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Bend de tree when-e young: Cultural Relevance in Reading Books

by

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Abstract

This study emanates from the continued presence of institutional racism (Gillborn et al, 2016). It is specifically relevant to the cultural relevance of reading books, and fixes its gaze on the Biff, Chip and Kipper series, developed by the Oxford Reading Tree (ORT) reading scheme. By detailing a critical content analysis of a small sample of books within this reading scheme, this study highlights the importance of cultural relevance (Ladson-Billings, 1993). This is with special regard to the nurturing of children, who have historically and contemporarily not seen sufficient positive and normalising portrayals of themselves, in the media and in print. This study is conducted on the premise that such portrayals could lead to increased personal reconciliation and consequently, encourage unity in families, communities and nations. Critical Race Theory (CRT) informs the methodology used to conduct the analysis, which includes a high regard for the use of activist principles. This study therefore adds to the literature that uses CRT within education. The analysis revealed that the ORT books studied cannot claim cultural relevance, with regards to two out of the three identified tenets of Ladson-Billings' definition of the term. These tenets are firstly, that children should be enabled to learn to be culturally competent especially with regards to their own identified culture; and secondly, that children should be taught how to challenge institutions that maintain unfair inequalities. Further research would need to be conducted in order to determine the outcome with regards to the third tenet, which is that children ought to achieve academic success. This study foregrounds an agentic approach to the issue of under or misrepresentation, and in so doing, proposes the continuation of the development of a literacy programme, which is being published using a strategic essentialist conception of black British cultural capital.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, Cultural Relevance, Reading Books, Black British Culture

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Introduction

Background to the study

Cultural Relevance – a pedagogical prerequisite

Jesus was arguably the best storyteller that has ever lived because His stories not only had cultural relevance to the listeners of His time, but they have retained their relevance, and have influenced audiences multi-generationally (Burge, 2009). Children were drawn to Jesus' stories and the interaction that He had with them was radical. They were given a respect that up to that time was unheard of. Jesus made a child the example for His disciples to follow (Matthew 18:2). My twenty-five plus years in teaching has convinced me that the engagement children have with stories, has the ability to impact their overall progress significantly. As children relax into their educational identity (and what is more relaxing than listening to or reading a good story?) they gain the confidence to try new things which in itself is a precursor to academic progress (Garton, 2004). But what is it that makes a story good? I have already made reference to at least one requirement; that is cultural relevance. In order to escort our children from what they feel comfortable with, to learning that is slightly outside of their comfort zone, the material we use should be relevant to them. Cultural relevance then becomes a key part of a good story. It is certainly not the only key part of a good story though. Stories also need to have believable characters, a convincing conflict and an unpredictable resolution, so why devote an entire thesis to cultural relevance? As well as the studies and reports in the media that have made clear the need for culturally relevant books in the US and the UK, (Byrne, 2014; Longden, 2018; Bold, 2018; Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), 2018), Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995, p. 160) definition of the phrase helps to answer this question.

> "Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or prepositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop/maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order."

From this definition, we see that education (and all of its pedagogical components including storytelling) can and should be a critical process that transforms both the learner and the

learned. As well as Ladson-Billings' key use of the term 'cultural relevance', the broader field of cultural relevance and representation is outlined in Chapter One.

Racism and the British Education System

The British education system has come under scrutiny for the purposes of racial discrimination on various occasions (MacPherson, 1999; Adewumi, 2015; Gillborn et al, 2016; Gillborn, 2018). The ideas proffered are further outlined in the next chapter, along with a brief summary of the views on racialised identity. The verdict of 'institutional racism' has floated around since the MacPherson report (1999) and has only settled to impact policy and practice, when forced to by public opinion, and is subject to the "ebb and flow" (Gillborn et al, 2016, p.41) of government complacency and the reporting of drastic events by the media (BBC News, 2018a). The argument for the need to attend to other areas of discrimination is well-made (Hall, 1991). However, the lack of literature on the key areas of race and culture discrimination within children's reading material makes this a study worthy of attention. The recent and ongoing discussions regarding a lack of culturally relevant material in higher education institutions (Kennedy, 2017), also gives this study added importance, as it echoes the same within the early years and primary sectors. This study is an attempt at isolating one small cog within the complex machinery of the British education system and critically evaluating it for its cultural relevance.

Reading and Oxford University Press

The humble reading book represents this tiny cog. Its use in the practice of teaching our children to read is now widespread in the British context. Although many of us are certain that we want our children to be able to read and write, we are often unaware of the underlying values that accompany reading books, despite the very real influence that those values may have on our children's cultural awareness and perceptions of themselves (Scott, 1980). We also have the tendency to entrust our children's reading development, all too credulously into the hands of those that we deem to be the experts. This can prove to be an irreversible mistake, especially if the 'experts' fail to reflexively assess their own cultural positioning, and how this positioning influences children's cultural awareness. The need for culturally relevant services and products, that are produced by emic researchers, is seen in the health sector (Edge and Grey, 2018), as well as the education system (as this study aims to show). This study has been

designed in order to unpick the underlying values that exist within a specific reading scheme. Cultural values are the set of values that this study addresses and the identified reading scheme is the Oxford Reading Tree (ORT) Biff, Chip and Kipper series, published by Oxford University Press (OUP). The significance of an analysis on this particular scheme is in the widespread presence that the books have, and the powerful influence of "the world's largest university press with the widest global presence" (OUP, 2017a). Despite the introduction of newer and more rigorous literacy programmes (OUP, 2018), this particular scheme has maintained its presence in British schools and homes and is still viewed as a key part of children's learning to read journey (OUP, 2017b). The key debates within the field of children's literacy are addressed in the next chapter, along with an analysis of the approaches taken.

As shown above, culturally relevant reading material has the ability to influence our children academically and socially. While the books in the Biff, Chip and Kipper series do contain black characters, this study is designed to assess the cultural relevance of the books, according to Ladson-Billings' definition of the phrase.

Purpose of the study

Reconciliation through Children's Literature

The picture in Revelation that we hold of "all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9) is consistent with the idea that global reconciliation is a theological issue (Lederach, 1999; Roberts, 2005). The broad debate within this idea of theological reconciliation is outlined in the following two chapters, along with the key theologians in the field. Whether or not this concept of reconciliation will be seen in our generation is up for debate, but to imagine a future where our children will experience it is something that many of us hope for. This is the hope behind a study such as this; that by influencing the children, their future will be more peaceful than our present. As an English teacher of both primary and senior students, I have a lot of experience in choosing books for my students to study or read at leisure. Although I have seen the cultural diversity of primary and senior level books increasing, reading books for the foundation stage students seems to lag behind. This is concerning because these are the years where identity is formed, and where teachers have the most scope to build their students' confidence. The purpose of this study is

to critically evaluate a sample of books in the ORT - Biff, Chip and Kipper series, using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a methodological framework to analyse the textual and visual elements of the books (Taylor et al, 2016). Briefly, CRT is a theoretical framework emerging out of the civil rights era of American society and foregrounds racialised issues through a number of important tenets. These tenets are described in more detail in the next chapter and include the centrality of race and racism in analysing societal issues; the challenge to dominant ideology; the transformative approach to social justice; the importance of experiential knowledge and a transdisciplinary perspective to discussions (Solorzano and Yosso, 2016). The ORT books are used internationally, but the emphasis is on the extent to which the books are culturally relevant to black British students. Any missed opportunities for cultural relevance are highlighted and form the basis for the development of reading books that value black British cultural epistemology.

In a multicultural Britain where we have race equality as a yet unrealised goal (Gillborn et al, 2016), culturally relevant educational resources have been recognised as a vital step forward. The impact that such resources could have on cultural literacy at a global level is an exciting prospect, as we forge the path towards global reconciliation. The following section outlines the specific significance of this study to a range of disciplines.

Significance of the study

Theological Significance

This study offers a significant contribution to a number of academic disciplines. Firstly, it makes theological contributions with regards to reconciliation and aims to strengthen the bridge between racialised discussions and the black British church (Thompson, 2013; Beckford, 2014). Theology is significant to this study as its inception is regarded as divinely rather than academically inspired. In addition, the underlying values of the researcher are known to influence the process as well as the results found (Langridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). This is a concept that CRT embraces and by outlaying my theological perspective, I am both exposing and embracing a key part of my reflexive positioning.

CRT Significance

As a practising teacher, a purely theoretical study was never really an option. This study has further significance to the field as one that is conducted by a practitioner, and which forges past mere critique onto praxis orientation by sparking the development of solutions to the issues raised. This significance is in concurrence with the CRT influence, in that a solution-focussed approach is taken throughout. This study therefore contributes to research using CRT methodology (Parker and Lynn, 2002; Solorzano and Yosso, 2016) as well as to research on cultural representation (Fanon, 2007; Dyer, 2007) and to the ongoing discussions on race, racism and education (Gillborn et al, 2016; Warmington et al, 2017; Rollock, 2017; Gillborn, 2018).

Educational Significance

Lastly, this study contributes to the field of educational research that specifically deals with literacy and the cultural identity of the child reader and perhaps quite significantly, this study contributes to the growing number of studies that are being conducted by educational practitioners, (Scherer, 2016; Bold, 2018; CLPE, 2018). The next section outlines the research questions which form the central focus of this study.

Research Questions

It would appear that by critically analysing resources produced by such a prestigious institution, I am metaphorically creating a David and Goliath scenario. This is certainly not the impetus behind this study. In keeping with CRT and my own personal values, the motivation for this study is praxis orientated. Identifying any weaknesses in the scheme, should enable the formulation of material with corresponding strengths. With this in mind, the following questions served as a basis for fulfilling the purpose of this study:

1. Is the existing ORT reading scheme culturally relevant to black British students?

This first question is the main question to be investigated. The subsequent questions explained below feed into this main investigation. The two key ideas within this initial research question are 'cultural relevance' and 'black Britishness'. Both need defining as they are terms that are used in a variety of contexts but need pinning down as to how they are being used in this study. Cultural relevance as defined above by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) is explained with greater

detail in the following chapter. However, a brief explanation is necessary here. When pertaining to education, Ladson-Billings gives three main tenets of culturally relevant education. The first is concerned with students' achievement. There is a clear recognition that educational advancement is important within a culturally relevant pedagogy (ibid), as it not only opens opportunities for students to advance in their educational careers, but it also opens their minds to advanced ways of thinking. Cultural relevance, however, does not offer educational achievement in a manner that is divorced from who the student is. Cultural identity is therefore a key factor to be considered in any classroom or resource that claims cultural relevance. Lastly, students taught within a culturally relevant pedagogy need to develop a critical perspective toward the ideals of educational institutions. This means that they are taught, perhaps through teacher modelling, that taken for granted knowledge can and should be critically challenged.

Defining Black

Black Britishness is another term that needs defining at this stage. As a phrase, it could be seen by some to be antithetical, and there are a range of arguments with regards to what constitutes being black. The historically defined "one-drop rule" (Jordan, 2014, p.99) states that "if a person of whatever age or gender is believed to have any African ancestry, that person is regarded as black." This simplistic manner of socially defining people was made complex partly by the anomalistic way in which it was used by the American courts and by many famous people of mixed heritage who, although who could appear to be white, self-defined as black. In addition, the evidence gained by archaeological finds points to the high probability that all humans are of African descent. Nevertheless, whether vocalised or unspoken the "one-drop rule" persists in American, and to a large extent in British society. In CRT scholarship 'Black' is used to "indicate a particular political and legal structure rooted in the ideology of White European supremacy and the global impact of colonialism" (Taylor, 2016, p.3). This study adheres to this usage, but in addition, it is recognised that although it can be problematic to use the terms White or Black to signify individual people or groups of people, an element of this is needed in order to be able to identify discrimination as it is experienced by marginalised communities.

"Black identity is not simply a social and political category to be used or abandoned according to the extent to which the rhetoric that supports and legitimises it is persuasive or institutionally

powerful. Whatever the radical constructionists may say, it is lived as a coherent (if not always stable) experiential sense of self. Though it is often felt to be natural and spontaneous, it remains the outcome of practical activity: language, gesture bodily significations, desires… They point towards an anti-anti-essentialism that sees radicalised subjectivity as the product of the social practices that supposedly derive from it." (Gilroy, 1993, p.102).

In a similar way, I also intend to use the term 'Black' to mean individuals or groups of people that self-define as black and that have cultural heritage that emanates from an African or African-Caribbean diaspora.   This view is maintained within Rollock's research on the black middle class (Rollock et al, 2012, p.21), where she reports that for most of her respondents, "to be Black is to share a set of cultural understandings, memories and experiences which are transmitted through history, food, music, a belief in a black community or identity and an experience of racism." The combination of Gilroy's theorising and Rollock's reporting of black participant voice gives credence to this study's usage of the term 'black'.

Strategically Essentialist Framework

For the purposes of this study identity is perceived within a strategically essentialist paradigm (Gilroy, 1993; Morton, 2007). While I recognise the ongoing discussions regarding essentialism and its different guises (Hall, 1991; Gilroy, 1993; Holliday, 2015), I do not intend to contribute to them directly. The decision to place this study within a strategically essentialist paradigm fits within the CRT methodological framework in that CRT scholars recognise the

"need for people to participate in group solidarity for social, cultural, and political purposes… Thus, to identify as African American or a woman or an immigrant can be useful as a way to organize and garner political clout and social benefits" (Ladson-Billings, 2016, p. 350).

Although this study does not emanate from the essentialist idea that all people fit into a stereotypical category, it does seek to delve into the issues that surround the inequities that are associated with those who are racially and culturally placed on the margins of British society. This includes, but is not limited to, people who are perceived as being black and from the African or African-Caribbean diaspora.

Gilroy has made a seminal contribution to the concept of black British hybridity. This identity, like most where a minority people live amongst a dominant culture, has not been without its challenges and has produced a "double consciousness" (Gilroy, 1993, p.1), which according to Gilroy's understanding of the term, is the sense of having an internal conflict between a diasporic identity and a national one. Black Britishness, although an ambiguous term (having different meanings either side of the power divide) is here to stay and it must therefore be given due credence, from a self-defining point of view, with regards to its historical origins and development, its contributions to British society and how these can be educationally leveraged for positive future growth. By educational leveraging, I am referring partly to the opportunity that exists within reading schemes to tell the black British story in a black British way. This first research question therefore would enable us to ascertain where there are any culturally relevant gaps in the ORT reading books, with a view to filling those in a critically produced literacy programme that makes positive use of black British cultural capital.

2. *What are the underlying values and attitudes evidenced in the ORT reading scheme?*
   a. *To what extent do these values and attitudes parallel the society in which we live?*
   b. *Are these values and attitudes portrayed as neutral, or aspirational?*

For the purpose of this research, 'values and attitudes' refer to the ideological ideals that infuse the editorial teams' decision-making with regards to the inclusion or exclusion of images or words. This includes philosophical and religious ideals as they relate to culture. This question assumes the non-existence of neutral and objective cultural values (Dyer, 1988). It seeks to unearth the values and attitudes that are held by the publishing team and make them explicit. This question insists that the underlying values and attitudes of this very thesis are also subjected to scrutiny, in order to escape, as much as possible, from the accusation of having double standards. This question is very much in keeping with CRT, in that critical race theorists refute the existence of neutral values (ibid), and insist that knowledge perpetuated by dominant white cultures is often portrayed as neutral, and therefore juxtaposes other cultures as different, abnormal or extraordinary. The subtlety of this perpetuation makes answering this question a significant challenge. Its challenge also lies in the fluidity of notions of culture (Hall and DuGay, 1996); specific cultural indicators cannot be completely assigned to a particular cultural group due to the dynamism of culture itself. This difficulty is further discussed and managed in Chapter One. CRT identifies Whiteness as the seeming existence of neutral values,

which are actually the dominant white cultural values in operation (Gillborn et al, 2016). The adoption of some or all of these values by black people (Jordan, 2014) makes Whiteness theory problematic, unless we see it as a strategic or otherwise intentional adoption in order to advance in society. This study sides with the opinion that social mobility can and does happen amongst members of minority cultures, without an abandonment of their own cultural values (Rollock et al, 2012). To this end, I propose the teaching and celebration of aspects of black British culture, as a means to aiding the educational progression of students, from all cultures, who are learning to read.

3. *How are the black characters in the ORT reading scheme defined from a CRT perspective?*
   a. *How often are the black characters portrayed as protagonists?*
   b. *How does the textual and visual evidence portray the black characters?*

CRT methodology was used to conduct the content analysis, which enabled me to "explore the special relationships between 'race,' culture, nationality, and ethnicity" (Gilroy, 1993, p.3). The ORT scheme was chosen as the unit of analysis because it represents a British educational institution that is respected globally and one that has had a significant impact on the historical, political, economic and social climate in the UK (OUP, 2016). By analysing a sample of texts within the identified scheme, I aim to expose underlying white British cultural values that pose as neutral ones and identify areas where black British cultural capital could have been used to better represent the black characters in the series, as well as to offer readers a more realistic portrayal of black British people.

The inclusion of black characters in the scheme is a huge step forward from the first wave of reading scheme books. However, this study insists that cultural inclusion is of equal importance. It is not just about seeing black faces on the pages. Theories of representation of cultural identity (Hall and DuGay, 1996), suggest that identity cannot be represented as fully constituted, separate and distinct. This suggests that in order to represent a character in a book, further attempts must be made to define their cultural identity with specific attention to their individualised ways of being. The tendency to essentialise cultural groups that are very different to our own, is part of the danger in representing the black characters in the ORT scheme, without also representing a culture that is realistic and inclusive. The readership would therefore receive an unchallenged representation of the black characters, or one that reinforces

already held stereotypes. The main schools of thought within the field of cultural representation are outlined in the Literature Review.

CRT provides us with an ideal framework for answering this question, mainly because its foregrounding of racialized issues cuts straight to the centrality of the characters being black. Reading books are often based on an aspect of what is thought to be a common childhood experience; using CRT will enable me to challenge whether or not my own childhood experiences, as a black girl who was born and brought up in the inner city of London, are represented in the stories. The inclusion of personal narratives in this study, which is a crucial feature of CRT (Taylor, 2016; Rollock, 2017), offers a first-hand account of my own lived experiences and how this may be contrasted with the representation of black characters in the sample of books chosen. These personal narratives are not merely an opportunity for me to vent emotional reflections, they offer the reader further insight into my reflexive world, as well as giving a broader contextual setting for the research itself. The following interview with myself serves to foreground the importance of the lived experience as well as to contextually prepare the reader for the remainder of this study.

'See mi an cum live wid mi ah two different tings.'

What is your earliest memory of being in an educational setting?

I remember being taken to a school by my mum, handed over to the teacher and then escorted to a classroom, where I was made to sit on a carpet with the rest of the class, while a story was being read. Well, I think a story was being read. I remember that my attention was on another girl at the back of the carpet, who was making rude expressions towards me. This made me cry. I was a real cry-er when I was little, but this girl was rude. She was an Indian girl, and she indicated, through her facial expressions, that I smelt like a certain part of her anatomy! This is my earliest memory.

What about reading? What memories do you have about reading?

I don't remember being taught to read, but I do remember that my mum had a collection of novels that I read at quite a young age. I also remember reading the Bible at church. I read during Sunday School, and I remember reading from the pulpit when I was a pre-teen. I also

read a set of the Readers Digest Encyclopaedia that my gran had bought. I would sit and read those books right through the summer holidays.

It sounds as though you were a lonely child, did you have any siblings or friends?

No, I wasn't lonely. And yes, I had both siblings and friends. I just enjoyed reading and being on my own, which was actually really difficult to do. We all lived in Tottenham, London, in a 3-storey council house, and as far as I could see, most of my cousins lived there. I shared a room with 5 of my cousins and an aunt. It was a house full of women, except for my uncle and grandad.

Was reading and books a type of escape then, from the busyness of your family setting?

I wouldn't say it was an escape, I just really enjoyed reading and books. I also loved my family, we had so much fun when I was a child.

What sort of things did you get up to?

We used to take one of our mattresses and slide down the stairs on it. We would play outside in the tarmac, which was a concreted play area used mostly for football, or in the playground that was right outside my gran's house. There was also a patch of grass with a mound, and a friend used to live right in the corner of the estate opposite us. My cousins also taught me how to tap phones and we used to watch horror films when my grandparents were out. I remember the blackouts, and we would have to use candles to help us see anything. That was fun.

How much would you say that these early childhood experiences and relationships have made you who you are right now?

Well, for one thing, being surrounded by so many women meant that I had a really good understanding of what it meant to be a woman; I had so many different role models to draw from. There was my mum, strong and beautiful, she always dressed well and made sure that my sister and I were dressed well also. My gran was financially independent, she was and still is the matriarch of our family; she ran the whole house. My grandad was responsible for cooking, he let us comb his hair and mark his horse racing coupons, but my gran, she was the

one to fear. I think I probably get a bit of my strictness from my gran, my mum was quite laid back, to be honest, it was my gran who was strict. I never wanted to get on the wrong side of my gran, so I behaved myself - most of the time. Then it became that I didn't want to disappoint her, or my mum, so I behaved in school too. I loved learning at school, and I did do my best for me, but I think mostly for my mum and my gran. The one thing that I would say is that, although I was hardly ever alone, I was the only one of the cousins that was in my age bracket. Everyone else was either 4+ years older, or 4+ years younger. This did mean that I felt a bit left out. The older ones were allowed to do things that I wasn't, and the younger ones did things that I didn't want to do. My only escape from that feeling was my school friends, but when I was at home, I used to play 'schools' with my younger cousins. They would be my students and I would call the register and set them work to do. I loved it, even if they didn't.

So, was this your first taste of being a teacher?

Yes, and I remember that as I grew older, about in my teens, I felt that God caused a particular bible verse to stand out to me. It was the one where the apostle Paul told Timothy to teach in season and out of season, that was when I felt that I was called to be a teacher. It was confirmed when I went to church the following Sunday, because my Sunday School teacher asked me if I wanted to teach Sunday School. That was when I had my first experience of teaching in a public setting. After that, I worked in a Saturday School (my Sunday School teacher provided me with a reference) then from there to a pre-school. All of this coincided with my studies, so by the time I was working at the pre-school, I had completed my degree and gap year, and had a place at Homerton College, Cambridge University, to do my PGCE.

That is a bit of a jump! You said you lived in Tottenham, tell us more about your social background and how this informed your view of education.

Well, as I was growing up, my social background didn't really inform my view of education at all. I wasn't really aware that I was from a working-class family. I felt the pangs of wanting more than I had, and I definitely felt the pangs of wanting straight long hair and the perfectly bridged nose, but I would say that I was really made aware of my difference, when I went to Cambridge.

Before you let us know how that transpired, just fill in the gaps from when you left secondary school to university.

Ok, so I did pretty well in secondary school, all of my grades were A-C. I had some really inspiring teachers and leaders at church, so as well as working hard for my gran and mum, I also felt that I didn't want to let my church leaders or my teachers down. They all 'prophesied' good outcomes for me, so I needed to do well. There was one Secondary teacher in particular that inspired me and pushed me to be my best, through his instruction and example. His name was Mr. Henry, the late Mr. Decent Henry. He was such a popular teacher and I really looked up to him as my English teacher because he was the first teacher to show me, that my culture belonged in the classroom. He used to tell us Brer Anansi stories and jokes that were based in St. Vincent (where my mum is from). Mr. Henry made me feel like I was supposed to succeed. I did A-levels in Barnet College, so I would travel for about an hour to get there, but so did many other kids from Tottenham or Wood Green. I did ok there, I got a B in English literature, so decided to do an English and Psychology joint degree at London Guildhall University, in East London. I remember that my faith in God was tested at both College and University. The former when I had to write assignments on Ted Hughes' poems that I thought were blasphemous, and then at university during my Psychology lectures when a Muslim girl challenged the lecturer for presenting from an evolutionist worldview. That was my first experience of a student actually challenging the education system, and although I was quietly rooting for her in the wings, I was ashamed at my own inability to put forward a convincing argument.

Back to Cambridge University, how did you gain a place there and what was your experience like?

Well, this is where my faith really stepped in because I was less focussed when I arrived at University. I one of the few members of my family, to go to uni, so as far as I was concerned, I had satisfied my family's expectations by just being there. I didn't do very well there, but I knew that I was called to be a teacher, so I started praying about the way forward. I took a year out and got some experience in teaching, and the only choice I knew about for training as a teacher, was to put my application on clearing. Lo and behold, I got a letter from Cambridge University asking me to come for an interview and the rest is history. I was delighted and scared all at the same time, I had never lived away from home and I was going to be living in

an area where I would be a racial minority for the first time. I was keenly aware of the opportunity that I put down to the grace of God, but I was scared of being found out. I told the interviewer about my degree, but she was more interested in my character, interview skills or maybe because I was the only black student, I don't know, but I do know that I spent most of my time there wrestling between being the black girl from Tottenham and trying to prove that I had every right to be there.

Was there a particular incident which stoked those feelings?

Apart from the everyday unawareness of some of the words they used, and not being accustomed to the social life that they engaged in, I remember one time when a tutor was telling us about when LEAs would 'bus' black students from their home town to a school in another area. The tutor asked the question, 'why weren't the white students bussed?' A very middle/upper-class female student whispered indignantly, 'because it's our country!' Again, I didn't have the guts to retaliate and just remained silent, thinking about who she meant by 'our'. Was I a part of that collective pronoun? Not from her point of view obviously. I don't even remember what the answer to the question was, I was so rattled by her tone. There was another instance involving the same student, where she made it clear that people who didn't quite fit the Cambridge University calibre could fake it only so far, as soon as they open their mouths, she said, you would be able to tell them apart. This comment was largely responsible for my lack of social engagement with them, the Bible talks about a fool being thought of as wise if he keeps silent, I saw it more as *playin fool fe ketch wise*. My silence enabled me to hear things that I would not have otherwise heard. Apart from this particular student, who I kept well away from, the staff and other students treated me pretty well, and it really helped that I was renting a room at the house of a black Christian family. It gave me a feeling of being home from home.

What about the rest of your educational journey?

Soon after I completed my PGCE, I got married and started my first teaching job in a state school in Tottenham. Another teacher there, a black middle-aged lady, had completed her Masters in Education, and I was intrigued. It was the first time that I had heard of this type of qualification, so I researched it on the internet. When I was on a year's maternity leave in 2002, I decided to start my own Masters in Education with the Open University; I completed

it in 2010, when my first child was 8 years old. This means that I was studying while home-schooling and sometimes working part-time as a supply teacher. I haven't mentioned that we had moved out of London, and my husband and I led a congregation in the West Midlands at this time, so it was a very demanding period of my life, as well as quite a lonely time, being so far away from my extended family in London. This was where I experienced blatant racism towards my children, where other children would make racist comments and rather than argue back, I would stop my children from attending things. A terrible decision to make probably, but I was only interested in protecting my children, not saving the world. I guess this doctorate is an attempt at saving the world!

Thesis Structure

The remaining chapters of this thesis focus on the following:

Chapter One details a composition of the main literature associated with the major themes of the study. This is where the main terms that are used are defined and the main discussions surrounding the concepts are outlined. The ideas of cultural relevance, racialized politics within the British education system and media portrayals of black people are also outlined, along with the main contributions from the Pentecostal church in Britain. It includes an outline of the genesis of the ORT scheme, a synthesis of books designed and published by the black British community and an attempt to define black British cultures. This chapter closes with an evaluation of other studies which have pertinent overlaps with this one.

Chapter Two explores my ontological positioning. My theological centring is brought to the fore, as I examine reconciliation theology and how it relates to the self, the other and the glocal community.

Chapter Three explores the value of cultural knowledge from a CRT perspective.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological decisions made and details the coding structure, along with the decisions made regarding the data from a content analysis of a sample of 10 reading books from the ORT scheme.

Chapter Five is comprised of a critical analysis of the main findings which includes a discussion of subordination, misrepresentations and omissions of black British cultures within the books.

Chapter Six This chapter underlines the praxis approach to this study with an outline of the development of a literacy programme that is being designed with a view to better reflecting and celebrating black British cultures.

Chapter Seven concludes this study with a summary of findings, key recommendations and an outline of the contributions made to new knowledge.

Chapter One
Literature Review

"I had no idea what racism was but I do remember that my (white) teacher refused to allow me to move up to the next set of Peter and Jane books because I was racing ahead of the rest of the class." (Rollock et al, 2012, p.68)

"When yuh han get in-a Tiger mout tek time haul-e out." (McKenzie, 2002, p.53)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to offer an extensive compilation of the existing literature on the wide variety of issues associated with cultural relevance in reading books. The issues covered below are in no way exhaustive but represent what I believe to be the key issues relating to this study.

The educational context in Britain has many components which need to be deconstructed. From the macro political decisions to the micro practitioner choices, education is rich soil for academic research. My focus on a particular reading scheme is a minute, but significant component for a number of reasons. Firstly, the early years are where children start to form their learner identity (Woods et al, 1999; Roberts, 2006) and although reading books are not the only cultural artefacts which are used to impact self-awareness, the unrestrained and systematic influence that they have on our young children, makes them worthy of close inspection. This literature review covers the main tenets of the conducted research, namely, the concept of cultural relevance and representation; policy relating to racialized issues and education; the attention that media has given to this subject; the contribution from the black British Pentecostal community; the genesis and evolution of the ORT books; children's publications within the black British community; an attempt at defining black British cultures and studies that have used content analysis as a method for researching children's literature, or which have a converging focus with this study. The review also includes key thoughts by leading thinkers in the field of race and children's books and although they do not represent the most current voice within race and education, they offer key insights into the issues that still exist. The aim is to present the definitions of pertinent concepts as they are used in the

literature, as well as to clarify the definitions as I intend to use them. Before discussing the above themes, the next section briefly looks at racialized issues in education and how they relate to this study.

Theories of Race

The concept of 'race' is a fiercely contested field. Theorists have proffered a variety of views on the idea's historical genesis and its persistent use in contemporary socio-political language (Solomos, 2003; Hill-Collins and Solomos, 2010; Spencer, 2014; hooks, 2015). Spencer (2014) provides us with a comprehensive collation of the historical theories of race, which includes reasons for its contested use. A useful historical and sociological analysis of race and racism in the British context is postulated by Solomos (2003) which informs this study's geographical context. Despite this specific focus on the British context, this study also recognises the importance of the more current debates on race, which show the impact of globalisation, diasporic identities and hybridisation (Hill-Collins and Solomos, 2010). Lastly, hooks (2015) shows us how the concept of 'race' relates to negative representations of blackness and how this relates to the previous ideas stated. This study is steeped heavily within these debates but focusses its gaze more specifically on how the concept of 'race' is played out within education and how faith has impacted on the issues faced by the black community. In addition, this study also aims to address areas omitted by the above studies, especially with regards to a focus on early years education, black agency and a celebratory approach to black cultural capital.

Race, Education and Reading Books

Researchers have drawn conclusions that the way in which children have been positioned with regards to race, gender, class and ability, and how they position themselves in each of these respects causes them to adopt adaptable identities according to their different settings, (Walkerdine, 1998, cited in Kuby and Vaughn, 2015). This review foregrounds the issue of 'race' and racial identity which is in keeping with the CRT epistemological underpinning. Racial issues in British education are informed by a burgeoning literature headed by scholars such as Paul Gilroy (1993), Stuart Hall (1997), David Gillborn, (2018), Nicola Rollock (2017) and Paul Warmington et al (2017). The prevailing theme within the literature is that racism persists in British and global society and is therefore concurrently persisting in the British

education system, (Hall and DuGay, 1996). Perhaps more disheartening, is the understanding that racism persists in the early years, in a similarly covert and institutionalised form, (Lane, 2008; Meehan and Meehan, 2017) and it is regrettable that the above cohort of racial theorists do not attend to the racialised issues that affect the early years sector, as their rigorous critique is perhaps what the sector needs to gain a more critically produced learning environment. What makes the latter understanding that much more disheartening, is the uncertainty that we have of whether or not a child under 6 years old, is able to identify racist behaviour that indirectly or directly affects them, especially when those behaviours are subtle in nature. Books have been identified as a key resource in the struggle to dismantle racist ideas among young children, (Lysaker and Sedberry, 2015; Scherer, 2016) however, the notion that books are also able to perpetuate racist ideologies has not been tackled with much depth. We decry the presence of institutional racism in secondary to higher education, (Rollock et al, 2012); but we barely whisper about the same, which has a formative impact, on our youngest and most vulnerable students. It has also been argued that the early years should not be exempt from race education, despite the difficulties associated with communicating abstract ideas to such young children, (Hooven et al, 2018).

It is expected by most that a good education, which is often linked to good reading skills (Scherer, 2016), is a strong indicator of future life success, however, intervention calls have been made for black students who disproportionally fair worse than white working-class students with regards to career and life successes, (Otte, 2017). This seems to confirm that there are social factors that work against minority ethnic groups, in terms of the purposes and outcomes of their educational career and is therefore something that needs to be addressed at every level of education. This study aims to evaluate to what extent the ORT books perpetuate ideals that reinforce these trends. Debates sparked within the Oxbridge universities, (Kennedy, 2017) have spotlighted higher education as an educational site where the resources need to both reflect and capitalise on the diverse wisdom that exists globally. This study concurs with this view but insists that a focus on early years educational literature, would enable marginalised communities to enact a strategy whereby historical and current injustices are addressed within a framework that redeems the time through the critical education of younger members of the community.

The quote by Rollock, used to introduce this section, emphasises the overt racist actions of the teacher, however, her analysis that follows omits the awareness of the racist actions of the

publishers of the 'Peter and Jane' books. Yet, there was a sense that moving onto the next book was what should have been done, when it is questionable whether or not she should have been reading those books in the first place! The key word reading scheme was created in the 1960s and its perspective was entirely white and middle-class, (Arnot, 2002). Despite claims that it represented Britain as it was, there is no evidence of the political calls that culminated in the mass migration of black people from the Caribbean, sparked in the 1940s with the 'Windrush Generation', (Wambu, 1998). The attempts to add people of colour as unknown characters in the crowd, was an inadequate attempt to depict the demographical composite of Britain during the 1970s. To their credit, Ladybird bent towards societal changes, by researching and producing a sister reading scheme, called Sunstart (Aitchison, 2005). This was targeted at students in the Caribbean and their accompanying illustrations were largely complimentary. However, black Britons were still without a structured reading scheme that depicted a perspective that included their unique experiences. This omission was clearly noted by the ORT team, who made the inclusion of black characters a part of their work. However, the inclusion of black characters and the exclusion of black cultures makes the assumption that the cultural experiences of the main (white) characters are neutral and therefore depict the concept of whiteness (Leonardo, 2016). This is a concept that analyses the existence of a white perspective on socio-political issues, and in so doing uncovers this perspective as one amongst many, as opposed to the neutral ideology that it often poses as. The next section in this chapter defines 'culture' as it is used in this study, and reviews the main arguments concerning culture, race and how they relate to theories of cultural representation and relevance.

Race, Cultural Representation and Cultural Relevance

Cultural Dynamism and a Racial Refocus

Culture is a term that has been redefined in a number of different ways. Longhurst et al (2008) offer a broad analysis of cultural studies, which includes the concept of cultural representation in a specific geographical context. The representation of culture has also been discussed by hooks (2015) and Spencer (2014), with regards to the representation of black people in film, music and literature and the wider representation in the media and politics. The main convergence in all of these studies is that the definition of 'culture' has transitioned away from the essentialist idea of belonging to a homogenous people group, and towards the idea of a shifting, dynamic flow of individual expressions (Frith, 1996). Cultural theorists applaud the

transitional definition of culture/s, and cite it clearer still, as a continuous struggle between many different ways of being (Hall and DuGay, 1996). This clarification insists on an intersectional perspective of identity. It insists on the recognition of the many dimensions to a person's identity, and how these form multiple overlaps between different ways of being. Despite this recognition, an emphasis on race and culture is important, especially as these aspects have largely fallen off the political agenda, yet still remain as an area of concern for educationists, (Scherer, 2016) race theorists (Gillborn, 2018) and the people who live with the everyday injustices of racism. It is clear that although the above cultural theorists proffer anti-essentialist arguments, they also cite arguments which seem strategically essentialist in nature but without overtly claiming this territory. It is the intention of this study to claim overt strategic essentialism in the face of fresh moments of racial aggravations within British boundaries. This is more fully discussed in the following section.

Hall's pertinent recognition that the perceived social identities still remain (Hall, 1991), enables us to unpick their relevance in current British society, alongside an understanding that they are no longer thought of homogenously. His seminal analysis of class, gender and race identities informs this study so far as race is concerned, as I concur with the perspective that asserts the fluidity of racial identity (and indeed the hegemonic construction of racial categories). While there is no specific focus on class or gender, it would be remiss of me to engage in a study on culture and race without also, at least indirectly, addressing any impact on or of the other social identities, precisely due to the struggles and overlapping stated above. As Hall states,

"If contemporary writing which emerges from oppressed groups ignores the central concerns and major conflicts of the larger society, and if these are willing simply to accept themselves as marginal or enclave literatures, they will automatically designate themselves as permanently minor, as a sub-genre. They must not allow themselves now to be rendered invisible and marginalized in this way by stepping outside of the maelstrom of contemporary history." (Ibid, p. 61)

Attention given to class and gender in this study is largely circumstantial as opposed to deliberate, because this study is focused not on equality overall, but on racial equality and how that is lived through cultural experiences.

Hall also speaks of the silencing power of the term Black (ibid), which is the idea that the concept of a collective black British identity is problematic for a number of reasons. He speaks of the silencing of the Asian British community that comes from a black British label, and he quite rightly identifies that not all people perceived to be black choose to identify with that particular positioning. Despite this reality, and Hall's necessary theorising, lived experiences of people perceived as black in Britain, (that is, belonging to the African-Caribbean diaspora) continues to be filled with harassment and racial micro-aggressions within hegemonic structures (BBC News, 2018a). This is perhaps more pertinent to black Britons than other minority groups, due to their clearly distinguishable physical features, (Edwards, 1979). This is where CRT tends to take a stance both on the identifying of people groups, and the identifying of methodologies that take us closer to the analytical deconstruction of the aforementioned structures.

Gilroy (1993) has also adeptly analysed the continuous pull towards the historically induced black/white cultural binary. His insightful book presents a view of black Britishness that enables us to both capture snapshots of the process of black cultures, as well as make some sense of society's persistent use of absolutist terms like black and white. He offers us a more satisfying comprehension of the relationship between race and culture and does not allow his recognition of the hybridity of culture to halt his intellectual stance on cultural differences. His analysis of the need to propagate black cultural expressions, analyses and histories in academic society, supports the aim of this study as well as giving the idea of 'black British cultures' a more accurate label. The next section focusses on the use of the term 'race' and how it is used in this study.

Race and Strategic Essentialism

The historical notion of 'race' is recognised as a hegemonic categorising used to confirm the supposed racial superiority of the white race (Wade, 2002). The corresponding division of black and white, with the former bearing connotations of bad, ugly and deprived, and the latter being associated with goodness, beauty and success, is also recognised by cultural theorists (Longhurst et al, 2008; Spencer, 2014; hooks, 2015) and the connection between perceived racial characteristics and culture is an ongoing topic of discussion (Gilroy, 1993; Evans, 2017). Alongside these notions of 'race', exists a further debate on perceptions of racial categorisation. Essentialism (in its different guises) and anti-essentialism represent the two points of the

spectrum, with contemporary theorists opting for more anti-essentialist conjectures (Leddy-Owen, 2014; Mandalaywala et al, 2018). CRT has undergone criticism for its uncontextualized essentialist framework (Siebers, 2017). This study recognises that being black and British is a problematic identification, and that it is also an unfolding idea that is played out in the social arena of education with great effect (Gilroy, 1993). It is with this stance in mind, that I propose to contribute to the discussion on race, culture and education in Britain. This study is therefore underpinned by a strategically essentialist approach, which is a term that has been credited to Gayatri Spivak (Morton, 2007), although the idea can be traced as far back as W.E.B. Du Bois (Marable, 1986) and Woodson (2012). It is the idea that by identifying with a particular aspect of societal identity, marginalised groups can strategically enact programmes and enterprises that advance the causes of the same, with a view to recalibrating the negative societal disproportionalities that exist. It is as Woodson is famously known for saying (2012, p. 77), using "segregation [to] kill segregation."

In moving forward with a strategically essentialist view of race and culture, it is necessary to adopt a definition of culture that exposes its relation to people's ways of living (King, 1991). The idea that groups of people have certain cultural expressions was cited above by Gilroy and is seen in the many different aspects of cultural studies that focus on a specific discipline such as food, music, language, artefacts and religion (Edwards, 1979; UNESCO, 2000; Counihan and Van Esterik, 2013). Although this study recognises the complexities of cultural expression, it is felt that in order to maintain relevance to early years education, the specific focus will be on cultural expressions that are easily identifiable and those which young children are more likely to be able to have the ability to appreciate cognitively. My aim is to show the multifaceted nature of simple artefacts (reading books) and by use of critical deconstruction, reassemble an alternative version of the same that is more culturally relevant to black British students. Having outlined my use of pertinent terms, the next section relates the societal issues to do with race and culture to a multicultural pedagogy.

Multicultural Pedagogy

The use of identified cultural indicators relates to Banks' four levels of multicultural pedagogy (Banks, 2006). Banks refers to levels of culturally relevant teaching which are as follows: the first level is the contributions approach where students learn about the different foods, festivals, heroes and holidays etc that pertain to different cultures; second, is the additive approach where

culturally relevant content, concepts or themes are included in the curriculum without the disruption of a Eurocentric perspective; thirdly we have the transformation approach where the curriculum is restructured in order to take different perspectives into consideration; and fourth, he proposes the social action approach where students actively engage with a social justice issue that is pertinent to them. The former levels, if overused and heavily depended on are seen as tokenistic and inadequate channels for teaching children and young people about and from the complexities of cultural identity. He proposes that they should be seen as conduits through which discussions can commence and lead to more critical levels of social action. In this way, complex and often disturbing issues can be taught to even young children, through the use of cultural artefacts that they interact with on a daily basis. The challenge with the use of this particular framework, is that it is all too easy for teachers or researchers to become trapped by the lure of simplicity, in the familiar and friendly world of tangible cultural indicators. The complexity of social action is something that teachers, especially, shy away from partly due to their already demanding workload. Banks' familiar notion of the contributions approach has been given the status of the least critical element of his concept of culturally relevant pedagogy, however, I aim to show that even at this level, a critical educator is able to deliver a culturally relevant and transformative use of pedagogy. I also hope to show how textual analysis represents a type of research that can serve the purposes of social action, as well as being achievable alongside the prior work demands of the teaching force. This encouragement is a vital step towards more research being conducted that is birthed from within educational settings, and that then goes on to directly impact educational settings and the attending students. The idea of 'cultural relevance' was birthed in just such a setting and is now given greater attention, along with its corresponding synonyms. The next section looks in more depth at the concept of cultural relevance.

Cultural Relevance

The use of Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995, p.160) term, "culturally relevant" serves as a defining framework for this research and provides further theoretical underpinning to Banks' levels of multicultural pedagogy stated above.

> "Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or prepositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop/maintain cultural competence;

and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order."

Alongside this definition, Ladson-Billings suggests that students should be taught to accept and affirm their cultural identity, in order "to ensure that consistently marginalized students are repositioned into a place of normativity" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 76). The teaching practices that formed the basis of her qualitative study, were viewed by herself as 'just good teaching'. However, this label does not take into account the social justice value base that the teachers would have resonated with. Ladson-Billings has purported the importance of the fluidity of culture running parallel with the fluidity of scholarship and in-so-doing has proffered a remixed version of cultural relevance, which includes the idea of a culturally sustaining pedagogy and a culturally revitalizing pedagogy (ibid). Although both these terms concur with aspects of this study, i.e. using a musicality approach as pedagogy, the original term of cultural relevance is used throughout. Her recognition that the use of "alternative texts" (ibid, p. 79) has great potential to add to the criticality of learning environments does not however, extend to the potential impact of culturally relevant resources. I intend for this study to show how educational resources represent a valuable part of the arsenal against "academic death" (ibid, p. 77). Although cultural relevance is the definition that is used as the theoretical base of this study, the term 'culturally appropriate' has been lifted from the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, (UNESCO, 2002, p. 64), which reads:

> "The Member States commit themselves to taking appropriate steps to disseminate widely the "UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity" and to encourage its effective application, in particular by cooperating with a view to achieving the following objectives:
> […]
> 8. Incorporating, where appropriate, traditional pedagogies into the education process with a view to preserving and making full use of **culturally appropriate** methods of communication and transmission of knowledge." [Emphasis mine].

In addition, the United Nation's (UN) plan of action for the International Decade for People of African Descent: 2015-2024 (2019) records that member states (including the UK) should use education and awareness-raising to promote,

"greater knowledge and recognition of and respect for the culture, history and heritage of people of African descent, including through research and education, and promote full and accurate inclusion of the history and contribution of people of African descent in educational curricula;

Promote the positive role that political leaders and political parties, leaders of religious communities and the media could further play in fighting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance by, inter alia, publicly recognizing and respecting the culture, history and heritage of people of African descent;

Raise awareness through information and education measures with a view to restoring the dignity of people of African descent, and consider making available the support for such activities to non-governmental organizations;

[…]

Ensure that textbooks and other educational materials reflect historical facts accurately as they relate to past tragedies and atrocities, in particular slavery, the slave trade, the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism, so as to avoid stereotypes and the distortion or falsification of these historic facts, which may lead to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including the role of respective countries therein, by:

Supporting research and educational initiatives [...]"

These quotes highlight the aim to develop education systems that are designed and delivered with diverse cultures in mind. This would, in the case of reading books, include, not only the presence of characters from a variety of racial backgrounds in a reading book, but also their various cultural expressions. The three-fold definition that Ladson-Billings proffers, gives a theoretical underpinning to this study which situates it in the well populated field of CRT. The UNESCO term, where used, is taken to be synonymous with it. The study undertaken by Ladson-Billings was situated in the practice of teachers and thereby gives qualitative weight to her term 'culturally relevant'. The universal remit of UNESCO emphasises the importance of this study's aim to achieve cultural appropriateness in reading books and cements the idea of global reconciliation. Both emphases point to a convergence between global recognition of the power of educational imagery and content, and the African diaspora's increasing agency in political, economic and educational spheres. Both perspectives are relevant to this study, however, their distance from the British socio-geographic context, limits this relevance.

Cultural relevance is therefore being viewed as a term which has a universal context with practical and local implications. The next section discusses the ways in which black cultures are beginning to be recognised within aspects of British society and the impact that this should have on the education system.

The Normalisation of Black Cultures

Bowles and Gintis highlight both the complexity of racism and the need to focus on cultural, as well as racial prejudices within the education system, (Lynn, 2006). This study focuses on the marginalisation of black British cultures, as this is a group of which I am a part of and feel most able to influence change within. Overt discrimination has had much coverage, but within the field of education, and especially the publication of educational resources, the discrimination is more covert. For example, one of the most famous and prevailing indicators of intelligence is the score received on IQ tests, (Borghans et al, 2016). Currently, these are used less and less, with Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs) being a more popular choice, with which educators measure students' intelligence. The contentions with these tests are relevant (Verney et al, 2005), however, my emphasis is on how their use impacts society's perception of marginalised cultures. By unearthing the similarities between those published educational resources, with the publication of reading books for early years, I hope to make way for the publication of reading books that are conceived critically, with transformative educational aims for black students. This is noted by Lynn, (2006) who although writing from the American perspective, and with regards to education as a whole, summarises the British context also. He depicts the quandary that exists within the black community with regards to desiring social mobility through education, yet not wanting to be subtly drawn into the acculturation process. He notes that the emancipatory potential in education, was harnessed by community groups within black communities but did not have sufficient clout to make lasting changes. The mention of attempts within the black community, through independent schools and churches, to provide 'emancipatory forms of education', encouragingly accentuates black agency, despite being insufficient at that time. However, this study represents an attempt to learn from the successes of these institutions, and to combine the networking power of the Pentecostal churches with the educational power of the black academic community, towards developing a strategy that significantly alters the tide of education for the majority of black British students in years to come. The climate for this sort of change seems to be just about right, as the display of black cultures has been welcomed through media showings such as Black Panther, (BBC,

2018b) the use of black models in a range of advertising (BBC News, 2018c), and the advocacy of black communities by black representatives in the Houses of Parliament (The Voice, 2018). The concept of cultural relevance then, as it relates to black British cultures, is being developed in the areas mentioned above and many more. As society becomes more open to the normalisation of black British cultures, the scene is being set for educators to also adopt cultural relevance. The literature has validated the use of the term in academic and legal circles, this gives credence to the first research question, '*Is the existing ORT reading scheme culturally relevant to black British students?*' My hypothesis is that it is not, in ways which I have outlined in the analysis. Having discussed the terms 'race' and 'culture' and how they pertain to this study, the next section reviews how racialized issues in education are addressed in British and global policy.

Race, Education and Policy

As depicted in the previous section, global society recognises the relevance of culture in the education process. UNESCO (2003, p.30) guidelines on language and education have insisted that,

> "The 'educational rights of persons belonging to … minorities, as well as indigenous peoples' should be fully respected, through: … the 'full use of culturally appropriate teaching methods of communication and transmission of knowledge'". In addition, the guidelines state that, "[e]ducation should raise 'awareness of the positive value of cultural (and linguistic) diversity', and to this end: 'curriculum (should be reformed) to promote a realistic and positive inclusion of the minority (or indigenous) history, culture, language and identity'; the cultural component of language teaching and learning should be strengthened in order to gain a deeper understanding of other cultures; [and] 'languages should not be simple linguistic exercises, but opportunities to reflect on other ways of life, other literatures, other customs'."

This lengthy quote serves as a vivid reminder that we live in a global society. Britishness should not equate to living and learning in a manner that is disconnected from the historical and collegial ties with people from different cultures within or without Britain. In addition to this principle, we understand that global movement has led to a fusion of cultures where terms such as black British or African-American are now commonly used. This UNESCO principle,

springing from an inter-cultural philosophical perspective, seeks to positively value minority and indigenous cultures within education and depicts the view that cultural intelligence is as important as learning to read and write. However, the edict from the UN has not featured in much of British policy in the global sense that it was proffered. Whereas the UN have a universal remit and are therefore more likely to attend to these matters with a regard to the international picture, British policy tends to be informed by internal philosophies that vie for attention (Gillborn, 2018). This tendency is highlighted in the report of a two-year research project conducted by Gillborn et al, (2016). A summary of the British education policies that are relevant to race, from the 1980s to the present, is presented as part of the report, which represents an attempt by the writers, to highlight the lack of attention given to race and racism in British education, since the election of the coalition government in 2010. Its use of quantitative and qualitative methods to make the case is convincing, however, once the case is made, the attempts to pressurise policy-makers and muster a social conversation about race and education seem inadequate. This is by no means a critique of their work, but a recognition of their own assertions which are that a number of unique criteria need to be met in order for the British government to re-prioritise race in education. It would seem that neither international policy nor thoroughly convincing research by the elite thinkers on the topic of race and education, are relevant criteria, which points to the possibility of the existence of another way. The report hinted at the agency of the black community with the mention of "grassroots community activists" (p.35) and "community advocates, equality campaigners and academics" (p.45). This modest recognition of black agency could represent a greater source of transformation than it is currently given credit for. As alluded to in the cited report, the dependence on top-down processes, is likely to lead to progress that is hampered by the "ebb and flow" (p.41) of government complacency. The next paragraph reviews significant events in black British history that have changed either policy or public opinion.

The legal implications of the government commission of the Inquiry into Stephen Lawrence's tragic death (Macpherson, 1999) was one example of the government momentarily taking race related conversations seriously. The above report (Gillborn et al, 2016) correctly identifies a lull in the priority of race related conversations up to 2017. However, at least two significant events have started to change this. Firstly, in the latter part of 2017, black students attending the Oxbridge universities made the clarion call for books on their reading lists that were written by black and minority ethnic (BAME) people (Olufemi et al, 2017). This not only re-sparked necessary conversations about race in higher education; it also reverberates with the intent of

this study with regards to early years education, which is to ensure the availability of reading material that is not only written by black writers, but also reflects black cultures with regards to the existence of black characters and their cultural experiences. This study seeks to investigate what such reading material would look like and does so by first identifying how the black characters in the ORT books have been characterised, and then by attempting to define elements of black British cultures that could have been included as a part of stories where the main characters were black. The second event was the governmental blunder with regards to the black British people, who are termed 'The Windrush Generation' (Gov.uk, 2018). The revelation that members of this generation were being detained and deported to their home Caribbean islands, caused embarrassment within the Home Office and outrage on social media. The subsequent commemorations of 70 years since the SS Empire Windrush docked into Tilbury, Essex in 1948 served as a reminder of the unfair treatment that black British people have suffered at the hands of British institutions. The political apologies made and the subsequent review (Gov.uk, 2018) depicts the level of detriment that the black community seems to have to endure before government policy is altered. A grassroots focus avoids the need for such detriment. The recognition of the unique combination of criteria, that led to the official Inquiry and subsequent report of how Stephen Lawrence's life was taken, is poignant. The key factors highlighted were the family's ability to lead the campaign, the skill of the legal team that represented the case, the changed mood with the country's first New Labour government and the role of the media (Lawrence, 2006). This last factor represents the focus of the next section of this review.

Media Portrayals

Portrayals of Beauty in the Media

The portrayal of black people in the media sets the precedent for the wider impact of their portrayal in educational literature. Black femininity, in particular has been negatively portrayed in the media. Studies on the impact of how black women are portrayed in sport media, indicate that there are identifiable differences in how women from different racial groups are affected, (Beckford, 2015). One would expect similar findings regarding educational resources, but with an impact that affects educational self-identification, as well as racial self-identification. Although women have been found to be critical of images that are stereotypically portrayed in the media, (Milkie, 1999) it is unclear whether or not young girls

have also developed the same degree of critical thinking. These portrayals act, in some ways, as a rogue mirror, which instead of representatively reflecting women's image, takes the role of the image which women, unconsciously or otherwise, attempt to reflect. This dynamic becomes problematic when, in the attempt to reflect the image of the 'mirror', minority ethnic groups, "dislike their skin colour or hair texture" (Hill-Collins, 1990, p.228). One of the specific issues is the persistent portrayal of white women's features, light coloured skin and straight hair, as the universal basis of beauty, (ibid). This portrayal has been depicted in magazines, television programmes, advertisements and billboards. Black women, who have emulated white norms of beauty with regards to their haircare, often prefer synthetically straightened hair styles, as opposed to naturally curly ones. The foregrounding of famous black women that do not conform to European norms, has begun to change global perceptions of beauty (Essence.com, 2014). Women like Alek Wek and Lupita Nyong'o are providing black girls with positive images of the black self. However, the focus is not only on external portrayals of beauty but on the "deeper business of being beautiful inside" (ibid). This concurs with a black feminist view that African perspectives of beauty is of beauty as functional, as opposed to European perspectives which portray beauty as static and ornamental, (Hill-Collins, 1990).

Portrayal of race in children's books

Although black readers are often able to relate to the popular cultural experiences of the young characters in books that they read, there remains a psychological irk where their domestic culture is not recognised or misrepresented. Where the illustrations are included with texts, these are recognised as being of equal (or more), importance to the text that children learn to decode, (Serafini, 2009). Studies of the significant influence that illustrations have on young readers, have centred their analysis on the impact on gender, (Jackson and Gee, 2005), or other factors but seem reluctant to analyse the impact on racial groups. For instance, a chapter in Marsh and Millard's book which discusses the use of children's popular culture in teaching literacy, highlights a reception/year 1 teacher's discomfort with mono-cultural illustrations: "We've worked very hard to make sure the books we have are multi-cultural but the comics…er, they have mostly white characters and that does worry me." (2000, p.116). As well as the obvious issue of omitting black characters in a genre that is particularly popular with boys, there is also the added issue of the author's decision not to discuss this statement any further. They successfully evaluate the role of illustrations alongside text in children's

books, and even discuss some of the accompanying social issues. However, the identified issue of racial exclusivity is once again breezed over. This study addresses the issue of racial and cultural under/mis-representation within children's books directly, thereby filling an important gap in academic literature. This is especially important with regards to reading books which depend largely on pictures as an aid to the learning to read journey, because the pervasiveness of a visual image has immediate and lasting impact on the viewer. Researchers have noted the discriminatory effects of images in the media, (Kulaszewicz, 2015), but that is not the only part of society where racist images can impact learners. Churches often have images that portray a Eurocentric gospel and black churches in particular, who are often seen as agents of change towards eradicating racism (Roberts, 2005), offer a rich field for researching the power of visual images. As a crucial part of the societal structures that interact with injustices, the literature on the black Christian community in Britain and its potential for engagement in this field, is reviewed in the following section.

Religion and Race

Perceptions of the black British church

Black Theology (BT) is most closely associated with American theologians like the late James Cone (2013) and J. Deotis Roberts (2005). Their contributions to the discussion on black liberation has heavily influenced black British theologians who have continued the debate with a more situationally relevant emphasis. Black Pentecostalism, however, is the ideological underpinning of this study, although, the term used throughout is Pentecostalism. The word 'black' is not viewed as a necessary addition, as the theological idea of Pentecostalism, was originally associated with black cultures (Bradshaw, 2013) and the use of the word already represents the idea of worship within a black culture. This Christian ideology is not only a more truthful representation of my own reflexive positioning, but it also fits more comfortably within the parameters of what a significant number of black British Christians believe. Although this study is purposed with challenging this particular group, it is recognised that a successful challenge is most likely to be administered from the inside and that it should emanate from existing common ground. Pentecostal churches in Britain have been charged with the responsibility of increasing their social, political and academic engagement. This charge has come from Britain's foremost theologians within the black community, Anthony Reddie (2002); Joe Aldred, (2013) and Robert Beckford, (2014). Each of their unique perspectives

(Christian education, ecumenism and popular black culture respectively), form a compelling argument for black agency and political engagement. The basis for the call to more effective engagement could be based on the spirit-filled origin to Pentecostalism, which is rooted and iconized in the Azusa Street revival of the 1900s (Aldred, 2013), and emphasised a faith that was directly relevant to the individual and social needs that people faced. Whereas the above-mentioned theologians tend to focus more on a critique of the church's community involvement within their theological exploration of ideas, there are others whose focus has been to celebrate the achievements of the black churches worldwide (Gerloff, 2004; Thompson, 2015 and Dumangane, 2017). Gerloff's contributions have been to recognise the attributes of the African diasporic worship. Her work has held a prestigious place in the New Testament Church of God's (NTCG) Heritage centre for a number of years now (NTCG, 2016). Thompson (2015) has explicitly celebrated an example of African Canadian literature that has provided racial uplift, partly by addressing the social and spiritual contributions made by the black church. Dumangane (2017) has employed the positive tone that this study resonates with by charting the benefits of faith for the educational successes of black men. This is a view that concurs with this study, however the focus on further or higher education, does not take into account the benefits of capitalising on faith literacy in early years education.

The issues presented in the literature could be compartmentalized into two broad themes, namely, how the black church is perceived in wider society, and how the black church views itself. Both themes converge with educational resources in some way, for instance Io Smith (1989, p.83-4) recalls the children's literature that (mis)represented black people,

"The books. Robinson Crusoe. Master Willy has a roll in the mud. The images. A black pig washing in the mud. I remember as a child some of the things I used to get in Sunday School. I wouldn't dare teach it now to a child. Blue-eyed, blonde Jesus, with white children round his knee and a black child with no clothes on sitting on the ground at his feet."

Smith (1989) recognised that this type of Sunday School literature had a formative impact on the self-image of black children, as well as influencing how black people were viewed by the wider society. Almost a decade later, resources developed by Becher (1995) and Reddie (1998a and 1998b) sought to address this issue. Reddie's (1998a, p.3) comprehensive "two-volume resource of Christian education material designed primarily for use in multi-ethnic congregations and junior churches, particularly with black children and young people." While

this resource exemplifies the agency that this study hopes to propagate, as well as the valuable contribution that resources such as these bring to children and young people in the targeted context (Troupe, 2006), resources that can be easily adapted for use within nursery and school settings are where the greatest need for cultural relevance lies. In addition, it is important to offer resources that can be adapted for use by churches of different sizes including the many small churches that do not have established children's ministries due to a lack of personnel or other resources. The kind of misrepresentation identified by Smith (1989) was blatant and obviously racist, however, Beckford, notes a more ambiguous type of misrepresentation, not just of black people, but of the black church. He writes of the

"stereotyping of the black church as smiling, clapping, singing black Christians [which] reduces a complex religious tradition and its intersections with slavery community resistance and pedagogy to nothing more than dark-skinned people who 'sing so well'." (Beckford, 2014, p.21).

Although he asserts that this could be viewed as a positive recognition of the importance of the choir to the black church, he identifies that by over-representing the church in this way reduces it to mere aesthetics. Beckford also relays the idea of the 'conflicted individual' as another way in which the black church is misrepresented. This is based on the misinterpretation of the "conservative morality and personal integrity" (ibid), that traditionally the black church affirms, which is portrayed negatively by the media, in a manner that is very different to the portrayal of the white church. This study was partially designed to enable the black British church to engage in the field of education and cultural relevance, which heightens agency to enable a more culturally relevant portrayal of the black British church.

Self-perception of the black British church

With regards to the political, economic and social engagement, Aldred highlights that "a growing level of engagement in strategic high-level politics is emerging in numerous ways." (Aldred, 2013, p.24), to which he refers to the 'Black Christian Leaders' Forum', currently named the 'National Christian Leaders' Forum – A Black Christian Voice'. The development of this group indicates the self-identified agency of the black Christian community and offers a platform for socio-political engagement that transforms lives. The formation of a medium that runs parallel to dominant white avenues of political engagement, highlights a counter-

strategy for dealing with marginalisation. The 'develop your own' strategy resembles the counter-strategy used by the black church to address the failings of the British educational system with regards to educating African-Caribbean students, namely, the rise of the supplemental schools, (Reddie, 2002). Reddie outlines that the main critique of this approach is its essentialist underpinnings. In other words, the idea of an African-centred socio-political or pedagogical approach, assumes that the black community are a homogenous group and emphasises the fixation of cultural values and norms. This idea has been refuted most notably by Hall (1991), however, there is a consensus that a strategic essentialist position is a necessary adoption "in order to produce a critique or defend group interests" (Beckford, 2014, p.24). Surveys have noted the prevalence of faith to the black British community, compared to the white British community, (Bradley, 2008). While a similar high percentage of both communities self-identify as Christians, the evidence shows that a significantly high number of black people in England and Wales, self-identify as Christians, as opposed to any other religious affiliation (Office for National Statistics, 2015). The relevance of active faith to the black community is lived out in a variety of different ways. The spectrum ranges from those who view faith as a means to an assured after-life, to those who believe that faith should make a transformative impact on the earth. It is clear, however, that the black church as a whole is perceived as an agent for potential transformation and sees themselves as the same (Thompson, 2013).

The black British church as an agent for societal transformation

Certain factors such as the attendance to reading and studying the Bible, public speaking and the discipline of sitting still for extended periods of time, lends itself to training children and young people who are primed to do well in their educational career. However, the production of educational literature that capitalises on black Christian cultural values, is an enterprise that has been largely ignored by the black British church (except for the notable references stated earlier) and is one that would directly impact on the educational achievement of the church's most vulnerable members. This study represents an attempt towards identifying the extent of the need, as well as the general framework that would enable British children to learn to read by using reading resources that are relevant to their cultural worlds. The translation of the New Testament Bible into the Jamaican language (Bible Society, 2011; United Bible Societies, 2017), is a relevant signal that culture and literacy are within the church's domain of influence. This study aims to draw from what the black church in Britain has to offer, especially with

regards to its potential as a vehicle for racial and cultural equity. The next section of this review looks at the use of reading books and specifically the ORT books.

Reading Books and ORT

Studies on reading books

Reading scheme books have been available for a long time. Their use is advocated by governmental organisations (Ofsted, 2014) and they are accepted as an inevitable part of educational life by most early years practitioners. Publishers of reading schemes seem to have responded to research which suggests that the early years of a child's educational career, presents extremely valuable opportunities for learning, which may not be so readily available in later life, due to a number of social and genetic factors, (Goouch & Lambirth, 2007). By developing a series of books in a scientifically graded manner, they have aimed to assume more control of children's reading journeys. While their focus was primarily on the reading ability, others have sought to include the reading *purpose* in the debate. This has mostly assumed the line of argument that Freire makes, with regards to teaching students in a manner that is relevant to them, (Freire, 1996).

The literature suggests that from the onset, reading schemes were originally developed from a white male hegemonic perspective, this is seen in their later need to bow to criticism and "address equal opportunity issues by including non-stereotypical female and black characters in the books." (Browne, 1998, p.47). The major players in the publication of reading books have for some time now included black and Asian characters in their reading schemes, however even the books that were designed and marketed for a Caribbean audience, opted for storylines that reflected white British cultures, (Edwards, 1979). A project that was introduced to investigate reading instruction in multi-ethnic schools, produced books or materials that were designed to reflect and celebrate a diversity of cultures. Interestingly, these resources were "felt to be of value not simply for west Indian children, but for all children, whether in multi-cultural or all-White schools" (ibid, p. 137). The ORT scheme has come under academic scrutiny, in the interest of gender portrayal, (Skelton, 1997; Wharton, 2005) and the portrayal of people with disabilities (Hodkinson, 2017). Although a number of these articles have mentioned the 'race bias' and the 'unacknowledged or stereotypical' representation of multi-cultural Britain, (Skelton, 1997), there remains a disconcerting dearth of literature on the portrayal of race and

culture within more modern reading schemes that include black characters. In addition, the female representations used in discussions of gender portrayal, are almost exclusively representations of white femininity. This exclusivity undermines the unique issues experienced by black women, as Hill-Collins (1990) alludes to. Also absent from the literature are discussions on the possible need to deconstruct the concept of reading schemes from a cultural perspective. This omission in the literature also persists in the ORT publishing organisation. The books were first published in 1986 and are regularly updated (OUP, 2017), however, their updates, although becoming more inclusive in the sense that you see more black characters in the books, have not specifically addressed their depictions of black cultures.

ORT's influence

The Oxford Owl website provides the most comprehensive collation of the available resources from ORT. The information provided serves a number of purposes which are summarised in the 'About Us' page of the site. "Oxford Owl is an award-winning website from Oxford University Press" (ibid) - this first statement of the page reminds readers of the educationally lavish legacy of the resources. If the rhetoric in the first clause fails to do this, the global reputation of the name 'Oxford University' will almost certainly succeed. The website addresses parents directly and in so doing, appears to be offering them the first steps towards a lucrative link to one of the world's leading educational institutions. Its avid support for the use of the phonics method for teaching children to read synchronises with the scientific positivist approach (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009) it uses to get its message across. Leading experts, quantitative research and highly structured reading levels are all aspects used to position the organisation as the best educational option for children. "As parents, we all want the very best for our child, but finding the right advice and resources can be [a] challenge." (OUP, 2017). The second clause of this sentence inadvertently exemplifies the very dilemma, found in the literature, regarding the reading scheme. That is the challenge of finding academic resources that have included direct critique of ORT's depiction of cultural diversity. There has been criticism of the scheme in the well-known Mumsnet website, (tomhardyismydh, 2011), but this centres more on the lack of excitement within the books' plots, as opposed to their cultural relevance. Mumsnet is a website used by many cultures, but it is likely that the majority of its users are white women, as it is a site based in the UK. Hill-Collins states that such oppositions from white women have the ability to undermine the critical and unique experiences that black women face, (1990). As well as, sparking parental discussion from

British grassroots organisations, the Oxford Owl website leverages political links to the UK government, by employing a government adviser, Jean Gross CBE, to offer advice on struggling readers. ORT's hegemonic proclivity is further seen in their crafting of the BBC news report to celebrate their 30th year of publication, (OUP, 2016). It provides no evidence of reflexivity, which is a strange omission when you consider the educational reputation that the organisation has. The ORT editorial team is financially, politically and socially supported in a manner that presents a monumental advantage over any of its competitors. Should there be a prioritisation of culturally relevant reading books, one would expect that ORT would be positioned at a considerable advantage. The next section reviews Gillian Klein's publication (1993) which offers a conception of the obscure racial bias in children's books, which is a useful continuation to this review.

Klein and the impact of underlying values and attitudes

Klein's approach to analysing the British education system with regard to racism is both critical and relevant. In response to a case study of teachers who sought to make their classrooms culturally appropriate for their Caribbean students, she writes, "The pupils felt recognized and valued and responded very positively. They were also interested, and their increased motivation naturally led to increased learning." (1993, p.26). Specifically, with regards to books, she details an example of a librarian responding constructively to a Caribbean child's request for more books, involving positive portrayals of black characters, which the child had recently read. Including teachers' personal stories in this way enables Klein's readers to grasp the issues pertaining to culturally relevant books on a practical level, with a specific view towards solutions, rather than solely focussing on the problems. She also addresses the inability of writers to bracket out their own values and worldview, "Neither reading nor writing takes place in a cultural vacuum. All authors bring to their work their own values and attitudes", (1993, p.170). It is the authorial values and attitudes that are the most difficult to identify and explain to children.

"And it is these values and attitudes that form a 'residue' in the child's mind, a residue that many teachers have found that they have in their own minds, as a result of their childhood reading, and which they have painfully to scrape away if they are to work towards education for equality." (Ibid, p.171).

Perhaps, even more difficult than identifying values and attitudes is the identification of "omission", (ibid). How do you identify what is not there? While Klein addresses this issue critically, she focusses on the omission of black people's contributions in history, and the omissions by well-meaning authors. She does not, however, specifically address the omission of black cultures, especially in books where black characters are an integral part of the story. Siraj-Batchford and Clarke (2000) concur with much of what Klein has to say regarding racism and British education. They recognise that children's personal needs, interests and identities form the basis of the best educational programmes, and that ignorance of children's home cultures, could result in them having an anxious start to their school lives. Klein's contributions to the literature have pointed towards the need for educational resources that are specifically designed with children's cultural perspectives in mind. This does not only mean the depiction of different cultures within stories, but it also requires attention to be given to a variety of 'learning to read' methods, story production and distribution. Although I agree with Klein's direct address of the lack of cultural relevance in books, my point of departure is with the focus on books specifically designed for learning to read, and as such the readership that this study pertains to is the early years learners in Nursery, Foundation Stage and the Lower Primary years.

Meek and the indirectly cautious approach

I have already shown the white hegemonic origins of reading schemes in this country, but the idea of typically English children's literature has been explored by a renowned reading specialist Margaret Meek. Her idea of Englishness speaks of stories that have hidden nuances and stories within stories that only readers already abreast with classical English stories will be able to fully appreciate, (Meek, 2001). She addressed a number of pertinent issues but made no apology for focussing her descriptive analysis on the above characteristic of English books. It is, however, the issues that she briefly addressed that I would like to highlight now. Firstly, she dedicated a decent sized paragraph to describing the ignorance of the British who trade books written in English, to other non-English speaking countries through translation, but are slow to show interest in the translation of texts from these same countries. "I hope" she writes, that "this ignorance is not insensitivity, but ignorance it certainly is". She also recognised that her Scottish culture, makes her "conscious that English children's books are enriched and sustained by artists and writers from all over the world, whose displacement is much greater than [hers]", and that they "have had to create their identity out of a different history and culture

even if they are Caribbean, for example, although English is their mother tongue". This recognition seems to have pointed to an understanding that a Scottish person living in England might well struggle to identify with Englishness, but that a Caribbean person living in England would struggle to a much greater extent. Her ability to effectively mention key issues, almost in passing, is further evidenced in the following quote:

"I notice too that the work of writers from Australia, India, Africa and North America who write in English has a certain critical edge, recognisable and significant. I mention this characteristic and believe it is important. From time to time I appropriate it for my work as a teacher, but I have to lay it aside as this chapter deals with other issues", (ibid, pp. 89-90).

Although Meek does not directly deal critically with the issues that she mentions, she has somehow managed to include a resonance of criticality in her writing. She seldom betrayed her own thoughts on the quotes that she included and seemed to want them to speak for themselves, for example, Paul Hazard's quote, "England could be reconstructed entirely from its children's books", (Hazard, 1932 in Meek, 2001). Her criticality is also seen in her 'casual' use of the word "painterly", when referring to the illustrations, which has connotations of Barthes' concept of readerly and writerly texts, (Barthes, 1974), which underlines her point about the "constructedness of texts". By constructing a careful approach to the subject of the insular culture of English books, she has undoubtedly secured the attention of those who would otherwise be unwilling to engage in discussion. This approach is contrasted with the more direct engagement of Critical Theorists, which use transformative discourse liberally. A fusion of these two approaches enlarges the scope for success, however this study represents a more direct approach than that used by Meek, as a recognition of the severity of the issues raised. Too much of a gentle approach could signal a form of inertia on the part of those interested in real life transformation.

Reading schemes represent a small cog within the British education system. The potential for change within this small area is very achievable, but its generalizability is at danger of being underestimated, (Lynn, 2006). This study recognises the need for social and economic racial reform in wider society and presents in the analysis, potential strategies for how to practically address these through the use of reading scheme books. Children's books were a completely whitewashed affair until pressure from black British communities forced the inclusion of black characters in many stories (Edwards, 1979), albeit in an often-tokenistic manner. The current

wave of self-publications from black British authors is an encouraging indication of black agency which is highlighting the black British community's desire to see themselves in literature. This display of agency is the focus of the next section.

Black Publications

As well as the media-driven portrayal of beauty norms reviewed above, black girls have also absorbed white norms of beauty from reading books, (Alcott, 1953; Austen, 1993; Montgomery, 1994; Blyton, 2016). More recently written children's literature includes characters from a wider variety of ethnicities, however, the progress has been slow and although the amount of picture books that are directly multicultural have increased, there remains a gap in the market for learning to read resources that are published with cultural relevance as its intent (CLPE, 2018). There are numerous writers within the black British community who are publishing (and self-publishing) books featuring black characters and their cultural experiences. This depiction of black agency points to the awakened desire of the black community in Britain, to have access to books that depict their own sense of physical self – as it relates to norms of beauty and acceptability, and the collective self – as it relates to cultural norms.

American literature seems to have directly, and more extensively than British literature, dealt with the issue of underrepresentation of black people in reading books, (Myers, 2014). The above article describes some of the humanising advantages from reading books in which the characters reflect the reader's racial and cultural identity. It is with purposeful intent that this literature review, includes a section that demonstrates the agency within the black British community. The use of the descriptive phrase 'black publications', does not necessarily equate to them being transformative. The focus in this section is to chart the issues that are relevant to black writers and to present them as a starting point for a strategic development of reading books that depict black British cultures positively and give value to the linguistic capital of children from minority cultures (Yosso, 2005).

Publication and distribution

The role of the UK booksellers and publishers is important to note here because, as Warmington (2012) suggests in his analysis of the same, they occupy a gatekeeping role, whereby according to CRT, books of interest to the black British community must also offer

some benefit to the white British community, if it is to be accepted. The self-publication movement, which has been aided by changes in technology, has made it possible for people from different backgrounds to lay claims to authorship, despite the opinions of booksellers and publishers. Some of the well-known published black British authors of young children's books include Malorie Blackman, (1991, 1999, 2001, 2002); John Agard (1991, 2004, 2017); Floella Benjamin (2007); Grace Nichols (1994); Verna Wilkins (1993); Ken Wilson-Max (2014); Mary Hoffman (Hoffman and Binch, 1991). In need of particular mention is Verna Wilkins, who is not only a writer, but is also the founder of Tamarind books, a publishing company set up to address "the dearth of books which included BAME characters", (Scottish Book Trust, 2017). In addition, Britain's first black publishing company, New Beacon Books was founded by the late John La Rose and his partner, and is also a bookshop and international distributor, that offers a wide variety of books and accessories which reflect black British cultures. Other black owned publishing companies with a British base include Hansib Publications, Adonis and Abbey Publishers Ltd (2003) and others. A number of the writer/publishers above have embraced the dual role of writer-activist to varying degrees. Malorie Blackman's misrepresented call for more diversity in children's books, for instance, was met with a barrage of support on social media, (Flood, 2014). A noticeable strategy used by Wilkins and others is to write stories for children that are unselfconsciously inclusive (Scottish Book Trust, 2017). This strategy not only aids the success of book sales in a society dominated by white British cultures, it also avoids the use of disrespectful cultural stereotypes. The examples above support the evidence of agency within the black British community. However, it is perhaps more encouraging to note that these writers/publishers possibly represent the tip of the iceberg. The number of potential writers/publishers of children's books within the black British community is seen by the number of self-publications that exist (Fleary, 2016) and the consideration of how many more are coming through the pipelines. The desire for children's books that appropriately reflect black British cultures is evident. The most noticeable gap in the literature is evidence of a coordinated approach amongst black British publishers, writers and illustrators. Whether or not this is a prerequisite for achieving transformational aims, is subject to opinion, but what is clear is that many more attempts have been made than successes. An internet search of black British publishing companies revealed the many website links that are no longer active, which not only alludes to their inability to sustain the website, but also gives the impression that they have not been able to sustain the business element of publications. The ORT publishers clearly have no such impediment, which is one reason why these books have proved to be as widely used as they are. This study briefly analyses the

business aspect of the production of reading books (in Chapter Six) but the main emphasis is on perpetuating the values of black British cultures within reading books. It is necessary therefore, to review the literature on black British cultures, which is the focus of the next section.

Black British Cultures

Black British cultures are far too dynamic and extensive to be able to define in a sentence, or even in a thesis. My intention is to posit a definition that will render the research questions answerable. By definition, black British cultures oppose the idea that Britishness equates whiteness. This concept, initiated by Stuart Hall in the 1970s, (Owusu, 2000) goes some way to defining black British cultures not as the antithesis of white British cultures; nor as an entity that uses white British cultures as the British cultural yardstick, but as a cultural entity with its own complex genesis and dynamism. Analyses of culture often blur the lines between culture and race in a manner that is both unhelpful and inaccurate (Lynn, 2006). This study recognises the connections between the two ideas, and opts to centre the discussion on culture, so as to recognise the inclusion of book characters who are categorised as black, but whose culture may be omitted. It would however, be remiss of me to ignore the idea of race because as Gundara (2000, p.29) states, "one persistent force in British history has been the state's categorising people on the basis of 'race'", in a manner that has subordinated black people and caused white supremacy to flourish. Race does not equate to culture, but both are social realities that impact the education of black British children.

Attempting to define culture broadly

Culture "is generally understood as a set of common beliefs, practices, and customs embraced by a particular group. These ideas, taken together, operate as a means by which a cultural group makes sense of the world." (Asante, 1988 in Lynn, 2006, p. 113). While recognising that black British culture is not homogenous, I aim to identify aspects of it that converge with both working and middle classes, young and old and from varying parts of Africa and the Caribbean. "Valentine further argues that the term 'culture' is problematic for it is an insurmountably difficult task to name and order a people's ways of being and knowing, particularly when one is an outsider." (Valentine in Lynn, 2006, p.111). As a part of a black British community, it is permissible for me to attempt this definition as an emic researcher, while still recognising that

my attempt could cause offence. The anti-essentialist argument, which recognises the multifaceted origins of race and culture is a useful backdrop to this study, only so far as to call for the unity of purpose with regards to eradicating racist inequalities, therefore a strategic essentialist approach is necessary in order to clarify the real and perceived characteristics that exist within marginalised communities (Hall, 1997). It becomes necessary to specifically identify components of black British cultures in order to evidence its inclusion or omission. The complexity of this and the wider societal issues are important to note, but in the spirit of activism and in the interest of finding practical transformative solutions, simplification becomes a necessary component of this study. Black British culture is therefore being defined, for the purpose of this study, using the overarching and intertwining themes of language, food, music and spiritual beliefs (Gilroy, 1993; Rollock et al, 2012). These aspects have evolved over time and a historical synopsis is therefore a useful gauge to enable comprehension of the current cultural snapshot.

A working definition of black British culture historically

Black Britishness has spanned decades of debate from before post-war immigration to the present date (Owusu, 2000). The discussions include distinct aspects of black British culture ranging from the arts to economics, and from matriarchy to masculinity (Forna, 2000; Majors et al, 2000; Kufour, 2000). Attention to the specifics of educational empowerment within a cultural discussion seems to have been side-lined. So too, has a thorough look into the cultural contributions of the black church. This study aims to bridge the perceived gap between discussions on black cultures and discussions that are happening within black Christian circles, as well as the discussions about culturally relevant education. It is perhaps fair to say that the mass immigration of the 40s and 50s sparked more educational alterations, within the British education system, than any other period before, (Edwards, 1979). African-Caribbean people moving to the 'Mother-Land' with high hopes and expectations were met largely, but not exclusively, with rejection and maltreatment (Lamming, 1998), so a number of survival strategies were put in place which not only carved out a mould for the black British cultures that we see today, but also ensured that a foundation was laid for future social success, as opposed to mere survival.

These strategies lie within the four previously identified aspects of culture. Debates within food studies reveal some attention being given to the need to educate children with regards to

the food norms within cultures that are different to their own, (Pazzaglia and Williams, 2012; Sabatini et al, 2016). Although this attention is relevant to this study, they do not address the British context, or even more specifically the black British context, as this study aims to. In contrast to this, musical norms within black British cultures has had more coverage (Henry, 2012; May, 2013). Different musical genres are discussed and there is an adequate discussion of their intersections with education and religion, however, I would like to have seen a more agentic approach taken by each author, in order to aid a more positive portrayal of black cultures generally. The discussion on spirituality or faith in black British cultures has to a large degree been outlined in an earlier section and therefore needs no further contextualisation here. That is except to note how it intersects with the other cultural aspects, therefore underlining its importance in an analysis such as this. Lastly, racio-linguistic studies have centred their debate on the correlation between attainment and speaking English as an additional language (Demie, 2015), thereby elevating the status of English further. Where the use of Patwa is discussed (Drummond, 2017) it centres its analysis on use by low-attaining students outside of mainstream education. This does not allow for an association between the use of Patwa with high attainment. This study refutes this by its use of Patwa throughout. With regards to the use of the term 'Patwa' its use in this study is with a recognition that this is the term most commonly used among speakers of the language themselves (Edwards, 1979; The University of the West Indies). It is also recognised that while the 'Jamaican Language' is the understood to be the more appropriate term (Tomlin, 1999), this term does not encapsulate the understanding that there are variations which can be found in the language use from one Caribbean island to another.

The strategies, as they relate to the four aspects of culture mentioned above (language, food, music and spiritual beliefs) are as follows: Pertaining to language, in schools, young black students, used their fluency in Patwa as a means of resistance and incorporation, although they were perceived as English speakers by those in educational authority (Edwards, 1979; Gundara, 2000). Being a basic requirement, cultural food was an important aspect of black British communities. Black British residents would initially communicate with friends and relatives 'back home' and request certain foods that could not be found in Britain, (Roots, 2008; Meager, 2016). Although this was an inadequate way to access their cultural foods, as it would not have been received in as fresh a condition as it was despatched, it evidences the level of importance that accessing cultural foods had to the cultural community. Music was often used as a "psychological defence mechanism" (Gundara, 2000, p.46; Gilroy, 1993), which enabled black

people to construct political understandings of the issues they faced. Black majority Pentecostal churches in the UK, were formed partly as a result of the unwelcoming attitude immigrants received from the British churches, (Edwards, 1979; Thompson, 2013). Caribbean immigrants, who longed for the style of worship that they were used to back home, started meeting in each other's homes, school/community halls and eventually were able to purchase places of worship. This last strategy, in particular, has led to a number of social successes for the black British community and presents a site whereby further success could be spearheaded. Black British cultures therefore have been formed within a climate of hostility and marginalisation, which to a large degree persists today. The parallels, with regards to these four tenets in more recent times, is discussed next.

Linguistic, Culinary, Musical and Spiritual aspects of Culture

A more contemporary snapshot of black British cultures would be expected to provide evidence of an amalgamation of the African-Caribbean and British cultures, especially as younger generations, born in Britain, have adapted to their environment of upbringing. Patwa has been further marginalised to exclusive gatherings, and regional dialects among young black British people have been added to the black British linguistic repertoire (Gundara, 2000). More recently, black British writing is becoming recognised within higher education (Goldsmiths, University of London, 2018), as a field that is ripe for research. Similar regard is seen in the senior years of education where students are encouraged to read some poetry in Patwa (BBC Teach, 2016), as well as gain a deeper understanding of the importance of the black British linguistic heritage. The lack of similar readings available to children in their early years is disconcerting, especially as the home environment is known to have the greatest impact on children's learning (Tickell, 2011). The emulation of cultural attributes that can be found in children's home environments, could be a way that early years settings could encourage children's development towards improved outcomes, as pertaining to the early learning goals, especially 'communication and language', 'literacy' and 'understanding the world' (DfE, 2013). The availability and British acceptance of food from black cultures is now more widespread, with Caribbean restaurants situated in major cities and towns, as well as African-Caribbean grocers being widely available, even if not always easily accessible (Roots, 2008). This is to the degree that some now protest, to the opposite end, of cultural appropriation. Music continues to be a force for social cohesion and black majority churches have now been renamed, but technically consist of similar congregations. These churches, as well as having

secured impressive financial influence (pcuuk.com), have also continued to make inroads educationally by starting nurseries, and independent schools, which are usually comprised of children from their own community network. This tentative change within the black Christian community reinforces the praxis dimension of spiritual beliefs (Beckford, 2014) and is in concurrence with the framework of this study. Before moving on to discuss literature on the methodological decisions made during this study, I have included a section on the significance of an insider analysis of issues to do with black British cultures.

The importance and value of emic research

Black British cultures have been documented by academics who are not immediately perceived to belong to the black community, (Gillborn, 2018; Bradshaw, 2013). Currently, the black British academic community is growing at an encouraging rate, which provides those interested in this field the opportunity to cite from sources, which, hopefully, benefit from the added value of emic research. In order to exemplify the types of disservice that can be done to a community being researched from the outside, the Gundara reference, cited above provides us with a case in point. It contains a number of limited depictions of African-Caribbean culture compared to that of the researcher's own Asian culture; he cites that some "individuals **achieved** national esteem in the fields of sport and entertainment" and some "were **elevated** to the House of Lords" [emphasis mine, p.32]. The usage of the different verbs 'achieved' and 'elevated' are as subtly offensive, as the institutional racism that exists in British institutions. The former verb speaks of black agency within a field that is stereotypically 'black', and the latter verb speaks of requiring assistance from a more powerful being. Whether or not this has been the case, his word choice unintentionally betrays his perception of black British successes. His portrayal of the Asian British culture consists of no such verb usages,

"[t]hose who were able to use the cultural capital of their links with Britain could establish themselves as functioning members of society within a very short time without becoming a social burden on the British state" (ibid, p.33).

The difference in tone is notable once highlighted, as I have just done, and provides an example of a micro-aggression that black academics encounter. This is not to say that black academics are not capable of causing offence. I am sure that my own writings have or will incite criticism from within black cultures, however, it is hoped that by producing an insider analysis of black

British cultural issues, less offence will be taken, and contentions will be the kind that foster healthy growth and not perpetuate negative stereotypes.

Content Analysis

To my knowledge, there are few studies that have used content analysis to research social representation in children's books, (Rudd, 1997; Yang, 2014; Hodkinson, 2017; McGilp, 2017; Chen, 2018). Out of these there are fewer still that have been conducted in the British context (Rudd, 1997; Hodkinson, 2017; McGilp, 2017). Where race or culture was not the specific focus, it was still recognised as a factor worthy of mention despite not being developed in the analysis, (Yang, 2014; Hodkinson, 2017). Where cultural representation was the main focus, the source of data ranged from the media (Chen, 2018), to school textbooks (Yang, 2014), picture books (McGilp, 2017) and more specifically Enid Blyton's Famous Five books (Rudd, 1997). This coverage indicates that cultural representation in children's educational material is of ongoing concern to the research community. Some of the studies mentioned above made use of mixed-methods approaches including questionnaires and interviews alongside their own initial analysis (Yang, 2014 and McGilp, 2017). This study focuses solely on the use of content analysis, as it was felt that this method offered more than enough data for a study of this size. In addition, my interest is not so much in the responses of a small sample of children, as it is in the potential effect that the underlying values represented in the reading books could have on children throughout Britain. The sample sizes in the identified studies varied from a very small sample of two books (Chen, 2018) to a relatively large sample of 51 books (Rudd, 1997). Where researchers opted for fewer books, they conducted a more in-depth analysis of the books covering a variety of sub-analyses within the content analysis. Where researchers used more books, they seemed to do so in order to offer their participants the opportunity to choose books that were relevant to them. This study will be conducted with a relatively small sample of books in order to provide a more in-depth analysis, i.e. visual and textual. This is explained in greater depth in Chapter Four.

As a part of the analyses conducted in the above studies, most recognised the importance of the inclusion of a visual analysis of the illustrations or photographs included in the books (Yang, 2014; Hodkinson, 2017; McGilp, 2017; Chen, 2018). This lends itself well to theories of cultural representation and race theories where the image of black people is foregrounded (Evans and Hall, 2007). McGilp's thesis (2017) attempts to recognise CRT as a useful theory

in this field, but unfortunately uses it as an afterthought, as opposed to a central methodology. Despite this, McGilp's use of CRT, in response to a conference where Gloria Ladson-Billing was a keynote speaker, is commendable as it shows her willingness to be open to new ways of thinking about race and culture. Lexie Scherer (2016) has conducted research, which although does not rely on content analysis as a method, addresses much of the pertinent aspects of this study. The overlaps are discussed in the next section prior to the key differences in both methodology and focus.

Children, Literacy and Ethnicity (Scherer, 2016)

This research conducted by Scherer (2016) focused on reading identities in a Primary school in London. One of her main foci was advocating the children's views, which she felt gave her study its uniqueness. As stated above, this study converges with Scherer's research in a number of ways which are presented below: firstly, the most obvious convergence is the subject of reading books and the impact (potential or otherwise) that these have on children. Secondly, is the relevance of faith to the reading child and their identity, and lastly is the impact of the process of reading and how it relates to the children's racial identity. Despite these convergences, this particular study addresses a number of key issues not dealt with in Scherer's research. Firstly, this study approaches the entire study from the perspective of activism, this is important in order to ensure that attempts are made to address some of the pertinent issues that researchers in this field identify. This first departure leads quickly to the second which is that as an emic researcher, the issues to do with faith and race are not ones that I am easily able to side-line in the purposes of research, instead I have incorporated my own reflexive views on these issues as an important part of the research process. Lastly, the method of analysis used in this research ensures that a closer observation was made on the books and that specific portrayals were highlighted, thereby bringing greater clarity to perceived racial or cultural microaggressions.

The methods used by Scherer were chosen with the intent to represent children's views "in their own words" (2016, p. 39). Her framework was described as "broadly ethnographic" (ibid) and included qualitative methods, i.e. interviews. Her use of picture books to stimulate conversations with the children and produce data, included the use of three books from the ORT Biff, Chip and Kipper series, amongst other titles. While her books were chosen for being either multicultural or reading books, the focus of this study is purely on the ORT reading

books. This represents a key difference in the studies. To a large degree her study commences with the children and their views, while this study begins with the materiality of the reading books themselves. In this way, I hope to move forward the discussion in this field from identifying issues relating to the learning to read journey and racial/cultural identity, towards forming solutions to the issues highlighted. In saying this, I do not specifically intend for this study to inform policy as much as I would like it to spark mobility amongst grassroots organisations like schools, churches and community groups. The following section details the CRT methodology that frames the design of this study.

CRT Methodology

As briefly described in the previous chapter CRT partly emerged from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) in the U.S. Birthed during the Civil Rights Movement, CLS was a response to the "power and dominion of certain groups (White, male) over an unequal status quo" (Taylor, 2016, p.1). The pioneers of CRT in the U.S. made the decision to develop an 'Alternative Course' to one that was offered by Harvard University, because their request for the course to be taught by a black professor was denied (ibid). This show of black agency is central to the argument made in this study and indicates the difficult circumstances under which CRT has been developed. CRT now has an established voice in education, in both the U.S. (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Solorzano and Yosso, 2002) and the U.K. (Warmington, 2012; Hylton, 2012; Rollock, 2017; Gillborn, 2018). This study was designed to contribute to the literature with regards to educational resources and their cultural relevance, thereby attempting to fill a gap in the field. This is especially true with regards to reading books, which is surprising, given the pervasiveness of the written word, and the priority given to learning to read, by the upwardly mobile in society (Rollock et al, 2012). The CRT framework consists of a number of tenets which are detailed below.

The Centrality of Race

The primary observation that CRT offers is the centrality of race and racism to everyday life (Taylor, 2016). This observation, although sounding defeatist, exposes the hidden influence of a taken for granted white supremacist ideology that pervades many of the central institutions, including the education system. This is the premise that this study was founded on. According to this tenet of CRT, the ORT books, which have been produced within an institution operating

under a white supremacist ideology, are very likely to offer portrayals of the black characters within a culturally incomplete or inaccurate manner. This would be the case unless a thorough reflexive analysis were conducted by the editorial team, which would include the perspectives of members of the black British community. This leads us to the second tenet of CRT which is the value placed on the lived experiences of black people.

Experiential Narrative

This tenet of CRT concurs with a pedagogical approach which positions the participant as the expert, as opposed to the researcher and places value on the "narratives of selfhood" (Goodson and Gill, 2014, p. 124). This tenet is viewed as running counter to the dominance of a white supremacist narrative and has the capacity to foreground knowledge that has hitherto been silenced (Taylor, 2016). This study uses autobiographical memory and counter-narratives as techniques to highlight my own reflexivity and commitment to action and agency (Goodson and Gill, 2014; Farber and Sherry, 2016). In addition to its use throughout this study, it has enabled the formation of a culturally relevant literacy programme which supports the "ongoing process of knowledge production and learning" which is so crucial to a CRT epistemology (ibid, p. 127). The history of epistemological racism is also addressed within a CRT framework.

Reviewing and Reframing History

CRT scholars tend to situate current racialised issues within its long historical setting (Taylor, 2016). This is to say that the effects of historical epistemological racism, where power enabled the production of knowledge, reverberates still. This inequity is addressed in more depth in Chapter Three but suffice to say that the production of culturally relevant reading books enables the retelling of history from different perspectives. Interest convergence and transformative action are the last tenets of CRT defined in this study.

Agency and Action

An additional CRT tenet is the idea of interest convergence (Taylor, 2016). This pertains to the idea that white people tend to fight for black liberation only as far as it offers benefit to themselves. This specific tenet is not particularly relevant to the present study, because as

suggested by Litowitz (2016), I am of the opinion that everyone has this same tendency. That is not to say that I agree with the idea of assisting another only when it benefits the self, but it is to recognise the difficulty with proving the interest convergence claim. My preference for a refocus on agency takes precedence over this particular tenet, which the idea of transformative action (although not specific to CRT) runs parallel with (Hylton, 2012). This study is rooted in activism. A personal success criterion was for me to have been able to enact the publication of culturally relevant reading books, in tandem with conducting this study. This paragraph has highlighted one particularly perceived weakness with CRT, further such perceptions finalise the outline of CRT's relevance to this study.

Although CRT is now an established framework within education, it like many social theories is evolving. The tenets described above have been expanded within different disciplines (Cabrera, 2018). One of the main criticisms of CRT is that it lacks coherence and rigour and is therefore unable to be utilised as a social theory (ibid; Trevino et al, 2008). Furthermore, it has been suggested that Hegemonic Whiteness be explicitly situated within CRT, in order to account for this inadequacy and to enable CRT scholars to better theorise about structural racism (Cabrera, 2018). However, as shown above, the concept of whiteness is an integral part of the centrality of race tenet and this study accepts it as such. In addition, the agentic approach that this study uses does not heavily rely on the deconstruction of whiteness (although its presence is recognised). It instead focuses on the process of normalising blackness through interventions in the early years sector of education.

Conclusion

This literature review has summarised the main concepts relevant to this study. It started with a contextualisation of the issues within race, education and reading books, I then showed that cultural relevance has been authenticated as a term used in both legal and educational literature, in local and global contexts. The dearth of recent policy regarding race and education highlights the lack of top-down attention given to the issue, however the attention that the media has given to this subject has proven that it is still very much an issue on people's hearts and minds. The contribution of black Christian theologians, highlights both the importance of the black church for members of the black community but also as a potential agent for transformative change. Reading scheme books have been presented as a site which has further potential for transformation, but which was initiated from a white, male cultural perspective

and therefore lacks cultural relevance for a variety of groups, and although changes have been made, publishers of dominant schemes, like ORT, still maintain a lack of reflexivity that counters their reputation for being an outstanding educational institution. Black agency is emphasised in the summary of children's publications written and illustrated by members of the black British community. A useful attempt at defining black British cultures is included, while emphasising the non-essentialist characteristics of the group. I have highlighted the recognised need to adopt a strategically essentialist position, that focuses on the specifics of language, food, music and spiritual beliefs as indicators of black British cultures. Next, I summarised some of the literature that is available which represents the methodological considerations of this study, and lastly, I have outlined how the major tenets of CRT relate specifically to this study. The following chapter details the ontological underpinning of this study.

Chapter Two
Ontology

"One han wash de odder." (McKenzie, 2002, p.257)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explain the value-base from which the ideas in this study are gleaned from. This is important because it provides the reader with the context in which the ORT books have been analysed, and the framework that fuels both this and future studies.

The first research question explained in the Introduction, speaks of cultural relevance. The idea of relevance connotes specificity. In order to understand cultural relevance, we must understand who we are referring to. In the case of this study, black British students are the specified group, but more than identifying the 'who', we must be able to delineate the cultural needs of the specified 'who'. The meeting of needs brings ontological relevance but as Ladson-Billings (1995) concurs in her definition of cultural relevance, "students [must be taught] to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate." This understanding of who you are as an individual but also as a part of a greater whole is central to the ontological argument that I make in this section. It seeks to outline the concept of the self and identity that frames this study, and I offer an attempt to outline the cultural needs of black British students, in the subsequent chapter. The distinction between cultural needs and universal needs is important because it is a distinction between that which is vital for human survival, and that which is vital for a culture's survival. The latter is what this study is mainly concerned with, without denying the possibility that the two types of needs mentioned are interconnected.

The concept of identity is inextricably linked to our understanding of why we exist. Unravelling our personal concept of self is often a gruelling ordeal, as it involves the temporary deconstruction of our holistic selves into separate entities. It becomes even more painful when aspects of yourself are irretrievably incomplete due to historical injustices, or indeed from a lack of access to the ancestral relationships that would fill in the pieces.

The process of taking apart complex layers of cultural mesh, in order to relay, through narrative, our unique perspective on life, is something that I believe should be prioritised and endeavoured at least once in a lifetime. This is my attempt. Within the deconstruction process lies the ontological positioning which is the catalyst for a study such as this. It is my sincere desire to document truthfully, regardless of whether or not all the expected boxes have been ticked. For instance, theology rather than theory, undergirds my ontological framework. In other words, my understanding of Who God is fuels my understanding of my purpose in life, and my personal understanding of who I am. Yet as a black woman, my blossoming theological understanding has had to contend with aspects of Christianity that I have perceived as being restrictive (or dare I say oppressive). On the other hand, as a Pentecostal Christian I am aware of the way in which I could be pigeon-holed by those who refute fundamental beliefs. I recognise that as I attempt to outlay my version of truth, vulnerability is inevitable and is a prerequisite for reconciliation. Reconciliation, as Goodson and Gill (2014) suggest, is in turn a key prerequisite for transformation. Theology agrees, so I will attempt to outline my ontological perspective using the theology of reconciliation.

Reconciliation means different things to different people. The consensus on the global scene is that it regards peace, forgiveness, unity and ubuntu (Tutu, 1999; Lederach, 1999; Romocea, 2004; Roberts, 2005; Carney, 2010; Rap, 2015; Tsakiridis, 2018; Leon van Ommen, 2018). This study is situated within this theological framework and hopes to add an important dimension that seems to be missing in the debate. That is of personal reconciliation as a means to reconciliation on a global level. The following sections outline my argument regarding multileveled reconciliation with personal reconciliation being a key starting point, and unity as an ideal state (again with the focus on personal unity as foundational). My contention is that personal unity leads to wholeness – or reconciliation on the other levels and is therefore an ideal state to work towards. I proffer the idea that even in cases where the ideal state is not achieved, movement towards this state is more preferable than a completely divided self. This movement happens through what I consider to be a spiritually initiated state of 'flow'. While clarifying this study's use of spirituality, as being steeped in the Pentecostal tradition, I include in this section a discussion of the concept of this spiritual flow that enables transformation and does not depend on the power base of others. In so doing, I purport the agentic power of the Pentecostal church and make a firm, as well as self-accountable, call to action. These areas of discussion have been chosen because they are all areas, that do not depend on the influence or assistance of dominant cultures in order for them to be initiated. This also explains the

emphasis on personal reconciliation. Although all charitable organisations (of which the church is one) are subject to laws and regulations, the black church has an influence within the black community that has largely been unhindered by the dominance of white secular cultures, and therefore represents a site where further transformative change in the form of personal to community reconciliation can and should happen. It is worth repeating that while I use the term 'black church', I recognise that not all black Christians nor black churches are Pentecostal and that the term 'black' is being used in a strategically essentialist manner, as mentioned in the previous chapters. The idea of temporary separation in order to reconcile, is akin to the process of deconstructing in order to reconstruct and is mused on by Lederach in the following manner:

"One of the least-understood aspects of reconciliation is how to think about and allow for spaces of separation as an acceptable stage in the spiritual journey toward reconciliation." (Lederach, 1999, p. 20).

I liken a strategic essentialist approach to the temporary separation or deconstruction of cultural groupings, in order to allow opportunity for those groups to reflect and devise means, by which they are able to continue the social conversation on a more equal basis. I consider that over a historical timeline, it becomes necessary for groups, that flow altogether in the same direction, to momentarily step outside of that flow to ensure that their voice is being recorded and acted upon, in proportion to their unique needs. Where the balance is disproportionate; adjustments need to be made in order for it to be able to claim the label of fair, equal and intercultural. In the light of recent political and academic disregard of racialized issues (Gillborn et al, 2016), this study represents a refocus on racial and cultural adjustments that need to be made.
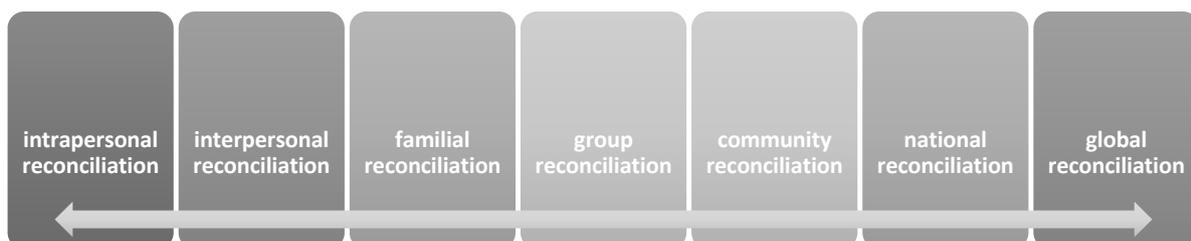
Multileveled Reconciliation

The conversation regarding reconciliation is a social justice issue. Some black theologians view the concept of reconciliation as belonging firmly beside the need for liberation (Roberts, 2005; Tutu, 1999), and by focusing their argument on the former, they show that black theology is often reluctant to engage with this idea in order to ensure that they do not condone the biblical concept of turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39, 40). There are many commonalities between the argument that I make in this chapter, with the ideas that currently exist, however, my main divergence is that I propose that reconciliation is a key means for liberation, as opposed to an

idea that exists alongside it. It is my intention to show how reconciliation on a number of different levels, is a prerequisite for liberation, as opposed to running parallel with it.

To reconcile, in its etymological form, means to "make (two apparently conflicting things) compatible or consistent with each other" (Collins English Dictionary, 2015). This definition suggests that agreement or oneness has been disturbed and through some process, wholeness, whether in the same way as the original state or not, is to be restored. On a global level this attests to the idea that all of humanity was at one point in history united. This idea is as easily emanated from a Creationist view of the earth's genesis, as it is from an Evolutionist perspective. A common heritage gives life to the idea of world peace, despite the fact that we have evolved uniquely. To black theologians, the idea of reconciliation is often viewed as an act of making a bargain with the enemy (Cone, 2013), however, the concept of reconciliation that I refer to is that which brings unity or oneness on a number of levels.

The primary level that I am concerned with is individual or personal reconciliation, where one has an ever-increasing degree of reconciliation with oneself. A more comprehensive explanation of this ideal is expounded later. Secondarily, reconciliation happens with those who we share intimacy with, then the wider family network, including children or members of the extended family. Reconciliation can also be seen within the organisational communities that we belong to, like places of work, worship or leisure. The level of conscious reconciliation within wider regions or nations is perhaps less than the former types mentioned, but it is nonetheless vital to recognise this type of unity, as it leads to a global understanding of reconciliation. This spectrum of personal to global reconciliation, visually represented in fig. 1, is not viewed as necessarily linear or one-directional; it is seen instead as a fluid bi-directional movement which can only be transformative if it is pursued from a sense of individual responsibility and intentionality.

| intrapersonal reconciliation | interpersonal reconciliation | familial reconciliation | group reconciliation | community reconciliation | national reconciliation | global reconciliation |

fig. 1

This idea, of multi-levelled reconciliation, is hinted at in Kincheloe's desire to see human beings regain their sense of belongingness "to both the world and to other people around them." (Kincheloe, 2007, p.33). The detail given to each level in the above image asserts the value that each stage gives to the other, serving as either a pattern to emulate or a foundation to learn from. The microcosm of an individual person fully reconciled, although an often distant ideal, potentially offers clues to global reconciliation. This then becomes a critical ontology involving "the process of reconnecting human beings on a variety of levels and in numerous ways to a living social and physical web of reality" (ibid, p.34).

Before delving further, let me insert a cautionary note about the concept of individualism, which is often paired as the twin of competitiveness (Roberts, 2005). When linked in this way, it is easy to see how the Western concept of individualism stands in opposition to the idealised African ubuntu concept of community (Tutu, 1999). If, however, individualism leads to the idea of individual wholeness, then it is possible for the two ideologies to exist complimentarily. The instructions given on flights abroad exemplify my thoughts. We are told that in the case of an emergency during air flights, we are to first secure our own oxygen mask, before assisting those around us, not for individualist reasons, but in order to ensure that by prioritising your basic needs you are then able to assist others. This simple idea is exemplified in the Bible, where we are described as worse than an infidel for neglecting the needs of our own household (1 Timothy 5:8). It would appear selfish if it was read in isolation but read in the context of a self-less Christ, it appears that we have paradoxically missed the mark in our attempts at being righteous. This idea of individualism firstly insists on the reconciliation of the self, (spirit, soul and body), in order to be able to initiate reconciliation between the self and the other. This is relevant to the concept of cultural relevance in that it ensures a thorough knowledge and respect for the self as a prerequisite to knowing about and respecting the other. In addition, the idea of an individualised curricular is a key approach taken within cultures that emphasise reading and writing as the main activities within schools. This emphasis on reading and writing, as opposed to speaking and listening, encourages an individualism that is inherent throughout the entire educational journey. My own engagement with the Open University, during what could have been an isolating time of bringing up my children, is an example of how an individualised approach has the potential to offer progress for marginalised groups. Reading, although scaffolded in the early years, is for the most part an individualised activity, which leaves readers open to a variety of interpretations of text. With this in mind, reading books, including the

ORT books, have a responsibility to ensure that as far as possible, reading material is free from negative stereotypes that early readers could absorb without challenge.

The theoretical challenge to the above idea, comes from the concept that we can only understand the self through our exclusion of the Other. This idea, discussed by Hall (1996), details that the focus on understanding or identifying the Self, is overrated. We should, he insists, focus more on who we can potentially become based on our interactions with Others and the transformation that this will inevitably lead to. He disregards any hint of an essentialist narrative of the self, due to the stereotypes that they lead to. While I disagree with the idea that we understand ourselves by excluding the Other, I concur that a focus on *becoming* alongside *being* is a satisfying and beneficial process. The next section details this concurrence but insists on the idea that rather than excluding the Other, we recognise, appreciate and respect their difference, which leads to mutual transformation and can aid the reconciliation process.

Unity as an Ideal

Trinitarian theology presents God as one God, existing in three persons (Roberts, 2005), and humans, who are made in the image of God, are therefore tripartite. That is consisting of spirit, soul and body (Reddie, 2014). Personal reconciliation can therefore be perceived as the ideal state of a completely unified self, where all three spheres of the self are overlapped, as demonstrated in fig. 2.
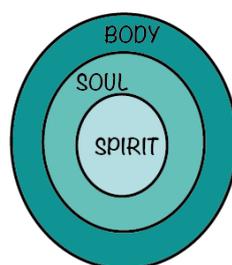
fig. 2

This ontological positioning stands aloof from the relativist ideology that acknowledges the relative truth of a multiplicity of voices. It is not too difficult to move from a theology that finds stability in the singleness of moral truth, to a critical theorist positioning that insists on the need for a moral stance on global issues. Reconciliation of the spirit, soul and body then

speaks of a spiritual responsibility to do the right thing, which is only actualised by the decision-making of the free-willed soul. This is inevitably connected to our interpersonal relationships; however, it is necessary to adopt subjectivity for a while before moving the discussion on. The desire to *do* good is incomplete without the pre-requisition of *being* good. The identity of *being*, can be confidently asserted through a spiritual identity that relies, not on self-righteousness, but on being "the righteousness of God in [Christ]." (2 Corinthians 5:21). This righteousness, although thankfully imputed, insists on righteous outputs, which in the language of Critical Theory would be translated as justice. Physically speaking, goodness could refer to bodily health, as well as the conscious embrace of the skin that you are in. These two ideas have special relevance to black people living in Britain. The historical and persistent "devouring of black flesh" has been aptly analysed by Beckford (2014, p. 92). While his analysis of cannibalism refers mostly to cognitive or systemic devouring, his recognition that black people have suffered physical atrocities to both body and soul, leads to the strategizing of means to re-represent black bodies as good. An appreciation of the goodness in black bodies inevitably leads to respect and self-care that would in turn promote respect in a society where black people have been disproportionately criminalised and over-medicated (Travis, 2017; MacAttram, 2017). This is not the place for a discussion on these aspects of institutional racism, but their mention is pertinent to education and pedagogy, in the sense that a critical pedagogy is needed for students to have a rounded understanding of the society which they are growing up in, and aspects of it which directly and indirectly impact their educational journeys.

Although this idea is being discussed pertaining to the individual, it is not too difficult to see how the same is true for a community of people. The recognition and celebration of the good in a family or a community, equates to recognising and celebrating their strengths, and it is this primary stage of self-awareness that is lacking amongst black British students, as compared to white British students (Said, 2017). An epistemology that omits the knowledge of self is suspicious and provides fuel to conspiracy theories that insist on a systemic vendetta against a particular community. The desire to know about black contributions to many different fields, is evident in the publication and distribution of books on the subject, outlined in the literature review. However, while the production of these books is applauded, they risk marginalising black cultures further by confirming their status as exceptional. The normalisation of cultures happens when knowledge is assumed. This happens, perhaps most successfully, when knowledge is transferred subliminally and without fanfare. The repeated exposure that readers get to 'the man in the background', will develop, at a sub-conscious level, the ingrained idea

that the everyday, normal man is white, if that is what they are exposed to. This level of characterisation is perhaps more influential than the characterisation of main or supporting characters. The thoughtful and racially diverse characterisation of characters within reading books, is a first useful step towards developing an education system that is culturally relevant to marginalised communities.

In addition to the knowledge of the self, including strengths and weaknesses, knowledge of the Other is a prerequisite for reconciliation on any of the other levels that I previously mentioned. This knowledge of the Other, need not be accompanied by fear or jealousy, when viewed through the lens of reconciliation firstly, because reconciliation attests to the original state of unity in which the self and the Other existed, and secondly, because of the mutual benefit that comes from the unity of differences. Where one lacks, the other compensates for and if this is approached with a confident self-awareness, then reconciliation is more likely to be achieved. Jesus' commandment to love others as you love yourself is now realisable (Mark 12: 31). From this we can see that it is important for cultures living within a multicultural society to have access to educational material that show a diversity of cultures, in order for the negative connotations associated with the Other to be dispelled. Global attention has been given to this subject in the World Culture Report 2000, (UNESCO, 2000). The report heralds creative pluralism as a key attainment on the journey to cultural equality, which involves "an active and dynamic coexistence of diverse groups" (ibid, p.39). In order for this to be achieved, the acceptance of the other is a prerequisite, which is made less challenging when knowledge of the Other is subsumed in everyday societal exchanges like viewing billboards, purchasing groceries and learning to read.

Hall's (1996) preference for an attention on *becoming*, (or the constant transformation process of cultures), rather than *being*, (which is the idea that a static cultural state exists) can be viewed through this same theological lens. I would argue that the complete overlap of the tripartite self, achieves this state of 'becoming' because the efficiency of spiritual forces leads the way, and the idea of 'becoming' must refer ultimately to an improved (or at least improving) state of 'being' in the future. It must offer hope, and hope, for communities that have been marginalised, is packaged in the ability to access power, i.e. the ability to act. Being led by the spirit, not only safeguards righteous or just intentions, but also, according to Pentecostal tradition, gives access to power. In its most basic form, power can be seen as energy and when

discussed in relation to physical things, on the individual level of reconciliation, renders this complex discussion more comprehensible.

Flow

The idea of how *becoming* becomes an experienced process, can be explained in the terms of a *flow*. That is the purity of intent and power inherent in the spirit becoming accessible to the soul and physical entities, through the flow of the same. The greater the degree of flow from the spirit and retention of the qualities, enables the flow to be cognitively realised, then physically felt and utilised beneficially. The diagram in figure 3 depicts this concept of flow with more clarity.

SPIRIT

SOUL

BODY
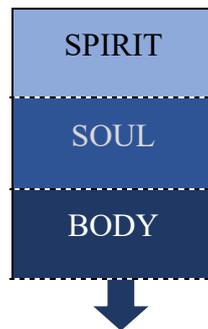
fig. 3

This concept of 'flow' runs parallel to the idea of 'becoming' as they both depict a constant transformation process. On the personal level, each unique combination of factors that make us who we are adds to the flow in a number of ways. For instance, music can be seen as a cultural activator of the flow of 'becoming'. As an identified cultural resource, different styles of music will affect each of us differently, at different times and seasons and is used as a socio-political force with intent. Musical force that flows through the soul and changes emotions, often moves to action, for ill or for good. So, far from being a mere product of culture, it is also able to transform culture. Reggae music, which is quintessentially Jamaican, has transformed local cultures across the globe which is manifested in associated dance/hair styles, language and socio-politics (Gilroy, 1993). The merging of cultures is a part of the *becoming* process, but my contention is that the real selves inside of us, is not a mere product of culture, but the driving force of it. In addition, I purport the idea that in becoming psychologically and physically, who we already are spiritually, we activate a flow that is simultaneously powerful

and vulnerable. Powerful in the sense that in its undiluted form, it holds the perhaps subconscious answers to many of the world's issues, and vulnerable in the sense that while the flow releases, albeit in micro-unit proportions, it is subject to being misunderstood, misappropriated, misused or worse still, ignored.

The idea of 'flow' has been adeptly explored by Csíkszentmihályi (2008) from a psychological perspective. His emphasis is mostly on the individual's agency to embrace and enjoy mundane or challenging aspects of life. His idea of flow pertains to an experience of optimal engagement which emanates from eight components, these are as follows: the clarity of goals and immediate feedback; a high level of concentration on a limited field; balance between skills and challenge; the feeling of control; effortlessness, an altered perception of time; the unity of actions and consciousness and the immediate gratification that an activity gives. As stated above, Csíkszentmihályi's research was conducted from a psychological perspective and focuses on making the tedious or difficult aspects of life more rewarding. Although there may be overlapping concepts, my understanding of flow is very different. First of all, I perceive that the origin of flow can be likened to that of a river; it appears to have an identified origin, but actually its movements are cyclical. The flow diagram depicted in fig. 3, shows what I consider to be an ideal state of flow, where the spiritual does drive the movement, however, in reality, there are many factors that encourage the flow of becoming, from all three spheres. For example, physical exercise is well-known for having psychological benefits. Csíkszentmihályi's research however, omits the possibility that a spiritual origin of flow could be the most efficient. It also appears to be far removed from the critical element that I consider to be vital to any pursuit of individual transformation. Apart from the idea of team flow that he proffers, his concepts do not provide much scope for challenging social injustices, they instead seem to offer a coping mechanism for how to maintain peace and joy despite social injustices. This aspect of his concept of flow is potentially dangerous, as oppressive situations could remain unchallenged. That is to say that although I argue for a theology of reconciliation as a means to liberation, I in no way support the argument that reconciliation must equal the forgive and forget notion that often leads to repetitive abuse. Loving your neighbour as you love yourself ensures balance and assumes the initial loving of yourself. Forgiveness, yes, but amnesia is a condition that needs to be corrected, whether found in an individual or a community!

Kincheloe's rejection of Cartesian mind/body division leads to the pursuit of "new relationships with the body, mind, and spirit" (Kincheloe, 2007, p.34). The understanding of a critical ontology sparked off from the spirit within us, has potential to bring us closer to these new relationships. While Kincheloe and others mostly refer to "an inward turn" (ibid, p.32) towards consciousness, I offer the possibility that the inward turn is actually towards our spiritual selves, a sub-conscious part of our whole, which releases tremendous transformational power as we encourage the flow. Lederach (1999) depicts the concept of reconciliation as both a journey and a series of encounters. Both these ideas support the two most pertinent aspects of this chapter. One that reconciliation exists in the movement within, between and among people, and secondly that "encounters with self, with God, and with other(s)" happen along that journey (p.23). The idea of spirituality conjures many different ideas to different people, so I will now clarify my use of it, and in so doing, move towards a critical spirituality seen in Pentecostalism.

Pentecostal Spirituality

Using Pentecostalism as a lens through which to discuss identity leads us to a culturally relevant discussion of spirituality. Beckford's work on dread theology (2011), has made possible a conversation about African spirituality, that brings acceptability to the idea of discussing spirituality outside of a European perspective. As outlined in the literature review, Pentecostalism in the UK has been forged through socio-political challenges and collective determination. Its acceptance and validation in British society has come with the stereotypical representation outlined by Beckford in the previous chapter, but it represents an entrenched part of black British society (Aldred, 2013). Pentecostalism represents an ideology within the UK, that mobilises a significant majority of the black British community, and therefore deserves to be recognised as such. It is not without critique, Reddie (2008), Beckford (2014) and others have challenged Pentecostal leadership with the mandate to "engage the wider culture, and advocate for its poorest and most marginalized members." (Beckford, 2014, p. 4). Although this charge has been made with regards to academic and political engagement, it would be remiss of the black church to solely change the trajectory of growth towards socio-political gain. The type of engagement encouraged by black Christian theologians should instead be viewed as originating from the deeper recesses of the spirit of an individual, family, community etc, in order to gain and maintain efficiency and success. When flowing from this space of pure intent and spiritual power, the momentum is almost infallible due to it being

charged with conviction and accountability to a sovereign Source. This understanding of transformation originating from within is echoed by Lederach (1999, p.71) with regards to reintegrating soldiers back into previously war-torn societies. He states, "it is not just a question of reinserting or reintegrating soldiers back into society, as if they are a physical entity being recycled. It is about personal and social transformation that must emerge from within."

Pentecostals attribute the unceasing supply of power to the Holy Spirit, but the proportionality of the amount then spent on practical measures that transform lives, is questionable. The mandate for black British Pentecostals is similar to that of this study. That is to adopt a praxis approach where "aesthetic consideration and abstract formulation are subordinate to instrumentality and theological-political struggle" (Beckford, 2014, p. 5). This represents a critical ontology that flows from the deepest recesses of spiritual conviction, intent and power; engaging theoretical and theological thought, but ultimately leading to multi-generationally transformed lives and minds, as Jesus did. Roberts concurs with the idea of the black church's influence, he states that the "black church has almost unlimited resources for racial uplift and for overcoming … barriers…" (Roberts, 2005, p. 95). Identifying the specific resources in the British context is a useful basis from which to encourage their utilisation.

The combination of factors that are perhaps unique to the black British Pentecostal community, mean that the level of expectation from young people within the same community is high. These factors include the belief in the impact of spiritual power; the economic clout (relative to other parts of the black community); the relational network of a variety of professionals, and elders who are experienced in establishing institutions, programmes and projects; the real estate that is within its ownership, and the already established ministries that have successfully mobilised thousands of children and young people. There are undoubtedly factors that I have omitted, as well some that I have included which are debatable. However, the point is to highlight the potential that exists for the Pentecostal church to spur the flow of multileveled reconciliation through the many different resources that are at its disposal.

Conclusion

Theological reconciliation, as I have outlined above maintains uniqueness, celebrates differences and welcomes opportunities to learn new modes of interaction and development. When pursued consciously, on an individual level as well as interpersonally, it offers scope for

the reversal and transformation of cultural injustices, as it creates respect for the self and others. It emphasises the source of power as being within each person, without discrimination and idealises a state of wholeness that can be initiated by the individual, (therefore emphasising human agency) and transposed to a variety of interpersonal levels of engagement. The black Pentecostal church in Britain, is presented in this study as an ideal vehicle for community engagement that prioritises lasting transformation, or in the words of Jesus, fruit that remains (John 15:16). The following chapter explains the epistemological positioning which flows from a similarly critical perspective.

Chapter Three
Epistemology

"Bend de tree when-e young." (McKenzie, 2002, p.35)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to clarify the relevance of the previous discussion on ontology to the production of educational resources and education in general.

Following on from an ontology that idealises the state of wholeness, on an individual and collective level, the question must be asked, 'what knowledge will bring us to this state of wholeness or unity?' It is clear that the idea of the self as 'becoming', requires us to understand the different components that make up our spirit, soul and body. This is equally true when seeking wholeness as a community, nation or globally. Understanding the differences without fear, jealousy or evil intent, will enable us to embrace difference, not as something to be subordinated, but as a crucial force that enables our flow of 'becoming'. Lederach (1999) makes a similar assertion in this way. "We must learn how to develop a positive identity of self and group that is not based on criticizing or feeling superior to another person or group." To this extent, I would like to suggest that first understanding ourselves, in terms of our culture, likes, dislikes and our own positioning, ensures our reflexivity and subsequently enables us to adequately comprehend the other, (those we interact with and those who we see from a distance).

A CRT methodology acknowledges and validates indigenous and personal knowledge, and this is instrumental in enabling marginalised cultures and their associated people groups to be re-humanised. The challenge appears when researching or trying to access knowledge which has been rudely interrupted by historical occurrences, i.e. the slavery of African people, colonialism and neo-colonialism. The irreversibility of these significant historical occurrences means that whatever micro components of one's marginalised culture that is retainable, is grasped with a sense of urgency because we recognise that it is by holding onto these indigenous knowledges that we will be able to reproduce ourselves culturally. This does not negate the hybridity of culture, what it does is insist that during the transformative process, indigenous and personal knowledge is not side-lined.

Following the pattern of first identifying the needs, I now propose to outline the epistemological needs of black British students. From the outset, I am suspicious of any attempt to state the needs of a group of people from outside of that group, however, my suspicions are alleviated somewhat by the fact that I am currently a black British student, albeit not in the early years sector. In addition, I recognise that children are not always able to adequately voice their own needs, and so depend on others to advocate for them. These advocates often assume the roles of parents (of which I am one), teachers (I am also one of those) and researchers. I am therefore more at ease with sharing what I believe to be the epistemological needs of black British students, within a strategically essentialist paradigm. My subsequent focus is on the concept of pragmatism and how it relates to CRT, knowledge that is rooted in black cultures and early years education.

Epistemological Needs

To begin with, it is recognised that there is a distinct lack of knowledge when it comes to black history in general (Garvey, 1923; Gilroy, 1987; Rollock et al, 2012). This has been addressed to some degree by the celebration of Black History Month in October. However, it is still common to hear young children citing Florence Nightingale's contributions to war efforts, while having little or no knowledge of who Mary Seacole was. The recent commemorations of 70 years since the SS Empire Windrush docked into Tilbury, Essex, on June 22nd, 1948, have given many teachers the opportunity to share significant aspects of black British history with a wide range of students. How many of those opportunities have been taken up is another question altogether. Having a secure body of knowledge of their cultural selves is the first prerequisite for being able to engage critically with this knowledge (Freire and Macedo, 1999). The seamless way in which my English teacher, the late Mr. Henry, would tell us Brer Anansi stories and jokes set in a Vincentian context, not only expanded our cultural knowledge, it also positioned these stories alongside the teaching of Shakespeare, which gave us the unquestionable message that they were equally relevant and valuable. This epistemological consideration is explored in more depth a little further on, but needless to say this body of knowledge can successfully be incorporated into a rigorous reading programme, while ensuring that literacy is the primary academic goal.

The second and most child-like suggested need is that of stimulus that sparks curiosity (ibid). Freire refers to an "epistemological curiosity" (p.51), that emanates from the dialogue that occurs within a learning environment. The curiosity should be followed up intentionally and without allowing the bureaucracy, which sometimes plagues educational institutions, to hinder its flow. Reading books are often seen as solely a means to improve children's literacy. I see them as becoming the means to improving children's critical literacy and engagement by providing stimulus that encourages dialogue and epistemological curiosity.

Thirdly, knowledge presented in written form is indelibly understood, by early years children, as being important (Eyden et al, 2013). Children are taught this concept from a very young age with the use of a variety of reading material that is used socially. Reading books are a vital part of that variety, but so too are various versions of the Bible, traffic signs and food labels for example. By observing how their respected elders engage with each of these, children understand that written language produces action, demands respect and signifies the meeting of their basic needs. By reproducing a child's culture in everyday print provides them with an alternative position of what is currently considered to be accepted knowledge (Freire and Macedo, 1999). Who they are and what they know of themselves gains respect by its inclusion in the elite world of print. This does nothing to negate the status given to orality, which will inevitably play a part in developing children's skills of comprehension, inference and deduction. The following section details my arguments concerning the importance of a praxis approach, how this relates to the CRT paradigm which this study falls within, as well as to the dispersal of a black epistemology and lastly, how this could be addressed within the production of a culturally relevant reading scheme.

Critical Race Theory and Praxis

CRT solidifies my ability to make assertions that reflect the reality of institutional racism in British education (Macpherson, 1999). Emerging from a postmodern ideology, CRT encourages educational researchers to accept the efficacy of diverse cultures. The attraction to CRT is its praxis approach. Activism, being a foundational underpinning of this study, flows with the grain of this perspective, and is situated within a pragmatist paradigm, as opposed to a formalist one (Farber and Sherry, 2016). Leading on from this approach I now include an example of where this approach has been firstly lauded by the global population, but secondly not attributed to the correct racial or cultural source due to what can only reasonably be

described as racism. This can be found from the archives of a BBC documentary co-produced, written and presented by Simon Reeves (2014). The programme details the extraordinary value of the River Nile to the countries that it flows through, and Reeves makes pertinent stops along the river to explore the various cultures. When discussing the construction of pyramids found in Sudan he states,

"I was travelling to a region that was once home to the ancient Nile civilization now known as Nubia… Archaeologists like Tim Kendall are shedding new light on a largely forgotten civilization. When people think of a culture along the Nile in ancient times, I think they just think of ancient Egypt, but we're in Sudan."

His travelling companion, Kendall, continues,

"Right. There was a major ancient civilization here. Urban, literate, powerful kings that controlled a vast empire in the 8th century, bigger than any empire that had ever been on the Nile before. And here we are standing in front of pyramids of these kings, 2000 kilometres south of the pyramids of Egypt."

Reeves goes on to explain that the so-called black Pharaohs were a powerful dynasty that ruled Sudan and all of Egypt. However, evidencing the existence of this dynasty is not the sole reason for the use of such a lengthy quote, it is to prepare for the following dialogue which clarifies the deliberate omission of the recognition that the highly revered cultural artefacts, the pyramids, were contributed by black Africans.

"Kendall: …there's a funny thing I noticed in Cairo and that is that on the façade of the Cairo Museum, the only dynasty that isn't named is the 25th dynasty… The dynasty of Kush which ruled them…They deliberately cut it out.
Reeves: Some archaeologists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries refused to accept that a black African civilization could have achieved what it did. They said the people here must have been lighter skinned, maybe Libyans, maybe even… early Europeans. It's racism. There are actually more pyramids in Sudan than in Egypt. Ignorance of Nubian culture has in some ways denied the black Africans who live here now, and Sudan generally, an historical claim to this land and even to the Nile itself."

Like the majesty of the Nubian pyramids, the real value of a praxis approach, is not so much in its origination, but in its ability to make academic research that stands out. However, by altering black historical knowledge, much damage has been done with regards to the perception of black Africans and what they are capable of. This example of a deliberate distortion of history, signifies a number of key issues. First, we understand the value placed on a pragmatist approach in the creation of the pyramids. Secondly, we can relate this pragmatism to a black epistemology and thirdly, we can place pragmatism firmly within a CRT methodology. This last point is what I turn my attention to in the following paragraph.

Counter-narratives and Storytelling

The value placed upon the lived experiences of black people is a key tenet of CRT (Parker and Lynn, 2016). These experiences form the basis of counter-narratives and the storytelling approach that is also customarily used by CRT researchers (Rollock et al, 2012). The connection between pragmatism and storytelling has been detailed by Farber and Sherry (2016) and convincingly draws on the historical legal roots of CRT with regards to the use of case studies which embed general theories. They also highlight the important understanding that neither concrete nor abstract cognition should be viewed as "the unique domain of a particular race or gender" (p.318). My emphasis on pragmatism for the outcomes of this study are due to my being convinced that the praxis approach to research is what is currently needed in order to move from mere discussion of racialized issues to the transformation that we so desperately want to experience. The counter-narrative and storytelling approaches used within CRT, sit in perfect tandem with the idea of a culturally relevant reading program and the next paragraph highlights how this connectivity is further seen in early years education in general.

Pragmatism in Early Years Education

As well as coming from a CRT epistemology, a praxis approach mirrors the current thinking about how early years learning should take place (DfE, 2017). In mainstream early years settings, practitioners are encouraged to allow children to learn through their play activities, rather than through focused tutoring (Tickell, 2011). The flow of 'becoming' that was described in the previous section, is also mirrored by the current thinking on literacy studies in the early years, where children are encouraged to learn through child-initiated play. This idea highlights both the agency of the student and the sense that they are *becoming* learners, but that

they are also in the state of *being* a learner, (Kuby and Vaughn, 2015). This is important in a study that is focusing on cultural relevance because it is important for children from all cultural backgrounds to have a firm confidence in their ability to learn and that this ability is not opposite to what they know in their home learning site (Scherer, 2016). The early years student learns to read at home, school, group and community settings and so embracing the variety of learning sites in which a child experiences literacy, is an important part of culturally relevant pedagogy.

My commitment to activism is seen in both the foundation of this study as well as the end goal. In the sense that my practice as an English teacher initiated the study and the intended outcome is to produce material that could be used in that same practice. Our preference for learning through action is not affected by our age or level of study, this principle is as vital to learning to read in the early years, as it is to the construction of a doctoral thesis. However, it is vital, if our studies are to have social impact, that praxis is paired with specificity. We need to have a specific idea about what we hope to do, and although specificity does not equate to rigidity, a moral stance must be taken from a CRT perspective, which will bring with it, transformative action.

Language

I believe that I have Ghanaian roots. This belief gives me a real sense of cultural stability, and pleasure as I have often been told that I could pass for a Ghanaian. That is except for my inability to converse in a language that would identify me as such. My true mother tongue has been stolen from me. The sense of loss, when it comes to aspects of culture that have been deleted due to the reality of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, is real. Perhaps, then there is little wonder at the tendency of many people, from the African-Caribbean diaspora, to cling to a language that provides them with a sense of linguistic restoration. The wider debate on the use of black Language includes a global analysis of the effect of Barack Obama's use of language in political spheres (Alim et al, 2016). While this analysis on racio-linguistics includes a look at the British context, it contains a mere introductory glance on the effect that this could have on education. Viv Edward's seminal book (1979) on the effect of language differences between Creole and English, on the educational performance of children with African-Caribbean ethnicity, gives credible insight not only into the social aspects of the use of Patwa in schools, but it also provides us with a useful understanding of the linguistic structure of Patwa. Patwa

(as speakers themselves tend to refer to it) is a language that is inherent within black British cultures. It is, however, a language that has often been relegated to informal settings such as the home and the playground. In fact, there are those who would like to reduce it to something less than a language, a type of pidgin that has insufficient structure to be called a language. As Edward shows Patwa has its own historical development, phonology, morphology and vocabulary that is similar, in the sense of having a continuum, to languages spoken in many European countries. She also highlights the variations spoken in different Caribbean islands. Despite this diversity, many black British children and young people have veered towards the use of Jamaican Patwa, partly due to the high percentage of Jamaicans that form the black population in Britain, but also due to the popularity of reggae music (Gilroy, 1993). The recent translation of the New Testament Bible into Jamaican Patwa (Bible Society, 2011) has given us an opportunity to validate its use in academic settings, as well as giving us a more widely available example of its written use.

Although Edwards addresses the use of Patwa by people living in the Caribbean, the main focus of her analysis is centred on the use of Patwa among children and young people, living in Britain, whose parents are from the Caribbean. A particular example that she used highlights the subtle differences that existed in the speech of these children, and which no doubt has been passed onto their children as well. She quotes from a study by Sutcliffe (1978 in Edwards, 1979) who recorded the speech of thirty-two secondary school children in Bedford.

"The Sutcliffe data contain examples like:

> So I just knocked him out of bed and jumped in, and then he turn on the light again se boy what are you doing there?
> Them boys, when they came in they stepped on my bag and all my sandwiches broke up.

The second example is particularly interesting. Sentence structure follows the Creole pattern whereby temporal clauses and adverbs are placed between the subject and verb of the main or embedded clause; 'broke up' is preferred to 'squashed'; and there is evidence of the Creole dislike for passives. Yet, this statement is fully inflected and contains none of the features usually associated with West Indian speech. It is not difficult to understand when we consider examples such as these why teachers and others should feel that West Indians speak like their White peers, for unless they have an intimate knowledge of Creole they are unlikely to detect its influence on the way many West Indians speak." (Edwards, 1979, p. 35).

The influence that she speaks of has undoubtedly had an effect on many black British students' ability to speak, write and read standard English, and teachers' assessment of this ability has not taken these influences into consideration. The identified influences could be seen as validation for the attempt to eradicate the use of Patwa, if Standard English is viewed as the epitome of language use. However, this study regards black British linguistic episteme as valuable, not only as an expression of "rejection, alienation and frustration", (ibid, p. 39), but as a contributor to British literary canons. As such, Patwa should occupy at least the same status as languages that are frequently quoted or referred to despite their current marginality. Latin, for instance, is often quoted in academic texts for various reasons and its use is viewed as a marker of esteemed academic credibility. My use of Patwa and Adinkra in the writing of this thesis exemplifies a way in which writers can elevate the status of their use, in tandem with providing readers with opportunities to glean from their compressed truths and expressions of general wisdom (ibid). The use of Patwa in reading books would further enable black British students to regard their linguistic inheritance with a sense of veneration, rather than as a type of broken English ignorantly used by their grandparents and parents. The practicalities of how this could be done are further explored in Chapter Five.

Musicality

Musicality is another pertinent aspect to the concept of creating reading materials from black British cultural capital. A study into language, identity and education, and how they relate to hip-hop culture identified Black Language as having a limitless capacity (Alim and Pennycook, 2007, p. 91). This study highlighted an interesting perspective of Standard English speakers who they regarded as being "'limited' and speakers of 'Black Language' as 'limitless'." This limitless scope of Black Language is described as "ever free-forming and flowing" (ibid, p. 92) and subject to change, while Standard English was viewed as restrictive and bound by strict rules of grammar. The recognition that Black Language speakers, although governed by rules of speech, are free to use or change these rules as the speaker sees fit, ensures the agency of the speaker or reader, as opposed to the written or spoken word owning the authority. The general consensus is that students should be adept with the rules before being allowed to break them. However, the use of non-words in the teaching of reading in the early years (DfE, 2013) indicates that there is some potential for Black Language to be used in teaching children to

read, as the transformation of words can be explored in an imaginative way, which incorporates Patwa and musicality alongside Standard English.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted my epistemological concerns. I have alluded to my value of knowledge that emanates from black British cultures but recognise that much of this knowledge has not been prioritised in British educational organisations, nor is it as easy to access as knowledge that springs from white British cultures. This challenge of inequality of access can be met partly by reviewing the use and perception of Black Language, and it may offer one way in which we can transfer the wisdom of African-Caribbean capital to our children, offering some hope of linguistic (and cultural) restoration. The following chapter details the methodology used to conduct this study.

Chapter Four
Methodology

"Where de axe fell de tree there shall it lay." (McKenzie, 2002, p. 81)

Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth delineation of the process used to complete this study, along with the theoretical considerations that informed it.

The Literature Review has shown that although racialized issues within education have not been particularly high up on the political agenda, it is still very much on the hearts and minds of people within the black British community (BBC News, 2018a), and the academic community (Gillborn et al, 2016). It also showed that although educational material has come under scrutiny in previous studies (Rudd, 1997; Yang, 2014; Scherer, 2016; Hodkinson, 2017; McGilp, 2017; Chen, 2018), this study fills a gap in that it uses CRT methodology and therefore foregrounds race and culture throughout. The literature further situated this study within strategic essentialism, while recognising the wide range of opinions that situate racial and cultural identity within essentialism, anti-essentialism and anti anti-essentialism (Gilroy, 1993). In order to conduct the analysis, Banks' levels of culturally relevant pedagogy (Banks, 2006) were used. The first level, the contributions approach (which includes giving attention to the foods, festivals, heroes and holidays that are associated with particular cultures) was used to collect the data and provide an entry point for further analysis of the books' contents.

The main characters in the ORT books used are a white British family, but the main interest of this study was the portrayal of the black British family and their associated culture. This chapter outlines the decisions made regarding the selection of data used, including a brief outline of ethical considerations. I then move onto an explanation of the methods used throughout, including the coding decisions that were made. Lastly, I offer an analysis of the main strengths and weaknesses of the chosen design rationale. Before moving onto these stated areas, a useful summary and reminder of the research questions is included in this introduction. I conducted a content analysis of a selection of books within the ORT Biff, Chip and Kipper series, and in order to achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. Is the existing Oxford Reading Tree reading scheme culturally relevant for black British students?

2. What are the underlying values and attitudes evidenced in the ORT reading scheme?

3. How are the black characters in the ORT reading scheme defined from a CRT perspective?

The following section details the process of selecting the data for the study.

Data Selection

The Literature Review includes a summary of the influence that the OUP have globally and how this relates to the decision to study books published by them. Other reading schemes published by ORT were not considered, because although newer schemes have been introduced, the Biff, Chip and Kipper series are still widely used and include characters that British children are quite familiar with, due to their repeated exposure to them. In order to conduct the content analysis, ten books were selected from the ORT Biff, Chip and Kipper series, out of a collection of more than eight hundred released titles. This small number of books was decided on as the Literature Review showed that studies which used fewer books (Chen, 2018), were better able to provide a thick analysis and focus on the researchers' main interests rather than depending on the idea that themes would emerge neutrally from a large collection of data. This suited the present study's CRT methodology, i.e. the centring of race and culture. The ten books were chosen either because of their inclusion of black characters or because they contained content that was relevant to the identified codes, e.g. spirituality. The books were borrowed from a school which includes a student population in excess of 70% African or African-Caribbean students. This is relevant as it shows that the books that were analysed are having a continuous cognitive impact on black British children. This is additionally relevant as the OUP have published updated versions of a number of the books analysed, however, the presence of the analysed books in a school, shows that not all schools replace the older versions with the newer releases. Lastly, books were chosen from similar reading levels and were thought to be mostly for readers in the foundation stage up to Year 3 (7/8 year olds). For a list of the books analysed see Appendix 1.

The idea of researching the views of a cohort of black British parents, on the ORT books, was considered. It was initially felt that by only including my analysis, the findings would not be representative and would therefore not be generalizable. However, CRT not only validates the view that my lived experience can offer valuable insights, it also denigrates the idea that generalizability favours the marginalized. Delgado (2016, p. 338) makes the point quite markedly,

"…take the requirement of generalizability, which stories are said to achieve only through argument and abstraction. Whom does such a requirement benefit? Naturally, those whose experience is the norm, whose versions of the way things are are inscribed in all the cultural rules and practices."

With this in mind, it was felt that this study would springboard from the findings of other research that has already depicted the voice of black British children (Scherer, 2016) and their parents (Rollock et al, 2012). The following section outlines the ethical considerations of this study.

Research Ethics

The use of publicly available published materials is subject to UK copyright laws, as such this study was bound by the inability to reproduce any part of the books analysed without the written permission of the copyright owners. This permission was not sought, as I did not intend to include any of the raw data in the thesis and interested parties are directed to where they can access copies of the books for themselves. In addition, I have been careful not to treat the books in a derogatory manner, so as not to negatively impact the publisher's commercial interests. It was felt, however, that for the purposes of this research, critical analysis was necessary and fell within the parameters of UK copyright laws (UK Copyright Service, 2017). As such, there were no ethical problems with regards to conducting this study. Any images contained in this study were either taken from the books that I own the copyright for or have used with regards to the copyright details of the relevant book, and as such, they are used without infringing UK copyright laws. The following section details the methods that were used to organise the research.

Methods of Data Analysis

In order to outline the choices of methods used, it is first necessary for me to give a brief descriptive summary of what the study actually entailed. The study was seen as being comprised of three main components. Firstly, there was the pilot publication of two reading books that were designed to be culturally relevant in the manner outlined in previous chapters. Secondly, there was the main part of the research which involved the critical analysis of ten books in the ORT Biff, Chip and Kipper series. Lastly, is the current and ongoing publication of a literacy program that takes into consideration the findings of this study. Although different methods were used in different parts of the research, it is felt that each method was employed throughout to varying degrees. The following sub-sections detail the sampling approach, coding choices, methods used, the rationale for choosing them and how they relate to CRT.

Coding Choices

In order to ensure that the codes developed were both representative of the books on a whole, and significant to this study, I used a stratified sampling technique (Rose, 2007) which meant that I chose ten books from within the subgroup of books that either contained black characters or that addressed any of the issues that I was interested in analysing. It was also felt that a large sample of books would prove too overwhelming for a study conducted by an individual, especially as the intention was to conduct a deep and thorough analysis. If the decision was made to conduct a further similar study in the future, personnel assistance would be secured and therefore a larger sample would be possible.

The ORT books have been taken as the unit of analysis due to their prevalence in British schools (OUP, 2016) and their inclusion of black characters. Aspects of black British culture, although not homogenous, have been identified and summarised in the following major categories: food, heroes, music, spiritual beliefs and cultural artefacts. It was felt that music and spiritual beliefs related to Banks' identification of festivals, as music is often used during festivals and they are often celebrated as a part of a community's spiritual beliefs. These categories were outlined in Banks' levels of multicultural pedagogy as useful doorways for the engagement of children with cultural and social justice issues (Banks, 2006). These categories inform the initial coding choices that were made.

The initially proposed codes, which were theory-driven using a strategically essentialist paradigm (as outlined in previous chapters) were as follows: Dominant Culture (DC); Minority Culture (MC) and Black Main Characters (BMC); Black Supporting Characters (BSC) and Black background Characters (BbC). The first two listed code names were later changed from DC to White Culture (WC) and from MC to Black Culture (BC), in order to reflect the idea that not all white cultures are necessarily dominant within British society. It was also felt that the use of the word 'minority' when referring to black cultures reinforced negative stereotypes and did not necessarily reflect the community's view of themselves. In addition, the unfortunate use of the black/white binary is in keeping with a strategically essentialist perspective and serves to enable the analyses to be conducted in a coherent manner. This perspective did not present an immediate theoretical challenge with regards to the books that were used, as they did not contain characters that were portrayed as being of dual heritage. The table in Appendix 2 depicts how the codes were later sub-divided and identified within the books.

During the process of data analysis, there were theoretical challenges that could not have been addressed merely with the codes above. In order to meet those challenges, a number of further sub-codes were used to express what was found in the text or the illustrations. These are explained in the following paragraph.

It was necessary for a differentiation to have been made in order to signify if the character was black by ethnicity or darkened. For example, the trolls in <u>Kipper and the Trolls</u> were considered as darkened characters, as was the biggest billy goat gruff in the same story. This was important because although the characters were obviously not ethnically black (so to speak), it is not clear how the readership viewed them. The decision was made that the readership would view them as black. Where characters were considered as being darkened, a '**d**' was inserted after the sub-code. The second dilemma was with how to code for omissions. This was seen where, for instance, there was an opportunity for the black characters to be portrayed along with a corresponding aspect of black cultures, and this opportunity was not taken. The difficulty with deciding if an element of black culture was omitted or not was dealt with by using my own lived experience as a gauge (Taylor, 2016). Where aspects of black culture were considered as being omitted, an 'O' was inserted after the sub-code. This sub-division of the codes ensured that they did not overlap and therefore fulfilled the requirement

of being exclusive (Slater, 1998 in Rose, 2007, p. 65). The following paragraph shows how the codes relate to the research questions.

The first two codes, along with their associated sub-codes, were devised in order to address the first research question, *'Is the existing ORT reading scheme culturally appropriate for black British students?'* By highlighting cultural identifiers portrayed in the books, comparing and contrasting those identified as black British culture and white British culture, these codes enabled me to simplify the complex task of identifying culture. The third, fourth and fifth codes addressed the third research question, '*How are the black characters in the ORT reading scheme defined from a CRT perspective?*' This code partly used a frequency scoring method, but also an intensity one, as it gave separate weightings to each character role (main, support or background) with background characters receiving the highest weighting (Boyatzis, 1998). This decision was made in order to attempt to highlight the underlying messages that exist within the books which are conveyed subtly and represent white British cultures as a neutral backdrop to the stories. In this way, the second code also addresses the second research question, '*What are the underlying values and attitudes evidenced in the ORT reading scheme?*' This explicit connection to the research questions ensured that the code categories used enabled me to produce data that was "analytically interesting and coherent" (Slater, 1998 in Rose, 2007, p. 65). This meant that the codes fulfilled the requirement of being enlightening. They were also exclusive in that the usage of the terms 'black' and 'white', although theoretically problematic, ensured that all the aspects that were pertinent to this study were covered. The validity of the codes used is seen in their meeting the requirements of content analysis (ibid), in being exhaustive, exclusive and enlightening. This was partly achieved by using a set of potential codes which were used on the books and then adjusted in order to ensure that they fulfilled the above requirements.

It was decided that the coding should incorporate all evidence of each of the identified elements of culture, in order to minimise the risk of omitting pertinent details. Any information deemed irrelevant was omitted at the stage of analysis. The data gathered was over and beyond what could be analysed in this study alone, this study therefore represents an analysis of only a part of the data collected. The coding was conducted manually because it was felt that the short length of the books made computer coding unnecessary. In addition, the focus on illustrations meant that a computer coding software would have been likely to miss implicit meanings and

could not, for instance, recognise omissions. The following paragraph details how the codes were used during the process of data analysis.

Once the codes were decided upon, each book was read to ascertain the overall understanding of the storyline. They were then re-read at least once for each sub-code. On each reading, the decision was made to categorise every example of the sub-code, so for example, every noting of food or drink was included. This enabled me to decide over a period of time whether or not inclusions, that initially seemed to be irrelevant, did after all have some relevance to the wider issues to do with race and culture. BMC, BSC and BbC codes were coded using a frequency measure, so the amount of times that a black character was seen was included in the data, along with the page references. An intensity scoring was also used with these codes. The background characters were given the greater weighting due to the notion that they represented a greater possibility of being subconsciously absorbed into the readers' cognitive framework, and subsequently were the best examples of the normalising ability of the authorial stance. The sub-codes for BC and WC codes, included famous people, musicality, spirituality and food. The decision to omit the language aspect of this was taken because it was felt that children in the early years who are learning to read were mostly affected by the visual micro-aggressions that were included in the story through the use of pictures. It was also decided that the language aspect of culture, would be addressed in an overall approach throughout the study. Whereby the language dominance of the English language, and its European precursors, would be challenged by the inclusion of linguistic capital coming from black British cultures. Once itemised, the pertinent issues from each storyline were then summarised and critically analysed.

Content Analysis

Using the codes above, I read each book at least five times and noted down any examples in a table similar to the one in Table 1.

Book Title		Blurb	Date of publication	Reading Level
Code	Sub-codes	As evidenced in book	Points for analysis	

Table 1

The points for analysis that were collated form the basis of Chapter Five. As previously mentioned, all data was included, and it was at the stage of analysis that I omitted data that was deemed irrelevant. The data found in the illustrations far outweighed the data gleaned from the text, which was expected due to the important role of the illustrations in picture books (Scherer, 2016). As such, a very limited analysis of the text was conducted, and the focus was centred largely upon illustrations. Analysing the text did however reveal some important data regarding the cultural differences with regards to the respect given to grandparents and their involvement in significant family events. This issue is further analysed in the following chapter.

The visual element of the analysis was conducted in order to take into account that the illustrations make up a large portion of the page in the reading books. They are also the part of the books that children who are learning to read look at initially, often to gauge the meaning of words (Scherer, 2016). Although it was important to quantify the data in order to successfully respond to the third research question, the other questions depended on a comprehensive qualitative analysis. This approach suited the content analysis method used, as it is recognised to be a technique "that requires not just quantitative skills but also qualitative ones" (Rose, 2007).

From a CRT standpoint, the WC codes were developed in order to challenge the normalising influence of whiteness (Dyer, 1999). By paralleling the codes with the corresponding BC codes, brought white cultures into the same category as black cultures and therefore recognises that both the former and latter are researchable ethnicities. The main themes identified from the data were misrepresentation, insensitivity, cultural appropriation, subordination of black characters and omissions. Chapter Five provides a critical analysis of three of the themes namely, omissions, subordination and misrepresentations, as these were the issues that were

most prevalent in the data. The following section outlines the use of autobiographical memory in the study.

Autobiographical Memory

Autobiographical memory was chosen as a significant component of the research design for this study, with a view towards enabling "reconstruction and reflexivity" (Goodson and Gill, 2014, p. 124). Reconstruction speaks of the cognitive reliving of personal historical events in order to make sense of decisions made and actions taken in the present. Reflexivity refers to the recognition and exposure of my own perspective on the issues that surface. Both ideas are crucial in a study such as this, as they ensure that bias is taken into consideration. They also enable me to make analytical decisions that ensure the integrity of the study (that is the study accomplishes results that aid the development of culturally relevant reading material). The very personal nature of this method has seen it undergo criticism for being too specific, individualistic and descriptive, (ibid), however, the very nature of a study such as this necessitates the use of memories from educational journeys and simultaneously challenges the researcher to use those memories in a critically detached manner. The scope for constructing "new cognitive maps and contextual understandings" is increased, and this new knowledge enables us to explore new ways of learning (ibid, p.128).

A greater understanding of the self is one area where new learning can take place. This is with regards to the individual self as well as the cultural self. By making connections between past events of individuals and groups of individuals, we learn from the similarities and the differences in the stimuli and the responses. The cross-fertilization of this knowledge has cultural significance as stated by Barclay (1996, in Goodson and Gill, 2014) and McAdams. "[I]ndividual life stories reflect cultural values and norms, including assumptions about gender, race, and class. Life stories are intelligible within a particular cultural frame, and yet they also differentiate one person from the next." (2001, p.101 in Goodson and Gill, 2014, p. 131). As well as being culturally significant, it also provides a model for a critical pedagogy. The use of autobiographical memory is something that can be seen as the construction of a story. McAdams (2001, in Goodson and Gill, 2014) speaks of his work on autobiographical memory with regards to identity reconstruction, in just such a manner. He speaks of the inclusion of a setting, characters and plot, which not only lends itself well to the core of this study, but also

feeds into the CRT methodology which encourages the use of personal narratives of lived experiences and counter-storytelling.

My use of autobiographical memory follows the model used by Goodson and Gill (2014, pp. 132-144). The inclusion of the interview with myself ensured that the pertinent issues were uncovered and that I was able to make relevant connections with those areas to the issues that surfaced in the sample data. In addition, the recognition that some of the surfaced issues might have been emotionally challenging, interviewing myself ensured that I interrogated only so far as I felt comfortable. While this may have limited the production of knowledge that could have further informed the study, it was felt that emotional preservation would enable a more rigorous analysis than one that had more data with less capacity to critically analyse it. Lastly, interviewing myself enabled me to take the time that was needed to reflect on the events that were mentioned without the pressure of someone else's timeframe, (Allet et al, 2011). The following section delineates the strengths and weaknesses of this research design.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strengths of the methodology used is first of all found in its replicability. The use of coding categories that were chosen because the themes covered were deemed to be more relevant to early years learners, means that the identification of those themes in the chosen sample should also be easily identified by other researchers. The pairing of content analysis with activism and autobiographical memory serves as a platform for both rigour and subjectivity. A further strength of the inherent activism lies in its power to transform the learning to read process for all students learning to read, alongside the incredible intrinsic motivating force that comes from being actively engaged in doing something transformative. The quantitative nature of the content analysis enabled me to remain close to text and illustrations, while remaining as objective as possible in the gleaning of the data. It was imperative for me not to make the analysis merely descriptive, in order to portray a convincing argument and to not make my conclusions appear reductive. The use of CRT as a theoretical influence is also considered to be a strength, not only because it was directly relevant to the nature of the study, but also because it adds to the canon of literature that uses CRT methodology. This in itself is an encouragement to future research students who have similar interests.

A specific challenge of conducting a content analysis of this kind was the coding of omissions. The approach taken to meet this challenge was quite subjective and it would be interesting to conduct a coder reliability test in any future studies, to gauge the reliability of the findings of this particular aspect. Content analysis has been further criticised as not being able to "interpret cultural meanings of images" (Rose, 2007, p. 71), but Lutz and Collings (1993, in Rose, 2007) show that this is both possible and characteristic of the method. The linguistic approach was not suitable for this study, as my intention was not to contend with ORT's pedagogical influence, it instead contends with its ability to develop critical readers. This may appear as a weakness to some, however, this study recognises the powerful influence of visual images on the very young, which is why visuality was prioritised. Attempts to address the omission of Black Language in the sample are seen in the use of the same in this thesis, however, this remains a priority in the activism element of the overall study. I am aware that by conducting the study on a relatively small sample, I have lessened its generalizability. A future study could address this, as stated earlier on, but it was felt that the books chosen offered more than enough data and any future study would need to be based on justifying its ability to produce further significant themes for analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the decisions made to select data that was both relevant to my interests as a research student, and to the wider community of early years readers. A relatively small sample of books was decided upon in order to focus the study on providing a thick analysis of the data. Coding decisions were made with reference to Banks' levels of cultural pedagogy; the use of the black/white binary was recognised as being within a strategically essentialist paradigm. The content analysis focused heavily on the illustrations within the books, but consideration was also given to the text. The use of Black Language throughout the thesis, partly addresses the imbalance of use within the books, and this will be addressed further in the publication of a culturally relevant literacy program. This program represents the main aspect of the activist component. Autobiographical Memory was considered as a method that both made explicit the reflexive positioning of this study, as well as being directly relevant to the CRT methodology used. A brief outline of the study's ethical stance shows that no copyright infringements were made and that any critical analysis was for the purpose of conducting an integral research study. It is to this critical analysis that the study now turns.

Chapter Five

Analysis

"Story deh fe tell but long bench no deh fe se-dung pon." (McKenzie, 2002, p.244)

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed account of my analysis of the selected ORT books, using the main themes discussed in the previous chapter. I firstly present an overview of the findings along with a rationale for the focus on the codes that I have chosen to include and omit in this analysis.
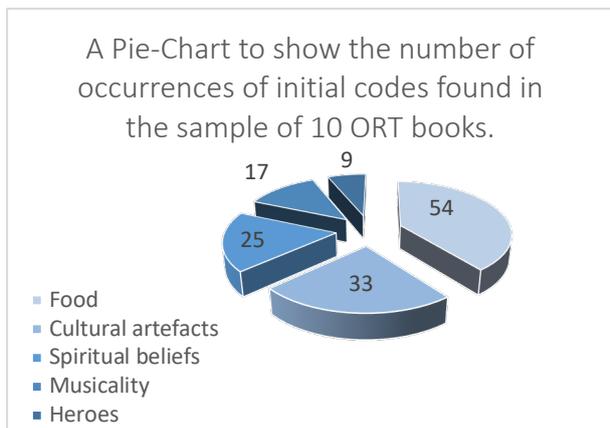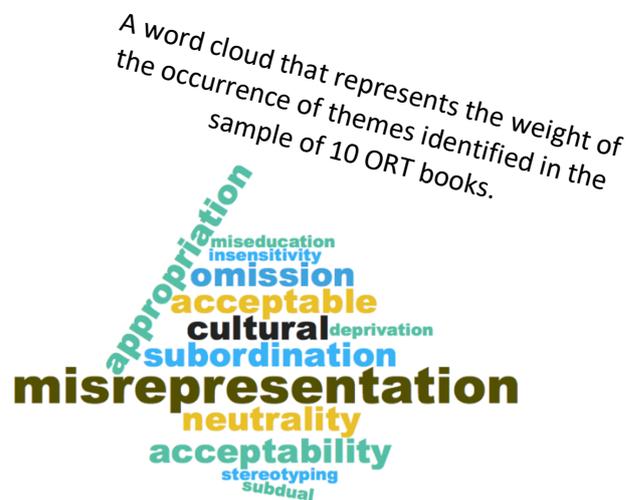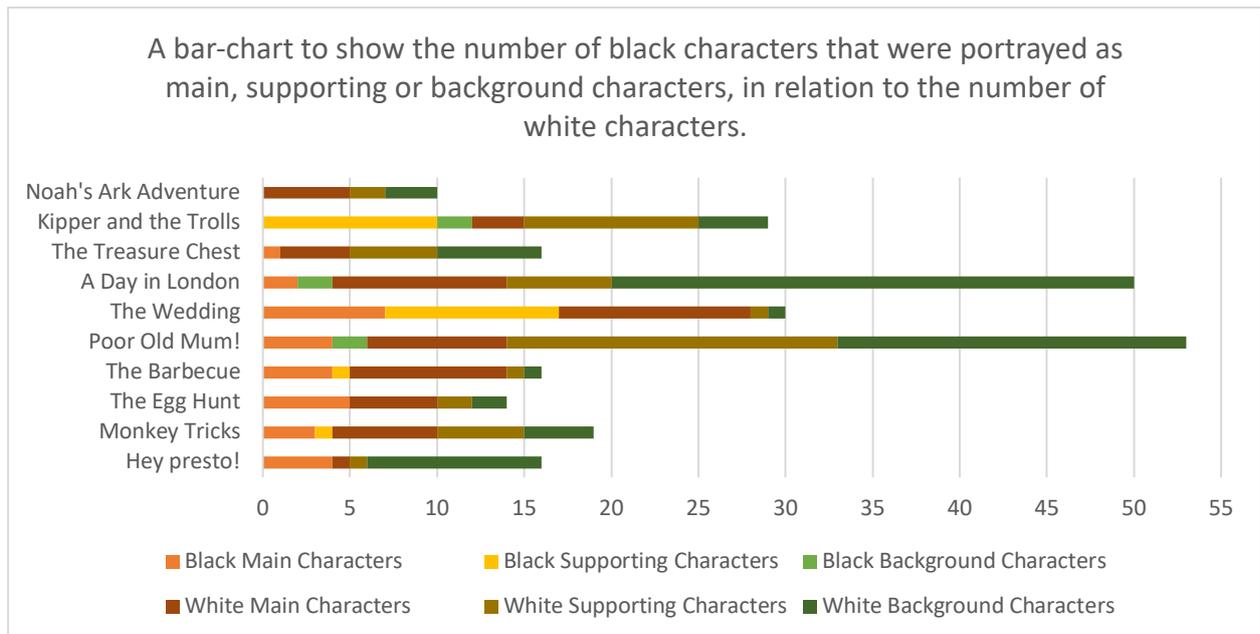

Chart 1

A Pie-Chart to show the number of occurrences of initial codes found in the sample of 10 ORT books.

54, 33, 25, 17, 9

- Food
- Cultural artefacts
- Spiritual beliefs
- Musicality
- Heroes

Chart 2

A word cloud that represents the weight of the occurrence of themes identified in the sample of 10 ORT books.

appropriation, miseducation, insensitivity, omission, acceptable, cultural, deprivation, subordination, misrepresentation, neutrality, acceptability, stereotyping, subdual

A bar-chart to show the number of black characters that were portrayed as main, supporting or background characters, in relation to the number of white characters.

■ Black Main Characters ■ Black Supporting Characters ■ Black Background Characters
■ White Main Characters ■ White Supporting Characters ■ White Background Characters

Chart 3

The above charts provide an overview of the data gathered from the content analysis. Chart 1 shows how many occurrences of each of the initial codes were found in the sample. 'Food' was clearly the most prevalent code found, which highlights the importance of food as a cultural indicator and justifies the detailed attention given to it later in this chapter. 'Cultural Artefacts', the next most prevalent code is omitted from the analysis, as it was felt that a large number of the artefacts identified were not exclusive to the dominant culture, as they would be used by a variety of cultures, albeit alongside artefacts that were omitted from the sample. For example, it is quite common for a variety of mugs to be used in African and/or African-Caribbean households. You would expect to find plain coloured mugs alongside mugs that have been given as souvenirs from an associated African or Caribbean country. The difficulty with identifying these artefacts is that nearly everything identified could have been categorised as a 'Cultural Artefact', hence the large number of occurrences. The omission of cultural artefacts that are culturally relevant is addressed practically within the production of culturally relevant educational resources, as discussed in Chapter 6. The remaining three codes, 'Spiritual beliefs', 'Musicality' and 'Heroes', are included in the analysis as they offer distinct knowledge that sheds further light on the cultural relevance of the texts.

Chart 2 is presented as a Word Cloud in order to represent the sub-codes in a less quantitative format. This is important because, although the quantitative weighting exists, it was felt that the qualitative weighting was more relevant to a study that values subjective and

autobiographical data. Lastly, Chart 3 aims to depict the correlation between the black main characters and the black supporting/background characters. The chart shows that very few of the stories include supporting or background characters that are black. This is a key finding because these are the characters that provide the most potential for normalising the presence of black people. The dominating presence of white characters in these roles serves to embed the idea of whiteness as neutral.

This rest of this chapter consists of three main parts. First, I offer an analysis of the data found in the book samples. As stated, the identified themes gleaned from the data were subordination, misrepresentation, omissions, insensitivity and cultural appropriation. For the sake of space, the first three themes are introduced and the evidence for their presence in the sample is presented. Further to this, I offer an analysis of each of the three themes, as they relate to reconciliation theology, CRT and the learning to read process. Prior to proffering the analysis above, two sections are necessary. One is a discussion on the portrayal of black British cultures. This is important because the portrayal of culture within the reading books is a crucial indicator of their cultural relevance. In order to delve into the more complex themes described above, it is also necessary to first provide a brief analysis of the first level cultural indicators, so as to ensure that they are given their due regard as factors that both inform and express culture (UNESCO, 2000), and to show how they provide opportunities for entering into higher level discussions (Banks, 2006). I therefore begin this chapter with an overview of the portrayal of black British cultures in society, followed by an analysis of food, music, famous people and spirituality, as they relate to black British cultures, and as a doorway to a further analysis of the identified themes subordination, misrepresentation and omissions.

Portrayal of black British cultures

The normalisation of diversity is an ideal which we have not achieved yet, and possibly will not achieve until the generations of children and young people, who will grow up to negotiate the production of social images, perceive the balanced portrayal of a variety of people groups as an unquestionable and underlying part of their cognitive matrix. This is a challenge ideally initiated with the young, before cultural biases have had a chance to become entrenched. With regards to how this ideal is achieved, I perceive two main methods. One is overt and positions itself in direct opposition to racist discrimination. The other is covert and presents itself, more like a serpent in a tree or a baby in a manger. It is akin to the unselfconscious awareness that

Wilkins (Scottish Book Trust, 2017) uses, and has many advantages over the former method. This is where the image of the previously marginalised self is included without the overt mention of what is being done. My argument in this thesis is not that progress has not been made, with regards to the diversity of images in British society, but that these images still seem to be presented in a way that sensationalise black people, especially black women. The disadvantages that the former method has, is that in order for it to work one has to manipulate a pathologized identity of self in order to be 'successful'. In so doing, it often forces proponents to seek out the reinforcement of stereotypical perceptions, much in the same way as described in the Miseducation of the Negro, (Woodson, 2012, p.62).

"If you can control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his action. When you determine what a man shall think you do not have to concern yourself about what he will do. If you make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself. If you make a man think that he is justly an outcast, you do not have to order him to the back door. He will go without being told; and if there is no back door, his very nature will demand one."

This much-quoted reference to the back door, is often the aim of those who adopt the pathologized version of their culture. It leads to an appearance of success, in that projects for the pathologized culture are funded and governmental attention is given to the issues. My use of the term 'pathologized' is with regards to the portrayal of a person or group of people as being psychologically inferior and in need of external intervention. Inevitably, the self-perception that accompanies this method is one of innate powerlessness and inferiority to the hand that feeds. In the event that the self is not enveloped in this cultural pathology, there is another dilemma awaiting advocates of an overt response to racism. Namely, the opposition's upper-hand. Racism is a long-standing pandemic, and it is as complex as it is long. In any endeavour that involves an opponent, a wise player would seek to play to their own strengths and against the opponent's weaknesses. An even more skilful strategy would be to play to one's own strength, but masquerade it as weak, so that it draws little attention to itself until it has become entrenched (Rumelt, 2011). Although this is a difficult concept to exemplify, I will attempt to with a fictional case.

Take, for example, the supplementary school, initiated to support black students, funded by government grants, but hosted mostly in the halls of black owned churches, and run by

members of the church. The continued success of the funding application would undoubtedly depend upon the project manager's ability to evidence that this group of students are in some way disadvantaged. Therefore, developing a pathologized notion of self-identity. In addition, the funding is accompanied by a proviso, which is that the governmental generosity be advertised, which in turn leads to increased public interest in the project. Greater scrutiny from parties that do not agree with the perceived imbalance of dispersal of funds, now have an opportunity to form counter-strategies against the work of a fledgling organisation that, although providing a valuable service to the community, has not had the benefit of time and internal growth to withstand their imminent attack. Often manifested as withdrawal of funds, changes in law that are purportedly outside of the project's remit, yet which affect it profoundly, or in questioning the reputation of associates, which in this fictional example, would have been the church. Here we see the strength of institutional racism taking place, with three of the most heavily weighted British institutions in action, the economic, legal and political systems. The National Health Service is the fourth, and although not relevant to this example, is implicit in that its propensity to pathologize black people, is evident in the disproportionality of negative treatment against black people in the mental health system (MacAttram, 2017). My resistance of this view of the black community, extends to the decision not to focus this study on the plight of 'poor readers', as this too is a label that is largely associated with black students (Scherer, 2016). It seems to me that the fight against racism is complex enough, without those fighting against it using unnecessarily complex methods to fight back.

The overt method has advantages too. Money answers all things, and the financial investment in a community often signifies the value placed on it. However, the fight for a balanced portrayal of cultures within society could take on a more covert stance, without forfeiting financial input. Take, for example, the fictional black owned independent butchery, that is meeting the needs of the wider community, by supplying grade A meat that is well-presented and accessible. In addition, customers have the choice of purchasing meat that has been prepared and seasoned according to black British cultural norms, and deliveries of the same are made to homes where you have elderly members of the black community who are struggling to look after themselves in this way. Deliveries could also be made to churches, who are holding events that need catering etc. My intention is not to supply a list of business ideas that I think should be run by the black community, but to insist that an autonomous fight, fought from the ground up, is both feasible and less exposed to the kind of institutional racism

that was evident in the former example. My experience of moving from inner-city Tottenham to an extreme part of Warwickshire, has heightened my desire to see a variety of cultural resources available to children in all parts of the country. The educational focus in this study will hopefully provide a template for dissemination of other socio-cultural resources too.

This first section of the analysis has delved into the necessary discussion of society's portrayal of black British cultures. The third research question '*how are the black characters in the ORT reading scheme defined from a CRT perspective?*' forms the basis of this analysis, as it includes the portrayal of black people in society and how this has, perhaps, informed the books' portrayals of the black characters. It is a key starting point to answering the other two research questions because portrayals produce perceptions and our individual perceptions tend to be what we base our judgements and decisions on. Two main routes to the transformation of negative portrayals were considered, with the covert option being the preferred route for the reasons outlined. The following sections cover the analyses of the four initial codes used. The contained analyses are my views of how the characters and their cultures were represented. While this does not indicate an absolute representation, I offer it as a basis for reflection and transformation. The very basic need of food is analysed first.

Food

Our most basic needs, like food, clothing and shelter, are catered for in a manner that reflects our cultural influences. In this study, the portrayal of food was chosen as a cultural indicator, because it represents one of a child's first introductions to labelling which leads to reading. It is worth restating my acknowledgement that black Britishness is a hybrid culture, like all cultures are, and that the balance of blackness and Britishness is unique in every household. The analysis that I offer is a strategically essentialist one and concurs with Woodson's desire to see "segregation […] kill segregation." (2012, p. 77). In keeping with the theological and theoretical frameworks used so far in this study, I offer an analysis of the portrayal of food in the ORT book sample that uses reconciliation theology, CRT and learning to read, as the three-layered lens.

Reconciliation Theology and the portrayal of food

The concept of reconciliation has been discussed earlier as operating on a number of different levels, the personal level being a starting point for reconciliation between couples, families, communities and nations. We have seen that this understanding of reconciliation brings unity to the self and leads the way for unity along the same different levels. This idea highlights how crucial it is for us to aim for wholeness on the personal level, as this could be a means to bringing about much of the reconciliation that we are currently seeking on a global level. The portrayal of culture in educational literature has been called for as a means to encouraging fairness and respect to all cultures, especially those belonging to groups of people who are often marginalised. In this respect, the portrayal of culturally relevant food in children's books, has a small part to play in encouraging personal reconciliation, as well as reconciliation on the level of the community. This is initially being perceived from the perspective of the person/s who are a part of the portrayed culture. For those who are typically outside of the portrayed culture, there is also benefit, as they become more culturally literate in a context where relationships with non-European countries is becoming more and more vital (Madowo, 2018).

One of the ways that the portrayal of food can bring about personal reconciliation is through stimulating the memory. The Lord's Supper is an ordinance that stimulates the believer's memory and brings to remembrance an essential event in the Christian calendar. The Judeo-Christian calendar is filled with occasions where food is used as a pedagogical tool. The concept of food clearly goes beyond it being necessary for survival. The term "nostalgic gastronomy" has been coined, (Roy, 2002 in Slocum, p.6), in order to recognise the recreation of cultural dishes that bring about a sense of comfort and resistance against the dominance of white cultural norms. As a term used to describe that which benefits diasporic families, it carries a kernel of wisdom which could be utilised in reading books, as the idea of remembering a part of oneself, offers scope for creating personal wholeness. This brings us to the reasonable idea that recognisable portrayals of food would engage readers, and offer them a sense of familiarity, which would in turn cause them to relax into the reading process, and it could aid the memory, when reading the associated words. This train of thought could prove pertinent for other cultural indicators, but the wisdom in a focus on food is based on the fundamentality of food as a cultural resource, and a more easily understood part of children's cultural environment.

My understanding of personal reconciliation does not only have to be experienced as a result of familiarity. It is also the case that by introducing knowledge that the child is unaware of, but which relates to him/her culturally, can bring about a measure of personal reconciliation. In an event such as this, the child could be said to have been re-introduced to a particular portion of knowledge. This could be the case, for instance, when reading about a particular type of food, or method of food preparation that is a part of their culture, but they were initially unaware or vaguely aware of it. It might appear paradoxical, that both familiarity and unawareness could lead to personal reconciliation, but the key factor in the latter is that the familiarity is found in the cultural group's awareness, and the child would be aware of this through family interactions. The idea of becoming who you are is again seen here, as children would have an opportunity to learn things about their own cultural group, while engaging in a formal, mainstream learning activity.

Reconciliation, through the use of culturally relevant portrayals of food, is possible on many levels. For instance, family reconciliation is to be expected where children are reading stories at home to parents, where portrayals more closely match what they have immediate access to. Intercultural reconciliation is also possible where children learn about foods and preparation methods that are different to their own, and where families are open to positively conversing about the same, and experimentation is approached with a greater level of understanding. These attempts can be seen to an increasing degree, as a result of celebrity chefs like Levi Roots and others from food-related reality television programmes (Arthur, 2018). However, embedding the idea that other foods are actually somebody's normal, is a useful stepping stone towards developing a generation of children who view others as normal. I am often amazed at how the humble fried dumpling, which my grandad taught me to make, is revered by friends who do not share my ethnicity. It is such a staple food in our home and the variations keep our children coming back for more. The sharing of these snippets of cultural norms within reading books' storylines, makes this study and the ongoing praxis extremely exciting.

Critical Race Theory and the portrayal of food

As discussed above, the portrayal of foods from different cultures can be a significant inclusion in the books that children read. The analysis so far relates to a thoughtful inclusion of food portrayals, as opposed to a tokenistic or superficial portrayal. A similar study to this one, (Braden and Rodriguez, 2016) conducted with Latinx cultural authenticity as its main focus,

viewed the inclusion of cultural foods, as a representation of culture, as reductionist. While I agree that a single focus on this aspect would be superficial, I cannot agree that portrayals of food pertaining to different cultures should be omitted for a few reasons. Firstly, portrayals of food, as I have mentioned above, were evident in every one of the books in the sample. The omission of culturally authentic foods would instead depict European foods as normative, which goes against the grain of what we, as CRT researchers, are trying to achieve. This is noted in another similar study where a translation of <u>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</u>, was made more culturally relevant, by the inclusion of foods that would actually be eaten in the associated countries, (McGilp, 2017). This translation was done by children using online research and their own cultural understanding. Secondly, concrete artefacts like food are tangible enough for children in the early years to understand and discuss, as they are still largely in a concrete-cognitive (Garton, 2004) stage of learning. Lastly, portrayals of food are a useful doorway towards discussion about other more complex aspects of culture, like language, relationship building and spirituality. As well as the three reasons just stated, the portrayal of food in society, how it is produced, distributed and consumed is not exempt from the glare of those concerned with social justice, (Slocum; Sampson and Wills, 2013). The portrayal of food in society, through advertisements such as Fairtrade foods, although well-intentioned, can be seen as perpetuating a normalisation that equates people from the African diaspora with poverty and the need for a white saviour. The balance between the perceived need to help Africa's poor, and the need to develop a perception of Africa as possessing agency through natural and developed wealth, has not been perfected. The error unfortunately leans too heavily towards depicting Africa as poor, especially with regard to a resource as fundamental as food.

As briefly stated in the above paragraph, depictions of food were evident in every book within the sample. This is indicative of the manner in which food infuses every aspect of our culture. It is, in some ways unrealistic to attempt to detail a discussion on this topic, without expecting it to converge with other cultural indicators. Food has spiritual significance, for instance, and is often enjoyed as a part of musical events. However, the specific injustices that relate to the portrayal of food are real and deserving of specific attention. The World Culture Report 2000 gives attention to cultural recognition as a basic need, (UNESCO, 2000), and that educational "strategies should take account of their impact on social attitudes …" (ibid, p.41). The recognition of foods that are culturally relevant to a family portrayed as black and British, could begin to pave the way towards meeting this requirement. None of the stories in the sample did this, although food from another minority culture was explicitly displayed in the illustration of

a story where the black family were the main characters. The 'polish style gherkins' were chosen as an accompaniment for the black dad's barbecue, but foods like jerk chicken, callaloo or jollof rice were not considered. This could be categorised as a misrepresentation if the gherkins used were considered as unlikely to be used by a black British family, however, this is not the categorisation that I have chosen because I recognise that the hybridity of black Britishness would make it likely for black families to enjoy the diverse meal options available to them in a diverse community. Unless of course, the authors have chosen to set the family in a region inhabited by a white majority. This would certainly seem to be the case, as a clear majority of the background characters are white, however, upon further reflection, the availability of the above stated gherkins alludes to the availability of food culturally appropriate for the Polish community, and is therefore discriminatory, when you consider that Polish families living in Britain often settle in similar areas to those from African or Caribbean communities. Omission therefore is a more appropriate categorisation for this error.

CRT offers an enlightening response to the omission of aspects of culture. That is, it proposes the need to form a counter-narrative; this response is immediately solution-focused and highlights cultural agency. A critical narrative refuses to pretend that objectivity is the intention of a storyline. It instead starts with the value base and constructs the plot, characters etc from that foundation. This existence of a value base presupposes the corresponding existence of a narrator and their lived experience. I consider the potential of life narratives to be as Goodson and Gill describe it, they "appear to be immersed in the past, they are reflective of the present and can lead us to the future." (2014, p. 31). This potential is therefore too precious to be squandered on tokenistic representations of marginalised groups. I propose that the short and frequent nature of children's exposure to reading scheme books, makes them an ideal vehicle for a transformative pedagogy. I have therefore reframed below, in line with a CRT methodology, an ORT story that was part of the sample, The Egg Hunt. A summary of the storyline would assist you in making a critical comparison.

The Egg Hunt

The Egg Hunt features Wilma's family looking after a little girl (presumably an extended member of their family). She decides to hide some Easter eggs in the park for the girl to be able to enjoy an egg hunt. However, squirrels find the eggs first, and the little girl is given a bigger egg, back at Wilma's house.

Key Illustrations:

A little, black girl being taken to Wilma's house by her mum.

Wilma's mum, Wilma and girl in kitchen decorating an Easter cake with little yellow chicks on it.

Wilma and her dad at the park, Dad talking to someone (a white woman) while Wilma hides eggs in various places in the park.

Wilma, her mum and little girl at park, but squirrels have taken eggs up to a tree branch.

Back at home, the little girl is given a bigger chocolate egg.

Versus

<u>Sow and Reap</u>

Wilma goes to church and receives a few Easter eggs from church members. She is really happy. However, she also gets a few visitors who happen to have children younger than her and she ends up giving away all of the eggs she received. She is no longer happy. Grandma comes around to the house and gives a really big egg to both her and Wilf.

Key Illustrations:

The church is drawn as multi-cultural but with a black majority.

Wilma's expression on receiving the Easter eggs, shows that she is focusing solely on the chocolate.

The visitors to their house are from a variety of cultures.

Dad cooking fried fish with roasted breadfruit and salad for dinner, while Mum hosts one of the guests.

Guests eating bun and cheese with ginger beer.

Wilma hugging Grandma to show appreciation.

Value-Base

The focus would be on situating Easter within a spiritual context. The majority opinion amongst Pentecostal churches, seems to be that this is a significant event on the Christian calendar, and the symbols that may appear commercialised have been reclaimed and given meanings that concur with Christian beliefs (Lamont-Hill, 2014). The egg, remaining as a symbol of new life, gives opportunity to discuss Jesus' resurrection and the new life available to those who believe. To this effect, it is a common practice in black churches to give Easter eggs to the children who attend, and many children within the black British communities would relate to this depiction of the church. The moral of the story, however, would not be centred on the receiving of chocolate eggs, but on the benefits of giving and the need to appreciate those who give to you. The cultural values are seen in the depiction of foods traditionally eaten during this celebration (Roots, 2008) and the interaction with extended family and friends. In addition, the visitors from various cultures would depict the norm for many families within the black community. Lastly, it would be possible for Grandma's linguistic contribution to the story to mirror many black British children's reality with an inclusion of a Caribbean proverb, such as "wha yuh loose in de jig, yuh gain in de reel." (McKenzie, 2002, p.106).

Food Injustices in Global Society

The wider context of global food injustices, can be seen through a socio-political, historical or geographical lens in order to make the case for, what some have termed, 'Food Sovereignty' (Sampson and Wills, 2013, p. 1), which "is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems..." (Via Campseina 2007, in ibid). The omission of culturally appropriate foods in the reading books, speaks to the recurring injustice in terms of how black people are portrayed globally in relation to food. My contention is that inclusion of a culturally respectful portrayal of a variety of foods, would normalise an important aspect of culture and begin the slow process of moving marginalised cultures from the realm of the exotic or extraordinary. This would also expose generations of children and

their parents to a variety of cultural foods and would potentially bring attention to the wider issues of global food injustices.

These sorts of issues are perhaps too weighty for children in their early years to decipher in their entirety. However, critical theorists recognise that child-appropriate exposure to social justice issues lays a cognitive foundation upon which critical pedagogies are able to establish critical thinking, instead of the mere receipt of dominant narratives. It is also important to remember that early years reading books are designed with the understanding that adults play an important role in scaffolding the reading process (Scherer, 2016). Recurring objects or themes are often included in the illustrations for the benefit of parents, who may otherwise find the simplistic text and storylines tedious (Meek, 2001). How much more meaningful would it be for parents, and teachers, to be able to engage critically with values that are purposely placed, culturally diverse and academically stimulating?

Food studies highlight varied incorporated areas like the "political, economic, and cultural dimensions of food, historically and in the contemporary moment, from production, to exchange, to preparation, to consumption." (SOAS University of London, 2018). The portrayal of food in the book samples is related to the wider portrayal of food choices and the associated assumptions about other cultures. A study exploring class, food and culture, in the context of alternative food choices, (Paddock, 2011), was introduced to the distinction of food as an 'experience' versus food as fuel. There was clearly a class distinction where participants who voiced their preference for fresh food daily, positioned people who depended on convenience food as lazy. The intersection of class and race, although not central to this study, offers another layer of analysis. The use of burgers in The Barbecue, chocolate eggs in The Egg Hunt and Krispi Hoops in The Wedding, build a picture of a family that rely on convenience foods as opposed to fresh foods. The two stories that depict members of the black family baking cakes, do not detail the process, as it does in the story depicting the white mum baking a cake. The effect of seeing the white mum go through the cake-baking process and not the other, is to reinforce a racialized perception of womanhood, (Igenoza, 2016). This is where an "ideal emphasized modesty, purity, and domesticity for White women and identified wife and mother as their primary and most important roles. Historically, Black women were viewed in contrast to this norm for middle-class White women." (Settles et al, 2008, p. 455). Although further research would need to be conducted to ascertain this trend throughout a wider sample of

books, it is clear that depictions of the black mum, at best do nothing to dismantle incorrect perceptions of black femininity.

This section has focused on the primary code of Food as coded initially in the sample. I have covered an analysis of the portrayal of food, reconciliation theology, CRT and the learning to read process. This included a counter-narrative to the story <u>The Egg Hunt</u>, which incorporates an alternative story which considers a more faith-based celebration of Easter, as well as modelling a moral dilemma that children often encounter. It also included socio-linguistic relevance to black British culture by incorporating a Caribbean proverb in Patwa. The key findings in this section show that although food represents a key cultural indicator and a potential source of early years pedagogy, a culturally relevant portrayal did not exist in the sample of ORT books. Instead food that could be considered as Othered was reviled and portrayed as unacceptable. This key finding concurs with Ojo (2018) whose study into British black African cuisine showed that people from outside of the culture tended to be neo-phobic and that the omission of this type of cuisine in mainstream cookery literature is partly culpable. The following section offers an examination of the Musicality sub-code using the same three lens that were used for this section.

Music

Although not a basic necessity, music is recognised as a key part of cultural existence (Gilroy, 1993). Its use in social justice issues speaks to its potency in meeting a number of the challenges that have been discussed so far. The following is an analysis of the portrayal of black British musicality using my understanding of reconciliation theology, CRT and the learning to read process.

Portrayal of black British musicality

<u>The Wedding</u> includes portrayals of black British musicality in the forms of music and dance. There were other portrayals of musicality, which although did not represent black British cultures precisely, were coded as representing a culture outside of the white norm. The depiction of the trolls' music at their party, for instance, in <u>Kipper and the Trolls</u>, was intentionally depicted as distasteful, and could be said to represent something other than white

cultures. It is however, the portrayal in <u>The Wedding</u> that is the focus for this analysis, as this portrayal was specific to the black British family.

Reconciliation through Open Homogeneity

As well as being recognised as a cultural indicator, music is also a medium through which cultures often merge and overlap (Gilroy, 1993). Bob Marley's reggae, for instance, has adopted a global culture, with his songs being sung, played and covered in many different countries, and by many different people groups. It could be said that classic music and artists such as Marley will inevitably crossover, however, the same trend is seen, (albeit to a lesser extent), in other genres like rap, soul and gospel. The main idea purported here is that an appreciation of musicality from one's own culture, as well as from others can have a unifying influence. This idea of exploring others from a starting point of the self, can be said to mirror the strategy of Jesus' plan for redemption. He came as a Jew, ministered to the Jews, but later extended salvation to all people. Even in this strategy, He proved the value of people over plans when He made digressions from this plan to minister to the occasional person who fell outside of His target audience, (John 4). This open homogenous approach was effective because of the power of self-definition. Jesus' focus on the Jews encouraged a clear depiction of Jewish identity, which was bound up in being God's chosen people. This identity depended on love for people over principles, and only a Jewish Saviour could have had the audacity to make this priority clear. Once culturally defined, the disciples were then able to reproduce by making more disciples through preaching and teaching. The success of this ongoing reproduction depended on the disciples' accurate initial understanding of who they were.

Misrepresentations of Musicality

The content analysis of <u>The Wedding</u> revealed evidence of misrepresentations with regards to the musicality within black British cultures. In the book <u>The Wedding</u>, musicality was used to code the black community's wedding celebration. The image was of 'everyone dancing' and depicted adults and children in different dynamic dance positions. The representation is one that concurs with the stereotypical perception of black people as vibrant dancers (Hughey, 2009). This is not the contention however, it is instead the manner in which the dancers are portrayed, as well as the assumption made in the use of the word 'everyone' that this manner of dance is descriptive of all black people.

I will give first priority to the latter point made, which is that the use of the word 'everyone' depicts the idea, in the mind of the readers, that all black people dance and indeed that they all dance in this manner. It would be easy to give many anecdotal examples of family gatherings that I have attended where not everyone danced, and although that would serve the purpose of exemplifying my lived experience, it might not offer convincing data for every reader. My contention with the use of the word 'everyone' in this instance, is as follows. While an adult would take that word to mean everyone in the picture, (which is one way that the writer could have meant the word to be understood), it is well-known that children frequently have a different comprehension of words and/or phrases than adults,

"The argument we have been developing implies that the ease with which pre-school children often seem to understand what is said to them is misleading if we take it as an indication of skill with language per se. Certainly they commonly understand us, but surely it is not our words alone that they are understanding – for they may be shown to be relying heavily on cues of other kinds." (Donaldson, 2006, p.72).

The cues that assist children in their comprehension of the words they read are seen in the following quote,

"So we reach this conclusion: when a child interprets what we say to him his interpretation is influenced by at least three things (and the ways in which these interact with each other) – his knowledge of the language, his assessment of what we intend (as indicated by our non-linguistic behaviour), and the manner in which we would represent the physical situation to himself if we were not there at all." (ibid, p.69).

All three of these ways of interpreting words have relevance to words read as well as heard. The last two points in the above quote have notable relevance to the way in which the word 'everyone' could be understood by children reading it. A child who would be identified as black British, may more closely match the supposed authorial intent, meaning that everyone in the picture danced. However, it is foreseeable that children outside of the black British community could, because of their cognitive framework, that regards these books as representative of black culture, sub-consciously adopt the stereotypical view that every black person likes to dance, or that every black person dances in this frenetic manner. While we

cannot know for certain which interpretation an individual child will adopt, we can ensure that due authorial diligence is done, by avoiding negative stereotypes and thereby misrepresenting aspects of culture.

In addition to the use of the word 'everyone', the illustration accompanying the text depicts a two-page spread of the family dancing. The sub-code used to categorise this was 'misrepresentation', for two pertinent reasons. One being that the image reinforces a negative stereotype of black people as brutish and wild, in the way in which the illustrator has interpreted the black family's celebration. Second is the way in which this image has the potential to produce ongoing meaning in the minds of the child/adult readers, and thereby causing the misrepresentation to reproduce further misrepresentations to do with other aspects of black gatherings or black celebration. In the absence of the actual image, I will attempt to give a detailed description of the offending illustration. While recognising that I bring to the description an emotive response, I do not intend to put this in check because I view the response as an appropriate one in the light of the portrayal of a culture that I adhere to. This book was and still is in an operating school, so its portrayal of black gatherings and celebration has the real potential to impact a number of children. The illustration includes a picture of the bride being swung into the air at a 135-degree angle, by either her newly married husband or her brother-in-law. Her tongue is hanging out of her mouth and she is being swung so much higher than the other characters, that some of her face is out of the range of the illustration. The guests accompanying her are in different dance snapshots which include arms and legs positioned at a downwards right angle, but mostly hands in the background are being waved in the air. The inclusion of a barefooted female leg, with no identifiable torso or head completes my description.

This gross misrepresentation of a black British musical gathering runs parallel with observations by Gottschild (2005, p. 25), where she notes a white dancer's description of a particular type of black dance, as having "an animal-like quality". Rather than being a true representation of an aspect of black British culture, this illustration serves as a dehumanizing tool. My choice of words that imply deliberate attempts to dehumanize are perhaps fuelled by the emotive response mentioned above, yet I do not retract them. Solorzano and Yosso provide me with support for my polemic via their counter-story where a character explains that, "when we do speak out, people often do not understand the depth of emotion welling up in our throats. And if we show any emotion it makes it that much easier to write us off as 'supersensitive,' or

'out of control.'" (2001 in Solorzano and Yosso, 2016, p. 136). My unedited response and the previous quote also highlight one of the offending aspects of the above described illustration. The people in the picture appear to be driven completely by emotional sensibility, as if the musical stimuli has rendered a people, who were respectably composed for photography on the previous page, senseless. The hanging tongue of the bride, the ownerless barefooted leg and the seemingly floating hands in the air, resemble a random collection of body parts. This dismemberment of black bodies serves as a metaphor of the treatment of black people in global society historically, through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, and in more recent events in America and Britain, through unjustified restraints and killings of black people. The prevailing perception is that this group of people who appeared to possess a form of respectability in the previous picture, are actually closer to savagery. The significance of the presence of a white character in the formal pose is unclear. Apart from the fact that he recurs in a number of stories, as a way to provide a character motif throughout the books, this character could be said to be present for the image that represents black people acting in a respectable manner, while notably absent for the dance scene. The idea that black people, acting out of emotion are unable to make reasonable arguments is one that I refute by my inclusion of an emotionally fuelled analysis. An emotive response is one that is more likely to be acted upon through the researcher's agency, whereas the emotion-poor responses of studies that depend on rationality and reason alone, vie for attention through more mechanistic methods. My attention now turns towards the production of a much-needed counter-narrative.

Counter-narrative

The storyline of the above book had huge potential to portray the black British community positively. CRT confers the scope to retell the story in a way that better suits a humanizing pedagogy. In this instance, however, I am not convinced that the whole story needs to be retold. There are aspects that need to be better represented, as I have mentioned above, but the overall storyline is positive. The main need for change is with the reprehensibly illustrated image described and analysed above. The subject of the illustration is one that is often associated with the black community, which is perhaps why an illustration that I commissioned, has a similar theme and is used in this section as a counter-image to the one in the sample book. A counter-narrative/image is briefly outlined below:

The Wedding (alternative)

The grandmother's influence as an older and wiser relation would be emphasised by the inclusion of Caribbean proverbial wisdom, as used in the previous counter-narrative. The cultural composite of the extended family would include people and children from dual heritage backgrounds, and a small but significant detail would be made culturally relevant, by ensuring that the married couple figurines on top of the cake were black.

The picture below represents both a counter to the one used in the book sample, and one where the images used are respectful to the community depicted and illustrated with a degree of consciousness. An analytical description ensues the picture in order to spotlight the culturally relevant claims that are being made.

Illustration 1

Counter-image illustrated by Tayo Fatunla

The above illustration, although described as a counter-image, was not commissioned as such. The commission came about as part of a pilot project to self-publish an initial reading book that was culturally relevant to black British culture. The book is called The Band Family, and introduces the main characters of the scheme, who are an extended family comprised of Mum, Dad, Felix, Joy, Omar, Nan and Pops. The illustration represents black Britishness in a culturally relevant manner for the following reasons: The characters have been respectfully drawn; the symbols of musicality steer away from the negative stereotype of a frenetic gathering of people and depicts technicality and skill, and the illustration shows an attempt to

include diversity. The illustration also makes plain an aspect of spirituality that is often seen as controversial when associated with public education, which is that black Christianity has played a significant role within black British culture, (Thompson, 2013). This point is discussed in light of CRT and the authorial intent in commissioning the illustration, in the following section of this study. The following sub-section evaluates the use of black musicality to aid the learning to read process.

Read, Rhythm and Rhyme

The wider pedagogy used in British schools provides an effective launching pad for the critical pedagogy that I propose. The former, therefore needs no lengthy explanation (DfE, 2016). The key elements to be included which make use of traditional black British cultural capital, are as follows: musicality and Afro-futuristic/prophetic imagination.

Britain's black community has a long-standing relationship with musicality, where "music and song are conceived as ideological weaponry for survival" (Cooper in Henry, 2012, p.359). Although it is common for music to be used pedagogically in early years education, black musical cultures among young people has often been denigrated except when it has been gentrified, as in the cases of learning rhymes which are labelled as raps. This project seeks to identify the aspects of black British musical cultures that are compatible with teaching young children to read, in a manner that gives credence to the lived experiences of a marginalised community. Counter-storylines produced in reading books have the potential to further the conversations amongst members of the black British community, that are to do with social issues that affect them the greatest. Black musical culture in the 70s and 80s, in the form of Reggae Sound Systems provided a safe space for conversations of this nature (Henry, 2012), despite being branded as anti-social and sub-cultural. Artists were able to tell their counter-stories in an arena where the musical prowess was appreciated, and the linguistic codes were understood.

The significance of Patwa being the language of choice for engaging in these conversations, has been attested to by black theorists (Edwards, 1979; Tomlin, 1999; Henry, 2012), but is still to a large degree, ignored by educationalists. Black academics or politicians tend to employ oral use of Patwa when addressing a mainly black audience yet omit its use in written form. This gives the impression that Patwa does not have the same linguistic value as Standard

English, or indeed Latin, French or any of the other languages that are often used in academic writings. This could not be further from the truth when you consider how the use of Patwa and other Creole languages, have been central to hegemonic resistance throughout the country, as well as the semantic credibility afforded the language through its everyday use, capacity for evolution and its methodical linguistic processes, as documented in The Dictionary of Jamaican English (Cassidy and Le Page, 2000).

This segregation of use can be pedagogically addressed through the utilisation of written Patwa in reading books. Dual language books for children have been available for a long time (Scherer, 2016). However, this proposition is one that will more closely reflect the lived occurrences of Patwa for children from black British communities. Examples of intended usage have been given above and form a way of highlighting the linguistic capital of black British communities, as well as depicting and further encouraging the inter-generational conversation between older members of the community with their British-born descendants. Sutcliffe's (1978, in Edwards, 1979, p. 53) study of black British children's speech in Bedford, highlights a "fast, fluent and rhythmic delivery, in a wide range of settings." This style of speech is quite common amongst speakers of Patwa and is another valuable aspect of Black Language that can be capitalised on in the construction of sentences that borrow from that style. The precedent for this has been set for older readers by Penguin's publication of Linton Kwesi-Johnson's dub poetry written in Jamaican Creole (Kwesi-Johnson, 2007). His critical perspective of racialized issues in Britain serves as an example of how to use Black Language for critical pedagogical purposes. Before moving onto another dimension of the programme's critical pedagogy, I will first address how the Pentecostal church has engaged with this idea of musicality.

Christianity has been credited with having "a significant role in the formulation and reformulation of the social, cultural, political and psychological make-up of generations within the African diaspora" (Henry, 2012, p.366). According to the writer, the hybridity of African and European religious music and dance formed a unity amongst Jamaican slaves, as well as a means for their revolt. It was through this means that they were able to communicate with each other to enable "resistance and transcendence" (ibid, p.361). The Pentecostal church in Britain has certainly provided a means of transcendence through the creation of Gospel music, however, the means for resistance has been lacking in many respects. The transcendence that came from the eschatological lyrical references, provided singers with an emotional safety that

enabled many to advance musically (and otherwise) in secular arenas, in spite of the racial tensions. As described above, the black church network has already provided the pilot reading programme project with access to people with relevant specific skills and qualifications. In addition to this the introduction and use of "Di Jamiekan Nyuu Testiment" (Bible Society of the West Indies, 2012) Bible, speaks to the agency of the black church to inspire literature that is radical and culturally relevant. It also raises the prestige of Jamaican Language, as it is still "commonly held that the only 'real' languages with 'proper' grammars are those with a written literature", (Edwards, 1979, p. 41). The subsequent contribution made by Beckford et al, (2016), is a remix of pertinent scriptures, critical theological thoughts, songs and poetry, musically performed to highlight issues of social justice, however, a more education-based utilisation of this valuable resource is needed. The fusion of musicality and language is another example of how musicality can be used to inspire, encourage and educate. The following paragraph explores how Afrofuturism could transform the learning to read process.

Afrofuturism has been described as a means to imagine a techno-rich future for the African diaspora, that is free from historically oppressive ideologies (Rouse, no date). This imagination is often experienced through popular culture in the forms of music, film, art and literature. This ability to develop a collective imagination is seen in the global response to the Marvel movie, Black Panther. The film has been described as "a breakthrough in black cultural representation" (Connolly, 2018) and although fictional, it has sparked a radical imagination of an era where Afrodiasporic contributions to global issues are both welcomed and respected. Wakanda seems to exist in each unified individual, family or group that dares to rediscover their own source of power and make the decision (or not) to manifest it as it is. Afrofuturism as pedagogy describes an attempt to further spark the imaginations of leaders within the black British community. When storylines take from the historical and contemporary narratives, and implant future possibilities, we create an overlap of the spiritual reality, cognitive effort and tangible hope for a just global society. This element alone is one that ignites excitement and motivates the continued development of a culturally relevant literacy programme.

This section has focused on the portrayal of black musicality in the book samples. The emotion-rich analysis of The Wedding led to the culturally relevant claims of an image that was commissioned as part of a literacy programme designed with cultural relevance in mind. The key finding within this section was that musicality offers great potential as part of a critical pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014) but that it also has great capacity to portray depicted cultures

positively (or negatively). This concurs with Gottschild's (2018) view that the language of movement has the capacity to speak, and that the movement of black bodies often triggers a memory of enslaved bodies. The critical pedagogical elements of the project, musicality and Afro-futurism, have been shown to be capable of teaching readers about social justice issues; celebrating black British cultural capital and informing a future for marginalised groups, where racism and its accompanying ideologies, do not exist. Following this, is an analysis of the Spirituality code, using the same analytical tools.

Spirituality

This section uses findings from the book entitled, <u>Noah's Ark Adventure</u>. In addition, the 'magic key' motif is analysed as it is a significant aspect of the reading scheme, as well as being a crucial sticking point amongst a number of Christian families. First, I discuss society's portrayal of black spirituality, especially as it relates to the black Pentecostal church. I then move onto a theological discussion of reconciliation and how the black church has and can continue to make headway in this crucial area. This is followed by how the black church has contributed to CRT, and an approach to writing counter-narratives is offered. Lastly, I include an analysis of how the learning to read process is affected by students' participation within black church settings.

Black Spirituality

Beckford's (2014) analysis of society's perception of the black church, details that the counter-image above, of a vibrant worshipping mostly black congregation, is the common perception that society has. Outside of this perception, there is also a view of black spirituality that equates to witchcraft. Disney's 'The Princess and the Frog' shows this view and portrays a version of black spirituality, that they obviously consider to be suitable for young children to absorb. This idea of a good version of black spirituality versus a bad version, is interesting because it offers an insight into the way in which dominant narratives almost tell the story without having lived it. As discussed in the Literature Review, Christian faith is an important part of the black British community, and with this value comes the abhorrence of anything resembling witchcraft (ibid). This then highlights a quandary with regards to the use of the 'magic key' motif in the ORT reading scheme. While appearing to be a harmless bit of literary imagination, many families within the Christian (especially the black Christian) community, do not allow

their children to read the books that make mention of the 'magic key'. It also appears that the kind of spirituality that is more closely related to white norms, i.e. magic, is acceptable while at the same time Christian spirituality is denigrated. The story entitled, <u>Noah's Ark Adventure</u>, notably depicts Noah and his family as white characters. While this aspect of the reading scheme is most likely to draw the attention of the black Christian community, it has been presented with a negative twist that not so subtly presents the children in the story as being of better moral character than Noah (and presumably the God who instructed him). Both the Bible characters' whiteness, and the story's negative slant, show that the publishers do not perceive and value black Christian spirituality, in the same way as the black British community do.

Differences in how different cultures practise Christianity is an understudied area, and its relevance to this study is highlighted by Scherer's research (2016) which showed that although children can be 'faith literate', this aspect of their identity is often silenced within the school community. The foregrounding of faith in an ORT book was therefore significant, from the perspective of a study that seeks to investigate the portrayal of black cultures, which is often inter-linked with the black church, no matter how tenuously. It is no surprise that portrayals of the church were not included within any of the storylines, but the use of a Bible story, in the negative way that it was written, hints at a desire to persuade young children that anything to do with Christianity (and maybe faith) is undesirable. While this might be the view of those who advocate for the secularisation of society, it is a form of indoctrination nonetheless, and cannot be positioned as neutral or unbiased. Furthermore, if the view taken is that religious faith is to be avoided, then why should faith in magic be encouraged? I do not have a contention with the magic used in the books, but I do want to highlight the values that appear as neutral and that are often difficult to ascertain without close examination. Moving on from this then, I now present a discussion of how the black church can aid the journey towards reconciliation.

Reconciliation Theology and the Black Church

Chapter Two looked at the importance of multi-levelled reconciliation. On a personal level, this was described as the idealised balance between the body, soul and spirit. The church in general has been called to be a place of restoration for individuals in need, however, the black church in Britain has had a particular role to play with regards to meeting the needs of people within the black community. The call for the black church to take more of an active role in

politics (Aldred, 2013; Beckford, 2014), could conceal the work that is undertaken by the church in the areas of mental health, prison ministry and homelessness. In addition, there are numerous individuals who can testify to the internal regeneration that occurs through their interaction with the church. This work, which occurs mostly on an individual basis, is priceless. However, it does not negate the call for the church to do more. The request seems to be regarding the areas of reconciliation, from the interpersonal to the global. Although the church hosts conferences for marriages and families, for instance, the stereotype of the single black mum still persists. Thankfully, this is not a stereotype reinforced in the book samples, however, a number of books for older children or young people do present their characters in this stereotypical way, (Zephaniah, 2007; Mason, 2014). The argument in this section is that although the black church is known for making impact to the lives of individuals, there is much more that can be done with regards to the reconciliation of families, the community at large and further afield.

CRT and the portrayal of Bible Characters

CRT's premise of the importance of counter-narratives is significant with regards to the portrayal of characters in the Bible. The infamous image of Mary and the baby Jesus has etched in many people's minds, the depiction of a blond and blue-eyed Jesus. This concocted image of Jesus and His mother has ricocheted into a plethora of children's literature, so much so that the idea of Him resembling a child from the African diaspora often brings debate, disdain or disgust. Some of this educational literature has been widely used within the black church community in the form of Sunday School literature, which has meant that I find it hard to shake the norm imagining Jesus as a white person (Perryman, 1995). This is not only true of Jesus, but as Perryman states, most

"Christians unconsciously assumed that all biblical characters were persons with Caucasian features. These unconscious attitudes are evident, and reflected, in the illustrations of most Sunday School and Christian education materials. Virtually none of the illustrations remotely resemble blacks, and very few resemble Jews. The characters usually have European features. Only recently have slightly darker skin tones been used." (ibid, p.6).

The rhetorically asked question that I encounter from black Christians is, does it matter? The answer lies at the heart of what it means to be omitted from the cultural mainstream. Cultural

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relevance insists that it does matter, because the truth of who different Bible characters were racially, is more diverse than we have been led to believe (ibid). A white-washed portrayal of Bible characters has probably done the most amount of emotional damage to non-white people than any other portrayal within children's literature. After all, it was to the Bible that many slave owners turned for justification of their ownership of black slaves. A culturally relevant global portrayal of characters in the Bible is probably where the most urgent need is, so as to first allow black children to see themselves as a part of God's story, and to open non-black children's perceptions to the inherent spiritual value of all of God's children. The following presents the story of Noah's Ark, as told in the book sample.

Noah's Ark Adventure

The children are miserable because of persistently heavy rain. The weather means that they cannot go outside. The magic key takes them on an adventure, but it happens to be raining there too. They see Noah's ark and state that he has to put all the animals on the ark or they will drown. The animals are coerced onto the ark two by two then Noah asks them to get on as it is time to go. Noah then realises that Floppy cannot go on because he already has two dogs on the ark. The children decide that they could not leave Floppy, so they do not go on the ark either. The ark sails away and the children are left in Noah's umbrella, just before the magic key takes them back home.

Key images:

The children from the white family are looking out of window, passers-by (who are white) walking past their window with umbrellas.

Noah and his family are white.

Noah is shown holding his hand out to stop Floppy and the children from entering the ark. At this point, the water is ankle deep.

Noah throws his umbrella to one side as he walks inside the Ark; the children and Floppy have sad expressions, as the water continues to rise.

The children are sitting inside of the upside-down umbrella, looking at the Ark, which is pictured far away in the background. The expressions on the children's (and Floppy's) faces evoke empathy and shock that Noah would leave them like that.

I have shown in an earlier counter-narrative that spirituality can be woven into story lines without being onerous. In this instance, however, the blatancy of the biblical connection leads to the idea that the inclusion of adapted bible stories, which depict the characters as accurately as a more open-minded reading of the Bible would, would be one effective way of restoring global unity through the children. A counter-narrative would however, seek to convey to the readers the value of a relationship with God, the endorsement of accountability to a higher power and other biblical values, rather than portraying the stories with a negative twist, as the ORT version does.

Learning to Read and the Black Church

As we have seen in the Literature Review, the black British church has been instrumental with regards to paving the way for educating black children. Reading has been a particularly important skill within the four walls of the church. Children attending church are expected to read publicly as well as in congregational and small groups; the comprehension of Bible passages often takes deep thought and study, which children are encouraged to do from a young age. These literacy activities, as well as those that are associated with personal or family devotional times, have often gone unnoticed and are certainly understudied. The attention to a series of books which would draw the attention of congregants of the black churches, could also open the door to further research that could benefit the reading journey of a variety of children, who do not currently benefit from some of the literacy activities mentioned above.

The key finding in this section is that spirituality was only portrayed as acceptable when it concurred with magic, while Christian faith was directly maligned. This represented a missed opportunity to capitalise on the teaching of values that concur with children's faith literacy. This finding concurs with views that positive depictions of children's faith provide normalising portrayals which enable children to benefit from seeing their home culture in print (Carver Sekeres, 2008; Scherer, 2016).

Famous People

This theme represented the fourth cultural indicator mentioned in the Literature Review and used to initially code the data. My treatment of the inclusion of 'famous people' or heroes is necessarily different to that of the previous three themes. Firstly, the book samples included no example of famous black people. This is an extremely obvious omission which is dealt as such, in a later section. Secondly, books depicting famous black people are one of the most published books within the black community (Fatunla, 2015) and they are very well used during October's Black History Month. Their use would be applauded, if it were not for the notable absence of as many books that include a collection of 'Famous White People'. This is not to say that I am being critical of books that fill this particular gap. My contention is that it needs to be normalised, famous people should be a genre that spans culture, sex, faith etc. For these two reasons, this study does not include a specific analysis of the ORT books' portrayal of famous black people.

Having now concluded the analysis of the first level cultural indicators, the subsequent section delves into a deeper analysis of the identified themes. By terming it 'a deeper analysis' does not suppose that it is more important than the previous analysis. I have found that the first level codes have offered an analysis that is not only close to the data but is also close to the issues that we grapple with in practice. The following section is therefore offered as a continuation of the discussion, which although is necessarily more abstract, aims to maintain the practical relevance of the previous sections. In the way of a reminder, the identified themes that will now be considered are subordination, misrepresentation and omissions**.**

Subordination

The primary code of Food has served as a doorway to the sub-code Subordination. This code was evident in the overall positioning of the black family as secondary to the white family, but more specifically subordination was evident in three of the books in the sample, namely: The Barbecue, Poor Old Mum! and Monkey Tricks. This category is analysed through the theological lens and critical race methodology. The counter-narrative is discussed at the close of the section. Before discussing the details of the data, a brief outline of the storylines and specific instances are necessary.

The Barbecue introduces the black dad as wanting to host a party, in the form of a barbecue. The white family are invited to the barbecue and the dads, in stereotypical form, set about attempting to light the barbecue. The black dad uses matches to no avail, but then the white dad using a much more elaborately packed fuel, succeeds in lighting the barbecue. This is despite the fact that it is being held at the black dad's home and with his resources. In addition, the cooking and dispensing of the burgers has been taken over by the white dad, and although the weather and further misfortune render the barbecue a failure, the black dad is portrayed as a subordinated assistant to the white dad. The sub-code subordination was also identified in Poor Old Mum! and Monkey Tricks. The former book presents the black mum as entering a school sports day race and losing the race, due to a torn sole on her running shoes. The subordination seen in this story is in the obvious outcome of the mum losing the race, but is also depicted pictorially on p.12, where the mum is standing on the margins of the parental group, looking at the winner of the race holding up her trophy. The latter book shows subordination in a subtler form. This is where Kipper and his siblings have been taken on an outing to the zoo, by the black dad. The subordination is identified when Kipper manages to purchase a monkey mask and hide away, all without the black dad realising. These three instances of subordination have been further refined to the following sub-categories: subordination by subdual, subordination by deprivation and subordination through miseducation. Each of these sub-categories are dealt with in the analysis that follows.

Subordination by subdual

The sample book The Barbecue included the 'Subordination by subdual' code because of the identified subdual of the black dad by the white dad. This has been described as an arsenal of racial micro-aggressions which "justify and reproduce the subordination and oppression of Black males while concomitantly erecting edifices of racial and gender inequality (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007 in Smith, Hung and Franklin, 2011). The idea of a barbecue was instigated by the black dad; the resources used belonged to the black dad, in spite of this, the white dad was portrayed as the one who could light the fire, cook the burgers and hand them out. Both dads were subjected to the stereotype of the incapable male, but the black dad was further subjected to a more understated depiction of subordination by subdual. Subdual in the sense that illustratively speaking, both dads are equals, yet the white male has been portrayed as having subdued the resources of the black dad to the point that he is cooking and serving the burgers. The black dad was portrayed as being made subordinate in the sense that he was

unable to or not allowed to get the job done. This sense of being made subordinate is emphasised further by an illustrative detail, where a canopy has been made by the dads to shield them and their barbecue from the customary rain. The black dad is drawn as being somewhat silently aware that a disaster was about to break forth, yet they were both subjected to the embarrassing downpour that could have been averted if the black dad's voice or agency was forthcoming. This obviously, would have spoilt the storyline, and it is not my intention to suggest different plots for each of the books in the sample. It is however, my intention to call to attention the subtle portrayals of the black characters that have real potential to perpetuate the idea of black people and their associated culture as a subordinated race.

Subordination by deprivation

The idea that black people possess full agency with regards to their economic development is one that disregards the current and historical impact of the system of slavery (Walters, 2012). The portrayal of the African diaspora as a socio-economically deprived people is one that infiltrates reading books, fair trade literature and even public lavatories. This portrayal coupled with the backward pull of the economically disadvantaging effects of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism creates a downward cycle which perpetuates the belief that black people and poverty are synonymous. Of particular significance, is the portrayal of the black female character as having been momentarily deprived of adequate resources. Black women's voices have been amplified through black feminist and womanist theoretical developments (Hill-Collins, 1990). In this sense the recognition of the disproportionate effect that slavery and its associated ills, has had on black women's economic status is highlighted in the recognition that poverty is both a racialized and feminized social issue (Claude, 1986).

The use of the word deprivation, at first reading, appears to rob the deprived from agency to own wealth. This is not the meaning that I propose by using it. By using it as a noun, enables me to highlight its synonyms and the way I mean it to be used, i.e. poverty, hardship or lack. This is the manner in which I have categorised aspects of the story, Poor Old Mum! The storyline includes both families' involvement in sports day. Differing degrees of success are seen, by Wilma, Wilf, Chip and the black dad, but the category of subordination by deprivation is given to the instance where the black mum loses her race due to a ripped shoe sole. In other words, she lost the race due to a lack of adequate resources. Mum's disappointment was depicted through an illustration which shows her looking on from the margins at the winner

(who is white), surrounded by her supporters (who are also white). The echoes of wider society are too loud to be ignored. The relevance of the black female character being portrayed as the ultimate loser could not have been lost on an organisation that is known for its academic brilliance. However, to suppose that this portrayal was intentionally insensitive is perhaps a step too far. I will then attribute this lack of criticality or reflexivity to educational negligence, which although not as direct as assuming intentionality, has the same degree of culpability.

Subordination by miseducation

It is again important to clarify the use of the word used in this coding and for this clarification, I cannot turn to a dictionary definition. Instead it is necessary for me to appeal to the seminal work of Carter G. Woodson (2012), The Mis-Education of the Negro. Woodson draws upon an example of an 'uneducated' black man who runs his own business, building it from the ground up. He compares this man to a 'mis-educated' black man who does not believe that it is possible for a black man to do what the former man is doing. This difference is seen in the visual reference to the black dad's Oxford University tracksuit, alluding to the idea that he has been (mis)educated at this educational institution. The portrayal of a black man who seems to be as ignorant of his own cultural capital, as he seems to be, would fit the category of what Woodson describes as being mis-educated. The idea of being misled or taught in such a way as to hide the truth about the self, are additionally synonymous with the word and is specifically related to the book Monkey Tricks. This is where Kipper is seen hiding from the black dad, while purchasing a monkey mask and surprising them with it at the end of the story. Kipper is depicted as being a step ahead of the dad, because while the dad has the majority of the children enjoying the elephants, Kipper is enacting his scheme by purchasing the monkey mask. This act of misleading/mis-education is made worse by the fact that it is a child who causes the adult man to become subordinated.

Counter-narrative

In order to refrain from producing counter-stories merely from the offshoot of the analysed ORT books, this counter-story refers back to the autobiographical memory approach taken in the Introduction. Goodson and Gill (2014, p.125) have described autobiographical memory accounts as having the potential to "provide the compass for the delineation of our courses of action throughout life", which therefore augment "human action and human agency." As a

pedagogical tool, autobiographical memory also enables the author to advance in their identity construction and reconstruction, through the process of reflexivity. It is viewed as a vehicle for transporting the process of "detaching, distancing and development [as] we construct new cognitive maps and contextual understandings" of the self and the societal and cultural settings in which we exist, (ibid, p.127). I have taken inspiration from CRT models of a conversational style of counter-narrative and the interview style modelled by Goodson and Gill (ibid, pp.131-144). I have chosen to use this deconstructive process to interview myself, by using an open question style, with a view to developing a better understanding of how my educational journey impacts upon my current courses of action, and to unpick any feelings of being made to feel subordinate to colleagues or peers throughout the journey.

Conclusion

This section has detailed the idea of the black characters in the sample being portrayed as subordinate to the white characters. Three types of subordination were identified in the book samples. These were subordination by subdual, deprivation and miseducation. Each of these sub-categories have paralleled the portrayals in the book samples with a societal dynamic that adversely affects the black community, both globally and locally within British borders. This key finding concurs with Clawson (2002) who also shows that the portrayal of black people as poor in textbooks mirror the wider portrayal in the media. Lastly, I have offered, as a counter-narrative, an account of the autobiographical memories associated with my own educational career, with a view to using it to further the understanding of my current and future courses of action. The following section is an analysis of the sub-code, Misrepresentation.

Misrepresentation

The sub-codes categorise aspects of culture that encapsulate more depth and meaning, than the initial codes, which were used as a means to access more depth. 'Misrepresentation' was used to define mostly illustrations where black characters were portrayed in a way that was either disrespectful to aspects of their culture, or where the elements of the story failed to capture poignant aspects of black British cultures. Stuart Hall's writings on representations have proved useful in shaping this section within a CRT methodological framework. Hall states that representation connects language and meaning to culture because it involves "the use of language, of signs, and images which stand for or represent things." (Hall, 1997, p.15). He

does, as can be expected, insist that it is a far from simplistic process and goes on to analyse how this "production of meaning through language" works, using mostly a constructionist lens. A child's learning to read journey, is partly made up of learning to decode and decipher the systems of representation, that are mentally construed in order for them to make sense of what they read, and more crucially the world in which they live and interact. The accompanying sharing of these ideas through the tripartite process of representation – things, thoughts about those things and signs which represent the things – is what this analysis is concerned with. I am also interested in exposing what could be considered as the generally shared connotations that specific signifiers evoke, especially with regards to the illustrations drawn in the books.

Misrepresentations of black female hair

Hall highlights the presence of linguistic codes that belong to different cultures. These codes are socially constructed as a result of the meanings that we decided to give to signs, (words, images, symbols etc). These codes function to enable us to determine the public meaning that signs have in different contexts and are uniquely found in cultures. A CRT perspective of codes suggests that it is not always possible for marginalised cultures to socially construct their own shared codes, because they are often subverted by dominant cultures' use of language and by the normalising influence on the shared conceptualisations of marginalised cultures. For instance, the image of the black female characters' hair depicts each of them as having natural afros for the majority of the time. As an insider to this particular cultural group, I would say that the black female characters have their 'hair out' most of the time. Having their hair out has unique significations to black females with natural hair, which would be very different to how white females view having their own hair out. For instance, having our hair out so often leaves it susceptible to damage, due to the fact that we would have to comb it often. It also has implications for the daily (or nightly) care that would be required in order to keep the natural curls as bouncy and voluptuous as Wilma's tends to be. In reality, for many black girls and women, the portrayal of black female hair is misrepresented, although it would seem that by giving the characters natural-looking hair the illustrator was attempting to be culturally relevant. There is one particular example where Wilma is swimming with Biff and the others and she has no swimming hat on, and has managed to maintain the same voluptuous afro, which remains unaltered despite being submerged in deep water. The illustrator has more accurately portrayed the movement of Biff's hair, but has failed to represent Wilma's with cultural accuracy, or according to the shared linguistic codes of the black female cultural group. The

portrayal of black female hair and hairstyles is particularly important due to a number of social phenomena, one of which I will mention here. This is, the societal portrayal of female hair and the affect that that has had on black British girls and women.

During the years that I was growing up in England, the 70s and 80s, the main image of beautiful female hair was shampoo adverts that portrayed white (usually blonde) women with slow-flowing, shiny, shimmering hair. By omitting portrayals of beautifully bouncing afros on black women, a generation of black women were made to resort to placing silky petticoats or tights on their heads, in order to emulate the necessary flicking of hair and the feeling of pretend locks down their backs. As well as the bombardment of these images from advertisers, prominent black women in the music or film industries, often wore extensions or the like, or had their hair chemically straightened. Black girls were not encouraged to see their natural hair, in its natural state as beautiful or normal. Currently, a natural hair movement is on an increasing rise, re-stoked by women such as Lupita Nyong'o and Alec Wek, but also by grass-root movements that have provided black women with researched and developed hair-care regimes, styling methods and products to enhance our natural hair's unique curl patterns and styling flexibility, (Cornwell, 1997; McDonald, 2018). The Black Panther Marvel movie struck a nerve with many black women as it positively and beautifully portrayed black femininity, and the producer did not covertly challenge black women to embrace natural hair. The very phrase 'natural hair' is one that is mainly used with regards to black women. You seldom, (if at all) hear white women speak of wearing their natural hair, or if you do, it is likely to be referring to their hair colour. The conceptual damage that this has done to generations of black women is evident by the sheer number of children's stories, which are published within the black community, which tend to veer towards portraying black girls with 'beautiful, happy, nappy hair', (Tarpley, 1998; Swain-Bates, 2013; Miller, 2017). The recognition that this is a medium that can be used to repair conceptual damage, gives further credence to this study, and although could seem as trivial to outsiders, is a real priority for most black women, for reasons which I will attempt to outline below.

In addition to the necessary time, money and attention that black women often give to their hair care regimes, in order to account for the vulnerability of the tight curl pattern, (McDonald, 2018) black women live with a heightened consciousness of their hair that women from other cultures are not susceptible to. From childhood, black women are often defined by their hair texture and length and made to feel that the further away from Eurocentric norms it was, the

more abnormal, ugly and inferior it (and they) were. During the 70s and 80s when afros were made fashionable by the Black and Proud movement, (Prince, 2009) black women wore their afro, not so much as with a sense of normality than as with a sense of rebellion, that to some degree is still associated with the hairstyle today. Black hair and hairstyles portrayed and accepted in a way that encourages the feeling of normalcy, is the goal that I believe needs to be achieved, in order to give black girls a confident base from which to explore their identity. A black female whose hair is close to African textural norms, cannot have a natural hairstyle, within many sections of British society, without having to first build up a reputation of being the one that wears her hair naturally. This is an example of a micro-aggression that can wear away at the soul of young black girls, ensuring that they grow accustomed to an ongoing emotional fight which their friends who have hair that is close to European norms, are not subjected to. A representation within children's reading books, that pretends that African hair behaves in a similar way to European hair is inauthentic, betrays ignorance and lacks criticality.

Misrepresentation of extended family relationships

The extended relationships depicted in <u>The Wedding</u> consist of an auntie, grandmother and others who are not given specific relational ties. While there can be no manner of ascribing certain family models to black communities, one would expect, for the grandmother to say more than one line throughout the planning of the wedding! In addition, the cultural composition of the family group is a poorly represented depiction of black families in this country. The likelihood of a family living outside of London to have no family members from non-black cultures is extremely low, and the inclusion of the motif character with the baseball cap, does not adequately compensate for the lack of diversity in the illustrations.

This section has critically analysed the sub-code of Misrepresentation as seen in the research data. Stuart Hall's ideas on representation and the socially constructed nature of the linguistic codes we use, led us to see that marginalised groups are often unable to construct self-defining codes because of the normalising influences of the majority culture's use of language. We have seen how the portrayal of black femininity through depicted hairstyles in the book sample has been subverted in this way, but also how the global black community are taking back their right to self-define through recently produced films, literature and music. This key finding is seen in research done by Brooks and McNair (2015) where it was found that African-American writers have made a huge contribution to the publishing of books that positively portray black

female hair, in order to provide black girls with normalising images of themselves, as well as to provide non-black girls with stimuli with which to consider their Eurocentric perception of beauty.

Omissions

Gilroy (1987, p.45) speaks of a new cultural racism that "is primarily concerned with mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion." This concept was analysed by Gilroy with regards to the exclusion of immigrants in the 70s. He makes mention of Enoch Powell's infamous speech regarding the proposed repatriation of people who were considered as being non-British. This idea was born out of reluctance to release a stereotypical view of what was considered to be Britishness. The unfortunate truth is that although many politicians would not dare to associate themselves too closely with the ideals of the politics of exclusion, this thesis was completed in a year where very similar ideals were foregrounded. The key difference is that this time around praxis instead of rhetoric enveloped the ideals. We have seen black Caribbean immigrants experiencing and being threatened with deportation, during a year filled with celebrations to mark the 70th year since the SS Empire Windrush famously docked into Tilbury (Wambu, 1998). We have battled with the re-emergence of debates about immigration (albeit European immigration) and how much of a part this has played in the country's decision to leave the European Union (EU). In short, the mechanisms of exclusion have been directed towards black Britons in terms of policy and praxis. The omission of black cultures within the ORT book sample mirrors the socio-political exclusion of black cultures. Culturally relevant portrayal of food that would be associated with black Britons, was notably omitted from the ORT books. This was the same for black famous people. A plethora of famous white people were illustrated in <u>A Day in London</u>, by means of the waxwork museum, but black people's contributions to British culture was clearly not considered as valuable enough to be included. This is despite the inclusion of black British people in the museum that the book was alluding to, at the time of publication. The omission of black people globally was also noted, as was the implied inclusion of a figure that looked a lot like Adolf Hitler on p.21. The matter needs no further analysis within this study, except to consider the production of a reading programme that does include black cultures. Should such a programme include diverse cultures in order to remain innocent of the charge against mono-cultural idealists? Is there an argument to be made for maintaining an open homogenous black presence within reading books? These questions and others are considered in the following chapter of this thesis.

The key findings of this section concur with findings from a study based in a Korean Heritage Language school in America (Jung Kim, 2015, p. 10) that showed that "picture books depicting African Americans and their culture provided the children with a chance to be familiar with blacks and to reduce their biased attitudes towards them." Where there was no depiction of black characters or culture, the converse was true, in that students were resistant to initial exposure to books featuring black characters solely because of skin colour.

Conclusion

This chapter has contributed a detailed analysis of the major themes and issues found in the research data. The primary codes (food, music, spirituality and heroes) have proven to be valuable entry points for analysis and we have seen that they enabled a close proximity to the text, as well as to the issues that are faced by the black British community. Further analysis was made regarding the identified themes of subordination (by subdual, deprivation and miseducation), misrepresentation and omissions. The topics discussed although presented as discrete, are unavoidably overlaid in certain parts. This testifies to the complexity of the issues raised, and also the difficulties that arise when attempting to discuss and resolve them. Despite the complexities, this study's praxis approach necessitates the spearheading of real attempts. Therefore, the following chapter offers a discussion of how the development of culturally relevant reading material represents such an attempt.

Chapter Six
Discussion

'Wi lickle but wi tallawah.'

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to highlighting the praxis essence of this study. I aim to make the links between the theoretical and theological decisions discussed, with the practical applications that I have undertaken so far. As explained in previous chapters, the development of a literacy programme designed to be culturally relevant is the main outcome of this study. With this in mind, this chapter first outlines the conceptual development of the reading books based on The Band Family (a black British family) and then moves onto the working relationships that reinforce its criticality.

The development of The Band Family

This study transpired as a direct challenge to, "the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories" of an established educational publishing British institute (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002, p.24). My initial supposition regarding the ORT books was limited to the omission of black cultural experiences, but this study has reinforced the initial view taken to a degree that I have found quite surprising. The development of the books was originally the main idea for the thesis, but it was thought to be prudent to first make the case for their need. The different points analysed above have served as witnesses for the case, leaving the path cleared for a different kind of justification for the perceived need to develop reading books that view the experiences of black British students as "sources of strength" (ibid). From the outset, it was important to ensure that the reading books celebrated epistemologies of colour and was not merely a blackened version of what was already in existence. This would mean that traditional aspects of black British cultures would be woven through the storylines as well as the pedagogy. By celebrating black British cultural capital in this way, these books would show appreciation for a culture that has often been held responsible for low achievement in black students, (ibid, p. 31). It also gives credence to auto-biographical narrations in the same way that a counter-storytelling methodology would, however it is not to be seen as a mere counter

to reading books that subscribe to the status quo, for as Solorzano and Yosso (ibid, p.32) remind us,

"Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform. Yet, counter-stories need not be created only as a direct response to majoritarian stories. As Ikemoto (1997) reminds us, "By responding only to the standard story, we let it dominate the discourse" (p.136). Indeed, within the histories and lives of people of color, there are numerous unheard counter-stories. Storytelling and counter-storytelling these experiences can help strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance."

The Band Family reading books are emerging as a counter-storytelling project, in a very literal sense. I hope for them to serve as a tool that dismantles the master-narratives of racism in the British education system, by planting and re-planting seeds of ontological truths in the minds of children and their educators. These truths centre on historical, contemporary and prophetic accounts of black British cultures and are constructed in order to inform readers within and without black Britain. The method of counter-storytelling to be used is a composite of auto-biographical elements, data from historical and contemporary sources and fiction. This has the capability to "teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone", (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002, p.36). The following section provides aspects of the current status of the literacy programme, including an introduction to the main characters of the reading books, along with an explanation of the decisions made with regards to them.

A Culturally Relevant Literacy Programme
Critical Pedagogy

In addition to the illustrations, the process involved deciding on the key motifs to be included. The decision was made to incorporate much of the musicality that is so valued within black cultures (Gilroy, 1993). This would open up possibilities of using a variety of musical genres in order to ensure cultural relevance. This theme is evidenced in the introductory book by firstly giving the family a surname that alludes to their musical prowess, but also by depicting them in their different instrumental roles. This theme draws from the spirit of the negro spiritual songs that aided communication and escape during times of incarceration. It draws

from the spirit of praise and worship that exists in the black Christian congregations, and it draws from the lyrical opportunities that are hidden within each child, that will use the musical features as an inspiration for composition.

As well as including themes to do with black musicality, it was decided that the main characters would be perceived as black British, in order to redress the imbalance that currently exists. Their extended family, in the form of mainly grandparents, would further clarify their African and Caribbean heritage by representing the more distinct aspects of their black culture. The surrounding neighbourhood is set in a multicultural setting, which therefore gives opportunity for diverse cultures to be featured in the books, as friends, neighbours etc. The underlying values of each book will be outlined in the use of concluding quotes, which should encourage their use within churches, schools, homes and other community groups where moral education is a priority. It is not currently the intention for the storylines to directly deal with issues to do with racism. These decisions have been made as a result of this study, however, further research into their use would offer potential guidance for future decisions.
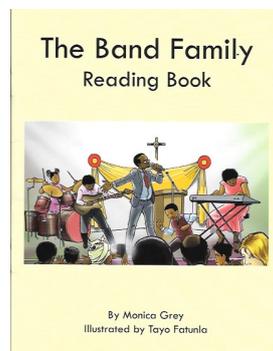
Front cover of first reading book

The first reading book was developed as an introduction to the main family. It depicts the Band family who are worshipping through music during a church service. The value of worship as an expression of both devotion to God, as well as a spiritual means to clarifying temporal problems and soliciting Divine intervention, is integrally encapsulated in this idea of a worshipping family. The intention is for acts of musical worship, i.e. humming, tapping, dancing etc to replace the 'magic key' motif of the ORT books. As well as representing a more culturally relevant inclusion, this idea of worship through music offers all readers the value of a musical pedagogy. The request to the illustrator was for the congregation to represent a

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variety of cultures; although this has been done to a limited degree, the intention is for future books to include both the physical appearances and cultural realities of a variety of cultures within Britain.
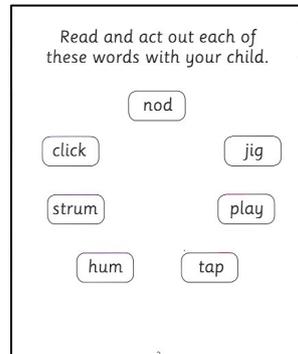
Page 2 of first reading book

This page partly represents the commitment to a pedagogy that emphasises praxis. Parents are encouraged to engage with their children while reading and to ensure a firm comprehension of the words used. Accompanying audio/visual resources (attached to the website: www.truevineacademy.com) will enable readers to learn outside of the book and further secure the relevance to their cultural worlds, by the use of musical sounds that are relevant to their cultures.

The Female Characters

The importance of a culturally relevant portrayal of the black female characters in the reading books, is seen in the portrayal of them as confidently beautiful. It is of particular importance to ensure that the hairstyles reflected, normalise a range of natural hairstyles, thereby attempting to reverse the questionability, within the minds of young girls that their natural

black hairstyles are beautiful. In addition to their physical appearance, I am drawing from my own experience and the wide variety of women that I have had the pleasure of growing up with to draw from their characters and challenges. The storylines are being designed to equip young children with a mind-set that appreciates and celebrates uniqueness found in themselves and others. The aim is to celebrate key aspects of black cultures, as identified in previous chapter, while challenging restrictive stereotypes.

The Male Characters

The male characters are also being designed with the view towards challenging stereotypes. However, a particular stereotype that I plan to address, is the role of the dad in black families. My personal experience of growing up without my dad, has had a profound effect on my sense of identity, however, my involvement in the church community has exposed me to countless examples of excellent fatherhood. I have made the decision not to reflect my personal experience as a part of the main characters' story, because I do not feel that portrayals of present and involved fathers within black communities are celebrated enough. In addition, I aim to use the power of visual images and normalising storylines to change negative residual attitudes towards black men and boys.

The children in the storylines will represent an amalgamation of their cultural inheritance and their own interpretations of this inheritance. Through the power of their transcendent worship, they will be transported to spiritual realms that offer solutions to their conflicts. This will be represented using Afro-futuristic imagery to mirror the Pentecostal belief in the power of praise and prophecy. The choice of their names also reflects an African and/or African-Caribbean culture as the meanings of the names determined the choices, as did their links to the Bible.

"Make a joyful noise
unto the Lord, all you lands."
Psalm 100:1
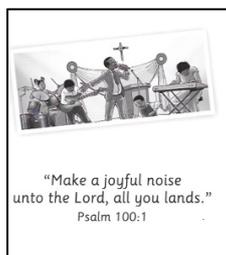
Page 10 of first reading book

The use of Bible quotes will both reflect the relevance of scripture to the characters' challenges and offer additional pedagogical value through the use of memorisation. African and African-Caribbean sayings used in the stories, will also be used in this way, with the associated English translations included. In this way, the readers should develop a growing bank of African and African-Caribbean linguistic capital.

Susa spider is so tricky, just like her grandad Anansi.
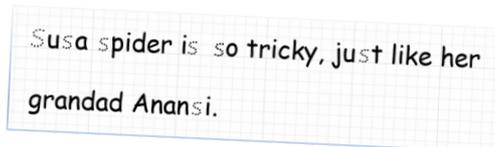
A sentence from the developing writing books

The associated writing workbooks are being designed to enhance letter formation through practise, in a similarly critical manner. The production of the workbooks includes: the opportunity for children to 'make their own books' by colouring in the front cover and illustrations, writing in the letters learned so far, and completing the blurb. In addition to heightening the learners' awareness of their own agency, the pedagogy is being designed to be engaging. As seen in the above image, the content includes culturally relevant links to characters from traditional Caribbean children's literature, in an effort to give learners a contextual relevance that encourages their own research. Further research into the use of these resources could be done in order to test the outworking of these aims. As well as producing these workbooks with schools and families in mind, I also intend to develop Sunday School workbooks that are designed to be used by children independently, during sermons, on key dates in the Christian calendar. My experience as a Sunday School teacher reveals this as an opportunity to be grasped by churches with any number of children or young people in their congregations. By building on the work done by Becher (1995) and Reddie (1998a, 1998b) the depictions of the characters (including biblical ones) will represent a more critical view of

the traditional cultural representations in Bible stories, and the activities will build on the academic expectations of the wider school curricular.
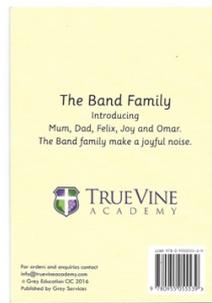
Back Cover of first reading book

At present, the resources are self-published through a Community Interest Company. This builds on the current trends of self-publishing within black communities, as discussed in the Literature Review, as well as providing scope for steady growth over time. The feedback from this initial book has given me the opportunity to reflect on the level of challenge provided in the resources. In the same way that I was exposed to literature that exceeded the curricular expectations when I was younger, I have found that the parents of the children targeted, desire resources that will give their children scope to exceed academic expectations. In addition, I have been able to put in place the associated working systems to enable efficient replicability. This initial pilot also informs future development with regards to the development of working relationships.

Developing working relationships

At the point of conception, an organisation is simply an idea. As the responsibility of perhaps one or two people, it is relatively easy for a critical thinker to ensure that the organisation operates within critical values. However, in order for this to remain so, as the organisation grows, it is vital that working relationships are formed which allow this. Two key questions emerge: does everyone have the capacity to develop critical thought? Is it the responsibility of critical educators to attempt to develop critical thinking in adults who they work alongside? In response to the former question, the church mantra of being 'able and willing' comes to mind, which partly speaks of having the capacity to but also appeals to the individual's will. The latter question answers itself in the phrase 'critical educator'. I do not see how it is possible to live and work according to your values, and not influence who you live and work with. By its

very nature critical education affects all who come into contact with it, whether to a lasting degree or not. During the production of the pilot book, a number of individuals were involved in devising the storyline, producing the illustrations, typesetting, printing and distributing. It would be an interesting challenge to attempt to uncover the degree of transformation that each person involved has undergone, but the reality is that such an endeavour would add minimal value to the central aim of providing critically produced reading books for children in Britain. It is instead important for us to recognise the manner in which these working relationships were developed.

In the absence of a network that offers many of the privileges available to the white and/or middle-class, the black British community often depends on the church network for the sake of progression. Any publishing endeavour requires a certain set of skills as outlined above, which although available within the black British community are not always easily accessed due to a low level of awareness. The decision to use skilled people that belong to the black community, as far as possible, was taken in order to highlight and encourage the agency of the community. The mere fact that the recommendations given to me were from people that I already knew and trusted, also strengthened the decision, because as a black person, I am more likely to engage with people from this community. The church network afforded me much greater ease of access to the different people who were able to offer their services, thereby acting as an alternative to the 'old boys' network' available to the white middle-class. This is a vital aspect of the process, which highlights part of the potential that the black church has in advancing marginalised communities. I have already mentioned in the Literature Review that in order to circumvent pathways to publication usually dominated by hegemonic structures, self-publishers have had to use alternative methods of production, marketing and distribution; the black church is a site which offers these alternatives, as the pilot publication of The Band Family evidences.

Perhaps the most vital skill needed, apart from having the qualifications and ability to write educational material, is that of producing conscious illustrations. Being able to illustrate aesthetically is insufficient in a programme designed using critical race methodology. The artistic capabilities must be evident, but so too must there exist already ingrained evidence of an attention to social justice issues. Tayo Fatunla (2015), fitted this demanding description. His work was put on my radar while looking for a cartoonist to work with children in our Sunday School session, and he did not disappoint. Further exploration of his work uncovered

an animation created for the BBC and a number of self-published books in which he celebrates the historical and contemporary achievements of the African diasporic global community (tayofatunla.com). In light of the polemic analysis of the illustrations in the book samples, an effective relationship with Fatunla was vital in order to steer clear of images that further perpetuated negative stereotypes and majoritarian narratives.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the need for and the development of the pilot reading book published by the author. The key points of discussion were the development of the literacy programme; the development of working relationships and the critical pedagogy used. In light of the decisions made and the analysis conducted, the next and final chapter of this thesis offers a summary of the research findings and conclusions; recommendations on the basis of these findings and an outline of how this study contributes to existing knowledge.

Chapter Seven
Conclusion

"One bite kyaan nyam mango." (McKenzie, 2002, p.300)

Introduction

This final chapter concludes with a summary of the process and findings of this study. These are in response to the research questions which are included again for the sake of easy reference. This chapter also includes recommendations that have arisen from the study, partly as a 'note to self', but also with regards to publishing companies that specialise in education publications, and to the Christian institutions, especially those led by members of the black community. Lastly, this chapter outlines how it represents an extension of knowledge in the field of education and especially literacy education.

Summary of findings and conclusions

In Chapter One, the literature revealed that while the need for culturally relevant children's books was evidenced, there was a real dearth of books that filled this gap (Edwards, 1979; Smith, 1989; Klein, 1993; Browne, 1998; Millard, 2000; Yosso, 2005; Myers, 2014; CLPE, 2018). The need for these books was shown to be crucial for children to be able to identify themselves in print, thereby validating their sense of worth and normalcy. This was identified as an issue very much in the hearts and minds of the community and the educationalists, despite the lack of attention given to it in British government (Gillborn et al, 2016; Olufemi et al, 2017; BBC News, 2018a). The choice to study the ORT book series was based upon their global influence and prestige. This study was purposed to determine answers to the following research questions:

1. *Is the existing ORT reading scheme culturally relevant to black British students?*
2. *What are the underlying values and attitudes evidenced in the ORT reading scheme?*
3. *How are the black characters in the ORT reading scheme defined from a CRT perspective?*

The detailed responses to each of the questions can be found in the analysis in Chapter Five, however, it is important to be conclusive about the main questions at this point. In response to

the first research question, this study found that although the books studied included black British characters, they did not meet Ladson-Billings' definition of cultural relevance (1995), in the following areas: Firstly, they did not include aspects that could be defined as black British culture and instead steeped the black characters in what could be perceived as a white British culture, which had the portrayal of being a neutral British culture. This does nothing to enhance black students' cultural competence. Secondly, the books offered little or no scope for teaching readers to challenge processes or organisations that maintain the status quo. Discussion of critical issues could be initiated by adults reading with a child, but there is no hint of any such intention on the part of the publishers. The element of cultural relevance that relates to academic success was outside of the scope of this study and further research would need to be conducted to ascertain how well black British students learn to read using this scheme. The second research question speaks of underlying values and attitudes that exist in the books. These have been shown to be largely based on European ideals, with an additional dislike of religious faith. Lastly, the third research question sought to reveal how the black characters were portrayed in the books. The study found that the portrayal of the black characters mirrored much of the inequities that exists in global society, and that they were largely misrepresented and/or portrayed as subordinate to the white characters.

With the use of counter-narratives, the development of a literacy programme that utilises black British capital was piloted and discussed. This forms the starting point to the recommendations for beginning to deal with the issues identified.

Recommendations

As described in the Methodology chapter, this study is founded on activist principles. The praxis approach has led to the initiation of a series of reading books which incorporate black British capital in both the storylines and the pedagogy. The recommendation for the continued development of the books is directed towards myself, as I have advocated for the agentic approach throughout. Further to this, I make the following five recommendations that would serve to further the transformative aims of this study:

1. I recommend the engagement of a range of cultural advisors and/or critical educational advisors within publishing organisations that specialise in educational materials. This

would ensure that educational books contain a greater degree of cultural relevance that is based on insider knowledge, rather than negative stereotypes.

2. Schools should also take greater strides towards ensuring that their libraries contain a range of culturally appropriate reading material and should ensure that this extends to the books used within the reading scheme library. This would guarantee their exposure to all children.

3. A variety of schools (those with an all-white, all-black and multi-cultural enrolment) should be encouraged and supported to engage with practitioner and/or field-based research involving culturally relevant reading books. This would further situate an ongoing understanding of the impact in the specific settings that are affected.

4. The black British church should further consider their social responsibility with regards to the production of knowledge, and actively engage in the publication of material that is based on the values that it holds dear, as well as considering engaging in the types of research recommended above.

5. Lastly, members of the black British community need to source and commit to purchasing reading material that celebrates their collective identity, to ensure the reproduction of black British cultures in our children.

Contribution of new knowledge

This study has contributed to the literature in the following key areas: Firstly, a specific study on the ORT books has not to my knowledge been conducted with regards to cultural relevance. This contribution is important because it indicates the necessity to hold to account institutions that are portrayed as prestigious, expert and knowledgeable, in spite of how daunting the task may seem. Secondly, the use of CRT methodology for the critical analysis of reading books, has not featured in the literature, and this study paves the way for further such studies of a variety of educational resources and media. Furthermore, this study's explicit triangulation of CRT, theology and education provides the theological community with a basis for further exploration of theology within the parameters of their collective responsibility. With regards to contributions to discussions within the associated field, this study bridges a gap between discussions on cultural diversity and the small but significant recognition of the current pervasiveness of whiteness within teacher training and teacher's professional development. It

has also served to highlight the need for the commencement of a discussion on the importance of faith, race and early years education.

Conclusion

The introduction of this study outlined the background, purpose and significance of this study, which related to the issue of cultural racism globally, but more specifically within British borders. My practice as an English teacher grounded the approach to the study within activism and was shown to have emanated from a pilot publication of a culturally relevant reading book. This idea of cultural relevance has been evidenced as an important concept in both academic and political arenas (Ladson-Billings, 1995; UNESCO, 2002). The research questions therefore focused the study on ascertaining the cultural relevance of a reading scheme produced by one of the world's most prestigious educational publishing organisations (OUP, 2018a).

The Literature Review discussed the literature in a number of the key areas that informed this study. The genesis of reading books in this country was shown to be a white, male dominated business, which has not responded quickly enough to the voiced needs for cultural relevance with regards to the black British community. However, the main emphasis of that chapter, as well as the remainder of the thesis, is the promotion of black agency. In order to undertake the analysis, I highlighted the need to adopt a strategically essentialist position throughout the study.

The ontological chapter was informed by a theology of reconciliation which encompassed the idea of wholeness, starting with the individual's knowledge and appreciation of self, and ideally leading to the unity of families, communities and nations. This led onto the idea of epistemological wholeness and the importance of knowing the collective self.

The Methodology detailed the procedures that were undertaken in the study. This included the use of a content analysis which was coded according to the cultural indicators, food, music, spirituality and heroes. These initial codes were used to analyse the text and illustrations and generated further identified the analysed themes of subordination, misrepresentation and omission. The relevance of the codes and identified themes were analysed in Chapter Five and the conclusion was drawn that the sample of books did not represent a culturally relevant series

for black British students. The discussion outlined the proposed solution to the issue by detailing the commenced process of developing a culturally relevant literacy programme.

Finally, the process of creating a story is one that requires varying amounts of dedication. Writing a story to help children to read might require less time than writing a thesis, however, the process of conception, dedication and publication is very similar. The completion of a task such as this ought to perhaps, culminate in celebration, yet I am reminded of the expectation of people who seek to follow God's commandment to love. "Dem no api wen dem si wikidnis a gwaan, bot dem wi api wen dem ier di chuut" (1 Korintiyan 13:6). This reminds us that wickedness and injustice is brought to account with reflective action and love and that the time to celebrate is when all children are brought up with the truth about who they are as individuals, and how this truth relates to others and to their purpose in life. We, therefore, *must* create the stories that our children need to read.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The following list depicts the sample of books used in this study.

Sample	Title	Author/Illustrator	ORT reading stage	Date of edition's publication	Description of book as per the blurb
1	Hey presto!	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta	Wrens – stage 3	2008	A story about Wilma
2	Monkey Tricks	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta	Stage 2 Red Patterned 3stories (Book band 2 red)	2008	The children go to the zoo
3	The Egg Hunt	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta	Stage 3 red	2003	Who finds the eggs?
4	The Barbecue	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta	Stage 3 More Stories B (Book Band 4 Blue)	2008	The dads have a barbecue.
5	Poor Old Mum!	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta	Stage 4 More Stories A (Book Band 3 Yellow)	2008	Wilma's mum runs in a race.
6	The Wedding	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta	Stage 4 More Stories A (Book Band 4 Blue)	2008	Wilf and Wilma go to a wedding.
7	A Day in London	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta	Stage 8 Stories (Book Band 8 Purple)	2008	When Gran takes the children on a visit to London, things don't go quite as Gran planned!
8	The Treasure Chest	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta		1998	
9	Kipper and the Trolls	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta	Stage 5 More Stories C	2004	Biff and Kipper go to a Troll Party.

			(Book Band 5 Green)		
10	Noah's Ark Adventure	Roderick Hunt/ Alex Brychta	Stage 5 More Stories B	1996	

Appendix 2

Code	Sub-codes	Explanation	Examples in Content
BC	BCf	Food prepared by the black characters	Found in illustrations and descriptions in text; e.g. salad and burgers in <u>The Barbecue</u>.
	BCm	Music associated with or created by the black characters	Found in illustrations and descriptions in text; e.g. the dance scene in <u>The Wedding</u>.
	BCh	Famous people within the black community	None found
	BCs	Spiritual beliefs that are associated with Christian faith and the black characters	Found in illustrations and descriptions in text; e.g. Easter celebrations in <u>The Egg Hunt</u>.
WC	WCf	Food prepared by the white characters or identified as being European	Found in illustrations and descriptions in text; e.g. fruit cake with raisins straight from the box in <u>Kipper and the Trolls</u>.
	WCm	Music associated with or created by the white characters	Found in illustrations and descriptions in text; e.g. keyboard music in <u>The Trip to London</u>.

	WCh	Famous people within the black community	Found in illustrations and descriptions in text; e.g. waxwork models in <u>The Trip to London</u>.
	WCs	Spiritual beliefs that are associated with Christian faith and the white characters	Found in illustrations and descriptions in text; e.g. the story of Noah and the Ark in <u>Noah's Ark Adventure</u>.
BMC	BMC (x)	The number of black main characters that were in each book	Main characters were identified as those that featured significantly in the story plot, either in the title or in as protagonists.
BSC	BMC (x)	The number of black supporting characters that were in each book	Supporting characters were identified as those that had a significant or repetitive role in the story, and without whom the story would not have been able to progress.
BbC	BMC (x)	The number of black background characters that were in each book	Background characters were identified as those who did not have a significant role and were only seen once or featured as a passer-by, for instance. Their omission would not have hindered the progression of the plot.