms of literature cannot be defined based on specific perceptual or cognitive skills; rather, one has to look deeper into the cultural and social values that shape the meaning-making process of interacting with a piece of literature. The purposes and roles of literature,

the values connected to certain types of texts, as well as how these texts should be understood and used are all shaped by underlying cultural and societal values (Luke, 2013). Due to the fact that this research study focuses on picturebooks (a children's literary genre), I find it necessary to dig a bit deeper into the world of picturebooks.

PICTUREBOOKS

Despite the escalating number of studies done on picturebooks, they still remain a very understudied literary genre. Historically, they have been a literary genre commonly dismissed by theorists and adults alike. Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) argue that this is because they are believed to be made only for children and are 'easy' literature – often found in the "E Books" section of libraries, the easy books. More recently, though, there has been a shift in thinking around the complexities and importance of picturebooks.

In 1996, Nikolajeva argued that children's books had evolved into more sophisticated and complex books on all narrative levels (Nikolajeva, 1996). She verified this claim by showing a move from traditional storylines (character is home, character goes on an adventure, character returns home) to a less linear narrative that often had an open-ended, non-return ending (Nikolajeva, 1996). Her findings showed that children's books were no longer superficial but had gained "deeper psychological insights" (Nikolajeva, 1996, p.7). Although her work is slightly dated, it demonstrates a significant paradigm shift.

Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) note that picturebooks have changed and continue to change rapidly. Their research looks at something that they call "Postmodern Picturebooks". Goldstone (1999, 2002) states that postmodern picturebooks have four main characteristics: they are nonlinear, may have self-referential text, they may have a sarcastic or self-mocking tone, and they have an anti-authoritarian stance. For Goldstone (1999, 2002), nonlinearity means more than what was defined by Nikolajeva – it means moving forwards and backwards in a text; it also indicates the presence of multiple stories being told at the same time. This can be in the illustrations and the text or in each individual half. Self-referential texts make use of the illustrations and text to depict the creation of the book (or story) itself, and sarcasm and mocking is playful and intertextual (Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007). Anti-authoritarian texts are

not as straightforward as one would think, as they do not simply draw on the readers prior experiences and reassemble these; they "[enrich] and [support] the storyline by infusing personal emotions and experiences" (Goldstone, 2002, p. 366). Here the reader becomes an active participant, or 'accomplice' (Metcaff, 1997), in the creation of the narrative (Goldstone, 2002). This is something that is good to remember when we move on to talk about children's identity.

You may have noticed by now that unlike many other pieces of writing or research, I have referred to picturebooks as one word. This decision is based on the concept created by Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) which describes the use of the connected words as a phenomenon used to show that the interconnectedness and dependence of the illustrations and the text make it different from books with pictures (or picture books). Picturebooks have two halves, the picture and the text. Each of these halves tells a story; there is a story being told through the illustrations, and there is a story being told through the text. However, only when these are placed together do they create one whole. Norton and Moore (1993, p. 166) describe picturebooks as a "balance between the illustrations and the text, so that neither is completely effective without the other". Both the illustrations and the text present in picturebooks have been created with "a conscious aesthetic intention" (Arizpe & Styles, 2003, p. 22).

Lewis (2001) names the experience of reading a picturebook an 'interanimation.' The text draws the reader's attention to specific parts of the illustration, and in equivalent, the illustrations provide more specificity to the words in the text. They add aspects of colour, shape and form that would be missing from the text if the illustrations were not present. Therefore, the illustrations of a picturebook have to be intentionally and thoughtfully made. Before moving forward, I feel it necessary to take a quick look into visuals (here known as the illustrations) and their meanings.

MULTIMODALITY

In addition to the obvious complexities of picturebooks, it is necessary to also identify their multimodality as this adds an important layer of complexity to this genre of children's literature. It has been established that picturebooks contain two main components, the text and

the illustration; however, what we are beginning to unpack here is the complexity of the relationship between these two components and what meaning they collectively create. This study views picturebooks as something to be understood and approached as a "complex multimodal [product] in which images and words complement each other in different ways to create meaning" (Moya-Guijarro & Ventola, 2022, p. 2). The illustrations and texts work together to construct meaning. These textual (sometimes verbal when being read to, for example) and visual semiotic modes can be used, as Moya-Guijarro and Ventola (2022) mention, to promote social inclusion and gender equality in children's visual narratives. In fact, what is being found is that children's picturebooks often deal with controversial and diverse topics such as discrimination, death, violence and depression (Colomer, Kummerling-Meibauer and Silva-Diaz, 2010); topics such as these are providing youngsters with essential tools to face such problems that they may face in their own lives (Evans, 2015). Literature gives children the space to express and explore some of their own questions and experiences, making this sort of literature especially important. The absence of such topics in picturebooks deprives children of the opportunity to develop empathy for others stuck in such unpleasant situations and denies children the opportunity to develop basic emotions (Nikolajeva, 2014).

A Look at the Visual

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) note that our lives are filled with visual images or symbols that have attached recognition and meaning. Visual symbols do not need to be attached to words as they are placed in highly contextualised spaces and experiences (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). A person standing by a taxi rank holding four fingers up has a different meaning to children showing four fingers in a Grade 1 classroom. The person waiting for the taxi is indicating that they want to go to Fourways, whereas a child holding four fingers up in a classroom indicates something in relation to numeracy and counting. Although these are the same visual image, they have different meanings based on the context. Children have learned that pictures and visual symbols have attached personal or social meanings (Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007).

In picturebooks, the two halves are telling different stories. The job of the reader is to "resolve the conflict between what they see and what they read or hear" (Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007, p. 274). Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) list five ways in which these two parts interact in picturebooks that create different possibilities for interaction, experience, and exploration. The

first way is when the text and illustrations are equal on footing; this is known as symmetry. The second way is when each part (text or illustration) provides important information; this is known as complementary. The third is when each half extends the meaning of the other; this is known as enhancement. The fourth is when the text tells a different story to the illustration; this is known as counterpoint. And lastly, the text and illustration are created in opposition to their counterpart; this is known as contradiction.

As brought forward by Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007), each of these devices promote the possibility that text and illustrations are more than simply connected. Painter, Martin and Unsworth (2013) are another group of researchers who reveal the present complementarity created in picturebooks between the text and the illustrations that create and transmit meaning in this genre of multimodal children's narratives.

CHILDREN'S IDENTITY AND PICTUREBOOKS

When children participate in reading high quality picturebooks, they are drawn into a world of imagination where their aesthetic senses, as well as their empathy for the characters and places (Leahy & Foley, 2018), are present, developed and encouraged. The reading experience for each person is different. Each reader brings forth their own identities, knowledges, and life experiences when reading, examining, and understanding books: "As young learners read, or are read to, they look both outward and inward, thinking about how they fit in to the world conveyed through the language, story, and images of each book" (Niland, 2021, p.651). Further on, when we dive into literature being used to transfer and shape different ideas around beliefs and values, it will be important to remember how children use literature to mirror society, and their identity within it. Additionally, it is important now to think about what happens when children are not represented in literature, when there is no space to fit into the world conveyed. It is not that nothing happens. Children get the subtle message that they do not belong, and this is a shaping of their view about themselves and the world in itself. As Niland (2021) demonstrated, children who are not able to identify with a story will feel that entry into such a world is not possible for a person like them as they feel like outsiders looking in. What then, happens when young girls read literature where they are not represented, or, where their representation is highly suppressive and controlled? What then, happens to their own identities and self-image?

TEXT PRODUCER AND CHOICES

Before we begin with looking at the choices that text producers make, one must remember that no text is neutral. Texts will always present (or reflect) the point of the text producer and are partial in that they only tell part of the story (Janks, Dixton, Ferreira, Granville & Newfield, 2014). Texts are positioned and work to position the reader; they provide partial and selected re-presentations of a situation in order to position the reader (Janks, 2010). Text producers must make many choices based on a range of linguistic and semiotic options that will be positioned by the writer's point of view (Janks, 2010; Janks et al., 2014). These options can be decisions based on what words, adjectives, adverbs, tense and pronouns to use, how to sequence or connect sentences, and what tone to use (approving or disapproving): "Every choice foregrounds what was selected and hides, silences or backgrounds what was not selected" (Janks et al., 2014, p. 2). Identifying these selections help us notice what has been silenced.

Of course, picturebooks are not only filled with text but with illustrations as well. Janks et al. (2014) note that the multiple modes of making meaning require text producers to select options from a wide range of signs that carry meaning. When she speaks of text, she does not only mean it in the literal textual form but as a producer of any of the multiple modes possible that create meaning.

The choices text producers make are made either deliberately or subconsciously. Janks et al. (2014) observe how people draw on meaning and the way subjects are spoken about in our own communities to express and deliver messages. They note the way in which humans re-produce our communities' common-sense ways of thinking in the texts that they create. This then brings us to the topic of discourse.

DISCOURSE

Discourse is found in every means of meaning-making that humans make use of. Discourse refers to the socially expected patterns of thinking, believing, feeling, valuing, acting, and using of language, or means of expression, to identify oneself as a global community member (Wohlwend, 2011). Additionally, it is also the internalisation of power relations, beliefs, practices, and global scripts that influence who adopts a particular literacy identity and how

(Janks et al., 2014; Wohlwend, 2011). These ways of being and thinking become so natural to us that we often forget that another communities' discourse may not share the same structure as our own (Janks et al., 2014). Discourse is often affected by aspects such as gender, race, class, and other markers of social difference (Wohlwend, 2011), which is why it is such an important consideration when it comes to this kind of research.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND GENDER DEVELOPMENT

Children's literature serves as a means for the transmission of beliefs and values from one generation to the next; they shape children's perception of the world (Cherland, 2016; Tsao, 2008). Many studies have been dedicated to representations of female characters in children's literature because of the impression such a representation leaves on the child reader during this crucial time of development. Gender development is one of the critical stages of a child's overall development. It is here that children learn to organise many perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviours based on gender; furthermore, children begin learning gender-stereotypical behaviour as soon as they master gender stability (Mathuvi, Ireri, Mukuni, Njagi & Karugu, 2012). Gender stability, which occurs during the preschool phase, refers to when children can begin understanding that boys become men and girls become women (Mathuvi et al., 2012). These stereotypical views develop with age. A study conducted by Giles and Hayman (2005) in the United States found that pre-schoolers believe that boys are aggressive physically and girls are aggressive verbally. In addition to this study, another study demonstrated that pre-schoolers believe that boys are strong and dominant, and girls are emotional and gentle (Etaugh & Liss, 1992). We can still see the prevalence of this in our pre-schools today. Children's books, as I have discussed in the background of this study, play a significant role in the transmission of society's culture. These books play a significant role in the learning experiences of children and contribute greatly to their gender identity and self-perception (Mathuvi et al., 2012; Tsao, 2008). Unfortunately, what we are finding is not only the domination of male characters but also the commonality of sexism and stereotypes (Tsao, 2008).

A LOOK AT SOME ADDITIONAL LOCAL, CONTINENTAL, AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

A study examining 40 common children's picturebooks in Kenya (published between 2005 and 2010) demonstrated that the behaviour of female characters is significantly different from that of males (Mathuvi et al., 2012). The results of the study were as follows: 55% of the books demonstrated male superiority, 55% demonstrated female subordination, 55% demonstrated female withdrawal from situations, 77.5% demonstrated images of males that were taller or positioned in the foreground in comparison to females, and 67% demonstrated females cradling objects (Mathuvi et al., 2012). Tsao (2008) investigated such studies and adds that females rarely reveal their identities as they are frequently presented as meek; he notes that this is problematic as discriminatory portrayals found in children's literature led children to be misrepresented and have misguided realizations of their true potential in the world.

A study conducted by Diekman and Murnen (2004) demonstrates that even books that are praised for their non-sexist portrayals of females often merely demonstrate a narrow vision of gender equality because the females merely adopt stereotypical male attributes and roles. Additionally, these books do not show males adopting aspects of feminine gender roles. This study demonstrates the multi-dimensional construct that sexism is (Tsao, 2008); even in children's literature, there are diverse ways that sexism can be present. However, in comparison, Zinn's (2000) post-apartheid South African study shows that feminist themes and fairy tales are now more positively welcomed, and the subversion of stereotypes and the attribution of male characteristics to female characters work well in children's imaginations. Ruterana (2012) further demonstrates how South African children (boys and girls) respond well to unconventional, sometimes tomboyish, female protagonists in Ndabaga (a feminist fairy tale).

Research has shown that picturebooks can play an important role in eliminating sexism by presenting egalitarian roles; here we see that books can be used as an intervention for children and their possible misguided beliefs about gender (Tsao, 2008). Children who are exposed to non-sexist picturebooks over some time are found to have reduced notions of gender-role stereotypes and are found to develop fewer stereotypical attitudes about jobs (Tsao, 2008).

It is, as we have seen, appropriate to use feminist theories to analyse and reshape children's literature. Hunt (2006) argues that women and children's literature have long been devalued and regarded as marginal or peripheral by literary and educational communities. Therefore, appropriating feminist theories to children's literature holds good reasoning to counter these tendencies. According to Oyewumi (2003), there are several motifs used to portray women in literature; to name a few, there are portrayals based on sex, portrayals based on physical features, portrayals based on gender roles, and gender stereotypes in children's literature. Portrayals based on sex look at the categorization that distinguishes males from females (biological characteristics); this portrayal is concerned with secondary sex characteristics (women having breasts, men growing beards) and physiological functions such as men being associated with initiating reproduction and women being associated with carrying out reproduction through pregnancy and birth (Mathuvi et al., 2012). Writers often use this categorization to portray males and females. The portrayal based on physical features is common. Here we see character descriptions being based on body build – often women are frail, and men are big and strong (Mathuvi et al., 2012). This portrayal feeds into the idea that female characters need male protection. Portrayal based on gender roles is based on the common trend that women are often presented as insignificant characters in literature. Most studies of children's literature look at gender stereotypes. Here, the focus is on character prevalence in titles, central roles, pictures, and the differences in roles and activities associated with the characters (Mathuvi et al., 2012).

CONCLUSION

The Literature Review of this study was able to define children's literature, looked into picturebooks and how they have evolved, discussed the multimodality present in picturebooks and how the two main components work together. It then discussed how children's identity is shaped by what the child reads. A brief look into the choices that text producers make was established, gender development in the young years of a child's life was discussed, and lastly, there was an inclusion of some local, continental, and international studies on the topic. There is a significant gap in literature in terms of literature that discusses the positive influence that inclusive and female leading picturebooks have on children. There is also a gap in studies that demonstrate positive images of female characters. Therefore, this study aims to look at

picturebooks that provide these alternative depictions of female characters and unpack how these may affect the young reader.

In the next chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework used in this study. The theoretical framework presents the theories used to build and piece together this report.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I establish the theoretical framework that has been used in this study. This framework is broken up into four parts: critical literacy, ideology, gender construction and identity, and African feminisms in children's literature. By the end of this chapter, the reader will have a greater sense of the theories that form the basis of this research study. These theories are fundamental to this research. I begin by looking at critical literacy.

CRITICAL LITERACY

"Social transformation that strives to achieve fairness and equality is at the heart of critical literacy." (Janks et al., 2014, p. 6)

This study makes use of some aspects of Jank's (2010) model of critical literacy, as captured in the quotation above. The central idea is that "critical literacy works at the interface of language, literacy and power" (Janks, 2010, p. 22). In this model, one has to "pay attention to questions of power, diversity, access and both design and redesign" and "recognise their inter-dependence" (Janks et al., 2014, p.5). Critical literacy, the key word here being *critical*, endows one with a lens to identify and give attention to how dominant meanings are maintained, challenged or changed (Janks, 2010; Janks et al., 2014). Because of this, it is a brilliant tool to be used in studies that look into discourse and issues of power.

POWER

Often, the relationship between language and power is not as easily identifiable as other more prominent features; critical literacy raises awareness around issues of power. Power holds importance for both those who have it and those who do not; how people get to the top of these power hierarchies has to do with what society values (Janks, 2010). Those who hold power can easily maintain it through the continuous enforcement of the view that the current order is nothing unnatural (Janks, 2010). This means that people that hold power within society, such as the churches, will continually persuade or remind society that they are necessary for the maintenance of a just world. The differences in identity and power, based on societal values,

determines who has the right to speak, who can be heard, and how one can act; these different points affect our ideas about whose language is important and whose is not, what is appropriate and what is not (Janks, 2010). Power silences some while making room for others; all of which affect one's opportunities and choices in life. However, it can also be used (as mentioned above) to challenge how things work. Paulo Freire's work would be an example of this. For Freire, critical literacy means that reading the word was a way to read the world and then change it (Janks et al., 2014).

Now, it is important to note that discourse and power work together. Our understanding of the world and ourselves (our identity) is shaped by language – the world is constructed in and by language (Janks et al., 2014). As mentioned in the literature review, we absorb the discourses valued by our communities. These discourses are what construct our identity positions and are what produce us into particular types of humans (Janks et al., 2014). Therefore, theorists such as Ngûgî wa Thiong'o and Freire have focused their work on the act of decolonizing and renaming themselves in a world where the discourse has constructed them as inferior beings.

DIVERSITY

Each community holds its own values, beliefs, texts, discourses, languages, social and linguistic conventions, as well as rules for dressing, interacting, and comporting their bodies – these are only to name a few. This means that there are diverse variations of how humans may experience this world. Janks et al. (2014) note that when people move out of their communities and encounter different ways of being, they either expand their horizons and sometimes take on hybrid identities or they see difference as a threat or an insult to their own identities. The latter is what creates divisions between people (us vs. them). This sometimes results in constructing the other as 'inferior', excluding or expelling them, or even killing them (Janks et al., 2014). Difference is what often builds hierarchies in society, making it an important aspect of critical literacy.

ACCESS

Access is quite straightforward. Here we are questioning things such as who gets access to the language of power, and who gets access to high-status knowledge (Janks et al., 2014). It is

important to ask questions around issues such as whose knowledge is valued in our society as well as who this knowledge belongs to (Janks et al., 2014). In terms of this research, questions such as what picturebooks young girls are exposed to, or what are girls allowed to do or are seen doing in these books, are powerful, liberating messages accessible to both genders alike. Access can be physical, it can be concerned with knowledge and power, but it can also be concerned with how we are taught and how we learn, how fluent we are in a particular language (Janks et al., 2014), and how our different interests are achieved and encouraged.

DESIGN AND REDESIGN

Design is concerned with how we make and shape texts based on how we select and organize different meaning making signs; and redesign is the act of deconstructing and transforming (Janks et al., 2014). These two aspects are not very applicable to this study in terms of its analysis of these selected picturebooks, but perhaps it may be useful to those that I hopefully inspire with my work, those who can use this to transform future picturebooks into more inclusive ones.

IDEOLOGIES

Not a single book exists that is free from ideological implications. Texts will either naturalize or challenge the belief systems of a culture and will always impose ideological beliefs onto their readers through their use of language and imagery (McCallum & Stephens, 2011). Ideologies are used by society to make sense of the world; they are based on the behaviours of a community and form the basis of the social practice and representations of groups; literary discourse produces, reproduces, and challenges ideologies (McCallum & Stephens, 2011). McCallum and Stephens (2011) have identified three ways in which ideology is conveyed in picturebooks. The first is through discourse, the second through story (characters and narratives) – and by extension through significance (values), and the last through a combination of discourse and story. This means that all textual discourses are informed and shaped by ideology, including children's literature. According to McCallum and Stephens (2011), children's literature either implicitly reflects its social function of defining group values and beliefs or seeks to challenge received ideologies and substitute new formations. Either way, the researchers note the importance of understanding that authors and illustrators explicitly or

implicitly imply values based on certain assumptions, stereotypes or omissions that underlie their decision making.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER AND GENDER IDENTITY IN CHILDREN'S PICTUREBOOKS

Picturebooks play a significant role in children's development if they are a widely available cultural resource, as they offer children multitudes of opportunities to learn new knowledge, become familiar with printed imagery, and be entertained, and they allow children the opportunity to experience perspectives other than their own (Tsao, 2008). Additionally, picturebooks provide opportunities for children to further construct their views of themselves and the world (Tsao, 2008); and this affects their perceptions of the world, its mechanics, and how to behave in it (this all being part of the socialization process). These books are a mirror of society for children.

Children's picturebooks help young minds make sense of gender. When gender stereotypes and sexism in picturebooks are present (in the content, language, and illustrations), the picturebook negatively affects the development of gender identity of the young child and the child's perception of the world and 'gendered behaviours'; it negatively affects a child's thinking, resulting in limited ideas of what the child and others can choose, be interested in, or can do (Tsao, 2008). However, as mentioned previously, books are meant to be a mirror of society and as Aoumeur (2017) has pointed out, women in contemporary society are no longer as limited by their gender as they used to be. The picturebooks that children are presented with should present protagonists who are empowered, regardless of their gender, and who can overcome patriarchal oppression – this is also known as feminist children's literature (Demirhan, 2020).

FEMINIST ANALYSIS

"Feminist analysis" has been prominently mentioned in the title of this research report; its use is requisite for the completion of this report. According to Sterk (2017), feminist analysis is grounded in understanding and examining fundamental gendered power relations between men and women. However, over the years, it has increasingly moved beyond masculine and

feminine binaries; it opens spaces to accommodate people belonging to the LGBTQ community, discussions around racial and ethnical situations that women of colour face, and other similar types of discourses (Sterk, 2017). Within this research report, I wish to use it to allow such spaces for discussions around discrepancies, representations, and progressions possibly found in the chosen picturebooks. Feminist analysis allows greater insights for topics such as this one. Using feminist analysis, literary researchers are given the necessary tools to focus on and identify language (and imagery) uses that may demean, ignore, and/or trivialize women; additionally, it can allow for the space to talk about identified channels of resistance (Sterk, 2017). Feminist analysis does more than simply stating (or recording) findings; Sterk (2017) argues that this would not lead to any needed activism. Instead, it provides the tools to identify and unpack social and cultural constructions that pave the way to gendered subordination (Sterk, 2017). Our ability to dig into such constructions also provides the tools for us to identify positive and alternative representations of women.

AFRICAN FEMINISMS AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Murray (2017, p.23) notes that "literary texts open up creative spaces where authors can expose the persistence of patriarchy; simultaneously, they can resist and oppose widespread patriarchal views by positing alternative, less oppressive understandings of women and their experiences." Feminist children's literature is one of these literary texts. Feminist children's literature refers to literature for children that are informed by feminist ideologies. This literature is not concerned with a female's sexual identity but with feminist autonomy and the ideologies of these characters behind their actions (Demirhan, 2020). The female protagonists in these stories are not silenced; "they fulfil their inner potential: they are liberated, outspoken, and in every feminist way, they prove their woman-self: a self-awakened, self-realized, and self-made woman" (Demirhan, 2020, p.529). It is about the empowerment of females and the rejection of sexism.

However, the use of feminism will not suffice for this study. As many scholars have argued, feminism does not address the needs of all women; it is tailor-made to serve a particular group of people – white American women (Eze, 2015; Shamase, 2017). Feminism entails an agenda that is designed from white women's history with the idea that it applies to all women (Shamase, 2017); all women are viewed in the same image as western women (Eze, 2015). For

this reason, many African Feminisms have to come to light that address the needs of African women. To name a few, there is Womanism, Motherism, Stiwanism, Nego-feminism, and Snail-Sense feminism.

Womanism, an ideology, is made by African women, for African women to deal with issues that are specific to African women – ethnicism, (post)colonialism, poverty, racism, militarism, and religious fundamentalism (Eze, 2015). It is important to note that I am discussing Ogunyemi's version of Womanism here. Womanism is culturally coded as it acknowledges the spiritual and cultural experiences of women and reflects on their traditional backgrounds (Shamase, 2017). Motherism, is boldly Afrocentric and denotes motherhood, nature, and nurture (Eze, 2015). Stiwanism stands for Social Transformation Including Women of Africa, which is similar to Nego-feminism and Snail-Sense feminism in that it introduces the concept of equal partnership between males and females (Alkali, Talif, Yahya &, Jan, 2013; Eze, 2014, Nkealah, 2016; Nnaemeka, 2003). Transformation and the building of a harmonious society is the responsibility of both males and females (Alkali et al., 2013), which is why these three feminisms focus on gender inclusion, collaboration, and complementarity (Nkealah, 2016). Nego-feminism, in particular, is concerned with negotiation between males and females and is also known as the 'no ego feminism' (Nnaemeka, 2003).

Nkealah (2006) calls on African women writers to portray female characters who employ all of their resources, namely, physical strength, intellect, and merits to attain self-fulfilment and contribute to societal development. It is through this employment that the female character's agency comes to light. Cameline Agency, an African feminism proposed by Nkealah (2017) based on insights from South African literature, is a model for women's survival in post-apartheid South Africa that offers functional methods of empowerment. It is concerned with the agency of women and the ability of those who are suppressed to act decisively to change their circumstances and regain control over their lives (Nkealah, 2017). In addition to agency, empowerment is another important aspect of analysis. Women's empowerment is defined as the "process by which women – individually or collectively – gain autonomy and mastery over their own affairs" (Nkealah, 2018, p. 50). Education, income, work, health, and reproduction can qualify as avenues of women's empowerment: when women lose control over these, they

become disempowered (Nkealah, 2018). Nkealah (2018) notes that empowerment and disempowerment serve as two mutually reinforcing processes rather than binary oppositions.

This study examines a selection of South African picturebooks from an African feminist perspective. It examines whether or not the female characters in these books are represented in ways that show female agency and empowerment. Furthermore, this study draws on various conceptualizations of gender offered by these African feminisms to analyse these picturebooks. Using these feminisms is deemed appropriate due to their grounding in African historical and cultural experiences. The picturebooks tell African stories about girls in South Africa which is why the use of African feminisms as a theoretical framework is considered appropriate.

Critical Literacy will be employed to identify as many variables as possible relating to power, diversity, access, design and redesign in the chosen picturebooks that will be critically analysed in chapters 5 and 6. The ideas surrounding the presence of ideologies in texts, gender construction and identity, and African feminisms will be added to the theory holding together the thought behind the analysis of these picturebooks. Each picturebook will be unpacked in relation to the variables mentioned within this underlying theory that I have established.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical framework broken down in this chapter began with the unpacking of critical literacies into four of its divisions, namely: power, diversity, access, and design and redesign. Thereafter, we had a look at ideologies and the role they play in this research project. This was followed by theories relating to gender identity and construction within picturebooks. Next, the justification and theorising of feminist analysis was unpacked; and lastly, African feminisms were unpacked and related to their role in children's literature. The following chapter will be breaking down the Research Methodology that will be utilised for this study. The methodology gives us the tools necessary to complete this research report.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This research study utilizes a qualitative content analysis (QCA) methodology. This methodology works well with feminist analysis as "feminist theory strongly suggests researchers consider critical and interpretative methods in order to uncover meanings" (Sterk, 2017, p. 554). As you read through this chapter, you will understand how the chosen methods rely on critical and interpretative methods. Sterk (2017) suggests that the use of qualitative, critical, and interpretative methods is most useful in research as it leads to activism and positive change. For these reasons, I have decided that qualitative content analysis serves this research project best.

This chapter will be broken down as follows: first, I will provide a breakdown of Content Analysis and its role; secondly, I will outline what is included in a qualitative study (here I will look at important aspects such as reliability, validity, and trustworthiness); thirdly, I will be listing the six chosen picturebooks that will be used in this study as well as my sample criteria used for the selection of these; and lastly, I will discuss the ethical considerations related to this study.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis allows me to describe the meaning/s of qualitative materials in systematic ways – through this method, I can identify and categorize parts, patterns, and trends (Schreier, 2012). It will allow me to describe and interpret the picturebooks chosen for this study. According to Schreier (2012), QCA allows the researcher to participate in some degree of interpretation to arrive at the meaning of the data. The idea behind this is that no data (in this context, text) has a specific meaning attached to it; it is the recipient that actively creates meaning with the use of the words read and the illustrations seen (Schreier, 2012). When we make meaning out of materials, we draw from our background knowledge. This could be from the knowledge we have encountered about the topic (Schreier, 2012), in this case, the existing research that has been collected on the topic of female representations in children's picturebooks as well as my own internalisation/understanding of my community's discourse.

The situation in which one encounters the material (Schreier, 2012) also has a part to play in the construction of meaning.

INDUCTIVE REASONING

This study will make use of inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is created when themes and categories emerge from the researchers careful and constant examination of the selected data (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). There exist three approaches to qualitative content analysis, based on the degree to which a researcher involves themselves in inductive reasoning. This study makes use of initial coding and then analysis (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). I begin by starting with relevant research findings and theories, and then during analysis, I will immerse myself in the data allowing for themes to emerge. This approach's purpose is to validate and/or extend theories (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

In this study, I analyse six different picturebooks made for the children of South Africa. These picturebooks are analysed and interpretations are made. These interpretations are constructed with the use of an African feminist theoretical framework (refer to the theoretical framework in the previous chapter) and existing research (literature review in Chapter Two) that forms the background knowledge for my interpretation.

There are five main critical issues that are considered when conducting a feminist reading of children's literature. The first is the need to address conventional gender stereotypes; the second is the need for feminist retellings, adaptations, and subversions; the third is the need to develop new forms of language, new voices, and subjectivities; the fourth is the need to break taboos on topics such as gender-based violence; and the fifth is the need for feminist pedagogy in children's literature and its translation (Demirhan, 2020). To address these five critical issues, I analyse all the various aspects of the picturebooks: the cover page, the title page, the text/narrative, and the illustrations.

Common themes, roles and patterns will be identified within the study; however, a coding scheme is necessary for this research report. My coding scheme will be divided into the following categories:

- female character roles (within play activities, family/community dynamics, education, and the working world), and
- female character characteristics (here I am looking for characteristics that show freedom of choice, courage, wisdom, strength, and curiosity).

The data (i.e., picturebooks) will be examined in relation to these two codes. These codes allow us the ability to find common themes in how female characters are represented within the stories.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Content analysis is often associated with quantitative research as it commonly involves identifying the number of times a certain property appears (Scott & Morrison, 2006). However, as Schreier (2012) has demonstrated, it can be used qualitatively as well. Instead of counting property appearance, the researcher discusses the common themes and patterns that occur. Qualitative research "assumes that multiple realities are socially constructed through individual and collective perceptions or views of the same situation," and "is more concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p.12). In this case, the participant's perspective is that of a single participant: myself. I take the role of a single academic reader who has a certain degree of knowledge about the related aspects necessary for this study. As a knowledgeable reader, I analyse these picturebooks with the use of the theoretical framework mentioned in Chapter Three. I acknowledge that every person, and probably more importantly, every child's perception of each of these picturebooks will vary from my own; however, what I wish to do here is to make my own analysis. As a text observant, I want to look at whether or not these books hold sexism and whether they offer alternative (counter) representations of female characters. Through the use of a Qualitative Content Analysis, I aim to fill in the gap found about books that provide alternative representations of female characters, and how these books influence children, which will begin building this information on a local scale.

VALIDITY

To ensure some level of validity in this study, I have used related texts to provide different perspectives to my interpretation. When using QCA, one combines background knowledge with established theories to make meaning of texts. Remaining aware that my interpretation of the text only provides a single lens through which I investigate the data collected allows me to see the essential role that other related texts provide. The use of other related (academic) texts provides other lenses that are essential to this study as it provides other perspectives that will allow me to dig deeper into the constructed meaning. This allows for a greater level of validity in this qualitative study.

RELIABILITY

Qualitative research places the importance of data collection on a skilled, prepared person instead of an instrument (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The additional academic texts collected in this study are found in peer-reviewed academic journals and databases, books available at the Wits School of Education Library, through online libraries and Google Scholar. Collecting and making use of academic texts from these locations ensures a certain level of reliability. Reliability is also established through the incorporation of these different academic texts that provide multiple meanings and perspectives to the study. Every effort has been made to avoid using material published in predatory journals since the quality of such material is compromised by the profit-making aim of the publishers.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Validity and reliability are certainly two characteristics that make QCA increasingly trustworthy; however, because of its interpretative nature, additional criteria may be added to improve its trustworthiness. An additional four criteria can be added to evaluate interpretative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is concerned with the accuracy and sufficiency of the social world that is chosen to be represented (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). To achieve this, it is suggested that a researcher spends prolonged time in the field of study, participates in consistent observation, makes use

of triangulation, completes negative case analysis, and uses raw data to check interpretations (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Although this study does not consist of out-in-the-world, physical observation, the picturebooks analysed were constantly analysed over many months and interpretations of them were continually discussed with my supervisor. Additionally, any negative findings were identified and discussed within this study so as to represent the picturebooks truthfully.

Transferability refers to whether my working hypothesis can be used in another context (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The description, breaking down of, and layout of this study has been provided in detail to allow future researchers the opportunity to use it within their own context.

Dependability refers to the logical consistency and application of the internal process being used within this study, as well as any accounts of changes in this application (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The process being used is clearly laid out within this study, and any changes are noted to ensure the dependability of this research project.

Confirmability refers to the extent to which this research project's posited characteristics of data can be approved by other readers of this information (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). This study, as mentioned previously, is discussed with, read by, and corrected by my supervisor before its submission. This means that it is given the chance to be read, understood, and approved by an outside party before it is finalised to ensure that the characteristics of data, posited by me, can be confirmed by other readers.

With these criteria, I have been able to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

CHOSEN PICTUREBOOKS

Six picturebooks have been chosen for this study, all of which come from *Book Dash*. The picturebooks that are analysed in Chapter Five are: *And Also!* by Anja Venter, Nkosingiphile Mazibuko, and Lauren Beukes; *Graca's Dream* by Melissa Fagan, Karlien de Villiers, and

Marike le Roux; *Katiiti's Song* by Philippa Kabali-Kagwa, Mary Marble, and Kirsten Walker; *Queen of Soweto* by Mia du Plessis, Jessica Taylor, and Marli Fourie; *There Must Be a Rainbow* by Sinomonde Ngwane, Nerissa Govender, and Thulisizwe Mamba; and *Yes You Can!* by Subi Bosa, Xolile Sepuru, and Georgia Demertzis. *Book Dash* is a South African social impact publisher that provides free books for young children; they began in 2014 with the vision that every child should own a hundred books by the time they enter school (*Book Dash*, n.d.). They understand that owning books is an important factor in the holistic development of the child and in their lifelong academic success. Their African picturebooks can be freely downloaded, translated, printed, and distributed. They have won many awards over the years, their most recent being the 2021 Nedbank Private Wealth Innovation Award.

SAMPLING CRITERIA

When identifying the above mentioned picturebooks, my focus was to find books that were written in English, presented racial, age and interests' diversity, and stories where female characters (at first glance) were being presented positively. I was left with around sixty-five books that met these criteria. I continued to narrow it down until I was left with six picturebooks that presented strong diversity and strong positive presentations, and that had similarities between them – for example, two books are based on real life stories, two focus strongly on breaking gendered roles, and two that have strong maternal and elderly love and respect.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the fact that this study follows a qualitative content analysis methodology that does not involve any human subjects, no ethical issues are involved. Important ethical considerations such as the anonymity of participants and confidentiality of information provided, which are central to empirical studies, are rendered void in this study. Thus, this study did not require an ethics clearance; nevertheless, it was granted an ethics waiver by the university's Ethics Committee in the School of Education.

CONCLUSION

Within this chapter I have outlined all aspects of the methodology necessary for this study. I began by outlining content analysis (with an inclusion of my use of inductive reasoning, my coding scheme and levels of analysis), thereafter I outlined qualitative research as a whole (here I also addressed reliability, validity and trustworthiness), this was followed by a section on the selected picturebooks and the sampling criteria used, and then I outlined any ethical considerations. The next chapter will be focusing on the analysis and findings of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I conduct my analysis of the six chosen picturebooks. I have divided the analysis as follows: Part One analyses *And Also!* and *Yes You Can!*; Part Two looks at *Katiiti's Song* and *There Must be a Rainbow*; and Part Three focuses on *Queen of Soweto* and *Graca's Dream*. This grouping has been created based on similar themes in each of the picturebooks. These picturebooks are analysed separately and then comparatively at the end of each part. The outline of each analysis is as follows: I begin by analysing the cover page, and then a few main pages/sections of the book. These sections are the ones that I feel convey the major themes in the picturebooks. This study makes use of and acknowledges the presence of multimodality (image and text) as well as how meaning is interrelated between the two modes. Therefore, each page/s I analyse looks at both the text and the illustration.

ANALYSIS PART 1: *YES YOU CAN!* & *AND ALSO!*

In this Part 1 of the analysis, I analyse two of the six books: *Yes You Can!* (Bosa, Sepuru & Demertzis, 2021) and *And Also!* (Venter, Mazibuko & Beukes, 2017). *Yes You Can* (Bosa et al., 2021) presents pronounced discussions around female and male roles in the workplace whereas in *And Also!* (Venter et al., 2017) two children, one girl and one boy, are both actively partaking in very adventurous, creative, and 'dangerous' imaginative play scenarios.

YES YOU CAN!

Yes You Can!, a book written by Bosa, Sepuru and Demertzis (2021), is a story about a teacher who is having a discussion with her learners about what they would like to be when they are older. The story itself fights against stereotypes when it comes to careers.

COVER AND TITLE PAGE (FIGURE 1.1, FIGURE 1.2)

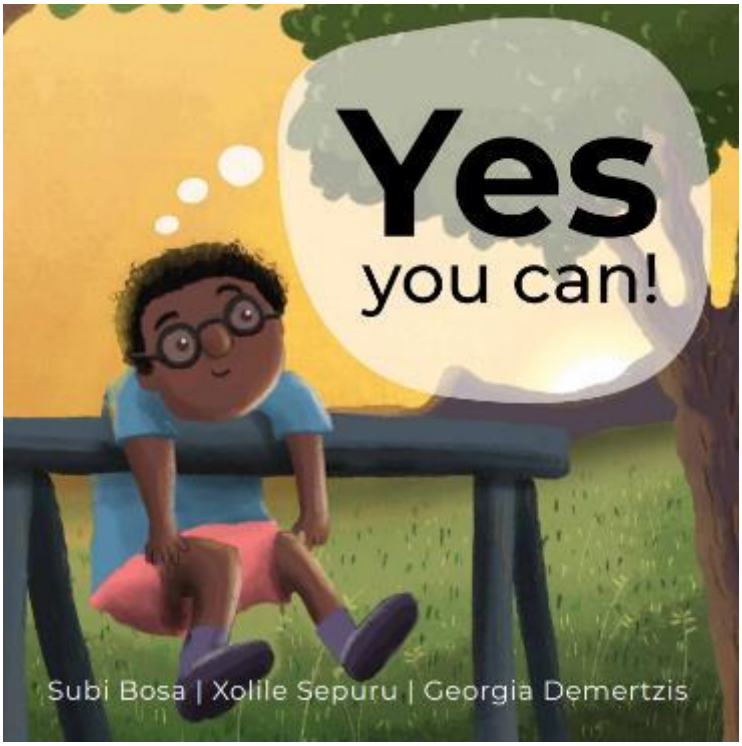

Figure 1.1: *Yes You Can!* cover page

As we can see in Figure 1.1, the cover of this book shows only what can be assumed to be a boy, leaning on a beam thinking the positive thought – Yes you can!, as indicated by the thought icon (the three dots). Although the boy looks triumphant and the page gives the impression that he has faith in himself, we do not see any representation of a girl. Critical literacy has taught us that the exclusion of a character may be seen as a means of silencing the character. However, when we turn to the title page of the picturebook, we then see a girl hanging upside-down, happy and at the focus of this page. (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Yes You Can! title page.

THE SETTING (FIGURE 1.3)

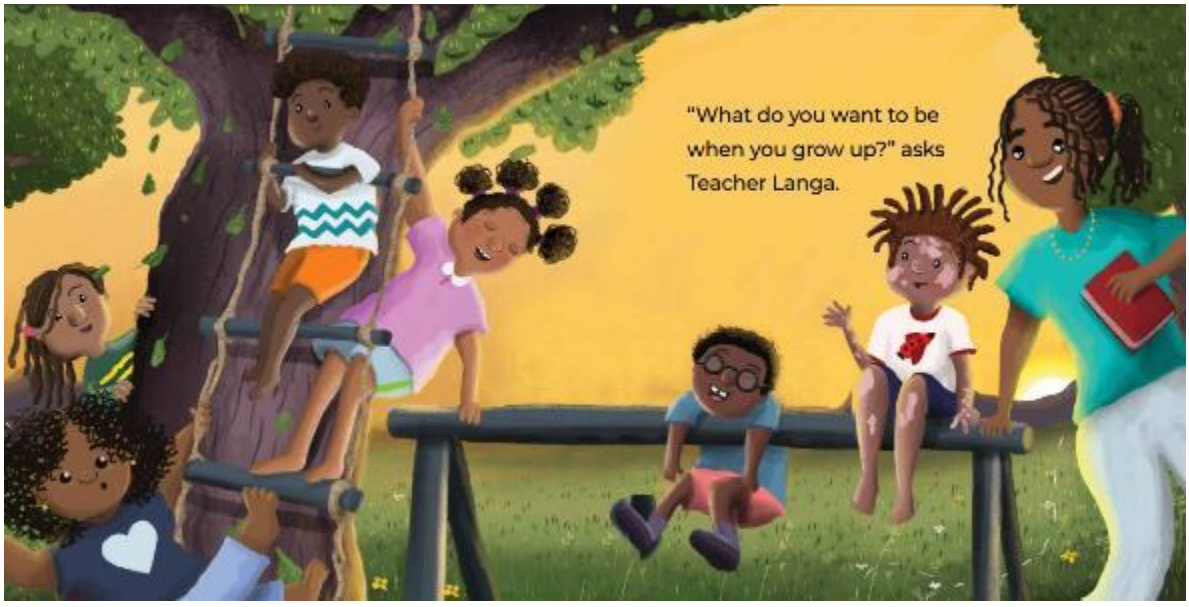

Figure 1.3. The setting of *Yes You Can!*

Opening up to the first two pages of the story, we see a mixture of girls and boys hanging and playing outside with their teacher (Figure 1.3). At first glance of the characters, one may note that the girls take on quite stereotypical appearances – the girls all have long hair and earrings. Looking at their clothing, we find that one girl is dressed in a pink shirt, another has a big heart on her shirt and the third has a dark green and yellow stripped shirt. The third girl does wear

something less stereotypical; she wears a shirt that can be considered unisex. The first and second girl do follow stereotypical colours/images for girls – in comparison to boys who are wearing, for example, a shirt with a red spaceship on it. The teacher appears with long hair that is tied up, jewellery, and a blue shirt with white pants. What I must note, is that none of these female characters are wearing "frilly" clothing or shirts or dresses; they are wearing either shorts or long pants. The girls, whose feet we can see, are barefoot, unlike many of their male counterparts, giving the impression that they are not afraid to get dirty outside. In terms of their actions, we see two girls hanging off a swinging ladder (holding on with one hand), and the other girl hiding behind (and holding onto) the bark of a tree. The teacher looks quite laidback with her happy expression, bright-lit eyes and her arm supporting her as she leans on the wooden beam.

Looking at the text, we see that the teacher asks a general question to all the children about what they would like to be when they are older. She has not created any pre-existing categories and has not asked any particular group of learners. She leaves the question open to all the learners; therefore, she indicates that they will all be allowed to speak and be heard.

A MALE COOK (FIGURE 1.4)

Figure 1.4. The male cook.

Figure 1.4 shows four pages of the picturebook that is concerned with the topic of a male cook. Khutso shares how he enjoys helping his mum cook and bake, leading him to want to become a chef (Bosa, Sepuru and Demertzis, 2021). Nandi then responds with a sexist comment – "No! that's a **girl's** job. My mom does all the cooking at home" (Bosa et al., 2021, p.9). Note that the word "girl" is bolded, emphasising her belief that this is, in fact, a feminine only role. Her teacher then reacts with a shocked face saying that Khutso can be whatever he wants to be. Both Nandi and Khutso's moms are the ones who cook at home. This is quite a useful inclusion in the story as the complete exclusion of such a role would not be fixing the sexist problem. Instead, the story takes us in the kind of direction that African Feminists would stand for: that this nurturing job is not taken away or frowned upon for women but is instead valued (such as what we see in Motherism) and created for both genders alike (an idea we would find in Snail-

Sense Feminism, Stiwanism and Nego-Feminism). The entire situation encourages the inclusion of practices for both genders without any discrimination, silencing or shaming.

A FEMALE BUILDING HOUSES (FIGURE 1.5)

Figure 1.5. The female builder

Figure 1.5 shows four pages of the picturebook that is concerned with the topic of a female builder. Milani shares how she wishes to build houses one day, to which a reaction from one of the boys, Phathu, is that she cannot do so as it is dangerous. Teacher Langa then shares that Milani can do it. The teacher constantly insists that children can be whatever they want to be, regardless of gender. The only thing that she highlights as something important to consider is that the child enjoys and likes what they decide to do. This scene is breaking the normative stereotype that woman/girls cannot participate in dangerous activities because they are 'too

weak', 'flimsy' or need protection. In the imaginative image of her being a builder, Milani is wearing protective gear with a heart on it, similar to what she is wearing in the present at school. This inclusion, I feel, shows that she does not need to change who she is, or become more boisterous, to become a builder. She can carry the love she has now with her into a future concerned with heavy gear, mess, and construction. In the imaginative picture, she is also holding a shovel and a spanner, and is kicking bricks as she walks along the mud and dirt showing us that she is not afraid to get dirty.

And Also!

And Also!, a book written by Venter, Mazibuko and Beaukes (2017), follows a story about two siblings (a brother and a sister) participating in imaginative play throughout the day. At first, the brother, Thabo, does not like the ideas that his sister, Keitu, comes up with; and it seems that he does not want her to play. However, he soon realises that she has great ideas, and they play all day long! The story begins with them getting ready for school, they are then transported to school, thereafter they play together while at school, and lastly, sit at home in the evening and share how much fun they had.

COVER PAGE (FIGURE 2.1)

Figure 2.1. The cover page of *And Also!*

The cover page of this picturebook presents both siblings, Thabo and Keitu. They are surrounded by a dark sky and stars making one think that they could be in space. Thabo is foregrounded. Thabo's facial expression is that of a boy who is curious as he holds one finger to his face, while his mouth is in an 'o' shape, his eyebrows are raised, and his eyes are looking in the direction of Keitu. Keitu is jumping up in the sky, with her arms lifted and feet apart. She holds a great big smile; her eyebrows are also lifted, and she is looking to her side. What we can take from this is that Thabo seems to be quite interested in the fun activities that Keitu is participating in.

WE ARE LIONS! (FIGURE 2.2)

Figure 2.2. We are Lions.

Figure 2.2 shows six pages of the picturebook that provides us with a scene from the story where Thabo is playing in the playground at school and is pretending that it is a jungle. Keitu comes up with a great idea that they are lions and after refusing the idea, Thabo realises that it is a great one. This is the first instance in the story where Keitu articulates her ideas with the word "we"; something that shows an important shift in the idea of the story. Before this scene, Keitu would come up with ideas but would not make it inclusive; it was ideas such as "And Also! There are sharks!" (Venter, Mazibuko & Beaukes, 2017, p. 8). She now adds "we", a word that signifies inclusion and collaboration. From here on out, they create exciting adventures for their imaginative play together.

If we have a look at the illustrations in the first four pages (two sets of two), we see that Keitu is following Thabo's movements. At first she does so sneakily, as she hides behind the poles, but then she stands out with her big idea, drawing Thabo's attention. When he realises that her idea is a good one, we see a shift in the order of the illustrations (last two pages): now he is on the left, and she is on the right, indicating a change in the leading of these imaginative adventures. The last two pages provide us with the same image found on the cover page, perhaps indicating that this is an important part of the story – an important shift is happening here as we see a change in leadership and the source of intellectual and creative ideas coming first from a male character and now from a female character.

KEITU LEADING IMAGINATIVE PLAY (FIGURE 2.3)

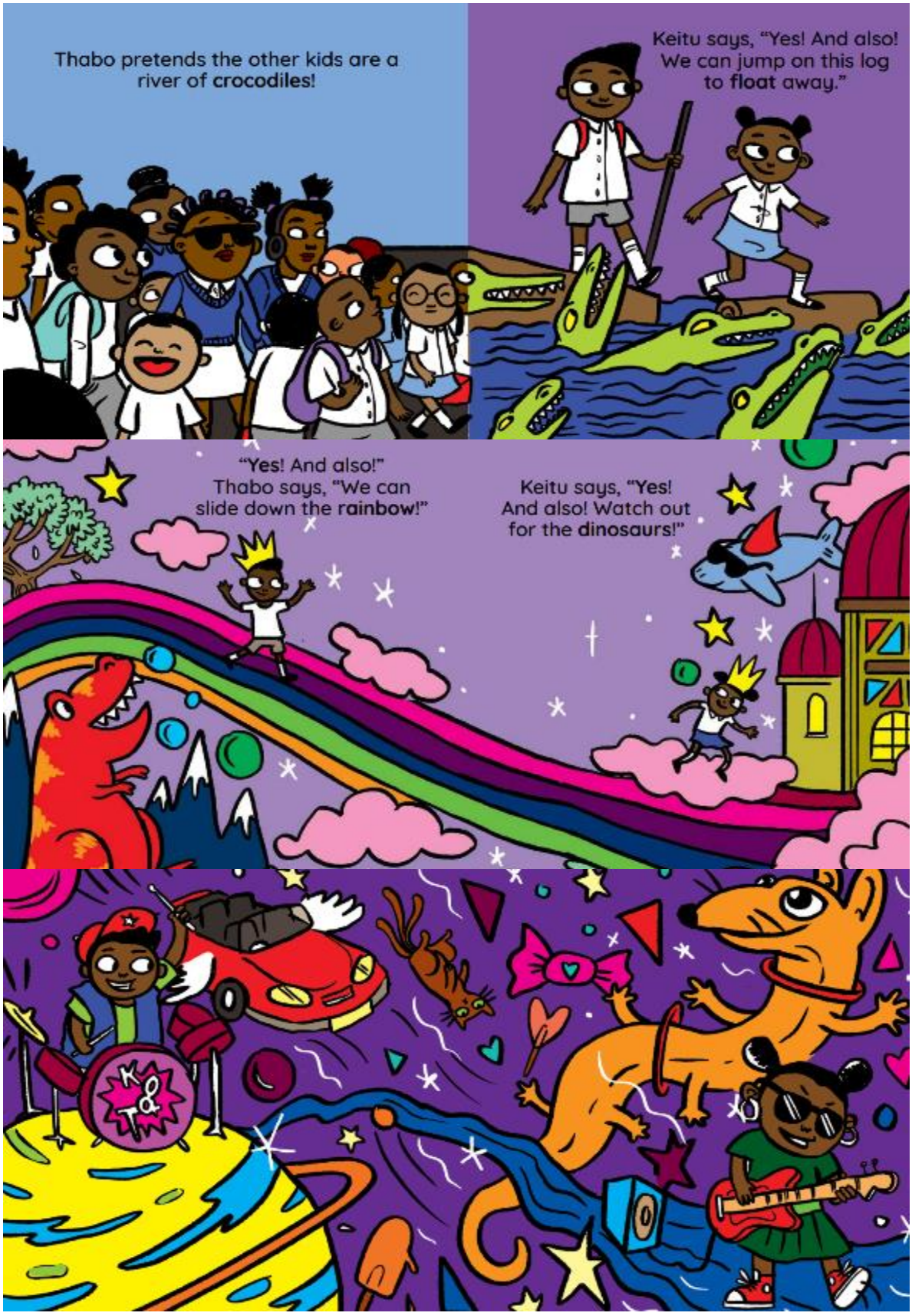

Figure 2.3. Keitu and Thabo's adventures.

Figure 2.3 shows three adventures, one where the children are pretending that their school peers are crocodiles, the other where they are riding a rainbow with a dinosaur beside it, and the last where the two are in a band. Just by looking at the illustrations, we can already see that continued shift where Keitu is now leading the imaginative activities and is always positioned on the right. Thabo is now consistently watching her, waiting for her to take the lead on this fun, and 'dangerous', adventure.

The text shows us that the two are now adding onto each other's ideas. We see the collaboration of their ideas with the repeated words (and name) of this story – "And Also!" The agreement between the two demonstrates a happy, and mutually fulfilling, relationship between the two siblings. Sometimes we see Thabo coming up with new, smart, exciting and 'dangerous' ideas and sometimes we find Keitu coming up with them. But all in all, we see her leading.

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO PICTUREBOOKS

These stories provide situations where collaboration between both genders can be explicitly seen and found. Both picturebooks deal with ideas around roles – roles in play and roles in the working world. In *Yes You Can!*, we see a very prominent and purposeful form of breaking the ideas around 'gendered roles and careers', whereas in *And Also!*, we see a more subtle yet just as strong message about how girls can also participate in smart and 'dangerous' activities, where girls can take the role of a leader and can be followed by boys as well. The girls in both stories are present in the capacity of one of the main characters; they are not presented as extra or background characters as we have seen in many studies (Mathuvi et al., 2012; Tsao,2008). Both stories show amicable discussion between boys and girls where both are heard and are given value.

ANALYSIS PART 2: *KATIITI'S SONG* & *THERE MUST BE A RAINBOW*

In Part 2 of the analysis, I look at two more of the six books: *Katiiti's Song* (Kabali-Kagwa, Marble & Walker, 2016) and *There Must be a Rainbow* (Ngwane, Govender & Mamba, 2015). *Katiit's Song* (Kabali-Kagwa et al., 2016) presents opportunities for discussions about the protective bond between mother and child, as well as courage, whereas in *There Must be a*

Rainbow (Ngwane et al., 2015) we have a young and courageous girl who leads her village in a time of disaster.

KATIITI'S SONG

Katiiti's Song is a story about a girl who likes to (and is free to) play in the forest. When it is time for her to come home, her mom sings to her. A gorilla notices this and one day runs into Katiiti; she runs away and hides in a cave for protection. The gorilla then tries to sweeten his voice with different techniques to trick her into coming out. Katiiti's mom saves her in the end. This story brings about topics of courage, motherly protection, and curiosity that provide an alternative retelling of "Red Riding Hood." Here we find that there is no need for male saving, or for curiosity to be punished in girls.

COVER PAGE (FIGURE 3.1)

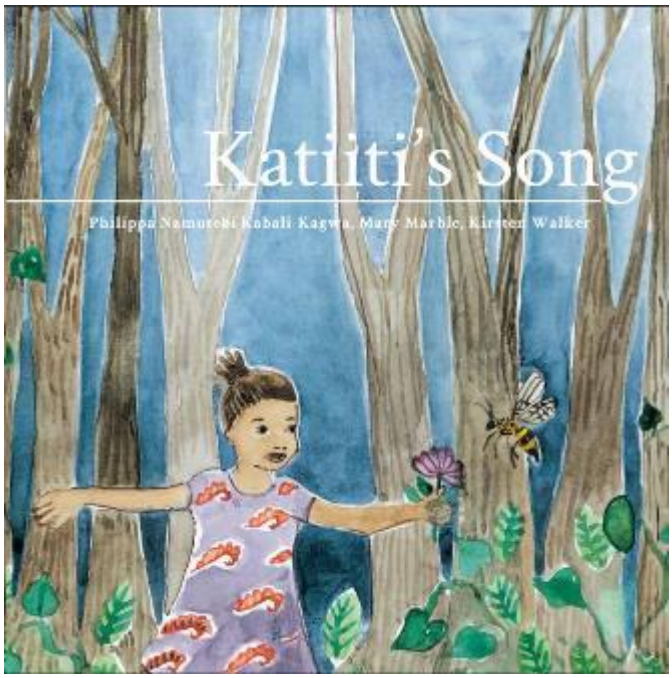

Figure 3.1. Cover page of Katiiti's Song.

Figure 3.1 shows us the cover page of this picturebook. On this cover page, we can see a girl, who we assume to be Katiiti, who looks as though she is playing in the forest. She wears a dress and is holding onto a flower that is pointed in the direction of a big bee. Already from this illustration, we can see that this is a girl who enjoys nature, is adventurous and is not afraid of insects such as bees, even though bees may sting her. She wears clothing that exposes her hands and arms, for example, yet she is still unafraid of the big bee.

INTERACTION WITH THE GORILLA (FIGURE 3.2, FIGURE 3.3)

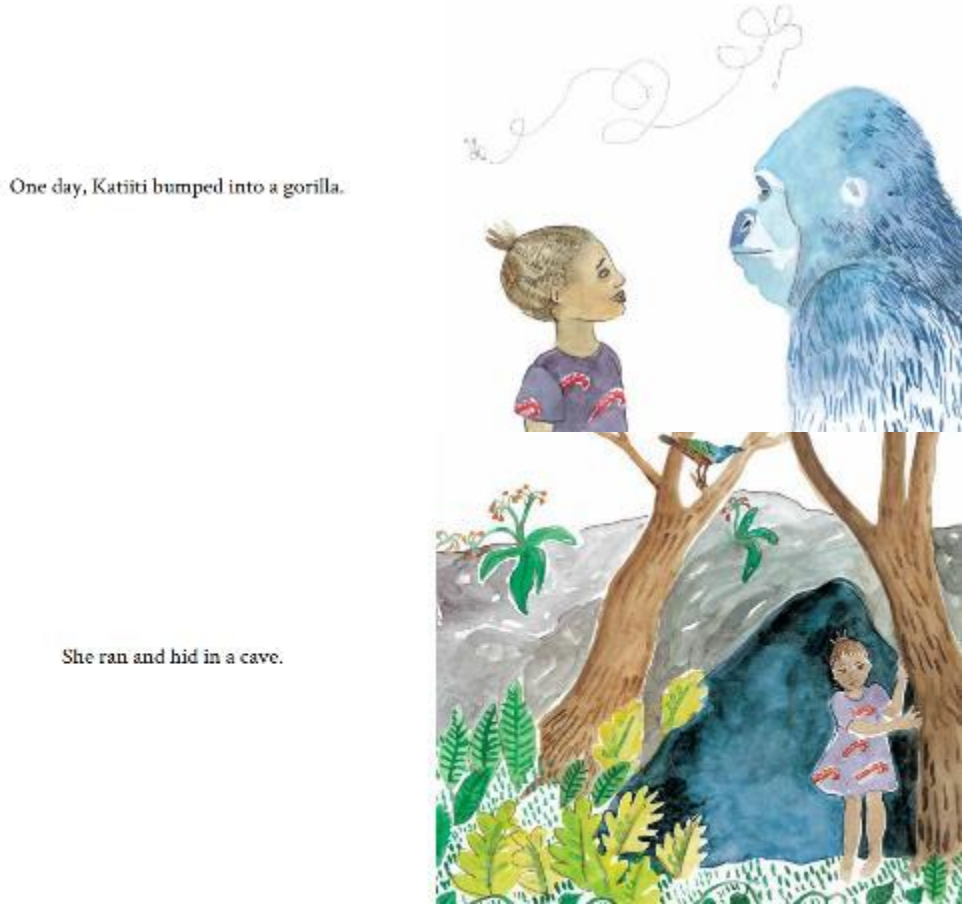

Figure 3.2. Bumping into the Gorilla.

Figure 3.2 shows Katiiti meeting the gorilla in the woods and then running away to hide in a cave. At first, we see that Katiiti looks at the gorilla with a kind face – she is smiling, and her eyebrows are raised in the centre. She then realises what we assume to be the danger of the situation and then runs off and hides in a cave. She shows intelligence and bravery in these two scenes as she is first able to identify the danger she may be in, and then is brave enough to hide inside of a dark cave, all alone. She also has the intelligence to know that this might be a good hiding spot. What is also interesting in these illustrations is that when Katiiti bumps into the gorilla, there is an insect that we can see was near the gorilla and now flies in the opposite direction – as if it could sense the danger.

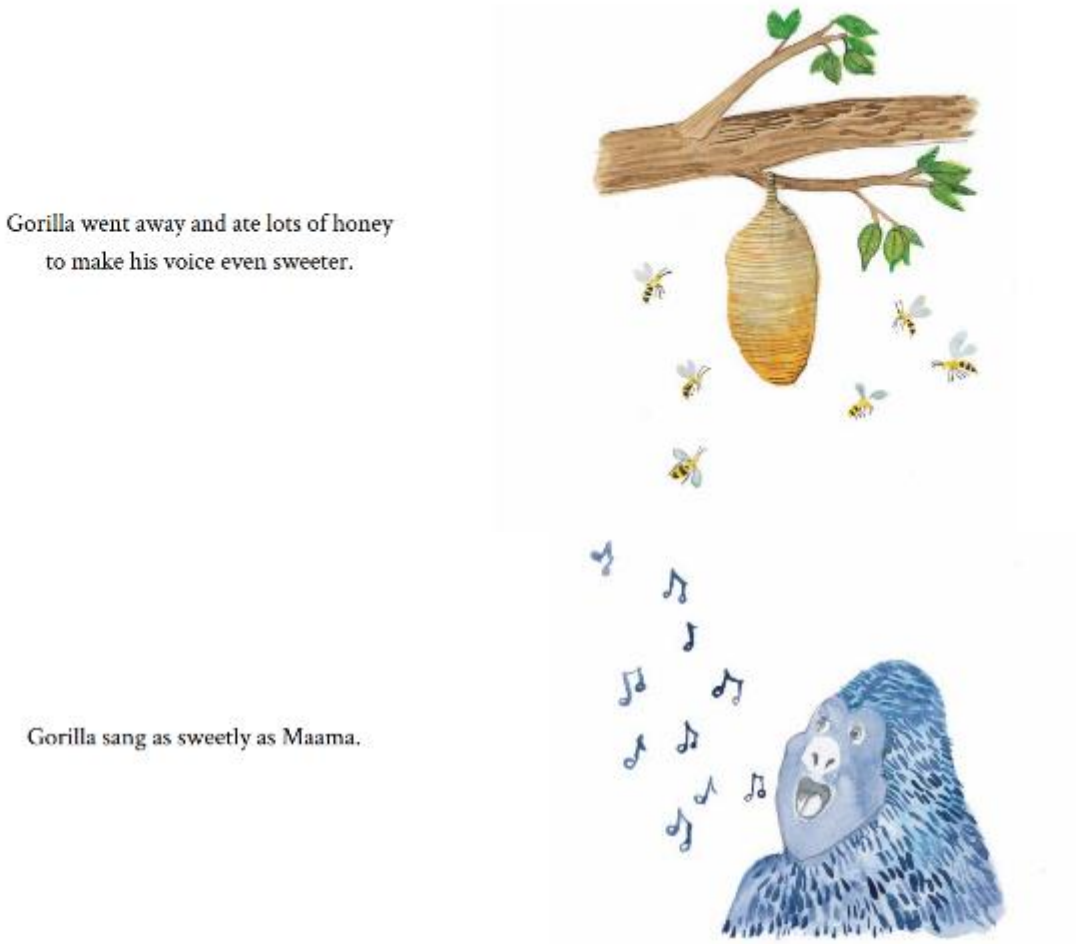

Figure 3.3. Gorilla eats honey to sweeten voice.

In Figure 3.3 we see that the Gorilla eats honey to make his voice sweeter so that he can sing like Katiiti's mom – a trick he is trying to succeed at. These scenes feel as though they are a retelling of "Red Riding Hood" that we discussed in Chapter One of this research report. In "Red Riding Hood", we find that Red Riding Hood takes a while to realise that her Granny is actually the Wolf in disguise. The wolf dresses like her Granny and sweetens his voice as Granny does, making Red Riding Hood take longer to catch on. Katiiti does not show this same kind of ignorance; the second she senses danger; she finds a safe location to hide. She is able to read her environment and situation from the start. Then she is not fooled by the Gorilla's 'sweet' voice. Identifying this trickery of eating the honey is an important aspect of understanding the direction that this story is trying to take. We are seeing the female character's wisdom and ability to protect herself coming through.

MAAMA TO THE RESCUE (FIGURE 3.4)

Figure 3.4. Maama saves Katiiti.

In Figure 3.4 we see that Maama has now come to rescue Katiiti and they sing their way back home. The protective nature of Maama is something that African Feminisms such as Motherism call for, and this story denotes motherhood, nurture, and nature (Eze, 2015). The story not only takes place in a forest, but it also shows the protective bond between a mother and child. Maama cares for her child's wellbeing so much that she is willing to put her own life in danger to save her daughter. She shows the courage and strength that a protective mother would possess. In the illustrations itself, we see her standing strong with her hands on her hips, standing in the foreground as the Gorilla runs away in the background.

Something important to note is that Maama does not look upset when she is walking back home with Katiiti; in fact, she is happy – she shows a slight smile and a relaxed face as she looks down at her daughter, whose hand she is holding. The text has no indication that she reprimands her daughter. From beginning to end, her child is allowed to be free and curious. In "Red Riding Hood", we are presented with a girl who needs saving after disobeying orders about not wandering (being curious) – a man of course is the one to save her, and she promises to never wander again, promoting oppressive female-like behaviour (Marshall, 2004). In this African retelling, there is no man that must take on the role of saving the 'damsel in distress'; instead, there is a strong and loving mother. Katiiti is not reprimanded for wandering; rather, she is comforted with the song that is a safe and loving means of expression between her and her mother. Here, the victim of a situation that could have gone very badly is not punished or mocked; instead, she is comforted. She is not told to stop her curious wanderings; she is free to do so in future should she wish.

THERE MUST BE A RAINBOW

There Must Be a Rainbow is a story about a girl named Jabulile who grows up as a curious child in the Kingdom of the Zulu. One day a tragedy happens that destroys houses and the crops. Jabulile provides the villagers with wise advice that encourages them to move forward and rebuild their village. This story encourages curiosity in young girls, respect and appreciation for her voice and wise leadership.

COVER PAGE (FIGURE 4.1)

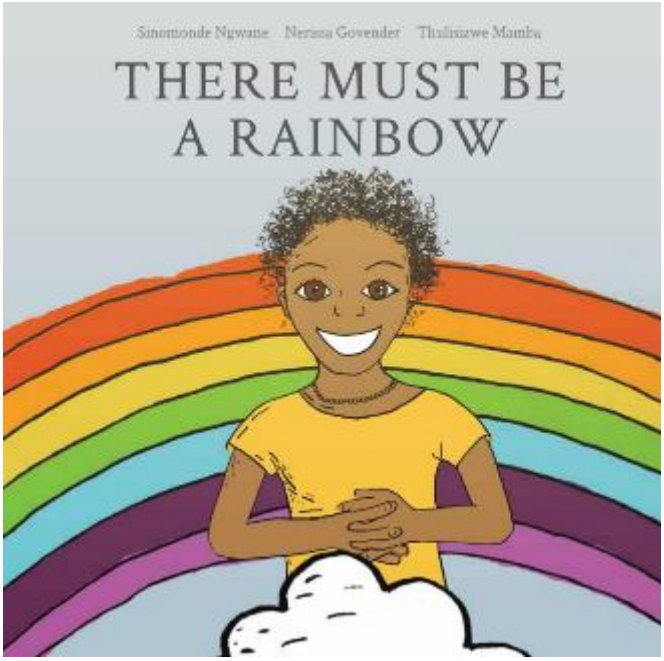

Figure 4.1 shows the cover page of this picturebook. We see a girl, who later we find out to be Jabulile, standing big in the centre of the page with a rainbow in the background and a cloud in front of her. She is the only character represented on this cover page. Jabulile looks like a confident and happy child – she stands with confidence with her hands placed gently intertwined in front of her upper abdomen, her shoulders relaxed and outwards, her face radiates happiness with a huge smile and raised eyebrows, and her hair is short and natural, adding beauty and demonstrating confidence in her natural beauty. She does not wear any sort of makeup or earrings (from what we can see), but she does wear a beaded necklace around her neck. Her shirt is simple and yellow. She does not wear any frilly clothing or clothing with stereotypical girl colours such as pink and purple. She dresses simply and shows full happiness in herself and appearance.

JABULILE'S CHARACTER (FIGURE 4.2)

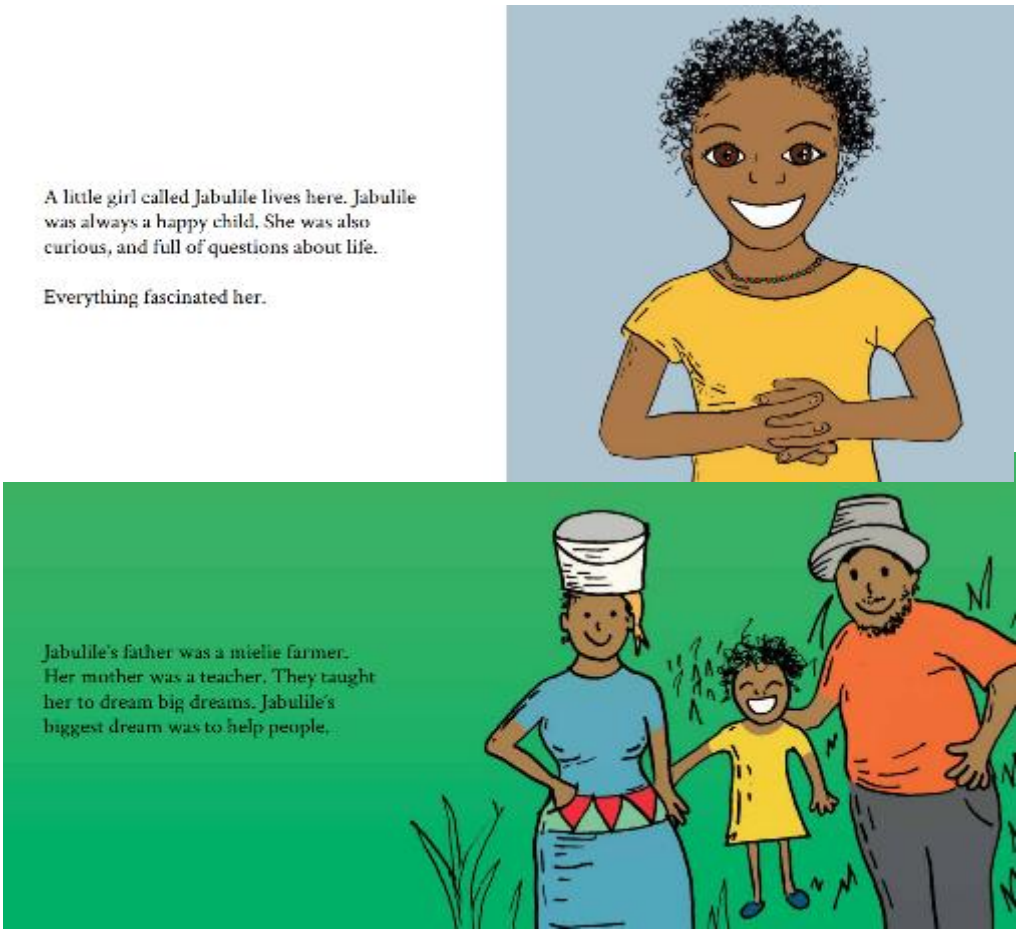

Figure 4.2 shows us two texts from this picturebook. In these texts we can see a few things: number one, Jabulile is described as a girl who is happy, curious, is fascinated by things and is a girl who asks many questions; number two, we see that her parents encourage her dream to help people. In the second illustration, we are able to see Jabulile smiling wide with beautiful, natural, short hair – she looks carefree and happy to be supported by her parents (we can see this in her father's hold behind her back and both of her parent's smiles). This illustration is giving us a deeper description of the family's dynamics that is not fully available in the text. Here, we have a girl whose dreams are supported and whose curiosity is encouraged.

It is also interesting to see that again we find a mother figure who is a teacher; a job that requires pedagogical content knowledge but also one that often is described as 'motherly' or 'nurturing.' The father, on the other hand, works in the fields – providing physical labour to maintain an income for the family. These positions are not against the norm in our society; they follow the stereotypical female and male roles.

THE WISE (FIGURE 4.3)

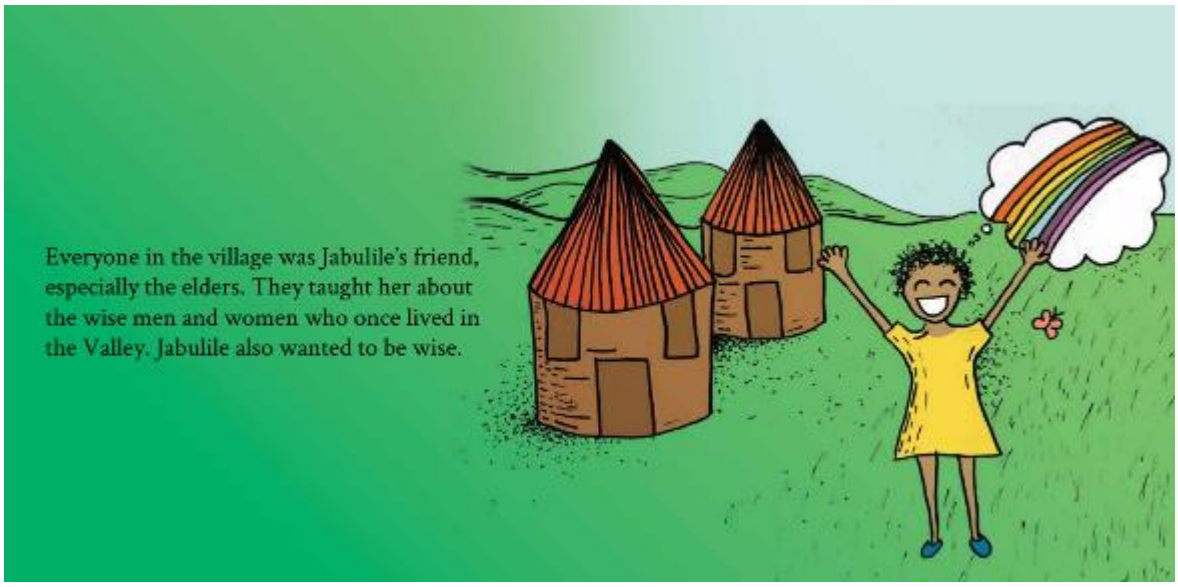

Figure 4.3 shows us a section of the picturebook that focuses on the wisdom of the people in the village. Additionally, it shows the relationship between different age groups. Here we see that Jabulile is friends with everyone in the village, especially the elders; providing the subtle message that agism is not a thing that is found in this book. Age does not create separation between people, neither does gender – something I will elaborate on now.

The elders teach Jabulile about all the "wise men and women" (Ngwane, et al., 2015, p. 8). Here we find an acknowledgement for women who are wise and whose stories are powerful enough to be shared with the people of the village, even after they have passed on. Looking at the illustration together with the text, we can see a reoccurrence of the people in Jabulile's life, encouraging her curiosity and wisdom. We see that she is happy, even when interacting with the elders. They do not use these stories to put her down, but rather to support her.

A WISE JABULILE (FIGURE 4.4)

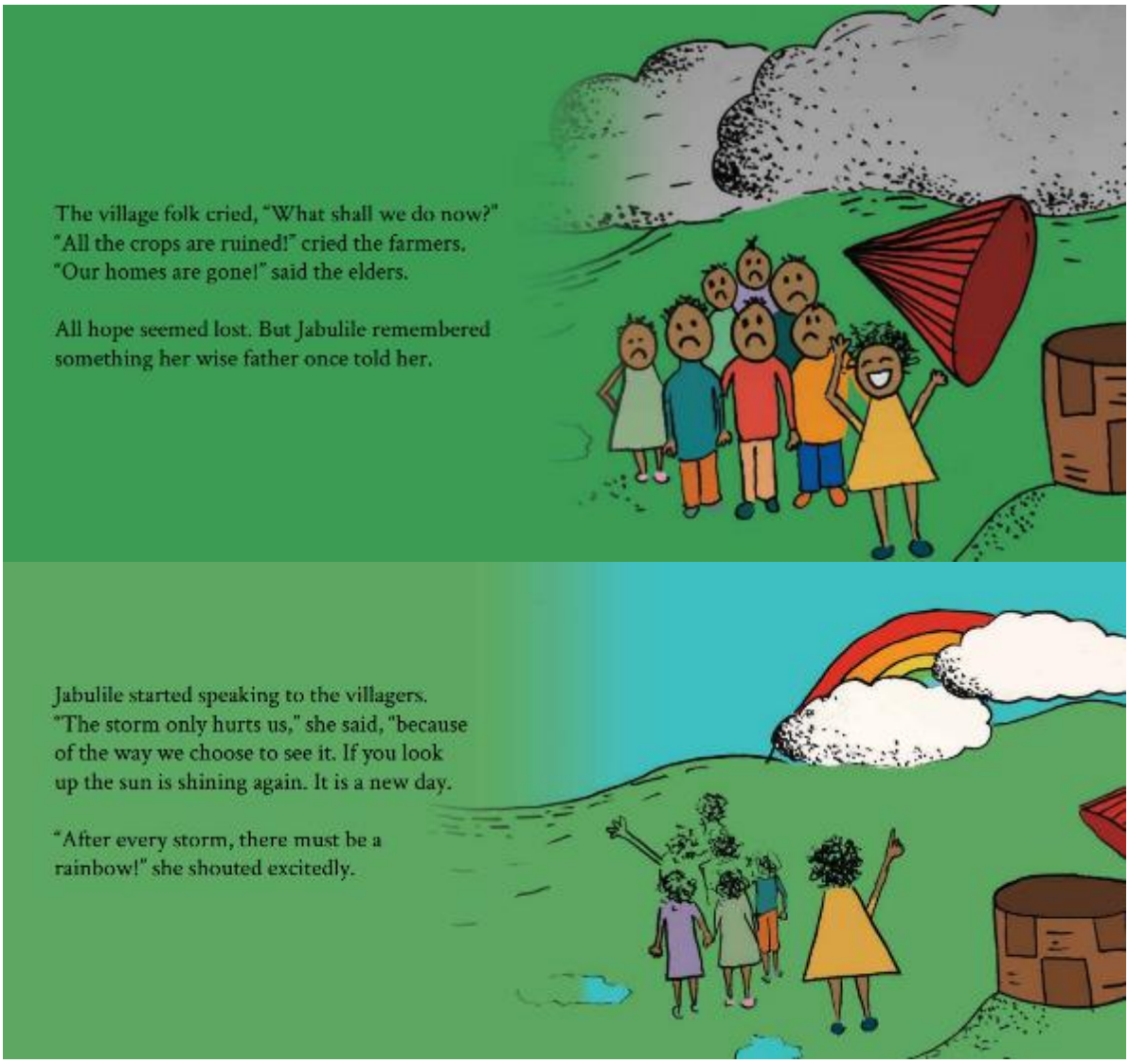

Figure 4.4 shows us four pages from the picturebook: it shows us what happens after a storm comes and ruins the village leaving the villagers with no hope. Looking at the text, we see that it begins with anxiety and despair – the village folk, farmers and elders are described as crying out their concerns. The use of questions and exclamations enforce their despair and inability to figure out what to do next. In the first illustration, we see Jabulile smiling while all the beforementioned people are frowning. Then Jabulile speaks – at first, she speaks in short and calm sentences. She is using her words here to try to calm the people. Short sentences are used to try and get through to people who are in shock. She is laying the foundation for the message she is preparing to share, building up her argument/point – something a wise person would do. Then "excitedly" (Ngwane et al., 2015, p. 12), she shares the highlight and most important point of her little speech – that there will always be a rainbow.

Jabulile demonstrates great courage and wisdom to turn to people who have lost hope with words that bring forth this hope. From the second illustration, we see that now a physical rainbow has appeared in the sky. It can be seen as the proof to what she has just said. We see her standing in the foreground pointing up to the rainbow, while the people in the background all look up to see where she is pointing. Some of them hold hands, and some have their hands in the air showing their relief and happiness. They are now beginning to come together again as a community. All because of something a young girl has said.

Hereafter, the people of the village have gained their desire to keep on working – but now they are rebuilding what has been damaged. They have the push to do so. The message that Jabulile has shared then becomes something that is held by the people of this village. Her wisdom pushes them through and stays with them – she becomes one of the wise people whose stories were shared in the beginning; the only difference is that she is neither a man nor a woman, she is a young girl – a child, a child who held great courage and wisdom, who led even those who are meant to protect and lead her.

A Comparison of the Two Picturebooks

Both picturebooks portray young girls whose curiosity is never frowned upon but rather encouraged by elders. Katiiti and Jabulile are both girls who demonstrate wisdom and the ability to think for themselves. Katiiti is wise when she runs away from danger and is not tricked by the gorilla's 'sweet' voice. She demonstrates autonomy in the situation and is able to think of and find a safe space to hide until her mother comes to her rescue. Jabulile is wise with her words and ability to give hope to and lead people, and she is able to think not only for herself but for all the people of the community. She is able to find, perhaps not the full solution, but the beginning of a solution, for her people. Both of these young girls demonstrate courage, curiosity and wisdom; and both are encouraged to do so in the stories.

Another theme that has come up in both picturebooks is that of a woman that is still able to nurture, be motherly and show courage and wisdom. Here I speak of both mothers in these stories. Katiiti's mother knew in the beginning that the forest could be dangerous – she tells

Katiiti to be careful; however, she does not stop Katiiti from venturing. This mother nurtures and cares for her child – we see it when she sings, when she comes and fearlessly chases the gorilla away and when she comforts Katiiti with a song and holds her hands after the dangerous incident with the gorilla has occurred. Jabulile's mom is described as a teacher, a person who not only nurtures and provides important lessons for her own daughter but also for other children in the village. She herself can be seen as a leader of knowledge and education in the community. When she is mentioned in the book, we can see her providing support and encouragement for her daughter. She nurtures and cares.

ANALYSIS PART 3: *GRACA'S DREAM* & *QUEEN OF SOWETO*

In Part three of the analysis, I analyse the last two of the six books: *Graca's Dream* (Fagan, de Villiers & le Roux, 2014) and *Queen of Soweto: The Story of Basetsana Kumalo* (du Plessis, Taylor & Flourie, 2014). Both picturebooks are based on the real-life stories of two influential women in South Africa, Graca Machel, the iconic wife of the late Nelson Mandela, and Basetsana Kumalo, a past Miss South Africa and First Princess in Miss World. These picturebooks tell the stories of two women who worked hard to get to where they are today: all the while looking out for their communities and having families as well. They show that a woman is capable of it all.

This selection of picturebooks consists of longer more detailed stories that follow many different situations. For this reason, this part of the analysis looks only at the main themes in the books rather than analysing chosen pages. It will be looking at the stories as a whole.

GRACA'S DREAM

Graca's Dream, as mentioned before, tells the story of Graca Machel: a woman who studied languages and discovered her dream to be a teacher, and fought hard to achieve freedom and education for all children in Mozambique and then fought for the same rights for those in South Africa. The story follows her life from before birth till her marriage to Former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. It shows the struggles she went through, the academic achievements she made against all odds, the loss of her ex-husband, Former President of

Mozambique, Samora Machel, her family life, the building of her foundation, and the love she has for her community and family.

COVER PAGE (FIGURE 5.1)

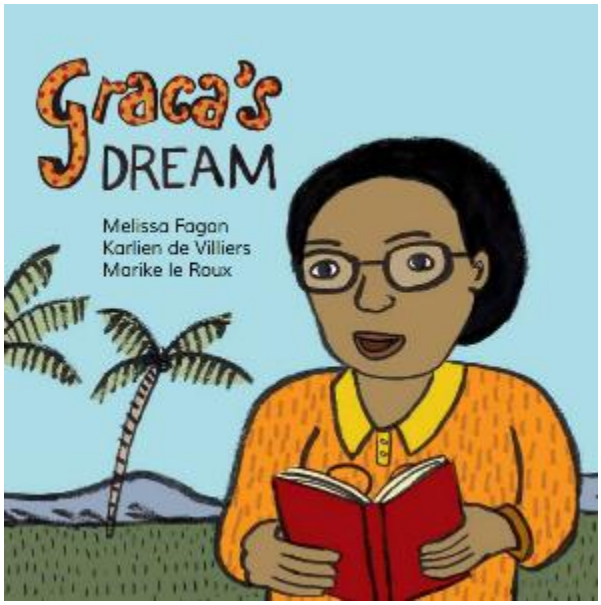

Figure 5.1. Cover page of Graca's Dream.

Figure 5.1 shows the cover page of this picturebook. On this cover page we see a picture of Graca (in her adult years), holding a book in her hands with glasses and an orange and yellow dress on. In the background we can see palm trees – a tree commonly found in Mozambique. Graca is looking neatly kept (with her buttoned up dress and neat hair) and educated (with the book in her hands). Her glasses and the book do not only make her look educated but wise and experienced as well. She is the only figure shown on this cover page, and because the name 'Graca' is big and orange (like her dress), we assume that this book is all about her.

EDUCATION (FIGURE 5.2)

Figure 5.2. Graca's father's dying wish.

Figure 5.2 shows the beginning of an important theme in this story, that of education. Here we see that Graca's father's dying wish is for her, being not only a female but also the youngest child, to get a good education that would lead to a better future for her. Here on out, we see Graca excelling at school, earning scholarships (one to a rich city school and the other to attend a university in Portugal) and excelling in all of her academic endeavours. She dreams of becoming a teacher, returning home, and using her education to give the children of Mozambique a better education. We see that she does this at the end of the story.

This story shows the importance of education for children. More significantly, it shows that at a time when education was not good in Mozambique, and boys were given preference for education, Graca's father dreamed for her, the youngest child and a girl, to get a "good education." He dreamed of a successful future for her, one where she is educated and can do well for herself. Of course, this story's focus is on Graca and none of her siblings or their education or success is mentioned; she is the centre of the story. Her success is explained as something that she was in charge of and achieved by herself –an independent, educated and wise woman who cared deeply for the children of her country.

A FAMILY WOMAN (FIGURE 5.3)

Figure 5.3. Graca with her family.

In Figure 5.3 we see the mentioning of Graca having children and losing her husband. In the illustration we see her and her husband at the time, Samora Machel, reading to their two children. They all sit cuddled up. Graca wears stripped green clothing and her daughter wears a yellow and orange stripped shirt with red pants; her husband wears a white and blue shirt, and her son wears a pastel pink and purple shirt with purple pants. These colours are all diverse and do not follow any stereotypical clothing practices – the daughter herself looks very comfortable and confident in pants just as the son looks so with his pastel pink and purple clothing. The parents sit together in unity, reading to their children. This adds to what the text says about them wanting a good life for their children; a good life in this story has meant a life of education with a focus on literacy and reading. The daughter and son being read to together, sitting next to one another, gives the idea that these parents want an equally good life and education for their children. Graca's arm around her children and this scene of the parents reading to their children shows nurture and care from both parents. It shows dedication to their family – both parents being present even though one is a state president, and the other oversees the provision of education to the children of Mozambique.

Samora's death is shown as a tragedy, yet Graca seems to have continued with her dreams of running schools and teaching children to read. She later is shown to marry former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. The story shows that women are able to find happiness again, even after their partner has passed on; it suggests that there is no shame in women re-marrying. Love is something that Graca is not ashamed of. She is portrayed as capable of loving two men,

loving her children, and loving the children of Africa while holding on to and growing her success.

DREAMS COME TRUE (FIGURE 5.4)

Figure 5.4. The end of the story.

Figure 5.4 shows the last pages of this story. This ending focuses on Graca's dreams and achievements. It highlights the fact that all her dreams had come true: she became a teacher, celebrated freedom for her country, gave children an education and gave them the opportunity to achieve great things in their lives. In the illustration, we see her handing out books to children who are happily receiving them; we see her standing tall and confidently, and we see the Mozambique flag in the background – all of which is a reminder of all she had done for the children of her country. It shows us that this woman, who was the last-born child of a family that did not have a good education, was not only able to succeed in school, but was able to use her education to help free the people of her country, become the teacher she had always dreamed of being and provide good educational opportunities for children. She not only created a good life for herself but worked hard to create one for others – a selfless and caring act. She became a true leader.

QUEEN OF SOWETO: THE STORY OF BASETSANA KUMALO

Queen of Soweto follows the real-life story of former Miss South Africa, Basetsana Kumalo. The story begins from her birth in Soweto all the way to her current success. It shows her

struggles during school, her hard work in earning money for her family on weekends, her success as head-girl in high school, one of her greatest achievements winning Miss South Africa and being crowned as the first runner up in Miss World, her career as a TV presenter, her volunteer work and the creation of her foundation to help people in the community, her relationship with former president Nelson Mandela, her marriage, and her growing family. The story ends with a note on her secret to success. This story is a story about success, determination and passion while remaining humble and generous. It shows that a woman can do it all.

COVER PAGE (FIGURE 6.1)

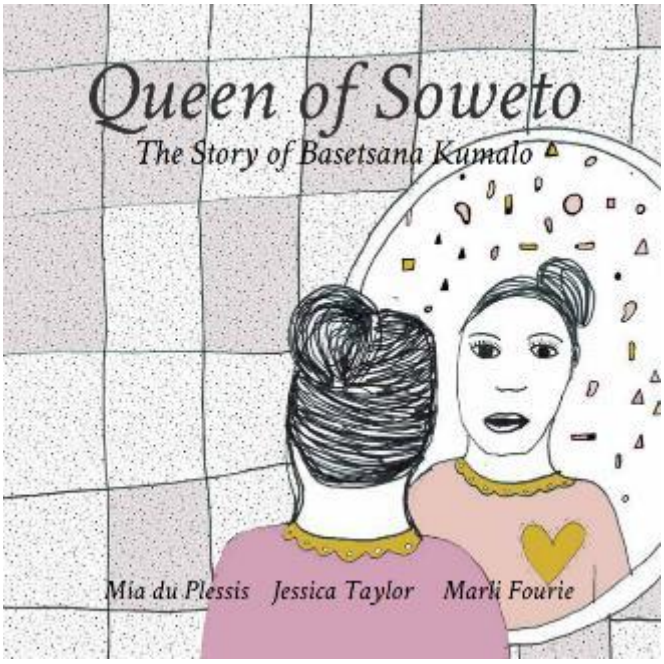

Figure 6.1. Cover page of Queen of Soweto.

Figure 6.1 shows us the cover page of this picturebook. On this cover page we are able to see an illustration of a woman who we assume to be Basetsana Kumalo looking in the mirror. Her reflection in the mirror shows confetti falling behind her, giving an indication of her future success (confetti being blasted into the air when someone is announced the winner of something). She is the only person shown in this illustration and is the focal point of it. Her back facing the reader with only her reflection being seen in the mirror is an artistic tool displaying herself looking into the mirror of her future. She wears pink clothing with a heart on it and her hair pulled up. The colour given to her skin is completely white, not showing the true beauty of her skin tone.

BASETSANA: “GIRL” (FIGURE 6.2)

Figure 6.2. Basetsana means “girl”.

Figure 6.2 shows us the first pages of this picturebook. Here we see a common tradition not only held by the Tswana people but by many different African cultures and worldly cultures – giving a daughter a specific name means that the next born child will be a boy. Bassie is given the name Basetsana which translates to “girls” – this name is used to encourage the birth of a boy following the named child. Boys are seen as greater blessings than girls in many cultures in the world, and it is clearly shown here. Basetsana’s name, a huge part of her identity, is given in the hopes that a male child will come next – this female child was not enough and a greater blessing, a male child, will hopefully come next. However, her name (meaning “girl”) can also be seen at the end of this story as something powerful – she owned it and succeeded so much that her name can be seen in many places around the world. This name belongs to an icon of South Africa.

BEAUTY AND BRAINS (FIGURE 6.3)

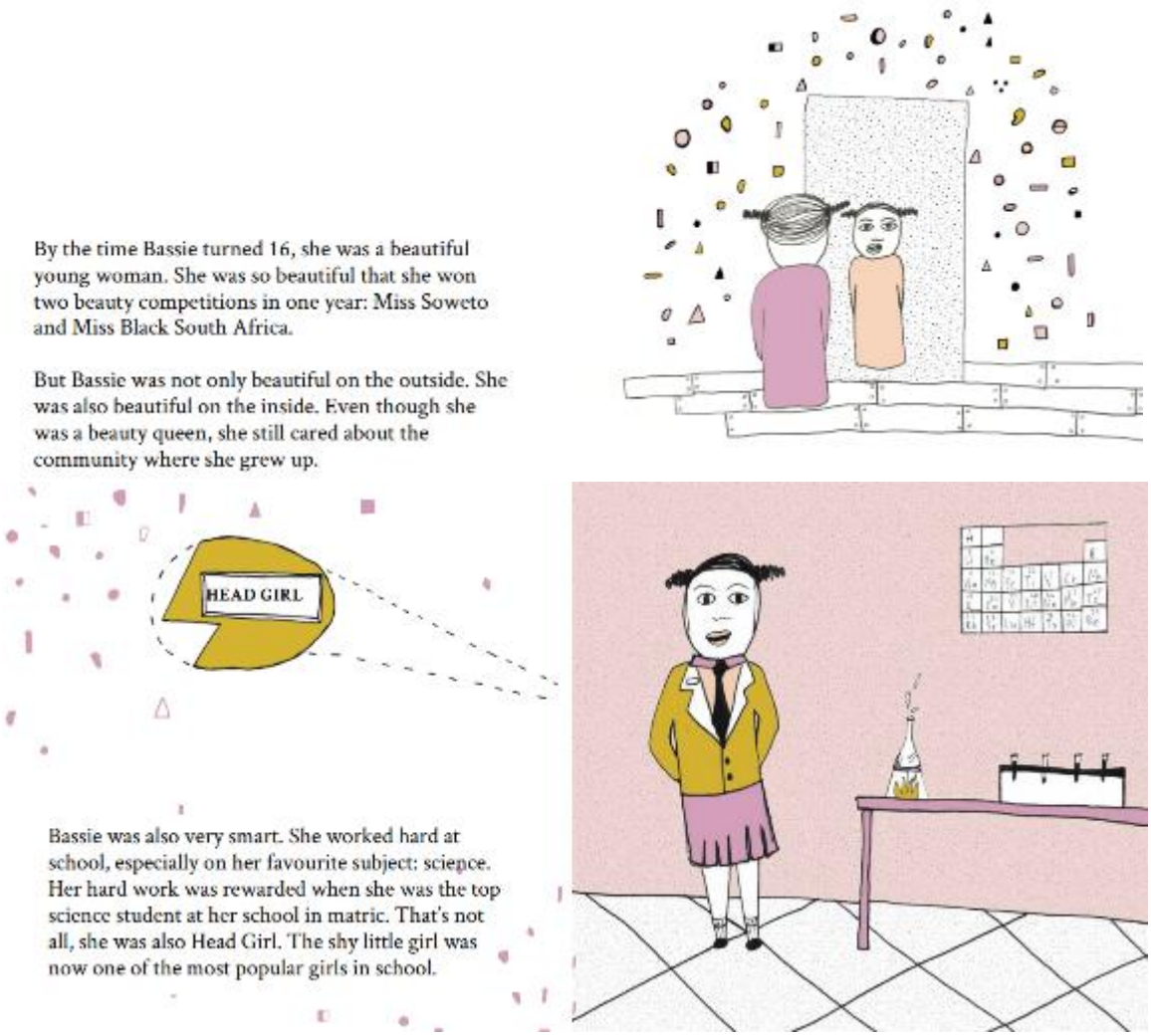

Figure 6.3. Beauty and brains.

Figure 6.3 shows two double-pages from this picturebook that show Basetsana's character as a person. Before these two pages, Basetsana is described as a shy girl whom no one wants to be friends with. Here she is described as a beautiful young woman – a trait stereotypically expected and celebrated when it comes to females. However, she is then described as someone who is beautiful on the inside too (showing that she is not superficial), someone who cared for her community, someone who is smart, hardworking, and now popular. These two pages show a transition from a focus on beauty (beauty gives value) to a focus on her wisdom and abilities. Her favourite subject is science, a subject known to be very difficult and previously known to be dominated by men. She not only loved it but excelled at it to such an extent that she became a top science achiever. She then became Head Girl of her school. The contrast between these two double pages creates a powerful transition between the idea of 'beauty and brains.' The

idea is that a girl can only have one; however, this transition in the story shows that a woman can have both. At first, the beginning of Basetsana's success is attributed to her beauty (and here we see her looking in the mirror happily with confetti now around her – an act that could be seen as vain) – the focus here is on her outer beauty. But then, we see a transition to a much deeper look into her person. We see that she is not just beautiful but is smart too. The second illustration shows her standing proud with science gear next to her.

SUCCESSFUL MOTHER (FIGURE 6.4)

Bassie has had to learn to balance her busy work and family life.

She has her own company called Basetsana Women Investment Holdings. She and Romeo have three children, two boys and a girl. Bassie sees her role as mother to her children as her "highest calling and greatest privilege".

Figure 6.4. Bassie, a mother.

Figure 6.4 shows the last section of this picturebook which I would like to look at. Here we see the mentioning of her company: Basetsana Women Investment Holdings. In addition to this, it mentions that she has three children. This section highlights the balance that Basetsana had to learn between her work and her family life. She manages this huge company, along with a foundation that she shares with her husband (the Romeo and Basetsana Kumalo Foundation) that is shared earlier in the book, yet she calls being a mother her "highest calling and greatest privilege" (du Plessis, Taylor & Flourie, 2014, p. 15). This demonstrates that a woman can be successful, smart, beautiful, and popular, and still value her role as a mother. This quotation shows her deep love and care for her children.

A Comparison of the two Picturebooks

These two picturebooks are similar in many ways: they are both based on true stories about two phenomenal African women; these women are both concerned with their success and achievements as well as their need to help their communities; the stories both put a focus on female education and reading (although it was not mentioned above, Basetsana's father placed a great deal of importance on reading); the two women both became mothers who care deeply for their children, they both were leaders in their own ways, and they both created foundations (Graca's to assist educating youth and Basetsana's to look after orphans); and both of these stories are about women's dreams coming true. Additionally, although not specifically mentioned, Basetsana has a great passion for children and education, just as Graca does; and she herself shared this passion with Former President Nelson Mandela, a man whom she, like Graca, had a close relationship with.

Here we have two women who had to build their way up to success. It took hard work and dedication. Graca grew up in a time in Mozambique when there was no freedom and the education being served to Mozambicans by the colonial government was poor; yet she managed to get scholarships that allowed her to go to places to get good secondary and tertiary education. She then came back to help her community. Basetsana grew up shy and with little friends. She worked on Saturdays selling sandwiches to help pay bills at home. When she became successful, she too used her success to help her community. She was even called "our Queen" by Former President Nelson Mandela.

Both women's stories also show how a woman can do it all. Both remarkable women are able to create and build successful empires, while looking out for their communities and making time for their families, specifically their children. Both take great pride in being mothers and both strive to create the best lives possible for their children. Just because these women are successful does not mean they have lost or do not have time for their motherly, nurturing roles.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to illustrate how the chosen selection of South African picturebooks directly or indirectly challenge patriarchal ideologies commonly found in children's literature by providing alternative representations of female characters. There were three main questions identified to assess the said chosen picturebooks. The questions are as follows:

1. How are female characters (children and women) represented in these selected picturebooks?
2. What meaning is produced from these representations?
3. How are these meanings and representations similar or different to those produced in picturebooks in the past?

This chapter will be bringing together the findings from the data analysis and relating them back to the literature reviewed and the established theoretical framework to answer these questions. The answer will inform us of how effective the given alternative representations of female characters are that challenge patriarchal ideologies commonly found in this genre of children's literature. This discussion will be broken up into sections that answer each of these questions, through discussions of each of the picturebooks and their relation to the existing research discussed in the literature review chapter. The first question will be more of an elaboration on what was found in the analysis, with a focus on female characters only, whereas the last two questions will refer to the findings and the existing literature used in this study.

THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE SELECTION OF PICTUREBOOKS

The chosen picturebooks present the reader with female characters who show a range of different attributes. Within this chapter, we will be assessing these characters in a more clustered way to see how they are represented as a collective group.

In *Yes You Can!*, we are presented with girls who wish to join work fields that are stereotypically male dominated. One of the main sections of the book highlighted in the analysis is that of Milani wanting to become a builder who builds houses. The reaction to her dream is that this career path is too dangerous for her (for a girl). Khutso on the other hand would like to become a cook, but the reaction to his dream is that this is a female's job (a reaction from Nandi). Phathu (the boy who noted that Milani's dream is too dangerous) is enabling his power as a male – something we can identify because of critical literacy. Critical literacy allows us to see that those who hold power maintain it through the sustained conviction that the current (or specific) order is natural (Janks, 2010). Power determines who has the right to speak and who can be heard based on the societal values held in a community (Janks, 2010); this shows that although Teacher Langa has created a safe space for everyone to speak and be heard, and although she later addresses this comment, the power that Phathu holds enables him to make such a comment. Nandi's reaction is, however, also sexist. Although Nandi is a girl, she has herself internalised these sexist ideologies. She has allowed sexist and patriarchal values (that hold power) to inform her understanding of what is appropriate and inappropriate in society (Janks, 2010). Murray (2017) notes that women are one of the biggest factors in enabling a perpetual sexist culture in society as they maintain a habit of silencing, shaming, and self-blame. Nandi's reaction shames rather than supports Milani's dream. Wolf (1991) calls for a change in the way women see and behave toward other women; she notes that the most necessary change must come from women. This story has created a space where these uncomfortable and patriarchal values are exposed and countered through Teacher Langa's reaction towards them. As an older person, a teacher, she uses her power to break down the patriarchal values that her learners have internalised.

In terms of the appearance of the female characters in the picturebook, it was found that girls followed more stereotypical appearances as they wear long hair, earrings, a shirt in pink and one with a huge heart. However, we then find a female character that is dressed in a green and yellow stripped shirt. Additionally, all the female characters (including Teacher Langa) wear pants, an item of clothing historically associated with males. Critical literacy informs us that there are diverse ways in which humans can experience the world; these ways are linked to values, beliefs and ideologies held by specific communities (Janks et al., 2014). Diversity,

according to Janks et al. (2014), can be seen in the rules for dressing. The variation of dress codes in *Yes You Can!* gives the reader an opportunity to expand their horizons.

In the picturebook, the girls' actions do not look timid or shy, as we have seen in some studies (Mathuvi et al., 2012; Tsao, 2008). These girls are found swinging off tree ladders and playing as equals with the boys in their class. The girls are not placed as secondary or background characters. Each girl has the chance to share what they would like to be when they are older, placing them each as a main character at some point in the story. Each character is given equal weighting and an equal chance to share their dreams for the future, and each is given the same response by Teacher Langa, creating equality between them and eliminating any biased opinions on 'girl jobs' and 'boy jobs.' Teacher Langa gives access (Janks et al., 2014) to both girls and boys alike – she encourages different interests while allowing all children the chance to speak.

In *And Also!*, we are presented with two main characters: a brother and a sister. The female character's weighting, appearance and importance of appearance is just the same as her male counterpart, if not greater. At first, we find that the female character, Keitu, comes up with ideas that are not liked or respected by her brother, Thabo. After he realises that she can create smart, exciting, and adventurous imaginative play scenarios, he enjoys playing with her and lets her lead in all scenes thereafter.

Already from the cover page, we find that the male character is looking up at the female character and at her jumping up with excitement in the air. We find in the story that he often does this to follow her lead. In terms of their placement, the first half of the picturebook presents the male character on the right side of the page, leading his own play, separated from the female character's ideas. Here, we can see him exercising his power as a man; this idea of power determines who is able to speak and be heard and who is not (Janks et al., 2014). Perhaps, in the beginning of the story, this was the reason for Thabo not listening to or allowing Keitu's ideas. Once he realises that her ideas are good, we see a change in the layout of the story – now we find the female character leading on the right-hand side of each page. Taking lead not only shows that she is coming up with these brilliant ideas, but it also shows that she is not afraid to

jump into dangerous situations first (like we see in the crocodile and rainbow and dinosaur scene). In fact, in the rainbow and dinosaur scene we find her warning her brother about the dinosaur, taking on that protective and leading role. It is important to note, though, that critical literacy allows us to see that this leading that Keitu shows was only achieved after Thabo (a male) gave her the allowance to.

In *Katiiti's Song*, we are presented with a female main character who enjoys exploring the forest and is not afraid to get dirty (we see this through her barefoot explorations). She shows independence as she explores alone. Katiiti is wise and can protect herself from possible danger. She is not easily tricked and knows better than to trust the Gorilla. She is able to find a safe space to hide until her mother comes to get her. Maama, being the only other female character, demonstrates great courage and strength when she comes to protect her daughter. She also shows a caring and nurturing nature in her interactions with her daughter: she sings to her daughter as they walk home and holds her hand to comfort her after a somewhat scary situation. We see a good relationship between mother and daughter throughout the story. Katiiti knows that Maama will come for her as she waits in the cave. The idea that his story is perhaps a response to the well-known Grimm's Tale, "Red Riding Hood", will come in the next section; however, what I want to note here is that this story is a means of redesign. Redesign, a component of critical literacy, is the act of deconstructing and transforming (Janks et al., 2014). This is what I believe these authors are doing with this story. Moreover, they are using African women within the African context (gorillas are found in many parts of Africa) to promote ideas of African women's strength, courage, wisdom and autonomy.

The entire story itself is based around the adventure that Katiiti goes on. The story is all about this female character, inevitably meaning that her appearance in the book will be often. Katiiti wears a purple and red dress with her shoulder-length hair tied up. As previously mentioned, she wears no shoes and is not afraid to walk around barefooted. She wears no jewellery. Maama wears traditional attire – a dress with a *doek* of the same material and pattern. These patterns of clothing represent an African cultural heritage. When acknowledging the attire and context of this story, I am immediately drawn to thinking of Womanism – a variant of African feminism. Womanism understands the cultural and spiritual experiences of women and reflects and represents their traditional backgrounds (Shamase, 2017).

In *There Must be a Rainbow*, we are presented with a female main character who is curious and aspires to be wise like the elders that have passed on in the village. We find that she has big dreams and is able to make them come true true, giving hope to her community. The secondary characters in the story respect Jabulile and are friends with her, even though they may have a huge age gap. Jabulile is respected, she asks many questions, and is encouraged by her family and community to dream big. Her dream to be wise comes true. She has been given the power to speak, and be heard (Janks et al., 2014). When disaster strikes, she is listened to, and her community works together to fix the problem, showing complementarity and collaboration which are the focus of Stiwanism, Nego-Feminism and Snail-Sense Feminism. Transformation and building of a harmonious society, for these feminisms, is the responsibility of both males and females (Alkali et al., 2013), which is what we see in this story.

In terms of appearance, we find that Jabulile is illustrated as a happy girl, who radiates natural beauty. She wears her hair short and the only piece of jewellery she wears is a traditional beaded necklace. She appears in all pages of this story (as she is the main character) and holds herself with confidence and ease.

In *Graca's Dream*, we are presented with a leading female character who is clever, hard-working, has many achievements, cares for her community, children, and family, is a fighter and a leader, and has big dreams that come true after many years of hard-work and dedication. Her family holds a dream to give her a good education, despite the fact that she is not only a female but is also the lastborn of six children. This shows the importance of education for all. Critical literacy's access component asks questions such as who gets access to high-status knowledge (Janks et al.,2014). Here we are seeing that Graca, a female and lastborn, is given these opportunities, showing that this story gives voice and power to women and gives importance to a good education for women. Lack of education for women is a problem prominent in Africa. African feminisms, such as Stiwanism, Nego-feminism and Snail-sense feminism, focus on gender inclusions (Nkealah, 2016), making this story yet another positive feminist one.

Graca also marries again, after her first husband passed on, showing that it is just as okay for a female to move on and find new love as it is for a male, that she does not have to hold the title of a widow forever, that her whole life has not been dependent on one person who has now passed on. She demonstrates independence as she moves on with her life – although she, of course, still holds deep love for her first husband.

Similar to the other picturebooks, this story follows the female protagonist, meaning that she is present in all sections of the story. Her achievements and struggles are shown; however, the story always shows how she remains a determined and wise woman through it all, resulting in her reaching different goals.

In *Queen of Soweto: The Story of Basetsana Kumalo*, we are presented with another female protagonist who cares for her community, is beautiful and wise, leads, has big dreams that come true, is extremely successful, and who has a deep love and commitment to her children and family. This story highlights the struggles that Basetsana went through, being named Basetsana translating to "girl" in the hopes that the next child will be a boy, struggling to make friends at school and being shy. These are struggles that many young girls face, and it shows how she completely turns her life into an inspiring one despite the challenges.

She first appears as a shy and timid girl, possibly one that is socially awkward. The story then changes direction when it begins to focus on her beauty as she grows up; but then, we have a contrast presented to us – we are then shown that she is not only beautiful but is smart too. She gets the best marks for Physics, her favourite subject, and becomes head girl. We now begin to see her transformation into a commendable person both inside and out. She then wins Miss South Africa, becomes the First Runner up in Miss World, becomes a TV presenter, and begins her foundation and company. Careerwise, she succeeds tremendously. In terms of her personal life, she mentions that being a mother is her "highest calling and privilege" (du Plessis, Taylor & Flourie, 2014, p.15). She shows great love and dedication to her family, showing her great success in personal life as well.

Bassie's story is exactly what African theorists, such as Nkealah (2018), call for in stories written by African women writers. Cameline Agency is a feminism concerned with women's survival in post-apartheid South Africa; here stories and the lives of women must offer methods of empowerment (Nkealah, 2017). Cameline Agency is concerned with the agency of women and the ability of those who are suppressed to act decisively to change their circumstances and regain control over their lives (Nkealah, 2017). We see Cameline Agency in this picturebook as Bassie is able to work her way up in the world through her own agency and wise decisions. She works hard and becomes empowered.

THE MEANING PRODUCED FROM THESE REPRESENTATIONS

The previous subsection provided a brief overview of what was discussed in the Analysis to answer the first research question of this study. In this section, I will be linking these representations to the literature and theories and providing deeper discussions into what meaning these female characters bestow upon the reader of these picturebooks. These meanings, otherwise known as hidden messages, are important because children assimilate, learn, and identify with cultural norms, values and beliefs that provide perceptions of the world (Cekiso, 2013; Cherland, 2016, Tsao, 2008), a world which children do not yet understand, through the specific abilities, behaviours, actions, and qualities that the characters display (Christensen, 2018). In this subsection, I will be analysing a few aspects that I found stood out in this study. This discussion will consist of two main areas of critique: the appearance of the represented female characters, and the characteristics of these female characters. These discussions will investigate the meaning given to the reader through these characters.

A Female's Appearance

My intention for this section was to categorise the appearances of the female characters in these picturebooks. However, after some thought, I felt that this would not do justice to my progression of thought. Therefore, my plan for this section is simply to identify the overall meaning given to these different appearances.

The appearances of these female characters are all shown through the illustrations in these picturebooks. Only in some of the picturebooks (such as in *Queen of Soweto*) do we find the text describing the appearance of the character – "she was a beautiful young woman" (du Plessis et al., 2014, p. 10). This omission of physical description in the texts of most of these picturebooks indicate a lack of the need thereof. All characters are simply presented in the illustration for our own viewing and meaning-making. Perhaps this is done simply because the purpose of these multimodal books is to draw meanings from the illustrations that are additional to the text – and just as important, or that add on essential meaning to the text (Lewis, 2001; Moya-Guijarro & Ventola, 2022; Nikolajeva, 1996; 1997; Norton, 1991; Scott, 2001). However, as we can see from research on how picturebooks were historically presented (something that will be discussed in the next subsection), I feel that it is fair to assume that this omission is done because the creators of these picturebooks did not feel the need to focus on any of the female characters' appearance other than what has been shown visually. Janks et al. (2014) note that text producers always make a choice in what to select and what to silence in their text that will ultimately position the reader. I believe that what many of the authors and illustrators are trying to do in these picturebooks is to focus on all the things that females can do rather than placing value on their appearance. The reader actively participates in creating meaning out of these stories – in being an 'accomplice' (Metcaff, 1997); however, the text itself supports, encourages, and directs the reader to think in more open and inclusive ways. The reader is influenced to see females for more than their beauty, but for their mental, physical, spiritual, and moral abilities. This is what African feminist Nkealah (2006) calls for in African books: she wants female characters who employ all of their resources – their education, their physical strength, and their intellect – to contribute to societal development.

Consequently, I feel no need to focus on much detail about these characters' appearances. Jabulile (in *There Must be a Rainbow*) wears short hair, as does Graca in her more mature years. Milani (in *Yes You Can!*) wears longer loose hair, whereas Keitu (in *And Also!*), Katiiti, and Basetsana (in *Queen of Soweto*) all wear hair tied or up-styled in some way. In *Yes You Can*!, we find a girl named Nandi who wears her hair in dreads and wears a dark green and yellow stripped shirt whereas next to her, we see a contrast in Liyana who dresses in a pink shirt with multiple buns on her head. Katiiti and Maama wear traditional attire, Jabulile wears a simple yellow dress with a beaded necklace, and Keitu wears her school uniform consisting of a white button up shirt and blue skirt. Overall, we see a variety of appearances. We are

presented with diversity. I believe that instead of categorising, or perhaps shaming some for not going against 'stereotypical attire', as Murray (2017) noted, one should rather see the lack of limitations in what these female characters wear. Removing something completely is not solving any problems, rather, it adds on more limitations for women. Janks et al. (2014) notes that when people are faced with diversity, they can do one of two things: they can either use it to expand their horizons (and sometimes gain hybrid identities) or they can see it as a threat. Presenting these alternative and varied ways of being for women resists patriarchy (Murray, 2017). These stories encourage the resistance of sexism and give truer representations of what women experience in society. But they also provide children the chance to further construct their views of gender, themselves and the world (Tsao, 2008).

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REPRESENTED FEMALE CHARACTERS

Within this section, I will be looking at different characteristics that stand out in these picturebooks. These are: strength and courage, leadership and wisdom, motherly nature, and ambition.

All the characters in these picturebooks demonstrate strength and courage in some way or another. For example, Graca shows strength in continuing the pursuit of her dream of educating the children of Mozambique even after her husband dies. For this section, however, I wish to rather focus on the more prominent displays of strength and courage. Here we will look at Milani the Builder, Katiiti and Maama and the Gorilla, and Keitu and the 'dangerous creatures.'

Milani the Builder creates gender inclusion. Gender-inclusion, collaboration and collaboration between males and females is important focus in Stiwanism, Nego-Feminism and Snail-Sense Feminism for the transformation and building of a harmonious society. *Yes You Can!*, in its entirety, encourages gender collaboration of equal partnerships and gender inclusion that these mentioned feminisms call for. So does *And Also!*, as here we see the equal and fair collaboration between a boy and a girl. The female child reader, when reading stories such as *Yes You Can!* and *And Also!*, is given the message that they can be whoever they want to be, that they can participate in activities that require collaboration between females and males if they would like to. *Yes You Can!*, particularly, informs the reader that their career choice does not need to be

dependent on their gender – as it may be 'too dangerous', for example. In *Katiiti's Song*, children learn that females can protect themselves and their family members, that they do not need male saving as the western story of "Red Riding Hood" shows. Keitu teaches children that girls have great ideas too, and that they can also take part in these 'dangerous' imaginary situations.

Leadership and wisdom are characteristics held especially by Jabulile, Bassie, and Graca. In these respective picturebooks, the female protagonist ends up being some sort of pillar in society. Jabulile is a child who is given a voice, a voice that allows her to lead. The people of her village learn to respect her from the start and lend an ear to her ideas when disaster strikes. Children are able to relate to this young character who wants to be wise. Bassie and Graca both have an education, a necessity that all children of South Africa have the right to. These two stories show the importance of education for the girl child in helping her achieve her dreams. These two women not only lead people in the story, but in real life too. They are, as mentioned above, pillars of our society. Both women collaborate with others to build their foundations that help educate and give shelter to children in Mozambique and South Africa, respectively. Jabulile, Bassie and Graca all show great wisdom that places them in leadership position which earns them respect from their communities. These are all successful and positive representations of women. What this is teaching the reader is that girls can lead because they are powerful and wise enough to do so. It also sends a message that women are to be respected and looked up to.

Another common theme found in these picturebooks is that of motherly, nurturing characters. In *Yes You Can!*, we have Teacher Langa who assists in the care and development of her young learners. Although she is not a mother to these children, she possesses that role of being a 'school mother.' She is careful with these children and ensures that each and every child feels heard, validated and encouraged. She is the epitome of the nurturing mother that Motherism advocates for the development of African societies.

Maama, in *Katiiti's Song*, is a mother who demonstrates deep love and care for her daughter. She shows the willingness of great sacrifice when she goes up against the Gorilla. Her motherly

instincts call her to protect her child in this dangerous situation. And thereafter, she makes sure to sooth her daughter; making her feel safe again. Maama can be said to be a Motherist (Acholonu 1995) because she displays a protective nature.

Bassie and Graca both have children of their own. They show great dedication to their families. Bassie mentions that being a mother is her greatest privilege; from a woman who has made many accomplishments in life, this says a lot. These mothers show that a woman can do both (should she wish to). She can be successful, can have her own goals and ambitions and can support and hold together a family. All these mothers represent motherhood and nurture (as we find in Motherism). Acholonu (1995, p.112) states that "a motherist protects the child, protects the environment, shows understanding and respect for differences in, and weaknesses of others." For Acholonou (1995), Motherism involves seeing the entirety of humanity and the earth as her constituency; the woman is seen as the spiritual base of a family and the nation. Bassie and Graca protect their children, care for those in their communities, and therefore, see those in their respective countries as their constituency.

Now, when looking at ambition, we can identify a bit of it in each and every female character represented in these stories. It is prominent in *There Must be a Rainbow*, *Queen of Soweto,* and *Graca's Dream* as all of the female characters in these stories end up achieving their dreams and goals. In *Yes You Can!* we find children who aspire to become great and contribute to different needs in the workplace. These children have hopes and dreams that are encouraged.

I think, all in all, we can say that these picturebooks provide very positive representations of female characters. Goldstone (2002) mentions that the reader will infuse their own personal emotions and experiences into the story that they are reading. When a girl who has been told that something is too dangerous for her reads *Yes You Can!*, she is learning that she is more than capable of being a courageous and strong woman! When a girl reads *And Also!* she learns that she too can be included in 'dangerous' imaginative play that can be in collaboration with males. When a girl reads *Katiiti's Song*, she is taught to be brave as women can be their own heroes or saviours. It shows that mothers protect too. When a girl reads *There Must Be a Rainbow*, she learns that her voice can be heard and respected by people of all ages; she learns

that what she has to say is valid and wise. When a girl reads *Queen of Soweto*, she learns that females can be successful, smart, beautiful and caring. She learns that dreams can come true for a girl. When a child reads *Graca's Dream*, she learns the importance of educating girls; she learns that all it takes is one woman to make such a big change in the world. She learns that women can lead. Additionally, she learns the power that women have to make their big dreams come true. These picturebooks make children reflect both inwards and outwards to think about how they fit into the world and in the story (Niland, 2021) in a positive reflective manner.

ARE THESE MEANINGS SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT TO THOSE FOUND IN PICTUREBOOKS IN THE PAST?

Many studies discussed in the literature review in Chapter Two showed negative and sexist representations of female characters in children's picturebooks. Mathuvi et al. (2012) found that picturebooks in Kenya showed significantly different behaviour between male and female characters – males were presented as superior, and females were demonstrated as subordinate and withdrawn in most children's books. In these six picturebooks, women and girls demonstrate confidence, leadership, and independence. These girls are main characters who define their own futures or situations.

Tsao (2008) found the rarity of females revealing their identity due to their unimportance in many existing stories. By contrast, all female characters in these selected picturebooks are given centre-stage, revealing their identities and characteristics in detail. They possess the spotlight in these stories. Their appearance, their ability to speak and be heard, their variations in discourse, ways of interacting and dressing, and use of social and linguistic conventions are all determined by the power, diversity, and access that these characters present in these stories. These authors have provided alternative and less oppressive representations of women and the experiences that we go through in society.

Diekman and Murnen (2004) identified that books claiming to be non-sexist are problematic as females simply take on stereotypical male roles while males adopt non-stereotypical female roles. In *Yes You Can!*, we have a girl who wants to be a builder (a stereotypical masculine

role) and a boy who wants to be a chef (a stereotypical feminine role). This contrast eliminates the existing binary between the said masculine and feminine roles. It shows that interest and aspiration is all you need to determine what role you wish to occupy when you grow up. Although the other picturebooks do not offer prominent portrayals like this, I feel that they are still quite positive. In many of the stories, female characters are represented to be confident in clothing that is stereotypically female, whereas others show confidence in clothing that is stereotypically male. Maama takes on a courageous role while the Gorilla (we assume to be male due to his husky voice) shows withdrawal from the scene due to fear of Maama. This gives us another comparison. Bassie has both beauty and brains – she wins beauty contests while being top of her grade in Physics. Graca gets an education as a female, and yet works hard to get even better education. She later creates the same opportunities for other children. I feel that although made with good intention, Diekman and Murnen (2004) created similar binaries as I almost did when looking at female appearances. Rather than looking to find genders on the complete opposite side of the stereotypical norms, I think it would be more useful to create a spectrum where females and males could exist on parity at any point on the spectrum, where the idea of gendered roles or stereotypical attributes is completely eliminated and the focus is rather on whether or not the character being represented is happy, liberated, self-realised (Demirhan, 2020) and is actively involved in the creation of their own life. A spectrum that has no male or female side, but simply includes a large variety of representations that are not linked to gender, is a more useful way of understanding the characters in these picturebooks.

The female characters represented in these six picturebooks depict positive images of girls. These girls are wise, independent, curious, have tremendous leadership qualities, are creative, are respected, demonstrate great strength and courage, have their dreams come true (or the story demonstrates that their dreams are possible, for example in *Yes You Can!*), and many of these characters are educated. In all six books, the protagonists (sometimes one of two, such as in *And Also!*) are female. They break gendered roles as well as the common patriarchal theme we see in many children's picturebooks, namely, that boys and girls have different capabilities. Young girls and boys reading this will learn that there is equality between men and women, and that girls are more than able to complete and succeed at whatever they put their minds to. Tsao (2008) noted that children who are exposed to non-sexist literature over a continuous and prolonged period of time have reduced notions of gender-role stereotypes. These picturebooks

teach children that these positive and inclusive depictions of girls are what is possible in the real world – as children's literature exists to mirror society (Aoumeur, 2017; Cherland, 2016; Tsao, 2008) and embed specific ideologies. Girls are shown that they can identify with and act out these diverse interests and roles in their own lives – roles that are not held by any association with female and male roles. There is no limit set for girls. That is an important and very necessary message that these picturebooks give young readers.

Zinn's (2000) post-apartheid South African study shows that feminist themes and fairy tales are now more positively welcomed, and the subversion of stereotypes work well in children's imaginations. These chosen picturebooks certainly provide positive and female leading representations, showing that they are not similar to the studies spoken of at the beginning of this study but rather are quite the opposite. Niland (2021) noted that a lack of representation in children's literature gives children the subtle message that they do not belong and do not fit in in society. Although these picturebooks do not provide all representations of female characters, they do provide a larger and more liberating variety of representations that ensures that more children are feeling heard and included.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study aimed to illustrate how a selection of South African picturebooks directly or indirectly challenge patriarchal ideologies commonly found in children's literature by providing alternative representations of female characters. It focused its lens on six picturebooks available on *Book Dash*, a free online South African social impact publisher, that were published between 2014 and 2021. The picturebooks chosen for analysis were:

- *And Also!* by Anja Venter, Nkosingiphile Mazibuko, and Lauren Beukes;
- *Graca's Dream* by Melissa Fagan, Karlien de Villiers, and Marike le Roux;
- *Katiiti's Song* by Philippa Kabali-Kagwa, Mary Marble, and Kirsten Walker;
- *Queen of Soweto* by Mia du Plessis, Jessica Taylor, and Marli Fourie;
- *There Must Be a Rainbow* by Sinomonde Ngwane, Nerissa Govender, and Thulisizwe Mamba;
- *Yes You Can!* by Subi Bosa, Xolile Sepuru, and Georgia Demertzis.

Three main questions were established to address the research problem. The questions were:

1. How are female characters (children and women) represented in these selected picturebooks?
2. What meaning is produced from these representations?
3. How are these meanings and representations similar or different to those produced in picturebooks in the past?

Through the utilization of a qualitative content analysis (methodology), and a methodology that combined critical literacy, ideology, gender construction and identity, and African feminisms, it was found that these picturebooks do in fact provide positive and alternative representations of female characters.

CONCLUSION

And Also! by Anja Venter, Nkosingiphile Mazibuko, and Lauren Beukes, *Graca's Dream* by Melissa Fagan, Karlien de Villiers, and Marike le Roux, *Katiiti's Song* by Philippa Kabali-Kagwa, Mary Marble, and Kirsten Walker, *Queen of Soweto* by Mia du Plessis, Jessica Taylor, and Marli Fourie, *There Must Be a Rainbow* by Sinomonde Ngwane, Nerissa Govender, and Thulisizwe Mamba, and *Yes You Can!* by Subi Bosa, Xolile Sepuru, and Georgia Demertzis are all South African pictrebooks that provide positive, alternative depictions of girls. These female characters are depicted as wise, independent, curious, and courageous females who have tremendous leadership qualities, are creative, are respected, demonstrate great strength, have their dreams come true, and are educated. In all six picturebooks, the protagonists are female. These picturebooks break gendered roles and challenge the patriarchal ideologies common in many children's picturebooks. Instead of females being presented only as involved in stereotypical male attributes or roles, these stories provide diverse ways of being for females. The focus is on females who are liberated and free to create their own destinies rather than on females being depicted as more stereotypically masculine. This study demonstrates the move that South African picturebooks are taking away from sexist storylines to liberating and often female-led stories. These stories resist and oppose patriarchal ideologies found in most children's books and they mirror the progression that females are making in society (Cherland, 2016). Through this, they teach children that they too can be whoever and whatever they would like to be.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I encourage further research, using African feminisms, on South African children's literature to be conducted as it is a far understudied topic. Furthermore, I encourage the research to be based on children's literature that encourage equality and provide depictions of females who are liberated and empowered. Such research brings light to such stories that can assist parents, teachers, and academics in finding these stories.

Additionally, I encourage the further creation of African written picturebooks that provide these positive depictions of females so that we may have a society where children are exposed to a diverse selection of stories that resist patriarchy and include African feminist ideologies. Only then will we be able to create a better future for the children of our country.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research report was largely advanced by previous research within the field. This study adds to the existing information around feminisms, positive female representations, and its connection to and importance in children's literature (specifically South African picturebooks). My research, like those before me, advance future researchers in their studies. It provides an updated and fresh interpretation of local picturebooks.

This study may be useful for school planners and policy makers as it recommends local picturebooks that depict positive images of females. Additionally, it paves an interesting way for discussions and further research on the direction that our South African children's authors are taking.

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APPENDIX 1

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CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2021ECE094M**
PROJECT TITLE	**Female representations in selected South African children's picture books: A feminist analysis**
INVESTIGATOR	**CARINA CRISTOVAO**
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	WITS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
DATE CONSIDERED	13th September 2021
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the project report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 20th September 2021 **CHAIRPERSON** _____ (Dr Paul Goldschagg)

cc: Supervisor: Dr. Naomi Nkealah

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** emailed to the Ethics Office: Matsie.Mabeta@wits.ac.za .

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

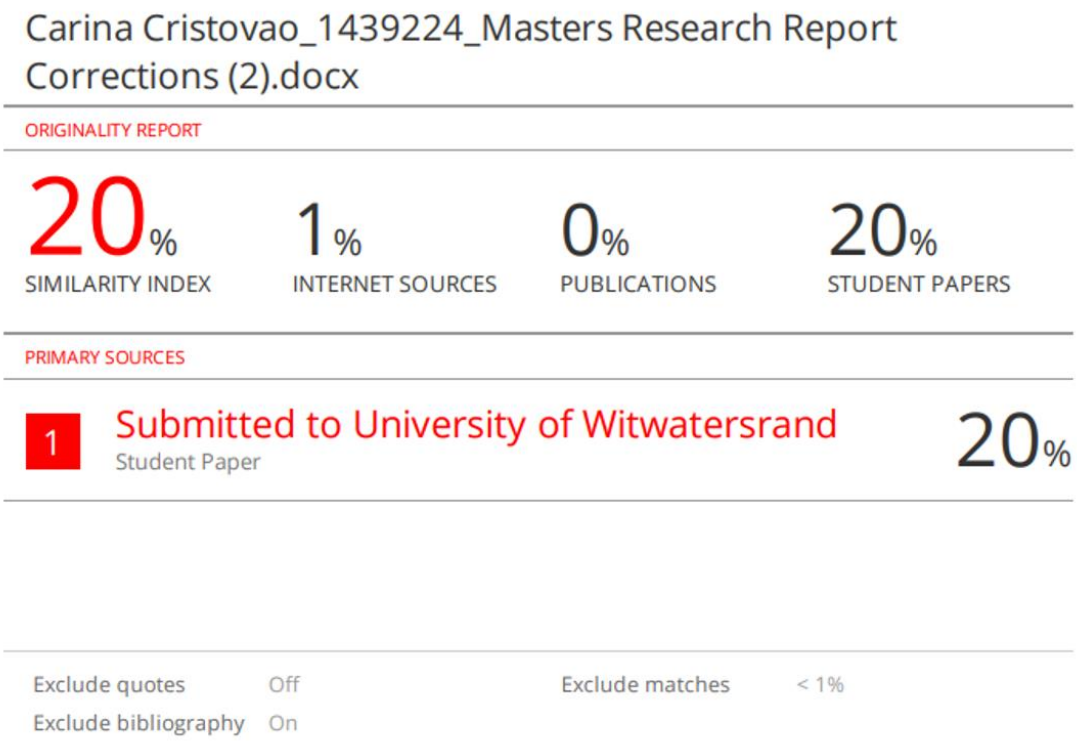
_____

Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX 2

TURNITIN REPORT



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