
Representing Racial Minorities in Children's Literature

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Representing Racial Minorities in Children's Literature

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1 Introduction

In September 2022, the release of the trailer for the upcoming movie *The Little Mermaid* has sparked a controversy surrounding the skin colour of the actor taking on the role of Ariel (the little mermaid), Halle Bailey: as one critic put it, “The film’s trailer has been flooded with 1.5 million dislikes from angry ‘fans’” (Di Placido 2022). The dismayed reactions then openly became racist backlash. Some people even created hashtags such as #notmyariel (Willingham 2022) demonstrating their discontentment with the character of Ariel being Black. These negative reactions have been countered by extremely positive videos posted by parents of children discovering the trailer with excitement and emotion: “She’s like me!”, “She’s Black! Yes, yes!” or “I can’t wait to see this” (NowThis News 2004).

The purpose of this dissertation is not to analyse the reactions of people to films but to discuss the representation of characters from racial minorities in American and British children’s literature. However, the *Little Mermaid* controversy, because of the situation, which is quite singular, as the little mermaid was originally White in the animated movies and made Black for the 2023 film, is particularly useful as it shows how unusual it still is to have racial minorities represented in creative works for children: for example, I, as a child, never even had the opportunity to read a children’s book with Black characters as protagonists; this is what triggered my interest to learn more about the development of racial minorities in picturebooks and children’s literature before I become a mother or a teacher myself. The present and future generations need to have the opportunity to read books with all kinds of minorities, including racial minorities for reasons that will be developed in this work.

Indeed, the negative reactions to the *Little Mermaid* trailer show that the representation of all skin colours and cultures is not yet sufficiently ingrained in Western societies. Children’s films and books are extremely important, as they are known to have “a strong impact on young children” (McClellan, Fields 2004). According to Rudine Sims, the damages concern Black as well as White children since they learn to socialise through literature, which also helps the sharing of cultural values (650); however, this children’s literature underrepresents racial diversity. Sims also emphasises the fact that if White children only read children’s books that solely include White characters, they could interpret this as a sign that White people have a kind of superiority over Black people (650). Furthermore, the way children from racial minorities are represented in books (for instance: with or without stereotypes) also impacts the way children see themselves. It shows how important it is to have children’s literature including Black characters appropriately.

This master's dissertation aims at analysing twelve different children's books including Black characters by authors and illustrators from different ethnicities. This work will begin with the methodological section (chapter 2) that will explain how the twelve books in my corpus have been selected and with which methodology they will be analysed in this study. The third chapter will be a short historical and theoretical introduction to Black characters in children's books (see chapter 3), also focusing on the importance of children's books in general (section 3.2), as being represented as a protagonist in a book helps with self-esteem since children need these books while constructing their own identity. This will be followed by the most important chapter in this master's thesis: the analysis of the corpus and the discussion of the results (chapter 4). This chapter will deal with the books themselves, their analysis depending on the methodology used and a discussion on the results such as the key themes that recur in the books in the corpus, the question of the author and illustrator's legitimacy, and finally the application of the results of this research to teaching.

This work will argue that diversity in children's books is important for children and their development, especially in terms of their values. The dissertation will conduct a thematic analysis of these books and try to make sense out of some of the most prominent motifs, such as the parent-child relationships that mostly include mother figures. This study will also aim to show that there are differences in the themes of these books depending on the ethnicity of the authors and illustrators, which has an impact in terms of intercultural and intracultural elements found in books. For example, the White authors do not talk about the same topics or do not include the same key themes in their books as African American authors do: mostly, the former write about the importance of accepting diversity in everyday life within large communities, when the latter focus on a hero being Black and usually encountering the same problems or going on the same journeys the authors or the illustrators have coped in their own life as a mirror reflecting what they have been through and sharing experiences that White people do not have to face in white-dominated societies.

2 Methodological Section

The aim of this section is to provide a rationale for the primary literature that has been selected as part of my corpus (section 2.1.) and to explain with which tools these children's books will be examined in this work. Firstly, the methodology used to determine the content of the books will be outlined (subsection 2.2.1.). Then, as the books analysed are not only children's books but also picturebooks, the illustrations play an important role and have to be analysed to bring out information with specific methodological tools (subsection 2.2.2.). Finally, the relationship between the text and the illustrations will also be examined to enhance understanding of how these two components interact (subsection 2.2.3).

2.1 Selection of the Corpus

All the items in the corpus are books of fiction, picturebooks and works for children of ages ranging between three and eight years old (section 2.2.). This choice was made to avoid a large gap (only five years) between the audiences targeted by the books. Furthermore, the purpose was to choose books that were highly recommended for children on popular websites, to see if their expectations are justified.

One of the main sources that I used to put together my corpus is a page entitled “21 Books Featuring Black Heroes and Characters Every Child Should Read,” written by Mica Murphy and published on the Penguin Books website. The books were then chosen in accordance with the three abovementioned criteria that every book in this analysis meets: fiction, picturebook and written for an audience of children from 3 to 8 years old. This Penguin article includes the books *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson (2017), *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong'o and Vashti Harrison (2019), *Hair Love* by Matthew A. Cherry and Vashti Harrison (2019) and *The Silence Seeker* by Ben Morley and Carl Pearce (2009). This was a starting point, but the list was not extensive enough to be able to examine different sorts of books written by authors and illustrators from various ethnicities. Therefore, I based the remainder of my research on other internet pages that had similar titles to the Penguin Books article, and I searched for books presenting the same three features as the abovementioned books. The article “23 Books to Help Kids of All Ages Learn About Race” (Francis) contained *Saturday* by Oge Mora (2019), *I Love My Hair* by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley and E.B. Lewis (1998), *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story about Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, Ann Hazzard and illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin (2018), as well as the picturebooks *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman (2018), and *What Can a Citizen Do?* by Dave Eggers and Shawn Harris (2018). The last four

books came from the article entitled “Children’s Books With Strong Black Characters” (Mitchell), and are *Hair Love* by Matthew A. Cherry and Vashti Harrison (2019), *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson and Rafael López, *I Believe I Can* by Grace Byers and Keturah A. Bobo (2020) and finally, *My Hair Is a Garden* by Cozbi A. Cabrera (2018).

It would be interesting to examine if children’s books recommended in articles, especially for children to learn about diversity are worth reading in this respect. Do they really help learn about racism, diversity and minorities? Or do they bring other messages? How could children feel reading these books? These questions will guide my analysis.

2.2 Structure of the Analysis

2.2.1 Textual Content

In this dissertation, the methodology related to the textual content will mostly rely on two sources. The first is a document on the various ways of analysing children’s literature (focusing on racism and sexism) issued by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) and adapted by the California State Department of Education (CSDE): “10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books For Racism and Sexism”. The second is the book *Tools for Text and Image Analysis: An Introduction to Applied Semiotics* (2011) by Louis Hébert, in which the author proposes a scanning method based on parts of the actantial model by A.J. Greimas and the ideas of Vladimir Propp.

First, analysing the corpus through the concrete and practical steps provided by the CSDE’s document proves to be interesting and useful since the Council fights against the absence of racial minorities in children’s literature. Accordingly, this document not only focuses on children’s literature, but also on the issues of racial and cultural diversity in children’s books.

The different steps mentioned in the document include checking the *illustrations* (subsection 2.2.2.), the *storyline*, the *lifestyles*, the *relationships among people*, the *heroes*, the *effect on a child’s self-image*, the *author’s perspective*, *loaded words*, the *copyright date* and the *literacy*, as well as *historical* and *cultural perspectives*. The storyline will mostly contribute to explain the stories and what they are about, as a kind of summary to familiarise the readers with these stories. The lifestyles, the relationships and the heroes will be analysed in more depth thanks to the actantial model. The effect on a child’s self-image in these books will be studied through the elements discussed in subsection 2.2.1. of this master’s dissertation. The author’s perspective is one of the main issues examined in this work: indeed, this study investigates whether there is a difference in content depending on the authors’ and

illustrators' ethnicities, and whether their perspective is reflected in their book. This point will be partly discussed in subsection 2.2.3. The loaded words are not as prominent in these books as one might have expected, so this dissertation will broaden the discussion to other formal elements that are worthy of attention. Furthermore, the copyright date will be briefly mentioned in relation to the technological key theme. Concerning the last point, the cultural and historical context will already be discussed in the third chapter. This suggests that all the points in the article by the CSDE will be in any case examined but through different elements with a larger focus. In addition, the actantial model will bring up some further and more detailed information on the content of these books.

The *actantial model* created by Greimas and then outlined by Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt and translated from French by Julie Tabler¹ is a method used to distinguish between actions in a text (here in the children's books). In each action, six *actants* play a key role, and they are involved in specific relationships that need to be identified to analyse what exactly happens and what brings the action close to a certain goal. The first step when putting this method into practice consists in identifying the main actions performed by the characters of the books and then the six actants which are the *subject*, the *object*, the *sender*, the *receiver*, the *helper* and the *opponent*. The subject is the entity that acts towards the goal, usually the protagonists of the children's books; the object would be the goal that the protagonists try to achieve; the sender is the entity that drives the subject to perform the action; the receiver is the entity that makes the most out of the action of the subject, and thus wants the subject to achieve the goal the most; the helper, as their name suggests, assists the subject so the latter can achieve the goal; and the opponent, by contrast, will do anything so that the subject fails (Hébert 71). The subjects, the senders and the receivers are usually "anthropomorphic being[s] (for example, a human, an animal, a talking sword, etc.)" (Hébert 73), but the other actants can also be elements that are *concrete* or *inanimate* such as things or a *concept*. According to Hébert, the actants have a role to play on different axes: the *axis of desire* (subject-object), the *axis of power* (helper-opponent) and the *axis of transmission* (sender-receiver) (71). There is rarely only one action or one actantial model in a text but mostly a *set* of actions and these individual actions do not contain all the actants or axes, some may be missing. It is also important to note that among the different characters of a picturebook, some

¹ I rely on Hébert and not directly on Greimas because this dissertation is written in English and Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt's work is translated into English by Tabler, while Greimas' work is written in French. Thus, Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt's work was a good opportunity to introduce the actantial model into this dissertation by still using quotations in English.

can also be purely observers or witnesses; not all the characters necessarily play a role as an actant. Furthermore, what could be interesting in terms of the relationship between the different actants in these children's books is whether the actants that are anthropomorphic beings play their role in an *intentional* or *unintentional* way. Hébert also argues that one should take the actants as *parts* of them and not as a *whole*, the actants should be definite and particular (75), which means that, if possible, the whole character should not be labelled as the helper because Hébert posits that being more definite “helps to reveal the differences that emerge between a description of the whole and that of its parts” (Hébert 75). To clarify: Hébert takes the example of a prince being the subject, and the rescued princess as the object. In this case, the helper would not be the prince, who is already the subject, but what helps him get to his goal, in this case, is his courage: not him as a whole, but his courage as a part because there could also be other parts of the prince hindering the action (75). Finally, it is also worth discussing the fact that some *classes* of daily aspects are known to behave in a certain way, but *elements* of them might prove the contrary. This is relevant to analyse in this work to establish whether books still continue to show a patriarchal society or if some of them contain elements deconstructing the ideas that mothers should stay at home and take care of the children and the housework. The actantial model is thus used to frame the interactions. It is difficult to compare two stories in their entirety without a model for the analysis, given all the differences and similarities that can be found. It is therefore this model that provides a theoretical framework for the analysis, making it easier to compare the interactions. The negative aspect of this case is that the story is reduced to the analysis of this component, leaving out parts of the story.

In sum, the ten ways proposed by the CSDE are interesting to ensure wide coverage in the analysis, but the steps are not methodologically detailed enough, hence the use of the actantial model. Not every single component of the actantial model is useful for this work either (the important ones were presented above). This master's dissertation will focus on the actants, on the three different axes and on the diverse concepts that help examine the different relationships and actions contained in the picturebooks.

2.2.2 Illustrations

This work deals only with picturebooks, not with illustrated books. As Bettina Kümmerring-Meibauer elucidates, in a picturebook, “the most significant characteristics are the medium (a book) and the content (pictures). The term does not imply that a picturebook also includes a text, although there is a common agreement that picturebooks have both pictures and

text” (3). Nevertheless, picturebooks are different from illustrated books because the latter imply that text is more present than the pictures when in picturebooks, the text and the pictures are significant on an equal level (Kümmerling-Meibauer 3). The books of the corpus are all picturebooks, which is why it is essential to explore the whole content: the text and the pictures.

William Moebius in his article “Introduction to Picturebook Codes” (1986), outlines different codes to analyse the illustrations in books. These are not codes that have to be respected, but they help the readers to highlight some elements that point to hidden meanings. Moebius argues that: “To be able to read a graphic code we must consider the disposition of objects on the page, the handling of line and colour [...]” (148) in order to exhibit other information. However, he explains that the information that these codes reveal are not certainties, but “probabilities”, a term that Moebius borrows from other authors, Robert de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Dressler (1981). In his article, Moebius introduces five different codes: *the codes of position, size and diminishing returns, the codes of perspective, the codes of the frame and of the right and round, the codes of line capillarity*, and, lastly, *the code of colour*. The first category, the codes of position, size and diminishing returns, as this name implies, concerns the position of the characters on the page and their size, which indicates their status at a particular time in the story. The diminishing returns refer to a character being represented several times on a single page: “The more frequently the same character is depicted on the same page, the less likely that character is to be in control of a situation, even if in the centre” (Moebius 149). The second category, the codes of perspective, covers the aspect of the horizon and expresses that if the illustration lacks the horizon, the character may be in trouble (Moebius 149). For the codes of the frame and of the right and round, the frame is what permits to differentiate between what happens within and outside the world of the story, and the right and the round help to distinguish the shapes of the objects circulating around the characters and what these shapes signify. The third category, the codes of line and capillarity, conveys what the thickness and the thinness of the lines represent for the characters; the capillarity also gives some indications concerning situations the characters find themselves in. Finally, the code of colour expresses the fact that the atmosphere is dark or bright for a character and helps to understand whether the situation is light or more complicated.

All these codes will help to determine in what situation the characters are. These categories are essential as the illustrations may contain crucial elements that could be missing in the text.

2.2.3 Text-Illustrations Relationship

As mentioned in the conclusion to the section dealing with the illustrations, the latter can add information that the texts do not express. The aim of this dissertation is to examine the text and the illustrations separately, but also in relation to one another.

This relationship between text and illustrations is examined by Carol Driggs Wolfenbarger and Lawrence Sipe who state that “the union of text and art [...] results in something beyond what each form separately contributes” (273). For this reason, they outline in their article five concepts to analyse the text-illustration relationship in picturebooks. These concepts are drawn from Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott’s book entitled *How Picturebooks Work* (2006). The five concepts are *symmetry*, *complementary*, *enhancement*, *counterpoint*, and *contradiction* (Driggs Wolfenbarger and Sipe 274). The symmetry depicts the idea that the text and the illustrations are symmetrical, or identical because they represent on the pages the same signified. The second concept, complementary, means that “words and pictures [fill] each other’s gaps” (Nikolajeva and Scott 12). The concept of enhancement signifies that the illustrations, so the images, reinforce the content of the text and that the text “depends on visual narrative” (Nikolajeva and Scott 12). The counterpoint for its part is the concept of difference, meaning that the images and the text have distinct content to express; thus, they are independent from one another. According to Driggs Wolfenbarger and Sipe (274), the last concept is the one based on contradiction and, as its name indicates, it suggests that the illustrations and the text tell opposite stories.

The link between text and illustration is particularly significant in this dissertation because, on one hand, it is representative of the relationship between author and illustrator who create certain meanings through symmetry or, by contrast, through contradiction and, on the other hand, they can also demonstrate that the author and the illustrator have opposite perspectives and the message they want to share through their text or their illustrations can be different.

3 Historical Part and Theory

The aim of this chapter is to determine how the representation of racial minorities in children's books from anglophone countries, particularly the United States of America and the United Kingdom, has evolved. This chapter will first focus on storytelling and then on what children's literature was before the emergence of racial minority representations and their development in such books. Section 3.1.4. will discuss the current situation regarding this representation in picturebooks. The second part of this chapter will then emphasise the notion of need: the need for children's books, the need for such works for the construction of children's identity and the need for racial diversity in children's literature.

3.1 Historical Part

Charles Sullivan, in his book *Children of Promise: African-American Literature and Art for Young People* (1991), lists significant events that led to the way racial minorities, and more specifically African Americans, are since represented because of these events, African Americans have gone from not being represented at all in literature or in a racist way, to gradually having their place, including in children's literature. One example of these events is the Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862 by Abraham Lincoln (51) which led to the freeing of a fraction of the slave population in the United States of America in 1863. However, this did not mean that Black and White people were all seen as equals: in 1895, thirty-two years after some of the enslaved people had been freed, the streets of Alabama were still filled with children of different races who did not mix; schools were divided along racial lines and there was inequality between them (Sullivan 65). African American athletes did not gain access to the Olympic Games until Jesse Owens, in 1936, who won four gold medals, contributing to a larger representation of African Americans in contrast with how it was at the time (Sullivan 96). Commenting on the political world, Sullivan states that, "[i]n the 1940s, it seemed impossible that an African American could ever be president" (90), which was accomplished by Barack Obama in 2009.

All these events attest to significant developments in the place African Americans have rightfully taken in US society, but history also shows that this representation took time to develop. This conveys the message that their representation in children's literature may also progressively evolve. The next sections will explain where children's books originated, and how they might be appraised today in terms of racial diversity.

3.1.1 Africans' Storytelling

In order to analyse Anglophone children's books that depict the stories of Black heroes and are written by authors in the western Anglophone area, it is essential to discuss storytelling among African communities as some of these authors are African American.

As indicated in the title of Tempii B. Champion, *Understanding Storytelling among African American Children: A Journey from Africa to America* (2014), the crossing from Africa to America helps today's African American children to understand storytelling. Champion posits that “[i]n West Africa, storytelling was one of the cultural and social practices that Africans participated in during various aspects of their daily lives” (1), meaning that this was a central part of their routine. The purpose of storytelling for the members of the community at the time was “to teach and to comfort” (Champion 1), but it also had the benefit of maintaining the families' histories or even the legacy of a whole ethnic group (Champion 1). These stories travelled with the African people to America, not without being adapted to the new situations that the enslaved evolved in (Champion 3). According to Champion, there is always a moral side in the storytelling, implying that they not only had an entertainment purpose but were also meant to help people “to grow morally and spiritually” (3).

In addition to this culture of storytelling is the oral tradition that was transmitted across generations during slavery since it was illegal for African Americans to be taught how to write and read, which is why they kept narrating stories verbally (Champion 21).

This shows how oral stories are important for African American children, but also for children from all over the world. Indeed, the children have continued to absorb the oral tradition at a young age through different activities of their daily life (church, playground...) (Champion 9). This is one of the reasons why, even though children are not yet able to read at a very young age, stories read aloud to them are crucial too, as well as having racial minorities represented in such stories.

3.1.2 Previous Literature in Anglophone Area

Before the representation of racial minorities started to develop in anglophone areas, children's books contained mostly White characters as heroes. Such books will be examined in this section to understand the origin of children's books in the Western world.

3.1.2.1 Children's Books Mostly Featuring White Characters

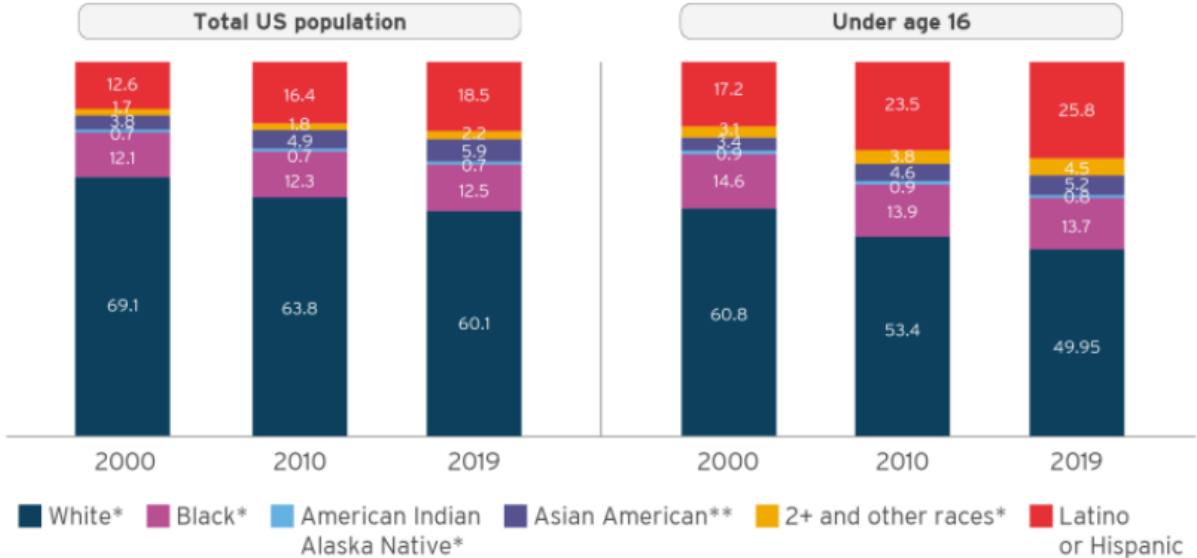
According to Bettye Latimer, in 1973 “there [were] few children's books written about or including black people” (21). The author also clarifies that the characters (the protagonists, but nearly all the others too) in children's literature were mostly White at the time, which

mirrored the segregated world in the US (21). The developments since 1973 will be discussed in subsection 3.1.3., which will focus on past books that mostly featured White characters.

In her review of Philip Nel’s book *Was the Cat in the Hat Black? The Hidden Racism of Children’s Literature, and the Need for Diverse Books*, Lydia Kokkola echoes Nel’s idea that the fact that White characters are more often and more extensively represented in children’s books does not mirror contemporary US reality since, as the figure hereinbelow by William H. Frey (2020) suggests, the number of people representing racial minorities is growing while the number of White people in the United States still declines.

FIGURE 1

Race-ethnic profile for total US and under age 16 populations
2000, 2010, and 2019



* members of race group who do not identify as Latino or Hispanic
 ** non-Latino or Hispanic Asians, Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders

Source: William H Frey analysis of 2000 US Census and Census population estimates, released June 25, 2020



Furthermore, there has been an estimation stating that racial minorities will count, by 2045, a higher number of people in the United States of America than the White population will (Philip in Kokkola 2). However, diversity is not represented proportionally because White people do not admit the reality, which is that racial diversity does exist in America (Philip in Kokkola 2). Jeanne Chall *et al.* echo in their article “Blacks in the World of Children’s Books” the research of Nancy Larry, which aimed to gather statistics on depictions of the Black community in children’s literature: “Of the 5,200 books published in 1962, 1963, and 1964 by 63 publishers, only 6.7% had even a single Black character in either text or illustration” (Larry in Chall *et al.* 528). Moreover, when children’s books included Black

children as characters, 60% of the stories in these books took place outside the United States of America or before the Second World War. This discrimination was not the only problem because when Black characters were represented, it was often based on stereotypes (Larry in Chall, *et al.* 528). To summarise, Chall, *et al.* state that “the studies of the 1960s and early 1970s found few Black characters included in children’s books. When included, they were often in derogatory roles” (529). The authors also establish that there were, in the 1970s, two sides between, on the one hand, researchers, declaring that there had been a positive development and, on the other, those stating that no improvement had been demonstrated (529).

The textual material was not the only issue in terms of diversity; illustrations also caused a problem: “Almost half, 46.6% of the 115 books analyzed had Blacks in no more than 20% of their illustrations which contained human beings” (Chall, *et al.* 531). Moreover, Black characters’ features were still disguised, especially on the covers, using particular techniques, such as placing them at specific angles. Moreover, whitewashing was put into practice as White characters were prioritised on the covers even though protagonists of colour appeared in the books; the idea was not to display characters of colour prominently (Philip in Kokkola 4). When Black characters found their place in illustrations, these appeared as a misrepresentation: “So often African American physical features were stereotyped with dark skin, thick lips, and protruding white eyes. Many illustrators did not note, or failed to acknowledge, the immense variation in physical features among African Americans” (Harris 42). This way of stereotyping Black characters conveys the impression that the illustrators did not consider the possibility of diversity of appearance, which is extremely diminishing and reductive.

According to the review by Kokkola of Nel, “African American literature for children [was] confined to history, realism, non-fiction, biography and poetry. Genres such as mystery, adventure stories and fantasy [were] almost exclusively the realm of White characters and authors” (4). This segregation in literature reflected the idea that African American stories were there to display culture, but African Americans had no access to entertainment, as previously mentioned.

Tekla K. Bekkedal posits that, at first, the whole of children’s literature was basically telling the same story: “the immediate family unit, parents and children, with the mother a full-time homemaker” (111). The aspect of the family and of women will also be discussed in chapter 4 on contemporary children’s books. More precise information about the usual hero in American children’s books between 1950-1970 was provided by Bekkedal: “He is [...] from a

middle-class, White, unbroken family and also more often a boy” 112). This hero of the past did not leave much room for gender, racial, class and family diversity in children’s literature. According to Dewey Chambers, cited by Bekkedal, such diversity (including religious diversity) was not even considered because not really accepted in society at the time; even secondary characters (e.g. the friends of the hero) originated from the middle class and were White (113).

3.1.2.2 Children’s Books Directed Towards White Children

Little by little, Black characters came to be more represented in children’s literature, but not to the extent of being on the same level as White characters in these books.

Black characters have been portrayed with negative stereotypes: as Latimer asserts, “[Black people] have usually been portrayed as submissive, inconsequential and deferring – but never too intelligent” (22). These representations conveyed to children (Black and White alike) that White people maintained a sort of superiority over African American people (Latimer 21). This work will discuss the consequences of such representations in section 3.2.1. for the construction of children’s identity. Based on Latimer’s quotation about stereotypes, it can be posited that these books were not addressed to a racial minority audience unless they were intended to be very diminishing.

3.1.3 Development

Following this discrimination related to the representation of minorities in children’s literature, it has been realised that this was uneven and could be damaging for children if they feel that no characters like them are depicted in the children’s books that they read. This section will discuss this realisation, but also the development of the situation and how this situation has progressed.

3.1.3.1 Realising the inclination to change

According to Bekkedal, “[t]he 1940s have been frequently described as the beginning of a new era in children’s literature; this new era has been characterized by increased realism in writing children’s literature” (109).

As mentioned above, it was still at the mere level of realisation in the 1970s, considering the lack of diversity in the usual heroes of the time. This recognition led to articles such as those by Bekkedal, Chall, *et al.*, Larry and Latimer for example and in the article about this issue, Bekkedal states in 1973:

What is missing is an adequate representation of all those people who differ from the majority in some way – the child whose parents are divorced, the American Indian child, the

lower-class family, the family with strong ethnic ties, the child whose family moves frequently, to name but a few. [...] Subjects which could be considered controversial [are], by and large, avoided. (122)

This lack of representation in the past hid entire communities and cultures, a fact that researchers tried to exhibit.

3.1.3.2 How the situation has developed

This section will focus on the way the situation has developed, how the condition of the representation of racial minorities, and more particularly of African Americans, has been transformed in children's books.

The studies demonstrating that there was discrimination concerning the depiction of diversity in children's literature had an impact on the situation and things started to change for the better. In 1973, Latimer proposed for example to integrate Black children in children's stories, but not randomly; she indeed considered that a random integration to gain a certain proportion of characters from racial minorities would not be genuine. She then suggested that these African American characters should be incorporated in different guises and perform different actions (25). Latimer also argued that "[a] sensitive author who is concerned about changing the image of children's literature will be aware of the need to make a book's pictorial environment richly heterogeneous" (25). She states that the authors and illustrators are the ones who have the power to choose diversity over similarity and the authors with racial minority backgrounds did understand that children's literature lacked heterogeneity. Other authors, rather than seeking diversity in their children's books, chose to focus on displaying Black characters standing for their roots in this American world (Torres Reyes 24). Reyes clarifies change in literature stating that "[g]radually, [...] some newspapers and periodicals launched by black religious people appeared as vehicles for self-definition, self-determination and self-expression" (24). The development of children's literature is a reflection of the self-empowerment of the Black community in America. Furthermore, an increasing interest in children's literature written by African Americans in the twentieth century contributed to the progression of the representation of racial minorities, and more particularly of African American characters, in children's books (Reyes 25). African American intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois, for example, created a prestigious Black children's magazine, where several renowned authors published their work (Reyes 25). Through this emergence of African American writers and their work, other authors have gained attention in America (Reyes 25). As previously mentioned (see subsection 3.1.2.1.), there was a distinction of genres in children's literature: biography was for Black children for

example and fiction was only featuring White characters and was written by White authors (Nel in Kokkola 4), but W.E.B. Du Bois decided to abolish this discrimination of race, as Muse relates:

[Whether] it was an attempt to recapture the spirit of *The Joy* or to simply continue transmitting the joy of our children, W.E.B. DuBois, the eminent scholar few would ever think of associating with children's literature, recognized the urgent need for bringing pleasure, fantasy and a sense of purpose and history to our children. (Muse 12)

The Joy was also a magazine for Black children (published by a Black woman) which did not expand as expected (Muse 11-12). Thus, children's literature has experienced development in terms of representation.

The Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) also played an essential role in this evolution. The CIBC was founded in 1965, as clarified by Beryle Banfield, with a role in the "promotion and development of children's literature that would adequately reflect our multi-racial society" (17). The CIBC was founded in 1965, as clarified by Beryle Banfield, with a role in the "promotion and development of children's literature that would adequately reflect our multi-racial society" (17). This council was created because of what several members had experienced while visiting a school in Mississippi to promote quality education for African American children, and they discovered that the books that children had were sexist and racist (Banfield 17). The members who created the CIBC were authors, illustrators, editors, but also educators and parents wanting to impact the publishing of books for children against racism and sexism (Banfield 17). One of their actions was to review some books and according to Banfield, "[t]hese concentrated reviews enabled readers to note how historical inaccuracies, cultural myths, and cultural stereotypes were perpetuated and reinforced by constant repetition in volume after volume" (Banfield 18). They also established a contest of writers to permit unknown authors of racial minorities to exhibit their work and some of these authors have, after the contest, been published in renowned edition houses (Banfield 18). Furthermore, they helped educators, teachers and parents to detect issues concerning racism and sexism in books at school by establishing a centre (the Racism and Sexism Resource Center) that published guides and other types of material (Banfield 19). Moreover, students received material to critique work (Banfield 21) and one document among this material that the CIBC developed will be useful in the analysis performed in this dissertation (see subsection 3.2.1.). Indeed, the article "10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books For Racism and Sexism" will serve as a basis for the analysis of the corpus of this work. Banfield,

who collaborated with the CIBC, expresses, in the following quotation, the impact that the council had on her demonstrating how positive it was:

Because of my lengthy association with the CIBC, I have come to understand the awesome power that books have in influencing individuals' perceptions of people and cultures. I have also come to understand that these perceptions persist and harden as a person matures unless timely intervention occurs. This has been particularly troubling when a person's perceptions have been shaped by myths, stereotypes, and historical distortions presented in books. (20)

The CIBC is thus a council acting against racism and sexism in children's literature that contributed to turning the readers into an audience more conscious about stereotypes and issues concerning genre and the representation of racial minorities.

3.1.4 Improvement

According to Chall, *et al.*, stereotypes were not completely erased in 1976, however, there were significant changes in the way Black characters were represented in children's literature (531;532).

Indeed, "[t]here has also been an increase in the percentage of publishers producing books with Black characters, from 87.3% in 1965 (Nancy Larrick 1976: personal communication) to 94% in the present study" (Chall, *et al.* 1979; 532). In ten years, from 1965 to 1976, Chall, *et al.* detected real progress in terms of the representation of Black characters in children's literature: "[t]he percent of books with one or more Black characters in text or illustrations doubled" (532). Furthermore, the settings were not historical anymore, but contemporary and the Black characters featured in prominent roles (Chall, *et al.* 532). Chall, *et al.*'s article dates back to 1976 and at the time, they argued that there was still work to do because 86% of books from children's literature remained solely with White characters (532). They posited that the best way to increase these numbers would be to promote and reinforce authors coming from racial minorities because they would write books with their own perspective, culture and experience (532), as the CIBC encourages. In 1983, Rudine Sims still believes that there has been improvement, but that it was not enough: "We are no longer where we once were, but we are not yet where we ought to be" (653). Walter Dean Myers states in 2014 that "[o]f 3,200 children's books published in 2013, just 93 were about black people" (Cooperative Children's Books Center at the University of Wisconsin in Myers 1). The numbers mean 2.6% of books were about Black characters. However, Myers does not provide the numbers of books featuring Black characters, but it demonstrates regardless that this is a very limited percentage of books when it would be normal to have as many books about White characters as about characters from racial minorities. Nonetheless, as Darren Chetty, Maughn

Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Lavery argue in 2022, “[t]he common practice in Anglo-American literature of identifying the racial or ethnic identity of only Black and racially minoritized characters leads to other characters being read as white—by readers of color as well as by white readers—unless told to do otherwise” (74). Furthermore, as the last update about the representation of African American in the U.S., the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) gives an update on the numbers of children’s books about characters or by authors representing racial minorities compared to all the books they have in their data.

Last Updated: May 4, 2023

Year	Books Received at CCBC (US Pubs)	Black/African		Indigenous		Asian		Latine		Pacific Islanders		Arab	
		By	About	By	About	By	About	By	About	By	About	By	About
2022	3,173*	454	482	35	46	568	342	351	231	13	14	30	24
2021	3,195*	302	441	47	62	463	337	312	236	8	6	21	21
2020	3,265*	256	402	27	41	387	310	233	198	1	5	17	22
2019	3,751	227	460	31	45	393	336	237	235	5	5	19	33
2018	3,352	205	391	27	34	358	309	208	245	2	6	15	24

*Due to the pandemic, some publishers didn’t send out review copies, so we didn’t get the number of books we typically do. As always, we recommend calculating percentages to see trends.

Children’s Books By and/or About Black, Indigenous and People of Color Received by the CCBC–U.S. Publishers Only 2018–

This table demonstrates that racial minorities are increasingly represented in children’s books and that the ethnicity of authors of children’s literature is also more diverse.

The statistics show how few Black people were represented in children’s literature until now and improvement can be displayed, but it is not enough. The analysis of this corpus will investigate if those books about Black characters written by people from racial minorities are an essential way to promote children’s books featuring Black characters or if there are more possibilities such as suggesting that White people should also write about Black characters.

3.2 Importance of Children’s Books

According to Champion, children’s books are essential to the construction of children’s own identities and in all cultures, their function in life is important (96). She also states that:

The stories that we tell ourselves and our children function to order our world, serving to create both a foundation upon which each of us constructs our sense of reality and a filter through which we process each event that confronts us every day. (87)

Books are thus tools on which children can base themselves in their everyday life and events to build their own world.

3.2.1 Awareness of the Content of Books for Children

The books chosen for the corpus were destined for children from ages three to eight years old. This was not a random choice because this is the period during which the children are beginning to read or to slowly understand what others read to them.

According to what Jana M. Mason explains, parents can support their children by reading books with them and this would have a positive impact on children's abilities to read (Barth and Swiss and Scott in Mason 205). According to Mason, "[a] majority of the children could recite the alphabet even before their fourth year, and nearly everyone learned by the end of the year how to recognize most letters" (215). Reading is not a skill that is learned at once but takes several years (Mason 223). Even though children learn slowly, and firstly to distinguish letters for example, it would teach them some specific values, such as being open to diversity, if the materials that they use to learn do not only focus on White characters but promote a diversity of representation, with illustrations proposing people coming from different cultures. Children from age three, before they have even the ability to distinguish letters, may have the opportunity to be helped by parents or educators who read stories to them.

3.2.2 Construction of One's Own Identity

The point of this section is to understand how children construct their own identity by reading and listening to such books.

In 2004, Sally McClellan and M. Evelyn Fields support the opinion that for Black children, reading African American children's literature would improve their interest in reading and drive them more to learn reading. Michelle H. Martin has recently written an article in which she cites Rudine Sims Bishop and clearly explains how children from racial minorities feel when reading mostly books about White children or perpetuating stereotypes:

When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part... (93)

This devaluation in society may translate into an issue of self-confidence for children. By contrast, when diversity finds expression in children's literature, it shows to children that

people of all races are human (Bishops in Martin 93). Harris posits several benefits that African American children would gain by reading children's literature from African American literature such as a "prompt imagination", a means to "entertain" themselves, a way to "increase the amount of general knowledge children possess" and to "improve comprehension" for example (43). She thus posits that children's literature from authors coming from racial minorities would have a large impact on children. Myers also mentions in his article the importance of including Black people in books, by telling about his discovery of the story of a Black person written by a Black man. He expresses the fact that he felt that all the stories were not his and that "[w]hat [he] wanted, needed really, was to become an integral and valued part of the mosaic that [he] saw around [him]" (1). Myers states that he did not appreciate the story about Black people that he read, but that it humanised Black people and so himself and because of this story, he decided to write about them too (2). Myers also discusses what he terms "the shock of recognition" (2), which means that including Black people in stories helps the recognition of the African American community and feels like "a validation of their existence as human beings, an acknowledgement of their value by someone who understands who they are" (2). However, as Dorothy M. Broderick states, "the problem, of course, is that once an author has made up his or her mind to use a book to show that all children are alike, he or she eliminates the uniqueness of the black experience" (125). It is then essential to be extremely careful while writing children's books about diversity and this is something that will be discussed in section 4.4. of this dissertation about the question of author's legitimacy.

Another alarming aspect concerning the construction of Black children's identity is "the doll test". Suriyan Panlay's book, *Racism in Contemporary African American Children's and Young Adult Literature* contain an analysis of an experiment with dolls conducted by psychologist Kenneth Clark and his wife Mamie in 1940 (131). In this test, black and white dolls are used to determine which race children identify with. This research has shown that even African American children prefer to choose white dolls, revealing the self-esteem issue that they suffered from during this test as White people in America considered themselves superior, leading Black people to devalue their own race because of the messages sent by this society (Panlay 131-132). In the 1960s and 1970s, more African American children chose the black dolls over the white ones, which Panlay interpreted as a consequence of the Black Power movement (133), but even if there was a higher number of black dolls chosen, some African American children still opted for the white doll. According to Panlay, "what the doll

test implies is that the internalised racism or racial self-hatred has always been part and parcel of African American psyches, children's in particular" (135).

Moreover, Panlay suggests that this situation does not only affect Black children but White children as well:

Apart from helping black children see themselves represented and validated on the printed page and provide them with coping mechanisms, equally important is how it helps white children become aware of all the colours of the world they live in, the world where diversity is enriched by African American experiences [...]. (175)

Instead of suggesting to White children that they should feel superior to children from other cultures, children's books should demonstrate all the diversity found in the world and make children aware that everyone has their place in a story, and by extension on Earth.

The extremely positive reactions and astonishment, and the comments of the children from the video about the trailer of *The Little Mermaid*, demonstrate to what extent it is important for racial minorities to be represented in children's movies, but also in children's books: "[w]e must strive to offer all children the opportunity to see themselves in their books, and to learn to love the individuals they see." (Harris 42). There is then a clear need for racial diversity in children's literature for the construction of children's identities, whether they are White or from racial minorities.

4 Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Story Line

This dissertation aims to analyse twelve children’s books, focusing on both textual content and illustrations. To achieve this aim and make it easier for the readers to understand the results, it is essential to be aware of the synopsis of each book, which is provided in the following subsections.

4.1.1 All Are Welcome

The children’s book *All Are Welcome*, written by Alexandra Penfold and illustrated by Suzanne Kaufman, clearly aspires to promote inclusion and diversity. The title is already a clue, and the story is set in a school that welcomes every child, no matter their background since “all are welcome” (Penfold), as the title conveys. Different types of children are thus represented, from a child of colour to a disabled child, so that every little reader finds themselves included. This book is inspired by a school in Seattle (USA), “where diversity and community are not just protected, but celebrated” (Penfold), as written on the inside front cover. The story is not only about showing that all ethnicities are included but also about proving to children that no matter who they are or what they wear, they should feel accepted. The children’s diverse backgrounds are represented as a strength as they can share their own stories to others who come from foreign countries proving that “there’s a big world to discover²” (Penfold).

4.1.2 What Can a Citizen Do?

What Can a Citizen Do? is written by Dave Eggers and illustrated by Shawn Harris and attempts to answer the question asked in the title by listing all the things a citizen can or should do. This book states that citizens should help others and not be selfish. The question “Who can a citizen be?” (Eggers) is answered explicitly by the illustration showing that a girl from a specific religion or a boy wearing a tutu are citizens and that everyone is a citizen as long as they take time “to do something for another” (Eggers). According to this book, “[a] citizen’s not what you are – a citizen is what you do” (Eggers) and this conveys the message that your identity does not define whether you are part of a society, as it is what you do that ascertains your citizenship.

² The only information about quotations that can be provided are the authors’ name as children’s books do not have page numbers.

4.1.3 I Love My Hair!

The story *I Love My Hair!*, written by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley and illustrated by E.B. Lewis, depicts a little girl whose hair is styled by her mother, who explains to her daughter how lucky she is with her hair. Even when the girl is teased by her classmates and is unsure of her hair, her teacher is there to comfort her, showing that adults are always comforting presences by her side. Keyana, the little girl, learns to love her hair because of all the hairstyles she can have, even though at the beginning of the story, she could not bear to be combed as this hurt too much.

4.1.4 Hair Love

The story written by Matthew A. Cherry and illustrated by Vashti Harrison, *Hair Love*, portrays a little girl who wants the perfect hairstyle for the day her mother is coming home. She is aware that she can do whatever she likes with her hair and have different hairstyles for various events. Therefore, Zuri and her father attempt to dress her hair but fail several times, until they have the idea of following a YouTube tutorial, which helps them find the perfect hairstyle for this big day.

4.1.5 My Hair Is a Garden

Cozbi A. Cabrera wrote and illustrated the children's book *My Hair Is a Garden*, which is about self-acceptance through taking care of hair. Mack, the protagonist, is teased by her classmates and decides to run to Miss Tillie's house to find help. Miss Tillie, her neighbour, teaches Mack to take good care of her hair with shampoo and tools, but also to appreciate it by comparing hair to a garden in need of care. In Miss Tillie's garden, there is a diversity of plants, trees, and flowers, and each one is singular and needs different treatments to be taken care of. None of these flowers is, therefore, prettier than the others: "They're [all] beautiful, though they're so different" (Cabrera). The story is not only about learning to appreciate hair or being comforted after being teased but also about finding a solution and changing things to be more appreciative.

4.1.6 Saturday

Saturday, written and illustrated by Oge Mora, depicts the story of a little girl called Ava, who waits the whole week for Saturday to arrive as this is the day she gets to spend with her mother who does not work on Saturdays. However, on this Saturday, while mother and daughter are convinced that this day will be special, everything falls apart and all the activities they had planned are either cancelled or ruined. The last one, a puppet show, is the most important for them, but Ava's mother has left the tickets on the table and thus, they cannot

enter the show. Mother and daughter end up being sad, but they do not give up on their perfect day because at least, they have spent it together and this makes it special. In the end, they decide to create their own show.

4.1.7 Something Happened in Our Town

The children's book *Something Happened in Our Town* is written by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins and Ann Hazzard, and illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin. The story focuses on two children – a little White girl, Emma, and a little Black boy, Josh – who do not understand what happened in their town and the reasons why a man has been killed by a policeman. Their different backgrounds show two perspectives: those who feel concerned because they are descendants of the White perpetrators and defend the policeman by stating it was a mistake, versus those who are more upset and more anxious because they could be the victim. As Malcolm, the brother of the little boy, argues: “I could get stopped by the police just because I’m Black, even if I don’t do anything wrong” (Celano *et al.*). The aim of the children is then to investigate this act with their parents and siblings. As this is a very serious topic, they have a lot of questions about it. The parents do not hide things from their children but take time to explain and teach everything to them with patience and kindness as, according to the authors’ notes at the end of the book, all parents and educators should. With the help of their parents, the children manage to transfer what happened in their town to their own experiences in order to act in better ways. At the end of the book, the readers witness a concrete example of the impact that the parents’ explanations had on them when another little boy, Omad, who is still learning English, joins the school and is teased and rejected by other classmates. Accordingly, Emma and Josh do not let this discrimination take effect and they welcome Omad, who then becomes their friend.

4.1.8 I Believe I Can

I Believe I Can, written by Grace Byers and illustrated by Keturah A. Bobo, is a book whose aim is to make sure that children believe in themselves no matter their origins, their passions, their dreams or their fears, because they can achieve their goals if they believe they can. As the author writes: “There will always be one person who might not believe in you; let that person never be you” (Byers). This book shows children all over the world that they can do whatever they want because they are able, and they should never think the opposite.

4.1.9 The Day You Begin

This children's book written by Jacqueline Woodson and illustrated by Rafael López deals with children feeling alone. Angelina did not travel like her classmates and stayed at home

with her little sister reading her books; Rigoberto does not speak English very well and is laughed at by the others in the classroom; a girl is looked at strangely because she eats different meals, which seem “too unfamiliar for others” (Woodson); and another boy is excluded from playing with the other children. There are many reasons for children to be different but there is also the day when they begin to find their place.

4.1.10 Sulwe

The book *Sulwe*, which is written by Lupita Nyong'o and illustrated by Vashti Harrison, tells the story of a little girl, Sulwe, who does not find her place because of her skin colour. She would have preferred to have a lighter skin like her family's. This is a story about feeling different and being teased and alone because of this difference. Sulwe tries to become lighter but does not succeed, which leaves her feeling extremely sad. Her mother tries to describe the inner brightness in Sulwe, talking about inner beauty and it emphasises the fact that what is bright is better than what is darker. After this conversation, the supernatural aspect of this story mirrors Sulwe's life and has more impact on her: she understands her importance as well as her sister's as the stars in the sky portray the story of two sisters: Night and Day live together in harmony until Night understands that people on Earth prefer her sister. She then leaves them, until those people and Day realise how important Night was for them too.

4.1.11 The Silence Seeker

The Silence Seeker is written by Ben Morley and illustrated by Carl Pearce. The title is the result of a misinterpretation by Joe, the little Black protagonist of the story. When Joe asks his mother who the boy next door is, the mother answers “[h]e's an asylum seeker” (Morley), which Joe understands as “the silence seeker”. The story revolves around this misinterpretation because Joe leads the silence seeker through the city, in search of silence. Joe does not find it strange to seek silence: the boy next door is different, and Joe accepts him as he is. However, they cannot find this silence because of the noise people make in all the places they visit. The boys do not talk during their adventure, but they end up smiling at each other. The next day, the silence seeker is not in the house he was in the day before, so Joe searches for him in the places they visited together but he is nowhere to be found because, as his mother tells him, he left with his family.

4.1.12 Last Stop on Market Street

Last Stop on Market Street, written by Matt de la Peña and illustrated by Christian Robinson, is a story of a grandmother teaching her grandson to appreciate every detail of daily life. With every step they take, the grandson asks his “nana” why he does not do the same as the others.

She explains her opinion about aspects of life and opens the boy's eyes to what is essential in life and what is worth it.

4.2 Interculturality vs. Intraculturality

Following the twelve readings of the corpus in this dissertation, it can be noticed that these books revolve around two poles that can be named in this work *interculturality* and *intraculturality*. The concept of interculturality can be defined similarly to its definition according to UNESCO: “[it] refers to the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures [...]”. In this case, I name *interculturality* the literary representation of the interactions between different cultures and their relationships through connection or contrast. Every story centred around the interactions between individuals or elements belonging to different cultures is then qualified as *intercultural*. By contrast, the term *intraculturality* is built with the prefix *intra-* “used to form adjectives meaning inside or within a place or group” (Cambridge Business English Dictionary) and *cultural* “relat[es] to the habits, traditions, and beliefs of a society” (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus). Intraculturality is thus defined in this dissertation as the internal cultural interactions rather than the external ones. These interactions are not necessarily culturally marked: an everyday action, such as cooking, can be considered intracultural as long as it does not involve this notion of interaction specific to the concept of interculturality. An intracultural story thus includes a storyline that does not relate to the encounter of distinct cultures. A story can contain different degrees of interculturality and intraculturality and one does not exclude the other, since a story can have an intracultural theme and intercultural elements. The following paragraphs will therefore be classified according to their degree of inter- or intraculturality: *interculturality*, *interculturality with intra- elements*, *intraculturality with inter-elements* and *intraculturality*. The twelve books will be divided into these four categories with the reasons why they are placed there.

4.2.1 Interculturality

The three books belonging to the intercultural category are *All Are Welcome*, *What Can a Citizen Do?* and *I Believe I Can*.

The first is considered intercultural because of the way all the children from different racial minorities are assembled in a community where they interact with each other and share a little bit of their culture, such as when everyone brings a typical dish from their culture to the school party. The second book deals with children from different backgrounds working together towards a common aim: to show what it means to be a good citizen and to build their

own community. They therefore enter into interculturality, since it is about working together even though they are all different. The last book is a bit different as it does not focus explicitly on this interculturality, but on what each child can achieve despite the dissimilarities. This story points to a distinct type of interculturality, the meaning of which can be reached by the readers themselves. Indeed, this interculturality is not explicitly shown but built by the reader, which is a distinction between the first two books and this one. In the first, the text says that the school welcomes everyone, which explicitly indicates the interaction between cultures, and in *What Can a Citizen Do?*, it is expressed in the text that it is not what you are that makes you a citizen, meaning that you can be anyone in the world and be part of this story, which conveys the message of interculturality. In this last book, nothing expresses that interculturality exists, but the readers understand it by reading the book in its entirety and by making their own conclusions.

4.2.2 Interculturality with Intra- elements

Two books are part of this category that are mostly about interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds, but still including intracultural elements: *Something Happened in Our Town* and *The Silence Seeker*.

The latter is the story of two children from two different worlds, a Black boy and a teenager who is an asylum seeker. They enter in a relationship and share an adventure that opens the two boys to a meeting of two cultures, but this is not the main theme: their search for silence is more significant in the story than their interculturality, which is nonetheless a significant aspect of the book because the child and the teenager understand how different they are but are still open to this intercultural relationship. In *Something Happened in Our Town*, the first two parts are about each family from different backgrounds and different ethnicities talking about their perception of History, but the most important element remains the interactions between cultures, with the contrast between the two families (interculturality) dealing with the situation in their own way (intraculturality). The last part is also an aspect of interculturality when Josh and Emma welcome Omad, which suggests that they are open to other cultures.

4.2.3 Intraculturality with Inter- elements

My Hair Is a Garden, *Last Stop on Market Street* and *The Day You Begin* are books that focus mostly on what happens inside the protagonist's habits and beliefs. However, some inter-elements take place.

In *My Hair Is a Garden*, the entire story revolves around Mack who needs Miss Tillie's help because she is teased by her classmates because of her hair. The fact that she asks for help with her hair, which is the focus of the story, is intracultural, whereas the interactions with other children who laugh at her because of her hair are intercultural; they laugh at Mack because her hair is different from what they are used to. In *Last Stop on Market Street*, the fact that the story is about a child and his grandmother sharing an adventure, which is the main part of the story, is intracultural, while the fact that they meet people from different backgrounds along the way is intercultural. They even talk about these differences, opening the conversation to these differences and having the opportunity to learn more about other cultures. In the last story, each child lives their own adventure, which is intracultural, but the fact that they are left aside by other children at school because of their differences shows the intercultural parts of the story. Furthermore, in the end, they all gather showing that despite their cultural differences, they share similar stories and situations and thus interact with other cultures.

It should be noted that in *My Hair Is a Garden* and *The Day You Begin*, the intercultural elements are present because the children reject these differences and prefer to remain in an intracultural way of life. By contrast, the end of the second book proves that instead of rejecting this interculturality, people should celebrate it and interact by talking freely about the differences but also being aware of the similarities such as when Rigoberto mentions the fact that his sister and Angelina have the same first name (Woodson).

4.2.4 Intraculturality

The books *I Love My Hair!*, *Hair Love*, *Saturday* and *Sulwe* all focus on intraculturality because none of these stories show interaction with other cultures.

The first two books are about hair and the focus is on these little girls and their mother or father who help them comb and style their hair. No other culture is represented in these books because in both stories the girls spend most of the time in their house and thus, they do not meet anyone. The same happens with *Sulwe*, no other culture is represented. In addition, as in *My Hair Is a Garden* and *The Day You Begin*, she is teased by her classmates, but these are children from her culture, which shows that even in an intracultural sphere, people can be different and still reject this distinction. However, in *Saturday*, people from different ethnicities are represented in the illustrations, but the story is not about the interactions between these cultures, as it focuses only on the journey of the mother and daughter.

4.2.5 Contribution of these Elements to the Dissertation

This section can be summarised as followed:

More intercultural		More intracultural	
<i>All Are Welcome</i>	<i>Something Happened in Our Town</i>	<i>My Hair Is a Garden</i>	<i>I Love My Hair!</i>
<i>What Can a Citizen Do?</i>	<i>The Silence Seeker</i>	<i>Last Stop on Market Street</i>	<i>Hair Love</i>
<i>I Believe I Can</i>		<i>The Day You Begin</i>	<i>Sulwe</i>

This difference is a striking element of this corpus. It makes it possible to identify differences between children’s books representing racial minorities. Interculturality is particularly an essential element to distinguish books in this corpus from other children’s books. Indeed, the difference between inter- and intraculturality may be more general, as some of the books depicting racial minorities stand out from the children’s literature as a whole because of this interculturality, since the majority of the books focus more on the intracultural elements. These are only suppositions, but due to the limited purpose of this dissertation, it is not in a position to answer them. However, this work will continue to focus on the distinction between interculturality and intraculturality to see if other elements such as formal ones or illustrations confirm these two distinct poles. The first of these elements is the actantial model, which enables to frame actions with a series of actants.

4.3 Actantial Model and the Relationship between the Characters

The actantial model enables an analysis of the actions found in texts and usually, there are as many models as there are actions” (Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt 72). However, in the children’s books examined here, the dissertation will focus mostly on the main actions and the resolution of a single problem. The reason for these unique actions is merely because these children’s books are very short and contain minimal information. Therefore, the stories are centred around a main action, which is normal given the target audience: the message is addressed to young children, and it is therefore essential that this message is clear. In the research of an analysis for this dissertation, it is important to focus mainly on what is understandable for them as this is what will make more sense to them. Indeed, in a dissertation based on a didactic approach, it is less interesting to direct our attention to secondary actions, since the results will help to find out how to teach children or teenagers

about the representation of racial minorities in children's literature in English as a foreign language class. Hence the information must be based on the main issue. The only books for which this dissertation will analyse several actions are *Something Happened in Our Town*, *The Day You Begin* and *The Silence Seeker* because several actions are on an equal level of importance for the story. However, the fact that these books contain several actions does not mean that they are independent of each other since these actions are built around elements that represent the essence of what the authors want to convey through the stories and are not secondary actions. The first book involves three different actions because the story follows two different characters in their respective family, who learn about what has happened around them and try to understand the reasons behind this situation. The final action in this book is the materialisation of the respective lessons into the act of including another child, left alone, into their group. The second book, *The Day You Begin*, develops around four different actions because the story focuses on four different characters who individually find themselves in a situation where they are left alone or feel different and try to accept those differences. The last story follows one main action and a side one: the main action is about Joe trying to lead the "silence seeker" to a silent place and the second one follows Joe when he searches for the other boy in all the places they went together.

Now that the actions in the books have been outlined, this dissertation will focus on the different axes of the actantial model and thus, on the different relationships between the characters and the different actants: the subject, the object, the sender, the receiver, the helper and the opponent. Observers will also be briefly discussed. The first axis is the axis of desire, concerning the subject and the object.

4.3.1 Axis of Desire

The axis of desire concerns the subject and the object of the story and, more precisely, the relationship between them, which is known as a "*junction*" (Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt 71, italics in original). In the twelve books examined for this dissertation, the twelve objects are all conjoined with the related subjects, which means that the subjects succeed in getting what they want, which is something they are going to keep, not something they are going to get rid of; in this case, it would mean that the subject and the object are disjoined. Hébert explains this difference between being conjoined or disjoined with two examples: for the conjunction, the princess (the object) is desired by the prince (the subject) and for the disjunction, "a murderer succeeds in getting rid of his victim's body" (71). The objects and the subjects are thus related to form the axis of desire. The axis of desire is significant because desire guides

people throughout their entire life; in this case, it shows that children also have the desire to achieve some goals and thus participate in active life. Furthermore, the relationship between the subject and the object is central, given that the subject defines itself solely through the existence of the object, since without object, the subject would have no role to play in this axis.

In the following section, the subject and the object of the different books are identified.

4.3.1.1 Subject

The subjects are the entities acting with the object in mind as their aim. They are usually the protagonists of the stories because they are the ones performing the action. They are anthropomorphic beings, so animate beings, including human beings, but also animals that share characteristics similar to human beings, such as talking.

Because the stories are diverse, so are the subjects. As an example, the subject of *All Are Welcome* is the entire group of school children because there is no focus on one single child; however, in *Sulwe*, the subject is only Sulwe. Other books such as *What Can a Citizen Do?* and *I Believe I Can* do not focus on a unique hero, but on an entire group of children, conveying a message around the idea of community. Further stories such as *Something Happened in Our Town* or *The Day You Begin* are not about an entire group of subjects but still contain several subjects: two in the first book and four in the second. Furthermore, the books *Saturday* and *Last Stop on Market Street* are different as their subjects are not necessarily children like in the other books: in *Saturday*, Ava is one of the two subjects of this book, but her mother is one subject as well; in *Last Stop on Market Street*, CJ, the little boy, is not the subject, but his “nana” is. The remaining books not yet discussed in this subsection are all about a key theme, which is hair. *I Love my Hair!*, *Hair Love* and *My Hair Is a Garden* all focus on little girls, who are the subjects of the stories, trying to accept their hair or learn to take care of it. All the books about hair have thus girls as subjects: not one of these books focuses on a boy.

Thus, as this brief description has shown, the subjects of children’s books can be divided into four different categories: an entire group (without attention given to the individuality of these children), several individual children, adults, or children (here of the same gender as it is theme-related). Therefore, most of the subjects are children, which is not a coincidence since they play the role of heroes in children’s books aimed at children. There is thus a plausible chance of identification for the readers, and they can potentially become emotionally involved in the story. Even when the subjects are not children, it may be another

family member closely involved in the children's life; the children thus identify the subject with someone close to them, which links them emotionally to the subjects. To conclude, the subjects are always characters with whom the readers can identify emotionally. It is not surprising in the context of children's books and seems to be a general characteristic of this type of literature, especially of didactic literature, with which children learn elements. However, it should be noted that some subjects are an entire group of people presenting a particular unity, usually in an intercultural dynamic. This dissertation thus shows a tendency to choose a subject as a group when the story is intercultural. By contrast, individual subjects are usually found in intracultural books.

4.3.1.2 Object

The objects are the goals that the subjects want to reach; they can be inanimate, such as things or concepts. This component will be examined based on the four categories of subjects outlined in the previous subsection.

When an entire group is the subject, the object is the same for all involved: as mentioned above, there is no individualisation of the subjects in those stories because the goal of one child is shared with the other children: accepting diversity, being a good citizen, and believing in their abilities. For instance, the subjects in children's books concerning a community aim together to, as an example, celebrate diversity at school and to welcome everyone no matter who they are and where they come from as in *All Are Welcome*. The goal in the book *What Can a Citizen Do?* is to create a place for citizens as the children do in the illustrations, but also for these children to learn all the things that a citizen can and should do for a society. Lastly, the object in the children's book *I Believe I Can* is that the children believe they can, and try to, do whatever they want to without fear, to try.

When it comes to the category of individual subjects, the objects in *Something Happened in Our Town* are the same for the two first actions even though the subjects are different. Indeed, the subjects pursue the same goal: investigating what happened in their town and learning more about this situation. The third action is about another object, which is accepting everyone into the football team, no matter their differences, and thus not letting the new boy at school be rejected by Emma and Josh's classmates. The other story in this category is *The Day You Begin*, which focuses on four different subjects, but they all have the same object in common: sharing their story and accepting the aspects of their life that are different from the other children, by realising that "every new friend has something a little like you – and something else so fabulously not quite like you at all" (Woodson).

The third category is about adults being subjects in children's books. *Saturday* has not only one subject, but two as the adult subject has a daughter, Ava, and they are both subjects in the story with the same aim: spending the best Saturday possible together. *Last Stop on Market Street* has CJ's mother as a subject and her object is to make her little grandson realise that the little things in life are worth discovering and paying attention to.

Lastly, books about girls' hair focusing only on little girls as subjects follow specific aims such as learning to love their hair. This object is a key component in all three books: the protagonists learn to take good care of their hair or find the perfect hairstyle for a special day, as is the case for Zuri, the subject in *Hair Love*, who wants to look perfect for her mother returning home.

To conclude, whether the book is about a community of subjects or several individual subjects, the protagonists all have the same objective within those different books. Moreover, the stories dealing with the same theme, such as the books about hair, all have the same objects. All these objects demonstrate that the children, the subjects, want something; they all have a goal they pursue through the stories because they all have a desire to achieve something. Furthermore, these objects already indicate a difference by dividing the books into two categories in this dissertation: the first includes entire communities whose objects are already a sign of interculturality since they all desire the same thing and are usually centred around the theme of inclusion. The second category concerns books about single characters and is more centred on the development of the subject. The conclusions concerning the object, therefore, depend on the nature of the subjects.

This dissertation will now deal with the second axis: the axis of transmission.

4.3.2 Axis of Transmission

This axis examines the transmission between the axis of desire and the sender and receiver, since the sender is the one who drives the subject to the object, and the receiver is the actant who benefits most from the object desired by the subject. Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt posit that “[s]ender elements are often receiver elements as well” (71). This aspect is examined in the next subsections about the sender and the receiver in each book.

4.3.2.1 Sender

It is essential to note that, according to Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt, senders are always anthropomorphic beings, even though one could easily imagine a sender taking the form of an illumination or a dream. As previously mentioned, the subjects are very often the children of

the stories and certainly because of this, the senders have most of the time been identified as being the parents or at least adult figures.

Indeed, the senders in *All Are Welcome* (in the plural because, as already discussed, the subjects of this book are all the children as a community) are the parents who choose to send their children to a specific school that celebrates diversity. In *Hair Love*, the sender of the object, which is learning to love one's hair, is also an adult, as it is Keyana's mother. She is the one imagining all the things she could do with her daughter's hair, and she teaches the little girl how lucky she is. In *My Hair Is a Garden*, the sender is similar in every way except that this figure is not the protagonist's mother, but Miss Tillie, who could still be considered a motherly figure. In *The Silence Seeker*, the sender is also the mother, as it is her words that lead Joe to misinterpret the situation and go on an adventure seeking silence. By contrast, in *Something Happened in Our Town*, the senders are originally the older children at school who mention what happened in their town to the younger children, leading them to want to learn more about the incident. There are several other senders in this book, such as the mothers of Emma and Josh, who explain the situation and teach the children that they can help other people.

To conclude this subsection about the senders, it is important to note that it is quite difficult to find them in these children's books. Some senders were mostly the children themselves wanting to act, as in *The Day You Begin* or *What Can a Citizen Do?*, but there are no clear indications about potential senders apart from the children. The abovementioned senders are the only ones who are clearly identifiable, and they are mostly adults or older children. It is essential to note that the senders are mainly authority figures who are older than the children, which emphasises the idea of transmission between adults and children. Even though the children reading the stories are not conscious of the actantial model, they are still able to understand that the sender represents a character who transmits knowledge to the subjects. The subjects are thus placed in a situation between desire and this authority figure. This pattern is effective for the learning process considering that the children identify themselves and therefore understand that the sender is someone they can trust and thus, what the sender teaches to the subjects may also touch the young readers. This distinct feature of transmission seems to be a characteristic of children's literature as a whole, but this would merit further specific research. From the point of view of the representation of racial minorities, there is no significant distinct characteristic observed in this dissertation.

4.3.2.2 Receiver

The receivers are also usually anthropomorphic beings and are the ones who benefit the most from the actions of the subject(s).

As previously discussed, the receivers are often the same as the senders; however, this is not really the case in this analysis: the receivers are usually the children in the stories. The readers are frequently confronted with other children or similar objects to those in these books. Once again, it allows the identification of the readers with the receivers if they are as young as they are; it can also be suggested that the readers can better understand the emotions of the receivers if they experience similar situations. Indeed, the books deal with a lot of topics, which are also the objects of the books, such as self-confidence, celebrating and accepting diversity, or spending precious time with one's own relatives. It should be noticed that the first topics are themes that raise the issue of racism, since, for instance, the theme of accepting diversity would not take place if representatives of racial minorities were not constantly left aside. These issues could have been anticipated before discussing these results because the difference between books featuring only White children and the books in the corpus taken from articles with titles such as "23 Books to Help Kids of All Ages Learn About Race" is obvious. The themes explored in these books focus on very important issues of acceptance or self-confidence taken away because of other children who do not understand diversity, which returns to the same topic. This is a determining theme of this corpus.

There are two different categories in this corpus when it comes to receivers: the books in which the receiver is the same person as the subject, and the others in which there are more receivers than the subjects. *All Are Welcome*, *I Love my Hair!*, *Hair Love*, *My Hair Is a Garden*, *Saturday*, *I Believe I Can*, *The Day You Begin* and *Sulwe* belong to the first category. By contrast, in *What Can a Citizen Do?*, *Something Happened in Our Town*, *The Silence Seeker* and *Last Stop on Market Street*, there is a twist where receivers are concerned. In those four children's books, the subjects are also receivers, but other people, who are not subjects, benefit from the actions of the subjects. In the first book, the child who has just moved in benefits from the actions of all the other children, because they welcome him into their society after creating it. In *Something Happened in Our Town*, Emma and Josh learn a lot of things that they did not understand before the discussions with their parents, but Omad, the new boy at school, benefits from those discussions as well, as he is welcomed by Josh and Emma. In the story written by Morley, Joe understands the value of silence, but the boy who is considered a silence seeker is also a receiver because he has made a new friend, for one

day, with an opportunity to visit the city. In the last book, the subject is CJ's grandmother, but CJ still benefits from this trip as he opens his eyes to the world around him.

It can be noticed that the books belonging to the first category – where the receiver is only the subject – are, except for *All Are Welcome* and *I Believe I Can*, more intracultural, as opposed to the books belonging to the second category – where the receivers are more people than solely the subject. The consequences are that it can be considered that the theme has an intercultural tendency when more people than the subjects are concerned by the benefits of the action, which seems to be a feature of the theme of inclusion. Indeed, inclusion needs to have several different people or groups and thus, the person who includes and the person included both share the benefits of this inclusion. This theme of inclusion usually goes hand in hand with the theme of racial minorities, and thus, it is not surprising to observe inclusion. However, this dissertation can, with the help of the actantial model, demonstrate that the feeling of interculturality is also confirmed by the nature of the receivers.

It can also be noted that, unlike Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt's assertion in their article, this analysis has shown that, in the corpus examined here, the sender(s) and the receiver(s) are not one single person, but rather the subject(s) and the receiver(s) are. This seems to be a consequence of the didactic nature of children's literature in general: knowledge is transferred from the sender to the children and thus to the receivers who are also the subjects.

This dissertation will now focus on the last axis, which is the axis of power.

4.3.3 Axis of Power

The last axis concerns the actants named the helper and the opponent. As these terms suggest, the helper aims to do their best so that the subjects achieve their object and, in contrast, the opponent will do anything to make the subject fail, whether intentionally or not. The helper and the opponent are not bound to be anthropomorphic beings but can also be concepts or things.

4.3.3.1 Helper

It is essential to analyse this actant in terms of parts rather than as a whole. For example, Hébert and Everaert-Desmedt explain that it is better to describe the prince's courage as a helper rather than say that the prince plays the role of the helper (75). Therefore, the helpers are not whole characters, but parts of them, are concepts or things.

In the analysis of this work, the helper is not particularly relevant. What the results can tell is that in more than half of the books, the helpers are parts of the adults and particularly

authority figures – parts of parents or teachers – such as in *My Hair Is a Garden*, in which Miss Tillie’s experience with her own hair plays an important part in this story; in the other half, they are parts of children. For instance, in *I Believe I Can*, the solidarity between the children, their support and their belief in their own capacity are the helpers that guide them to do what they want. This does not teach something particularly new, and thus, the helpers will not be developed in this dissertation since it is once again about the place of the parents in the children’s literature, which has previously been discussed.

The only important feature to note is that for the stories in which the subjects are an entire group, the helpers are always a spirit of community, the determination to create something for the community or a kind of solidarity between the members of this group. Therefore, the helpers are never aspects meant to help children individually, but always for the sake of the group. This feature in this subsection is relevant concerning the observation of racial minorities because again, of groups, interculturalities and inclusion.

4.3.3.2 Opponent

The opponents are the people, the concepts or the things that prevent the subjects from achieving their aim and they can be intentional or unintentional.

The role of the opponent is also not very relevant in this dissertation and solely participates in the construction of an action without being sociological such as in *Saturday*, where the opponents are all the little mishaps in the mother and daughter’s day that lead them to be disappointed; sometimes, the opponent is not even present, such as in *All Are Welcome*. It can be noted that when the opponents are human beings, it is always in the context of bullying (*I Love My Hair!*, *My Hair Is a Garden*, *Sulwe* etc.), which has consequences on the self-confidence and self-acceptance of the subjects and these are centred themes in the contemporary society, particularly concerning the racial minorities. In this subsection, nothing can be concluded about the inter- or intraculturality with the analysis of the helpers and the opponents since, for example, the theme of self-confidence can be marked by the interculturality or the intraculturality.

4.3.4 Conclusion

To conclude, the analysis of the actantial model of the books in the corpus allows us to identify two different categories with relevant elements to this dissertation: characteristics that seem to be specific to children’s literature in general and characteristics that are part of the distinction between intercultural and intracultural books.

In this first category, it can be noticed that the elements mostly permit the identification of the readers: the subjects are children, and the authority figure is present as a helper or in a role of transmission, as well as the teacher. These characteristics will not be discussed because the corpus does not allow this dissertation to go further in the analysis.

The second category is relevant to this analysis: several elements supporting the difference between intercultural and intracultural stories were discovered. For instance, when there is a group subject, the book is generally dealing with intercultural elements, whereas individual subjects belong to intracultural books. It is also supported by the analysis of the objects depending on the type of subjects. The receiver is also important: in an intercultural book, the receiver is generally not only the subject, which shows that an entire group benefits from the action, demonstrating the interaction between cultures. However, the axis of power is less significant in this dissertation. The relationship between the helper and the opponent is not really informative concerning this analysis, except for the feature of the helper in the case when a subject is also a group.

This dissertation continues the discussion by presenting the heroes and the relationships among the characters, as recommended in the article “10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Racism and Sexism” (California State Department of Education adapted from CIBC).

4.3.5 Heroes

As previously demonstrated, several elements in the books in the corpus enable the reader to identify with the subjects – who are also the heroes in the stories. The fact that the subjects develop values as the stories progress is proof that these books are part of the readers’ learning process: the aim is to encourage them to develop the same values as the heroes. These values are for example accepting other’s differences or their own (*All Are Welcome*, *What Can a Citizen Do?...*), self-acceptance (*I Love my Hair!...*), self-confidence (*I Believe I Can*), helping others, learning that the person they spend time with counts more than what they do or what they have (*Saturday*) and being interested in learning and discovering more. It is significant for the analysis to notice that all these values are sociological since they are needed to live with others, and thus, they are crucial for children living in a country like the United States with racial minorities, whether the children are White, Black, or representing another racial minority, these values are important. The fact that these values are taught in books involving racial minorities demonstrates the importance of the themes of inclusion, of groups, but also self-assertion and assertion of one’s own culture. Furthermore, these values

help distinguish between the intercultural or the intracultural books in this corpus, which is not astonishing as accepting others' differences would be more relevant in intercultural books, while self-confidence is more intracultural in *Sulwe* for instance. However, most of these values could be transferred in the other pole since learning more about the world around them is as significant in *Last Stop on Market Street*, which is more intracultural, as in *Something Happened in Our Town*, a book mostly about interculturality. It is clear that the values of accepting other people can solely remain in the intercultural pole.

4.3.6 Relationships among People

Using the actantial model has helped to clarify the relationships between the different actants and, therefore, between the characters in the stories. For example, a lot of the children's books are about children being teased by others as a result of their differences. In these books, it is made clear that it is often White or light-skinned children who tease others. In the books written and illustrated to demonstrate that everyone should be welcomed, there are no individual relationships, everyone is on the same level (which may seem implausible). In books about families, it is almost always the mother or at least a motherly figure who reassures the children, tries to explain to them what life is about or shows them that they are beautiful as they are: *Hair Love* is the only book with a father helping his daughter with her hair. This provides an opportunity to analyse the role of the mother in minority cultures, whether from within (when the authors belong to this culture) or from outside (when the authors belong to another culture and observe such as in *Something Happened in Our Town*). In each case, the mother seems to be a particularly central figure and the child's closest contact.

In the books in this corpus, teachers are always kind and have the right words for the children who are teased. For these children, the adults are role models; the children want to impress them, be comforted by them or learn things from them; the fact that teachers are presented in this way gives them a special status, placing them in a position to replace the parents outside the children's home, which implies a strong relationship promoting trust, sharing of knowledge and respect. The adults are never questioned about their role because they are the only people of authority in the eyes of the children, who try to follow in their steps and take for granted everything that adults teach them, such as in *Something Happened in Our Town*, in which what the parents and siblings teach them about History is not questioned by the children. However, in that case, children may feel restricted by the path followed by the adults, instead of trying to discover themselves while growing up. Those adults are always

there, playing positive roles, but children cannot express themselves as they would like in the books because there is always an adult to put children back on the right track. This presence and its limits mean that the children are not free and therefore they are more inclined to be respectful and to respect some social rules. Furthermore, readers learn to be dependent on adults and may realise that they cannot solve things by themselves. Young readers need to know that it is always necessary to talk about things when things get hard, but sometimes, it may feel like this is the only way children can take, rather than learning to face certain situations on their own. The relationship between children and parents in the books in this corpus, therefore, seems to be partly problematic because of this dependency. Indeed, parental authority figures are always present except in *What Can a Citizen Do?*, in which the characters learn to be good and independent citizens on their own, unlike in the other books, in which the parents are always there to solve their problems and comfort them. It is clear that in books aimed at children, it is better to portray parents who are present and almost perfect because young readers need to feel that in the books they read, parents are transmitters of knowledge and the people of authority to whom they can turn, as previously mentioned. It may not feel that productive for the construction of the children's self-confidence, a value often present in the books in this corpus.

The role of the mother, the teacher and adults, in general, could be indicative of a racial minority culture, but without a larger corpus, this dissertation cannot prove that these elements belong to a particular culture, as they are general features of children's literature where the authors do not necessarily represent racial minorities (see section 4.10). A comparative study might be interesting in this respect.

The following section will be a discussion about the key themes in the books.

4.4 Summary of Key Themes

This dissertation will now focus on the main themes in the books in the corpus. The aim is to identify these themes and examine how they are represented in the books, and highlight their similarities and their differences across the books.

4.4.1 Girls' Hair

As Wanda M. Brooks and Jonda C. McNair assert, "One of the ways in which creators of African American children's literature help young people, particularly girls, view themselves as beautiful is through books [...] that celebrate and affirm the normalcy of Black hair" (300). The type of books referred to in this quotation is represented by three books in the corpus:

I Love My Hair!, *Hair Love* and *My Hair Is a Garden*, as well as parts of the book *Saturday* because the protagonists go to the hairdresser.

In *I Love My Hair!*, Keyana's hair is associated with nature, music and sound, for example when she dances on the street and the beads at the end of her braids are making music: "Folks on the street look at me and smile as I dance along to the *Tap! Tap! Clicky-clacky!* Music my hair makes just for me" (Tarpley). Keyana tries to love her hair because, as her mother explains to her, it is beautiful, and she is very lucky. Her hair is also compared to a spinning wheel, seeds planted in a garden, a planet, a forest, cotton candy and a pair of wings. It is also essential to note that some of these comparisons are made by Keyana's mother while combing her daughter's hair. According to Brooks and McNair, when an adult combs a younger relative's hair, it is a bonding moment between the two members of the family: "Combing and fixing hair provides mothers and daughters, friends, and siblings with opportunities to bond and talk about hair and other things" (304-05). The mother-daughter aspect is highlighted in this quotation, however, in the book *Hair Love*, it is the father who takes the role usually played by women, breaking and featuring even more diversity in a children's book. The protagonist of the latter book is a little girl who wants the perfect hairstyle for her mother when she comes home, but the others are not worth considering because all the previous hairstyles were also fine but considered not good enough. The last book, *My Hair Is a Garden*, is also about the association of hair with nature and more precisely, a garden. The book teaches how to take good care of hair like a garden: people wash their hair, but they also water their plants. The reason why the protagonist, Mack, decides to run to Miss Tillie's house is that, for other children who teased her at school, black hair seems to be equated with messy hair. According to Brooks and McNair,

For young Black girls, these books provide a context in which they can better understand the role of hair in their lives. These books also enable readers who are not of color to question prevailing images and representations of beauty that can lead to a reification of normative European beauty standards. (305)

Books about hair are then essential to the construction of Black girls' identities and may prevent them from being teased by other children if Black hair also becomes valued. The presence of this theme is therefore important in this corpus.

4.4.2 Nature and City

Another relevant theme in several different books in the corpus is the settings of nature and cities. Indeed, several plots take place either in nature or in a city.

As previously mentioned, in *I Love My Hair!*, there is a clear association between hair and nature. A lot of the comparisons made by Keyana's mother about her hair are about natural elements, such as seeds planted in their garden; the little girl herself also draws a comparison between her hair and a forest. In *My Hair Is a Garden*, the nature aspect is also quite clear: even the title suggests that most of the story is about a garden represented as a safe place for Miss Tillie, but also for the girl. The illustrations by Cabrera and her words about this world show a beautiful garden represented as almost surreal: "Miss Tillie's backyard was a paradise with so many shades of green, bright pockets of colorful flowers and cool shade. I could barely take it in. It was as if someone had taken a big paintbrush and made bold strokes of green, then used countless little paintbrushes to fill in the details" (Cabrera). In the book *Saturday*, the protagonist, Ava, and her mother live in the city, but they still take time to seek natural surroundings, as when they go to the park, for example. They hope to find in this place what nature outside the city can provide: silence. Even in books without explicit mention of nature, some comparisons between hair, plants, and flowers are still casually featured, as in one illustration in *Something Happened in Our Town*, in which Josh's mother waters plants and flowers in her garden. There is also a representation of nature in the book *The Day You Begin* when the children's teacher says about Rigoberto that "[his] name and homeland sound like flowers blooming the first bright notes of a song" (Woodson). There is also in this book an illustration (López) in which there is a distinction between a green garden full of flowers and green plants, representing the happiness of children playing and enjoying their time together, and the desert with a sinister garden representing the solitude of the little boy left aside by his classmates. In the last two books, the city is more depicted than nature. In *The Silence Seeker*, the protagonists search for silence in the city, which is presumably a waste of time because the city is not peaceful at all and there is noise everywhere. Finally, in *Last Stop on Market Street*, CJ and his grandmother are in the city and mostly on a bus driving them to a street with no nature at all.

To conclude this distinction between nature and the city, it is evident that there are more representations of nature than of cities in the books. There are also comparisons involving nature, while there are no comparisons involving the city. Nature brings calmer and serenity and that is what emerges from these books. It is not clear why these themes are so present in children's books, but a glorification of nature can be detected. By contrast, the presence of the city is not surprising, since it is the most urbanised place where nature can be found but in small quantities. Moreover, in most of these books, the city is a common and realistic place

known by the children, while nature appears as fanciful and complicated to reach, and is then used more as an imagination technique, due to how nature can be vast and different.

4.4.3 Unity

As previously mentioned, several books focus on unity rather than on aspects of individuality, but in other books, no form of unity can be found. This difference will be examined in this subsection.

The books about community discussed above were *All Are Welcome*, *What Can a Citizen Do?* and *I Believe I Can*; it is important to note that they are the three books considered to be the most intercultural. In the first book, unity is already made prominent within the title: the word “all” emphasises the fact that all children are supposed to be welcome. Throughout the book, the use of the pronoun “we” accentuates this unity, predominant in this school, and the use of the future is also a focus on “what we bring together as a community, what will be done”. Furthermore, the last sentence in the book description on the page preceding the story is: “We hope *All Are Welcome* is a celebration of diversity and gives encouragement and support to all children” (Penfold). This quotation is also proof of the author’s and illustrator’s desire to both unify and celebrate diversity. An illustration by Kaufman depicts the children holding hands and forming a circle to celebrate this diversity and community around the Earth and at the same time, building this unity together. In *What Can a Citizen Do?*, the centre of attention is the collective defying the individual as the book is a guide to becoming a good citizen for the community and not for oneself. This also promotes unity in a group for the benefit of all. In the book written by Byers and illustrated by Bobo, the children can accomplish what they want together, as a group and usually, they accomplish these things with the help of several people rather than alone.

Another group of books is about helping others to form this unity such as in *Something Happened in Our Town*, in which the children fight for what is fair, which is never to let someone down and alone, and *Last Stop on Market Street*, where CJ and his grandmother are benevolent to help people in need. It is then another type of teaching lesson: it is not the reader who needs to understand the interest of unity, but the reader who is encouraged to become an actor of this teaching to spread these values.

Lastly, the presence of bullying in other books such as *I Love My Hair!*, *My Hair is a Garden*, *The Day You Begin* or *Sulwe*, shows that there is no question of unity as it is rather the opposite that happens. When children tease others, it brings tension in the group and there

is therefore no unity. It is essential to note that these books were classified as more intracultural. This distinction between interculturality and intraculturality in children's books demonstrates this feature of unity; interculturality is not represented to oppose cultures, but to gather them. This is an extremely important element since such books are written for pedagogical purposes as they are aimed at children. It also informs about the values that the authors want to convey: in intercultural representation, the authors do not oppose cultures, but show that unity is possible and preferable. It can be argued that it can diverge depending on the corpus: books that would take a completely different pedagogical meaning have no place in lists recommending children's books about racial diversity.

4.4.4 Inclusion

This subsection aims to analyse inclusion in children's books – the inclusion of racial minorities, but also of other minorities that are not necessarily included in everyday life such as people with disabilities. The aim is to determine how far the representations in the books in the corpus are developed and whether they might be considered successful or forced.

In *All Are Welcome*, even the title provides the idea of inclusion. This inclusion involves not only children from different ethnicities but also with disabilities. Indeed, a child in a wheelchair is also represented in this book. On the parents' side, the reader may also notice that in Kaufman's illustrations, single parents or non-heterosexual parents are also represented. The aim of this book seems to be the portrayal of everyone so that no matter who the child or the adult reading this book is, they also feel represented. However, according to Grant Bligh, "tokenism is defined as the practice of satisfying the *moral requirement* for the inclusion of members of structurally disadvantaged people in groups that are better placed in society" (italics in text, 834), supporting that this inclusion in these books may not be inserted adequately since as Bligh defends, "[t]his act of placation is generally perceived as both instrumentally unsatisfactory and morally inadequate" (834). In the intercultural books, many different people are represented in a large group without focusing on the individuality of these minorities, which is unsatisfactory concerning the representation of racial minorities because they are all placed on the same level and therefore, all the cultures are hidden. In other words, the book may also suggest that people are not really special and unique, but rather just like others. A similar comment might be made about *I Believe I Can*, as this book may feel like a superficial representation of diversity, whether in terms of ethnicity or disability; for example, the book, just as at the end in Robinson's illustrations in *Last Stop on Market Street*, features a child in a wheelchair, but who is not given any individuality and considered to be the same

as the other children. The contrast with what Bligh argues lies here when he claims, echoing Kanter's ideas, that tokens are in relationships with the dominants and that tokens can be named in this way if three conditions are met, one of them is that "a specific dynamics of tokenism are likely to operate, particularly when the master status of the tokens is obvious (women in a male-dominated group; Black people in a White-dominated group, etc)" (835). In these cases, no characters are represented as more dominant than the others since they are all supposed to be equals. Another book struggling with inclusion is *What Can a Citizen Do?*, in which people are only citizens if they tick specific boxes and do things for others. The books state that a citizen is not what you are, but what you do. This is not about inclusion in the sense of accepting everyone into the circle, no matter where they come from and who they are, but accepting people only if they work for society and do things for others without being selfish: there is a condition for inclusion. *Something Happened in Our Town* also focuses on inclusion at the end of the book when Josh and Emma clearly do what the other children fail to. Inclusion is also what the two boys in *The Silence Seeker* choose even though they do not know each other. In *I Love My Hair!* and *My Hair Is a Garden*, the children teasing the protagonists tend to go in the opposite direction as they exclude their classmates by mocking classmates because of their difference; the same happens with Sulwe, in the eponymous book. In *The Day You Begin*, the four children, who are also excluded, find a way to be included in their own group they created themselves.

An inclusion-exclusion duality can be noticed as central to a large majority of books in the corpus. It is not surprising in literature representing racial minorities; however, the books promoting total inclusion do not appear to be written adequately and could be accused of tokenism unlike those showing exclusion through bullying. Nonetheless, these books about bullying do not seem realistic either in the resolution of bullying, which is hardly representative of real-life situations. However, themes such as self-confidence helping the characters to face these situations are necessary for books aimed at children when the intention is to promote such themes in the hope of identification.

4.4.5 Gender

The aim of this subsection is to highlight the stories that deconstruct the gender norms by reserving specific activities for boys or girls for instance. This subsection will also identify the books that perpetuate stories about gender bias.

The books focusing on a whole group of people such as *All Are Welcome*, *What Can a Citizen Do?* and *I Believe I Can*, all deconstruct gender stereotypes. They do this

inconspicuously. For example, Kaufman's illustrations in *All Are Welcome* feature a girl presenting a science project, a subject that even in today's world is typically associated with boys. *What Can a Citizen Do?* features a boy in a tutu, which may seem unconventional according to gender stereotypes and thus, shows children that they should not refer to the social constructions about clothing and that they can wear whatever they want. *I Believe I Can*, which is about teaching children to believe that they can achieve what they want, features a girl playing soccer against boys and therefore promoting diversity in sports sets girls and boys on an equal footing.

The other books perpetuate more stereotypes concerning gender. For instance, books about hair only represent girls while boys may also need some books about hair to help them take care of it, or to help them accept and love it. Moreover, the adult reassuring the child is always of the female gender, often the motherly figure as previously mentioned; this is also the case in books that do not talk about hair such as *The Silence Seeker*, *Saturday* and *Last Stop on Market Street*. Only women are then included in the upbringing of the girls. However, it is unclear whether the mother and daughter live on their own or whether the father is not represented because he works a lot, for instance. The exception is *Hair Love* as it is the mother who is at work or who travels while the father stays at home with his daughter and takes care of her. It should also be noted that in *Something Happened in Our Town*, the reader may notice an illustration (Zivojn) where Emma's father carries a laundry basket, and both parents teach children things about their past and what happened in their town, but the person who continues to teach these children things about who they are is their mother. This means that women may be more qualified to comfort children, which perpetuates ideas rooted in gender stereotypes such as the image of the housewife. These representations of women could be problematic for children, especially if they live with those representations in their daily lives.

It is essential to note that books about a community feature images breaking gender biases, which chimes with the idea that accepting everyone also means living and doing what one wants without the fear of doing so.

4.4.6 Outer Space

Outer space is a key theme in three books in the corpus: *All Are Welcome*, *I Love My Hair!*, and *Sulwe*.

The first is about a science project: a child has his head in a planet with other planets all around him, which may demonstrate that the book is about diversity and that, on a large scale,

discussing space demonstrates that every planet is worth discussing and on a smaller scale, every country is worth representing. In the second book, the protagonist's Afro hairstyle is compared to the Earth: "Then my hair surrounds my head, like a globe" (Tarpley) as if she could fly according to the illustration (Lewis) as if she could take a big part in the world, which is something she has difficulty doing in the classroom with the other children teasing her. In the last book about Sulwe, the little girl finds peace when she looks at the sky and the stars. Moreover, her necklace is also a star as her name means "star". Space is also where she learns to love herself and to accept who she is, as the sky has succeeded where her mother had failed, namely in teaching Sulwe to love herself.

Space feels like a safe place in those books, a place of different planets, of peace, where the protagonists would feel more confident. This theme is about a confrontation with the universe that allows the children to find their place as part of something larger. It is in accordance with the idea of inclusion, but on a larger scale. It is surprising to find this theme, but the small number of books about outer space does not enable us to conclude a particular tendency.

4.4.7 Political Message

It can be argued that all the books include political messages, but the four most obvious will be discussed in this subsection: first, *All Are Welcome* and the sacrifice of the individual in favour of an inclusive society; *What Can a Citizen Do?* and its definition of citizenship, which differs from the word "citizen" defined as "a person who, by place of birth, nationality of one or both parents or naturalization is granted full rights and responsibilities as a member of a nation or political community" (LII); *Hair Love* and the readjustment of the roles of the mother and father at home, which this dissertation will not further explain since it has already been mentioned and is not the theme of this work; lastly, *Something Happened in Our Town* and the police injustices.

The message of *All Are Welcome* appears benevolent if the interculturality is taken into account and therefore the inclusion presented in the book at the expense of the individual may also be dangerous. It can be argued that this is inadequate and used to show open-mindedness, especially because the authors are not part of the racial minorities (see section 4.10). The definition of citizenship in *What Can a Citizen Do?* suggests that anyone can become a citizen if they accomplish acts for society, but, these subjective conditions withdraw the fundamental right to be recognised as a citizen because of what you are and not of what you do. A state with the power to designate citizenship or to withdraw it whenever it wishes

based on subjective conditions is the opposite of inclusive, which is one of the values that seems to be advocated. The message is contradictory. It should be noted that these books were identified as intercultural, but this interculturality, firstly considered as benevolent, is henceforth nuanced when political issues are involved. It appears that the author may not be personally concerned by the difficulties of inclusion.

The last message is the one of police injustice, which is the opposite of the previous concern. Unlike the other political messages, the negative elements here are very explicit but are problematic in a children's book because it contributes to the suspicious attitude of racial minorities towards the police, from a very early age. It is not the subject of this work to analyse the ways of talking to children about police injustices, but it was essential to mention the presence of this theme since insecurity is major concerning minority cultures. This is not the only message hidden in this book as the Chess Game played by Josh's father and brother is a metaphor to demonstrate that there are two different sides, just as in real life, a black and a white one and the white pieces always begin, showing how conservative the game is. The book thus gives a voice to racial minorities in an intercultural situation rather than talking about inclusion.

4.4.8 Technology

Technology is also present in three books in the corpus: *Hair Love*, *Something Happened in our Town* and *Last Stop on Market Street*, which is not very astonishing given the fact that most of the books are quite recent as they were all published in the late 2010s.

In the first book, the theme of technology is represented through a tablet and the protagonists use it with a YouTube tutorial. Without this tutorial and, consequently, without the tablet, their aim would not have been achieved. In *Something Happened in Our Town*, the technology depicted is the TV, the radio and the internet; this is through these means that the news is broadcast throughout the city and reaches the older children at school who pass it on to younger children, and from there, the whole story of the book begins. In the last book, young people have earphones, so CJ would like some and this is a good moment for the grandmother to give CJ a lesson: "What for? You got the real live thing sitting across from you. Why don't you ask the man if he'll play us a song?" (de la Peña). In this book, technology is seen as superfluous because of all the real things the world has to offer.

This portrayal of technology shows that the world develops towards more technological elements and that children's literature develops at the same time.

4.5 Lifestyles

Lifestyle is included in the CSDE article “10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Racism and Sexism,” adapted from a brochure of the CIBC. It will be used in this dissertation to compare the books and examine if characters from racial minorities are depicted as being poorer than the White middle class.

To deepen this lifestyle point, this subsection will not discuss what each book says about lifestyles because a lot has already been mentioned, but rather summarise and give an overview of some interesting elements. The children in these books live differently from one another: some live in houses and have toys and books (*Sulwe* and *I Love My Hair!*), use technological devices (*Hair Love*) and have their own bedroom, while others must share their bedroom with a sibling (*The Day You Begin*) and take the bus (*Last Stop on Market Street*). Some of the books depict a school community with children of different ethnicities living and learning together (*All Are Welcome* and *I Believe I Can*), while *Sulwe*, for example, portrays a whole other world with a school only with Black children wearing a uniform. In the case of children’s books explicitly about diversity and inclusion, the readers do not really get to see their houses or how they live, and thus their home lifestyle is missing; the readers only see what happens in the community. For the other books where the focus is on one child only, the reader is more aware of the emotions of the children, how they live, and in what kind of home they spend their time. The focus can be on deprivation in some books, but they still live a great life of adventure by discovering the world with someone else (never alone) and learning to enjoy it no matter the lack of material goods (*Saturday* and *Last Stop on Market Street*).

It can be concluded that the children have very different lifestyles. However, when poverty is depicted such as in *Last Stop on Market Street*, *Saturday* or *The Day You Begin*, it is more often the racial minorities who suffer from poverty, which continues to convey stereotypes. Nonetheless, it is an improvement when books such as *Sulwe*, *I Love My Hair!* and *Hair Love* are considered since these little Black girls are portrayed in a rather rich environment.

4.6 The Effects of Books about Diversity on Children’s Self-Image

This section also explores a point that should be analysed according to the CSDE (adapted from the CIBC). Indeed, the effects that books have on children’s self-image are essential, because, as Chall *et al.* argue,

By providing depictions of various cultures and life-styles, books can help children gain a more realistic picture of the world in which they live. By the same token, if the books to which children are exposed fail to represent the diversity of our multi ethnic and multicultural society, they will not be serving our children and society at large. (528)

However, it is one thing to represent diversity in children's books, but another to create a book that would only provide positive reactions among children in relation to their self-esteem. This analysis tries to put the finger on these books that focus on representing diversity and appear to be well-intentioned but might raise questions upon closer inspection.

Firstly, some books are explicitly about welcoming everyone, which praise diversity such as *All Are Welcome* and *What Can a Citizen Do?*, but these books may be problematic concerning children's self-image. It is clear that the book teaches children that they have to welcome people no matter their background and that everyone can learn from different people coming from different ethnicities. This book may also help several children who would identify with the characters no matter their gender or their ethnicity. However, these books show that they may be directed at White children since the message conveyed would teach them to welcome everyone but could be damaging for children representing racial minorities as they are more aware of the injustices of real life. This is also the case in *I Believe I Can*, but in this book, the focus is not on diversity but on teaching that children can achieve what they want.

The books concerning hair are quite positive: by reading *I Love My Hair!*, the girls struggling with their hair could identify with the protagonist and become more confident by telling themselves that their hair is just as beautiful as Keyana's hair. *My Hair Is a Garden* is also very positive in that sense as it teaches little girls that they have to take care of their hair and there is, at the end of the book, a guide to help them in this direction. Moreover, both books can prevent other children reading them from laughing at a girl because of her hair and make them realise the struggle of girls with their hair. *Hair Love* conveys the message that they can wear their hair in any style they want.

Three other books depict children being left aside by others, who either mock them or do not want to play with them. The first one, *Sulwe*, may teach a lesson to children with lighter skin than the protagonist's as the book shows how hard it is for Sulwe to be in that situation, as she even goes to the point of harming herself. However, the part of the story where the mother enters the bedroom and learns what happens with her daughter and tries to comfort her may be perceived as problematic as she implies that she still has brightness in her; therefore, she is beautiful because of this brightness, but at no time does the mother tell Sulwe how beautiful she is also on the outside. Children may think that if their skin is darker

than that of others, they are only beautiful inside. In *Something Happened in Our Town*, Omad is rejected at the end by Josh and Emma's classmates, but those two children do not tolerate it. Furthermore, the story does not hide facts from young readers; the situation is described with clear words and how things are handled within the families is cleverly depicted. This book, then, teaches children to be prepared for a world that is not fair, but also states that "[e]verybody should be treated fairly" (Celano *et al.*). Furthermore, the part of the story in the Black family shows that they are proud of themselves, which may have a positive impact on Black children as it teaches them to be proud of themselves. There is a message conveying that they have the power to change things. This book also has guidelines at the end aimed at the parents or educators of children to learn how to talk to children in such situations, and thus, not avoid discussing them. The last book in this category is *The Day You Begin*, as the story shows that every child is different, and it also teaches children to look around them in order to find happiness and not be jealous of classmates like Angelina is. More importantly, this book conveys the message to children that they do not have to fight to carve out a place for themselves as they can find their place in the little things of life. These books convey the message that even if the protagonists find it difficult to be accepted, the ending is always positive, which can lead to misunderstanding on the part of the children who read these books as not everything is resolved so easily.

The last category concerning the self-image of children reading these books is stories in which the focus is not on racial injustices or on welcoming everyone, but on going on an adventure, such as Ava and her mother who spend their time together. There is no question of racial problems or injustices in this book and it shows to all the young readers that children coming from racial minorities also deserve a book with someone they can relate to on a simple adventure: books of everyday life including people with whom they can identify just as White children do. However, books like this one also perpetuate stereotypes of poverty, as previously mentioned, which can affect children as well. With *The Silence Seeker*, the children could feel that no matter who they have in front of them, if that person needs help, they should help them. The book *Last Stop on Market Street* also conveys a positive message for children so they can help others like CJ as a volunteer. This book also teaches children that material things are not as important as real live things; this is thus a lesson to make them realise what they have around them.

The effects on the children reading these stories could be to learn things as well and grow up more self-confident; however, the effects might also be the opposite. The children could feel as if people were lying to them because the real world is not what is shown in some

of these books. Some books seem a little hypocritical regarding the racial minorities who are not included in real life as some books try to show. They also share the feeling that every story has a happy ending while these ends are only delusions.

4.7 Formal Elements

The article “10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Racism and Sexism” (CSDE) suggests watching out for loaded words, which can be seen as insulting concerning racism or sexism in this case. However, there are not a lot of them in the books in the corpus given the corpus selection method: the primary aim of these books is to tell stories with characters from racially diverse backgrounds and addressed to children. This subsection will then mostly focus on formal elements that may be worth analysing.

In the book *All Are Welcome*, the title is used as a mantra, and it can be noted that the text is written with rhymes: “No matter how you start your day. What you wear when you play. Or if you come from far away” (Penfold). With the chorus and the rhymes, the text could be seen as a poem or a song, something that stays in mind when it is read aloud. Alliterations can also be noticed, such as: “We will swing, we will slide. We’ll have fun side by side” (Penfold). This passage also contains sibilance, as the consonant sound /s/ is repeated. This alliteration is also proof that this text is meant to be read aloud to convey rhythm. Therefore, the sound elements of this book are used to help the readers remember what is said in this book and the values they should keep in mind, which participates in the pedagogical value while being entertaining. Moreover, there is an overuse of the personal pronoun “we” and of the future tense: “Gather now, let’s all take part. We’ll play music, we’ll make art” (Penfold). The use of the pronoun, once again, shows the community depicted, functioning as a whole because this is not about individualisation, but mostly about society and what could be called “overinclusion”, an openness to diversity at the expense of individuality. The future tense expresses the fact that things will change and that the children will all work together to make those things develop. The change of the personal pronoun from “we” to “you” demonstrates that the book includes the reader and reinforces the identification with the characters. Concerning the children in the book, they are compared to the bread they eat: “A dozen different kinds of bread” (Penfold), the “bread” represents the children, and each loaf is one child, which is a way to highlight their differences. They are represented as different, but still holding each other’s hands around the rhyming words “community”, “diversity” and “adversity”: the first two words are positively connoted and illustrate the group around those words, but the last one indicates that difficulty may exist, but the

community is a shelter to counter this adversity. The theme of shelter is also emphasised in “all are welcome here” (Penfold): this quotation clearly shows that the community is localised, which creates an opposition with “elsewhere”, described as less inclusive and welcoming. It could therefore also be a warning to the outside world. Lastly, the quotation “[o]ur time together is the best” continues to mention an idealised world where there would be a community of children loving each other within the geographical or social limits of the first personal pronoun in the plural “our”. This illustrates the authors’ problem in presenting inclusion as an illusion.

As formal elements, the title *What Can a Citizen Do?* can already count the modals and the indefinite article “a”. Indeed, there is a prominent use of modal verbs in the text: the question of the whole book is to know what a citizen can do for society, but this core modal verb “can” is part of the dynamic modality, and according to Kristin Davidse *et al.*, “[d]ynamic modality is concerned with the indication of abilities/possibilities [...] inherent in agent participants or in situations” (2019-2020 66). In the text, all the sentences such as “[a] citizen can join a cause” (Eggers) express thus the ability or possibility to execute an action. However, “should” appears later in the text: “A citizen should be engaged,” which does not suggest freedom as the previous modal verb, as it gives a sense of present obligation (Davidse *et al.* 2019 47). The core modal “can”, therefore, opens up to all the possibilities that a citizen can have, and accordingly the possibilities of the readers. By contrast, “should” restricts and demonstrates all the acts that they are well advised to realise. Moreover, the indefinite article in the title should be mentioned, as “a” is generically used (Davidse *et al.* 2019-2020 38): the book is telling all the things that a citizen, in general, can and should do and thus, does not specifically concern the citizen in the book, which includes the readers as well. Furthermore, two verbs are compared in the book: “A citizen’s not what you are – a citizen’s what you do” (Eggers), but according to the Cornell Law School, as previously mentioned, this is rather the contrary and a citizen is what you are and not what you do; this quotation thus shows the clash based on only two verbs but with strong connotations because one agrees with the definition by the Cornell Law School and the other with Eggers. Moreover, the quotation “[a] citizen is just like you” (Eggers) is confusing because, when one takes the definition of the Cornell Law School into account, nearly everyone can be considered a citizen, while the quotation by Eggers suggests the contrary: the reader is not yet a citizen, but a citizen in the making if he does what he should do. However, who gives the authors the legitimacy to tell children what they can and cannot do to earn the right to citizenship? The privileged status adopted strengthens the discourse of inclusion by explaining to children from all backgrounds

that they cannot belong to society without proof. It could appear overwhelming for children and place them under pressure at a very young age. Furthermore, the use of the personal pronoun “you” is a means to include the readers directly. This may be a way to embrace the readers so that they feel implicated, and thus guilty and responsible if they do not do what is expected from a citizen according to the book. There is also the idea of community in this book as the quotation “we bind us all, make us whole” (Eggers) indicates that people should act for the community and not do things for themselves: “So forget yourself a second. Grab a shovel or a pen. Do something for another. Don’t you dare doubt that you can! Everything makes an impact on a bigger than you” (Eggers). This quotation uses words with a strong impact on readers, which can be read as an encouragement to do better but also as a critique because people do not do enough and to show them that they can act in certain ways, but more importantly, that they should as an obligation. All these formal elements mean that if the readers want to be included and find some kind of identification, they must behave as citizens, according to the rules dictated by the book.

In the book *I Love My Hair!*, Keyana talks in the first person and, apart from the pages where she explains that she was once mocked by her classmates because of her hair and when the teacher reassured her, the entire book is written in the simple present tense. This conjugation suggests a specific routine between mother and daughter, which is emphasised by the sentence “[e]very night before I go to bed” (Tarpley). However, this would suggest that their daily routine always works the same way: her mother combs Keyana’s hair, Keyana ends up crying and her mother uses metaphors to comfort her daughter by demonstrating how beautiful her hair is. On the last page, “[t]oday I’m wearing it in my favourite style of all” (Tarpley) indicates a return to the present moment and not a daily routine. Further formal elements are also used, such as the onomatopoeia: “Tap! Tap! Clicky-clacky” (Tarpley) for instance, represents the noise that not only helps her remember what to buy “[m]ilk, bread, peanut butter” (Tarpley) but also makes her dance to the music of her hair beads, bringing joy on the street, which may have an impact on the reader as well. Another formal element is the possessive determiner “our” in the sentence “just like our grandmothers did” (Tarpley), as it conveys the message that Keyana’s mother is not only talking about her own grandmothers or Keyana’s ones but their grandmothers and certainly other people’s as well. In other words, the comment does not only concern specific grandmothers but a community of grandmothers, which brings back to the notion of cultural heritage. The explicit mention of cultural heritage indicates a closeness between the authors and the culture represented; it also shows children that they should be proud of their heritage. This element appears as being representative of

books about cultural minorities. Pride in heritage can also be detected in several words such as “growing up”, “blessing”, “stand up”, “believe”, “world”, “proud”, and “came from”.

No surprising formal elements are found in *Hair Love*. Alliterations are noticed, specifically with the sound /k/: “It kinks, coils and curls” (Cherry). The sounds imitate the impact that hair can have, such as Zuri’s hair because it has “a mind of its own” (Cherry) as if it were independent. Furthermore, the sentence “[t]here is nothing my hair can’t do” (Cherry) proves with the modal verb “can” that her hair faces no obstacles and is open to all the possibilities of different hairstyles. Then, the word “perfect” in the quotation “I want a *perfect* hairstyle” (Cherry) is written in italics in order to emphasise it, so that the readers do not miss it. However, there are two different approaches to this term: this may be a way to ensure the readers understand that Zuri will not give up until she finds the perfect hairstyle for the occasion, or it is a way to show the readers that this word “perfect” is nothing but subjective as there cannot be a perfect hairstyle other than the one Zuri perceives as perfect for herself. The last formal element of this book is the onomatopoeias ingrained in the illustrations, which clarify for the readers the sensations felt by the character. These are some typical formal elements that appear in children’s books, making them accessible and entertaining.

As previously mentioned, there are a lot of metaphors involving hair and nature in the book *My Hair Is a Garden*. Even the title shows a comparison between hair and garden, and Miss Tillie’s hair is also compared to a crown: “*She wears it as a crown*” (italics in the text Cabrera). The author also uses repetition to emphasise some ideas such as “[t]he way she found a use for everything [...]. The way her house shone in the daylight” (Cabrera); moreover, the repetition of the same words contained in the title at the beginning and the end of the last page work as emphasisers of the idea they express. Then, the overreaction of the narrator such as “[y]ou could say her house had a glory”, “Miss Tillie’s hair has a glory” or the word “special” demonstrates that it is a little girl who is the narrator of her story she overreacts. The fact that she has been teased at school for a long time is emphasised with the expressions: “It wasn’t the first time”, “I sort of got used to it” or “[f]olks have been poking fun of my hair since I was little” (Cabrera). Then, Miss Tillie compares hair to human beings or animals that can be trained in order to achieve specific goals: “‘Later on when your hair’s trained, you can go back to your usual comb.’ ‘Trained?’ Did Miss Tillie mean she could train hair?’ ‘Oh yes,’ Miss Tillie replied. ‘You’ve got to work with what you have, but you can still tell it what to do’” (Cabrera). This comparison to human beings or animals demonstrates how important it is to take care of hair, just as someone would take care of animals and train them to tame them. Therefore, according to Miss Tillie, hair is supposed to be trained so it becomes

easier to style. This goes back to the idea that people need to take care of their hair as the guide at the end “Caring for Black Hair” suggests. Indeed, this guide is used as a kind of recipe. Another lesson that Miss Tillie teaches the girl, apart from taking care of her hair, is to realise by herself that she is as beautiful as other children “even though they’re so different” (Cabrera) by asking direct questions: “Miss Tillie looked at me. ‘Is that Japanese maple prettier than those succulents?’ she asked. ‘Of course not!’ I said” (Cabrera). By proceeding like this, Mack answers the questions by herself, which appears more impactful for her: “As the words came out of my mouth, I knew that I believed it” (Cabrera). All the formal elements in these paragraphs focus on the theme of hair of African American girls; they do not belong to a particular genre but contribute to the construction of this theme, which is already characteristic of literature representing the African American racial minority.

Just as at the end of the book *My Hair Is a Garden, Something Happened in Our Town* also has a note after the story, but not like a recipe as in the former book, rather a “note to parents and caregivers” (Celano *et al.*). This note is about the seriousness of talking about the predominant subjects found in this book with children. In case parents or educators do not know how to explain specific words or broach a subject, this note provides this information. Furthermore, the dialogues, between parents and children, available in the story, are already a demonstration of the benefits depicted in the note at the end of the book. It is important to remind the readers of such books that the parents are supposedly talking to children, and this is the reason why the words “fair” and “unfair” are used rather than other more complex words: “They were treated unfairly, but helped others learn to be more fair” (Celano *et al.*). These terms are emotionally charged and thus impactful. There are also elements with different forms in the text highlighting some parts such as in the quotation “[a]nd YOU would be sad missing out, because you never know who is going to be your best friend,’ said Liz” (Celano *et al.*). The capitalisation of the personal pronoun “you” feels like an accusing finger pointed at the readers: it shows that the child of the story, Emma, and her decisions have an impact on herself and the people around her. However, it also demonstrates to the children reading the stories that their decisions also impact their life and the lives of others. Lastly, the use of impactful words in this book such as “proud”, “stand up”, “rights” and “power” works with the idea of being transparent with children and explaining things to them using the right words, as the notes advocate. This intercultural representation is probably specific to this corpus compared to children’s literature in general.

Similarly to the book *What Can a Citizen Do?*, the concept of the children’s story *I Believe I Can* is that the book circles around verbs. Most importantly, the modal verb “can” is

used prominently and acts as a dynamic modal verb used to express the capacity and the ability of, in this case, children (Davidse *et al.* 2019-2020 66). The repetition of this verb and of “I am like...” (Byers) is used to have a bigger impact on children reading the story, by repeating again and again to them that they can do whatever they want and that they are what they want to be, may reinforce their belief in themselves and their self-confidence. Nonetheless, these are not the only verbs in the text, in “I may not win at all I do. I may experience defeat” (Byers), the use of the epistemic modality with the core modal “may” has its significance as “[t]he varying strengths of epistemic modality can be referred to as *necessity, probability and possibility*” (Davidse *et al.* 2019-2020 61, italics in original). There is then a probability that the children fail at some actions they undertake, “[b]ut [they]’ll dust off and try again” (Byers). The use of the future, in this case, sounds like a promise that the children make to themselves to achieve their goals; it conveys the positive impression that children do not want to give up because they believe in their abilities. The use of the first person singular is also significant because the children, whether they’re reading the book in their head or out loud, do read that they can and thus, the first personal pronoun singular makes the children feel that they have the ability to do what the children in the story achieve. Furthermore, there is a lot of use of comparisons at the beginning of the story: “I can stretch, just like the Alps, until I reach my highest peak” or “I can charge, just like a train. Like a rocket, I’ll ignite” (Byers). These comparisons help the imagination of the children so they can project themselves while they act: the goal is much more fun for them. The quotation “[s]ometimes I am right and sometimes I am wrong. But even when I make mistakes, I learn from them to make me strong” (Byers) sounds like a poem because the words “wrong” and “strong” rhyme, which is an easier way to remember a text. That way, children may remember this part of the story, which conveys an important message to them. Lastly, the choice of the words “worthy”, “value”, and “believe” is significant because these words remind them of their value, that they are worthy, and they should believe in themselves.

In the book *The Day You Begin*, the personal pronoun “you” in the title is already a formal choice that is significant for the book. Indeed, the use of this pronoun directly includes the reader in the story, even more so if these readers experience the same situation as the children in the book. This book also compares different aspects of the book to nature: “Your teacher says so soft and beautifully that your name and homeland sound like flowers blooming the first bright notes of a song” (Woodson). This comparison conveys the message that difference may also be beautiful, so the children become aware that difference is not supposed to be seen negatively; the intercultural component typical of this corpus is also to be

noticed here. The structure of some parts of the text conveys the feeling that the words have been chosen to appear in different lines so that they stand out, such as “[t]here will be times when you walk into a room/ and not one there is quite like you until the day you begin/to share your stories” (Woodson). Moreover, this textual structure generates some suspense. Other means of emphasising textual elements are for example italics. Furthermore, just as in the book *Saturday*, there is a little summary at the end: “This is the day you begin/to find the places inside/your laughter and your lunches,/your books, your travel and your stories,/where every new friend has something else/so fabulously not quite like you/at all” (Woodson). This summary works as a little moral, so this is the last and the most significant element that the readers will keep in mind. It is essential to note the theme of finding their place and the importance of others.

In the book *Sulwe*, metaphors are also applied, as at the very beginning: “Sulwe was born the colour of midnight” (Nyong’o) and all the comparisons of her family’s skin colour to dawn, dusk and high noon. There are contrasting words throughout the whole book, such as “darkness”, “lightest”, “brightest”, “daylight” and “midnight”. The physical differences that can exist within the same culture are exhibited and express the idea that the difficulty of finding their place does not only occur when people from different backgrounds meet. The diversity that exists within the same cultural group damages this notion of group and nuances the arguments to define a cultural group since even in this case, intraculturality does not preserve Sulwe from being teased by children from her own cultural group.

In *Saturday*, *The Silence Seeker* and *Last Stop on Market Street*, there is nothing particular to note concerning the interaction between cultures. All these elements are part of a cultural framework; everything indicates that there is no pedagogical aim concerning inclusion. However, there are formal elements that should be noted. First, onomatopoeias: for instance, “Zoom” in very big coloured letters in *Saturday* and with more and more “o” as the story progresses or the big “wooshh!” also gives the impression of noise outside of the story so the readers can have the sense that they actually experience the story at the same time as the protagonists do. The onomatopoeias in *The Silence Seeker* contrast with the aim of searching for silence: “Click-clicking, drip-dripping, chink-chinking, hum-humming” (Morley). There is a kind of repetition that happens throughout the whole story as the protagonists want to do some activities that ultimately all fail, such as the following quotation

is repeated several times: “so – zooooom! – off they went” (Mora)³. The author also used tools to emphasise elements such as writing the days of the week in list form to highlight how many days the mother works, or the word “Saturday” is written in another colour than the rest of the text. The regular use of repetition in this book, such as repeating “[o]n Saturdays, they...” (Mora), behaves in this case as an anaphora because the repetition is at the beginning of the sentence, as with the quotation “[t]oday will be special. Today will be splendid. Today is Saturday” (Mora). Another repetition that has its importance because it contrasts with the end, is when her mother keeps repeating to her daughter: “‘Don’t worry Ava,’ her mother reassured her” (Mora), contrasting the comfort words that Ava uses similarly when her mother is sad: “‘Don’t worry, Mommy,’ Ava reassured her. ‘Today *was* special. Today *was* splendid. Saturdays are wonderful...’” (Mora). By using those words, Ava shows that the words of her mother had an effect on her, and she hopes that these will have an impact on her mother as well. Then, the repetition of “I went down...” (Morley) when Joe in *The Silence Seeker* searches for the boy in all the places they went together, emphasises the fact that Joe finds himself alone. The book *Last Stop on Market Street* also includes repetition as a formal element. For instance, “[t]he bus lurched forward and stopped, lurched forward and stopped” (de la Peña) highlights the fact that there is a repetition of actions by the bus, and thus that the way is quite long. Then, the repetition of the sentence that CJ asks his grandmother, “[h]ow come...?” demonstrates how curious he is. The use of italics for the verb in the past simple tense highlights that the day is over, but far from ruined. Oge Mora also decided to emphasise specific sentences by using codes such as using underlined words, different fonts, and words in bold or in italics as already mentioned. Words on the illustrations are as significant as words that are part of the main text as the notice for the puppet show mentions that the show was “one night only” (Mora), emphasising the fact that this is their only chance to see this show. Another formal element crucial to the story is the little summary that readers are given when the mother realises that she left the tickets at home: “‘I’ve had it!’ She sighed. ‘Storytime was canceled, our hair was ruined, the park was loud, and now we’re missing the puppet show’” (Mora). This is also another way to remind the readers of what happened in the story and to contrast with the end when they finally realise “[w]hat a beautiful day” (Mora, italics in original) it was. Lastly, in the book *The Silence Seeker*, alliterations are present, and

³ Very similar to the quotation “and woosh! they were gone” in the children’s book *Room on the Broom* written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler.

the use is already clear in the title; the use of the consonant sound /s/ three times contrasts with the fact that the “silence seeker” is supposed to search is silence.

The formal analysis conveys several messages such as the fact that these books remain above all children’s books and therefore show formal characteristics specific to this genre: repetition, poetic form or rhythm and music, onomatopoeia etc. It would, nonetheless, merit further investigation in another work. Furthermore, even though particular books such as *Saturday* do not contain formal characteristics that seem relevant to this dissertation, the presence of a series of formal elements which support the cultural elements and sometimes nuance the cultural message, confirms the idea that this corpus differs from children’s literature in general. Indeed, the elements found are characteristic of children’s literature representing racial minorities. These elements are for example the fact that Sulwe, even in an intracultural book is still different from the people around her and this difference leads the other children to reject her, but they will be discussed further after other analyses.

4.8 Illustrations

William Moebius in his article “Introduction to picturebook codes” advises analysing illustrations of children’s literature according to six different codes: the codes of position, size and diminishing returns, the codes of perspective, the codes of frame and of right and round, the codes of line capillarity, and the codes of colours.

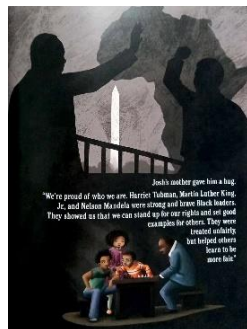
4.8.1 Position, Size and Diminishing Returns

The first code concerns the size of the characters on the pages and their positions which signify their importance at a specific point in the story. The diminishing returns deal with the number of times a character is represented on a single page as “[t]he more frequently the same character is depicted on the same page, the less likely that character is to be in control of a situation” (Moebius 149).

Firstly, *All Are Welcome*, holds a lot of double-page spreads including all the characters – all the children and sometimes the parents and educators – to show their differences. In these double-page spreads, they are all gathered and are the same size meaning that they have the same importance in the story, which is consistent with the values of total inclusion and equality previously described. The book *Last Stop on Market Street* uses the same effect as the protagonists are depicted as little as the other characters on the last page because the focus



is not on the protagonists but on the environment in which they find themselves. By contrast, the size in *Something Happened in Our Town* is used to show how the characters are little compared to History when the parents try to teach parts of it to the children, meaning that



History is more important than the characters. It shows the reader the significance of History and particularly in affirming their own culture. Otherwise, the characters are nonetheless quite big and occupy a lot of places with no particular features. In *What Can a Citizen Do?*, the children also mostly occupy a very

big place on the pages as the protagonists seem to be quite the focus. However, the bear takes a bigger place than the children: an entire page on a double-page spread and is on the same level as the children and not in the background⁴ showing that he is just as much a citizen as the children since he is helping them and working for the community, which further undermines the right to citizenship as already mentioned. It should also be noted that the focus is on a group of children, who are represented with a similar size, which shows that one of the children is not advantaged. In the case of *Hair Love*, the focus is on a particular character, as a lot of double-page spreads as the protagonist is sometimes represented with a very big size, for example, when she knows how beautiful her hair is, she is depicted as very big and alone on the page as she is the only one who really counts. The same happens with Mack in *My Hair Is a Garden* as the only time when she is pictured as very big and alone is on the last page when she says that she gives love to her hair that she compares to a garden. She is therefore represented as bigger on this page with a focus on her face and on her hair to emphasise the fact that she finally feels content with her hair.



Similarly, the focus of the double-page spreads in the book *I Love My Hair* is that the illustrations are very big, not only to show the protagonist's significance but also her feelings that are therefore quite clear and easy to identify, as for example her pain when her mother combs her hair. In these four books about hair, there is an important difference from

⁴ Hence the reason for his size: a bear is automatically taller than the children if he is not depicted in the background.

the first works: here, the hero is highlighted; it is no longer a question of equality between all the children forming a single group. It is not surprising then that these books are considered intracultural. This is therefore the first difference relating to the illustrations (and thus, more the responsibility of the illustrator than the author) to structure this corpus: two groups can be defined, between the books illustrating the hero as more important than the other characters, and those depicting the characters as equally important. It is also a process that can encourage identification by putting a child in the foreground. *Sulwe* is in the same category: the first page already announces who the most important character of the story is with an illustration of Sulwe in the centre of the first page where she occupies a big place. There are also pages where she takes an important place in order to show the readers her feelings and more particularly her sadness. In *I Believe I Can*, the different characters occupy more or less the same proportion, and they are quite big because the focus is on them and what they do; the book is in the same category as the first ones, which is not surprising given its highly intercultural features. The protagonists' size in *The Day You Begin* is bigger than the other characters' as they are depicted in the foreground in order to highlight them. The double-page spreads, where the characters are alone on one page and the other children, as a group, on the other page, are common in this book and look like a kind of confrontation. In *Last Stop on Market Street*, the very big representation of CJ on a double-page spread shows how important it is to discover the little great things of life that his grandmother taught him during their adventure on the bus.



Two main groups can therefore be highlighted concerning the representation of the protagonists in the illustrations. They correspond to the intercultural or intracultural groups (showing that the size of the illustrations corresponds to the theme of the stories): *All Are Welcome*, *What Can a Citizen Do*, *I Believe I Can*, and *Something Happened in Our Town* tend not to emphasise a particular protagonist in the illustrations, unlike the other books.



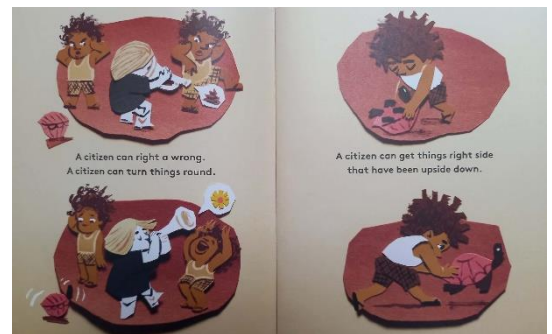
Concerning the diminishing returns in the book *All Are Welcome*, a little girl is represented twice on a page which would mean that she is less likely to be in control of her situation. However, she is portrayed as feeling more relaxed and more likely to be depicted twice only as an example of the

representation of differences. Another little girl is represented six times on a double-page spread. It may be because she came home with her parents controlling the rest of her day: taking a bath, putting on pyjamas and going to bed. It is also shown on the double-page

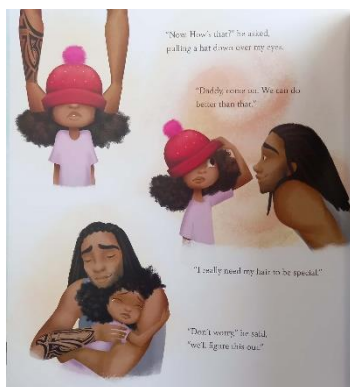


spread where part of the images are the children at school and the other images are the same children, but in their bed, that children may feel more in control at school as “[their] time together is the best” (Penfold). These diminishing returns highlight the fact that they

are more in control of their life at school and together. In the book *What Can a Citizen Do?*, there is a double-spread where a character is depicted four times, meaning that this character would not be in control of his situation, but on these pages, the character who does not seem to be in control of its situation is more likely to be the turtle in need of help because it has ended up



on its back, unable to move any longer. Diminishing returns are also present in *Hair Love* when Zuri feels serene having some tea in the garden with a pretty hairstyle and it starts raining, meaning that she has no control over the weather. Another time when she is pictured



several times on the same page, in the same position, and the cat drops the tablet. She is then not in control of her situation as it is not her action that leads to the mistake. Furthermore, she is not controlling her situation when she is depicted three times crying because it is not working the way she would like. The father is also depicted several times on a page when he tries to concentrate on what he is doing with Zuri’s hair to avoid making mistakes.

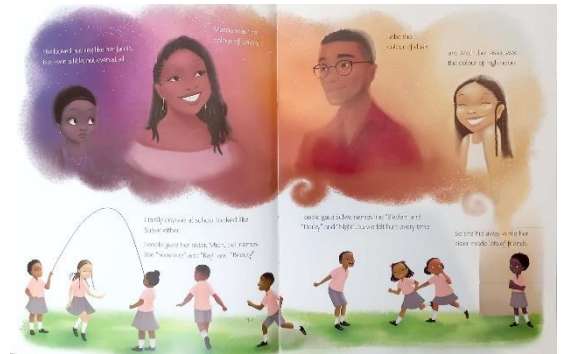
Concerning *My Hair Is a Garden*, Mack is also represented several times on the same page when she is teased by her classmate and she has no power over that, she has no control over a situation where this is the other children’s choice to stop their teasing or to continue. The situation is the same with Sulwe as she is portrayed twice when the story tells about her feeling not to be light enough while she compares herself to the members of her family. She is then not in control of her situation as she would like to look different. Furthermore, on the

same page, the presence of children teasing her shows that she does not control what they say and therefore she ends up feeling sad. Sulwe is then portrayed five times on a page where she tries to become lighter by means that she thinks might help but is in fact doing the opposite since



she hurts herself.

This scene demonstrates that she would like to be in control, but she actually does not control the situation at all as she gets herself into an unhealthy position by trying to fix her body. Sulwe is also

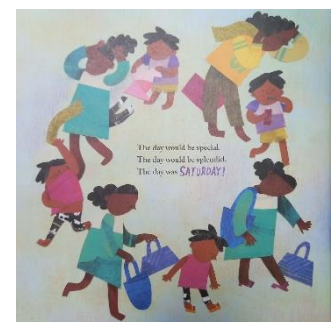


represented several times when she is lonely to emphasise the fact that she feels sad and is left alone, and to show that she does not have the power to be accepted by the other children as they are the ones who may or may not choose to accept her as a friend. Day is also represented several times on the same page to show how desperate she is when she misses her sister. In



the book *Saturday*, the diminishing returns are also exploited, but differently as sometimes, mother and daughter are represented on different events on the

same page or they are portrayed in a circle one after the other as if there were several Ava and Ava's mothers. However, these representations were good moments spent together and not illustrations of moments of uncontrol. There are also diminishing returns on double-page spreads in *I Believe I Can* when they make mistakes and then, they learn from them or when they do not dare to do something such as slide down a toboggan and they finally find the courage to. This is a demonstration of the fact that, unlike the other books, they first think that they do not have control over the situation, but they finally do in the second representation.



Regarding Keyana's position in the book *I Love My Hair*, she is depicted on the last page as looking at the sky, rounding her chest as if she were proud of something, of her hair. The illustration of this book shows thus a little girl in the process of accepting and



appreciating her hair. Zuri's positions in *Hair Love* are also clearly revealing her feelings. Whether she feels sad or proud, the difference between the positions is clearly identifiable.



To conclude the code of diminishing returns, indeed, mostly expresses the distress of the protagonists at moments when they do not control their situation. It is widely used, without providing further specific elements in the corpus; it seems to be classical to children's literature, but as mentioned several occasions, this is not the subject of this dissertation.

4.8.2 Perspective

According to Moebius, the code of perspective focuses on “the presence or absence of horizon or horizontals, vanishing points, and contrasts between façades and depths” (149). The absence of a horizon is a sign of danger or trouble in the atmosphere and the contrast between depth and façades is the difference between the two-dimension and the three-dimension. Moebius states that “[a] character located within a two-dimensional façade is likely to be less ‘open-minded’, less able to give imaginative scope to desire than one pictured within a three-dimensional ‘depth’” (150).

In the book *All Are Welcome*, the horizon is absent, as the background is totally white, which would mean that the protagonists are in danger or trouble. However, the children do not seem in trouble at all. Just like in the book *I Believe I Can*, there is no two-dimension and no real background as the children are represented in colours, in their environment, but the white page is



predominant. The horizon is visible in *What Can a Citizen Do?* at moments when everything is at peace for the children, but when things start to get complicated, when it rains or when a bear appears (before they realise it is a citizen too), the horizon is absent showing that the children are in trouble. In *I Love My Hair*, the horizon is most of the time absent as the little girl is in her bedroom, but she is having a hard time while her mother combs her hair. Nonetheless, when she is out, the readers sometimes perceive the sky or the floor alone or the horizon. However, whether the horizon is visible or not when she is outside, the girl does not seem to be in trouble or danger as the story focuses on a girl who learns to appreciate her hair. For the book *Hair Love*, there is no horizon because the illustrations are pictured in some colourful backgrounds; Zuri seems in trouble mostly before finding the perfect hairstyle, but

she finally manages to have it. The horizon is only to be seen at the very beginning of the book *My Hair Is a Garden* and when Mack is in the garden. When she is at school, the absence of horizon indicates that she is in trouble as the other children tease her. However, when she is at Miss Tillie's, she seems to be serene because she is in good hands and the horizon may mark the difference of feelings between the lesson of Miss Tillie and the garden, the place where she finds peace. In the book *Saturday*, the horizon is only represented once, when mother and daughter walk towards "their peaceful afternoon at the park" (Mora), otherwise, they find themselves over and over in inconvenience. The story *The Day You*



Begin lacks horizon when the children feel alone or different or teased by their classmates, but the horizon is clearly to be seen on the page where the children do not want to play with the little boy, leaving him aside, which contradicts the ideas of Moebius. The story of Sulwe lacks

horizon because the little girl feels rejected throughout the whole story, which leads her to want to become lighter and therefore, she puts her body and her health into danger.

Most of the story in *All Are Welcome* is depicted in a two-dimension which would mean that the characters are less open-minded; however, the children seem to be quite open to all the differences and still able to be imaginative, which is proved by the projects that the children exhibit. The children, after all, are represented as if their differences do not count because they all live together in the community so it is difficult to conclude if they are open-minded or not. There are nonetheless windows that are depicted twice, which open onto the outside world implying that there is more to the world than this community. In *I Love My Hair*, as Keyana is in her room with her mother combing her hair, which seems painful, even though there is no window to the outside, she is still open-minded to imagine all the comparisons her mother makes. In *Hair Love*, there is only once a window where the readers can see the outside world, otherwise, the protagonist seems confined in the house from the moment she chooses her goal for the day until her mother opens the door. There is no window in *My Hair Is a Garden* when Mack is at Miss Tillie's, but the door gives access to her paradise, the garden. In *Something Happened in Our Town*, the windows do not open to the outside, rather the perspective of the readers is outside, looking at the inside through windows. The three-



dimension is then not as significant as if the window opened to the outside, which may mean

that there is less to imagine than if the reverse would happen. *The Day You Begin* illustrates windows in which the readers can see the outside or, just as in *Something Happened in Our*



Town, the reverse happens, and the characters are on the outside in front of a window that opens inwards. At this moment, Angelina lacks imagination as she is thinking of her classmates who are travelling while she has to stay at home; later in the story, her imagination makes her travel through books. There is a big window in Sulwe's bedroom that she uses to escape her situation with the help of her

imagination. In the bedroom of Joe in *The Silence Seeker*, there is a big window next to his bed where he can imagine all the noise of the city. In the book *Last Stop on Market Street*, the only dimension represented is the two-dimension, because even in the bus, the readers do not see the outside world, and CJ tries to look outside as if he wanted to prove that he is open-minded, but then, he discovers the other people on the bus. Therefore, CJ seems to be more open-minded by meeting people on the bus, than by looking outwards.

Several mises en abyme are to be analysed in *All Are Welcome* as the children draw their life with their family, a world map is depicted and the book read by the parents to a



little girl at home contains the exact same double-page spread that the book exhibits.



Some mise en abyme is also included in the book *What Can a Citizen Do?* when the little boy draws what he sees through the window of his new room. The same process is also used in *Something Happened in Our Town* when Josh draws a policeman at the time of the shooting of a Black man by a policeman.

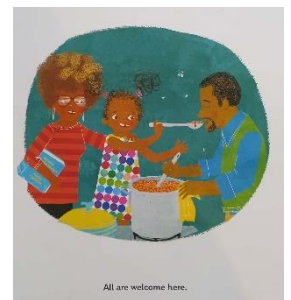
In the first book analysed, the absence of a horizon does not mean that the children are in trouble, however in other books such as *What Can a Citizen Do?*, the horizon plays its role as a sign of security and when it is absent, the danger is not far from the children as Moebius argues. However, this is not the case in every book: in *I Love My Hair*, the protagonist is not in danger when she is outside and sometimes, the horizon is nowhere to be seen. Furthermore, most of the children do not seem confined at home or at school except, Keyana for only a part of the story and Zuri, who spends most of her time at home. Concerning the other characters, the world opens up for them to fulfil their little adventure; however, in *Last Stop on Market*

Street, the inside world teaches CJ more than the outside one. It can be considered that Moebius' perspective is not very efficacious for this corpus: the interpretation is not very similar to Moebius' and shows no real difference. This may be a specificity of this corpus which would stand out from the books Moebius analysed.

4.8.3 The Frame and the Right and Round

The frame encloses the characters in the real world and Moebius argues that: "As the frame usually marks a limit beyond which text cannot go, or from which image cannot escape, we may associate a violation or of the forbidden or the miraculous with the breaking of the frame" (150). This quotation means that if the characters go outside the frame, it suggests either a violation because of the forbidden feature or that the characters are living a surprisingly wonderful adventure. Furthermore, the characters can be framed in rectangular or circular enclosures: circles frame the protagonists in a protected, safe and satisfied world while rectangles frame them in a world with problems (Moebius 150).

The books in which the characters are enclosed in circular frames are *All Are Welcome* and *Hair Love*. In the first book, the protagonists are solely represented in frames when they are home, which contradicts the idea of diminishing returns meaning that they have less control over their situation at home while the circular frames convey the opposite as it means that the characters are safe, secured and content. In the book *Hair Love*, there are



illustrations in which the characters are framed in circles, even at the saddest moment in the story for the little girl, when she cries because she is not satisfied with her hairstyle. These circular frames mean that she feels safe with her dad helping her with her hair. Furthermore, the mother and daughter in *Saturday* are also represented once in a circle, when they hug each other as Ava reassures and comforts her mother. Nonetheless, these first two books also include some breaking of the frame, but this does not appear as a violation, but rather of the miraculous as the children in the first book seem lucky to have so many different friends at school. Concerning *Hair Love*, unframe situations happen when Zuri knows how lucky she is with her hair, or when they find the solution for her hairstyle with her father or when she sees her mother.

Something Happened in Our Town, *Last Stop on Market Street*, *The Silence Seeker*, *Sulwe* and *Saturday* all portray some parts of the stories in rectangular frames. The first story mostly encloses the characters in a rectangle as the story revolves around serious topics such

as the fact that no one, even fewer people from racial minorities, is immune. In the bus in *Last Stop on Market Street*, the characters are in rectangular frames meaning that they are not protected in this bus, but there is nothing in this

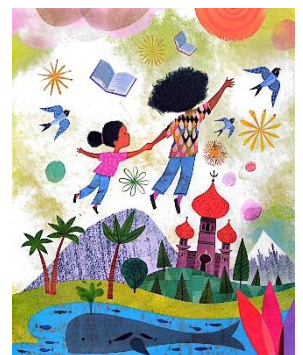


story to prove that. In *The Silence Seeker*, the only page where the situation is in rectangular frames is when Joe searches for the boy in all the places they went together. These frames look like posters hanging on a wall. Sulwe is also represented in rectangles for instance when she feels sad while telling her feelings to her mother and when she is alone at school as no one wants to play with her. People venerating Day at the end of the book are also represented in rectangles as the danger of them missing Night approaches, which lets Day search for her sister, also in rectangular frames. In *Saturday*, the protagonists are framed in rectangles even when they spend good moments, meaning that this theory does not apply to this book. However, these books also contain some unframed situations such as when the parents talk about History to their children or about injustices in *Something Happened in Our Town*. These breaks of the frame demonstrate violation and forbidden acts, especially in war and unfair contexts.

The book *What Can a Citizen Do?* is quite different as it includes circular and rectangular frames even though these do not prove security or unprotection because the characters always stay together. However, the remaining story shows a break of the frame which may show that the story violates the real definition of “citizen” as already expressed in this dissertation. The other books that are unframed are *The Day You Begin*, *I Love My Hair*, *I*



Believe I Can and *My Hair Is a Garden*. For instance, in *I Love My Hair*, Keyana mostly imagines situations, and thus violates the real world; in *The Day You Begin*, the children also imagine miraculous situations such as what Angelina imagines with the books she reads to her sister.



Moebius’s codes are therefore an explanation of what the circular and rectangular frames mean in those books; that is to say, when the characters are inside a circular frame, they are safe, unlike when they are outside of the frame or in a rectangular one, which is supposed to present negative aspects of the story. However, there are some inconsistencies

such as with the book *Saturday*, enclosing the characters in rectangular frames even when they spend precious moments together.

4.8.4 Line and Capillarity

According to Moebius, the lines on the illustrations also define situations, in which the characters find themselves: when lines are thick, the characters are paralysed or find themselves in a situation of comfort while by contrast, when the lines are thin, they give the impression of ability to move or agility (Moebius 150). Furthermore, “the code of capillarity refers to the presence or absence of capillary-like squiggles or bundles; an abundance of such marks often signals vitality or even a surfeit of energy, rendering the scene crowded, nervous, busy” (Moebius 151).

Most lines are thick in *What Can a Citizen Do?*, *Hair Love* and *Something Happened in Our Town*. For the first, it may signify that the children are comfortable as they all have the status of citizenship since they help each other to create something together. In *Hair Love*, it demonstrates that Zuri also feels comfortable in a situation where an adult still cares for her

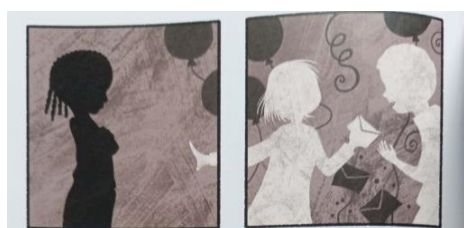
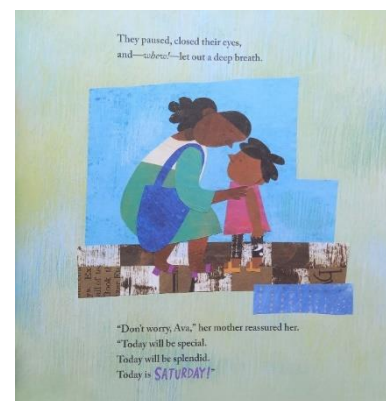


thanks to her father. There is proof in the last book that the two children are comfortable and protected in their house with their siblings, but at the very moment when Josh’s father shows how angry he is about the situation, by toppling the chess pieces, the wall behind him is drawn with thin lines while the background during all the story is always blurred without lines. These thin lines give a feeling of vitality and mobility because Josh’s father wants to improve the situation: “Black people have a lot of power if we work together to make changes” (Celano *et al.*). The books drawn mostly with

thin lines are *All Are Welcome*, *I Believe I Can*, *The Day You Begin* and *The Silence Seeker*. The first and the second, for instance, represent children doing some activities, which shows that there is mobility in the scenes of this book. *The Day You Begin* also portrays children playing at school, which demonstrates a form of vitality and mobility as they are not stuck without the ability to move. In *The Silence Seeker*, it shows how the city is noisy like a big city that is alive and full of mobility.

Capillarity is absent in the books *What Can a Citizen Do?*, *Hair Love*, *The Day You Begin*, *The Silence Seeker*, *I Believe I Can* and *Last Stop on Market Street*, but present in the other books. In *All Are Welcome*, there is an abundance of capillary-like squiggles as the hair

of some children or parents shows. This demonstrates that there is a lot of information in those books with the crowded scenes because a lot of people are represented on the same page. In *I Love My Hair*, the only moment when capillary-like bundles are represented is on the last page when Keyana’s hair merges with nature, with a tree. This page represents the vitality of her hair. Concerning *My Hair Is a Garden*, the capillarity is already visible on the cover as her hair also shows some vitality. The book *Saturday* is illustrated with a collage but pasted on backgrounds, coloured with chalks, which



leaves traces and gives energy to the images. Capillary-like squiggles can also be found in the illustrations in *Something Happened in Our Town* when History is involved or when Emma’s mother gives a lesson to her daughter about accepting people, which is an agitated scene. Concerning *History*, it is clear that during the war, vitality and energy are present; furthermore, war was an agitated situation.

Capillary-like squiggles are clues that indeed, some situations may appear full of nervousness, and rightly so because these bundles always appear when the stories focus on complicated situations or sad events.

4.8.5 Colour

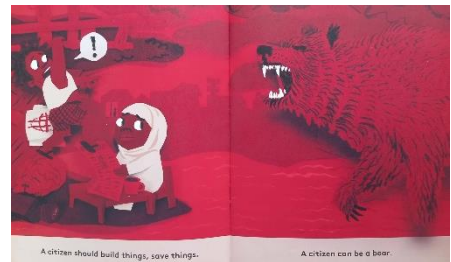
According to Moebius, colours give sense to the story as they also provide elements that the text does not determine (151). Concerning the colours, Moebius states that dark colours mean disappointment and confusion and light colours exhilaration and discovery (151). This subsection will not present a comparison between the books because as posited in Moebius’ article, “[readers] need to be sensitive to colour as a linkage among different objects” (151). So, each book will be discussed in one paragraph and a final paragraph will conclude on the most recurrent aspects concerning colours in the children’s books of the corpus.



Firstly, in *All Are Welcome*, bright colours are predominant and mostly represented on the characters as the background is usually white, which accentuates the colours. The blue sky is only pictured when the children play

together in the outside world to display the extent of their freedom when they are together compared to the moment when they are represented outside as well but restrained by their parent's hands. Furthermore, the fact that a lot of colours are illustrated may be a sign that the author and the illustrator chose to demonstrate that all colours should be represented in the same way all skin colours should be accepted.

What Can a Citizen Do? portrays darker colours, which would, according to Moebius, be a sign of confusion as more and more constraints are expressed to be a good citizen. Furthermore, the dark colours may suggest a dangerous aspect to the story as the cover shows children holding some tools as if they were weapons. These weapons suggest that the children have to fight for their citizenship, they thus become activists of citizenship, but not in the sense as the legal definition expresses, but as the story asserts. Moreover, the situation becomes more dangerous as the colours become darker when it rains, when the night comes or when the red colour comes as the bear appears, suggesting danger. Furthermore, the colours also promote



gender division as the boy is represented in a blue world with a blue tree and the girl in a pink one. However, a compromise is found on the

next page between the two children as the two worlds connect and the tree becomes partly blue and partly pink. In the end, the construction is full of yellow light suggesting their achievement.

The book *I Love My Hair* joins the idea of Moebius concerning the bright colours on the page when she dances on the street and the weather is nice, and thus adds joy to the illustrations. However, the book contradicts the idea that dark colours suggest disappointment and confusion as at the end of the book, Keyana expresses the fact that she loves her hair and the colours are darkened as if there could be a danger, but none is to be expected. Nonetheless, it may also merely show that this is the end of a great day of appreciation of herself as the night appears.



Concerning *Hair Love*, the colour of the background varies between pink, blue, green and purple according to the situation: for instance, when Zuri and her father feel satisfied with a certain hairstyle and then the hair band leaves Zuri's hair and lands in the eye of the father,

the background goes from light green to dark purple emphasising the unfortunate situation.

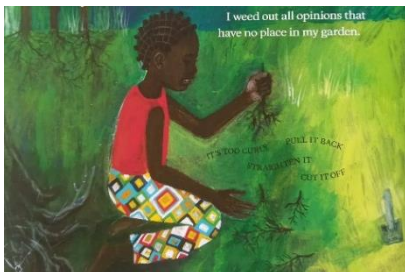


While the dark colours appear when they do not control the situation, the bright colours materialise the discovery of new hairstyles and the exhilaration of the day. When the father and daughter have the situation under control and work towards the achievement of their aim knowing that this will be a success, the background is brighter, and the white stars emphasise their future success.

My Hair Is a Garden mostly exhibits darker colours, which suggests confusion, and this is what the girl seems to feel as she searches for help at Miss Tillie's. Furthermore, on one of the first pages, two illustrations of Mack running to Miss Tillie's house are portrayed, when she was a toddler on one side and a teenager on the other side in the present of the story. The contrast of colours of her clothes is quite significant and shows the



difference between the toddler who is exhilarated to see Miss Tillie and the teenager being teased at school and disappointed. Another contrast concerning clothes is visible as well between Miss Tillie's and Mack's way of dressing. The green dress of Miss Tillie is bright and suggests joy while the clothes of Mack express sadness. However, as it becomes darker on the outside, it becomes brighter for Mack as expressed by her clothes, but she still weeds out all the unnecessary dark roots, the symbol of her disappointment and confusion.



In the book *Saturday*, a lot of colours are represented through the collage and the background also implicitly clarifies if the situation is fine or if everything falls apart as it is yellow when the narrator shows all the good moments they share. Furthermore, the background becomes paler and thus, lighter as the mother reassures Ava repeatedly by stating that the day “will be special” (Mora). The purple is also paler when the mother remembers that she has left the tickets on the table, therefore, there is an absence of brightness announcing that something unfortunate has happened. A page illustrates mother and daughter in a pink bubble surrounded by a darker background suggesting that as long as they are together, their bubble will remain bright.

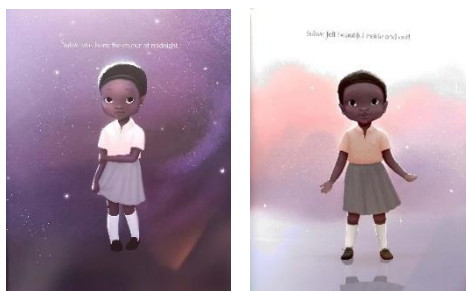
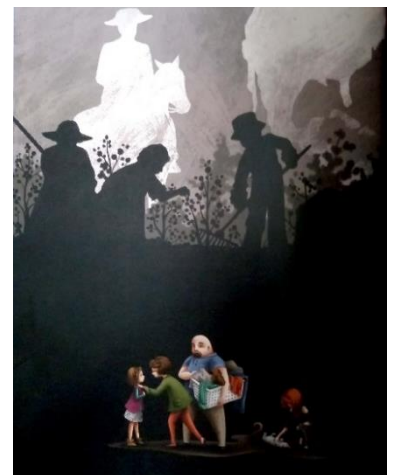


The background of *I Believe I Can* is neutral and white and thus, the colours inside the frame are highlighted and the focus is on the children and their activities. Moreover, the pages, apart from the white background, are colourful, but not especially the lightest or the brightest ones, but the children do not seem disappointed at all.



The Day You Begin is a colourful book with a lot of coloured information on the pages but is still rather dark. Furthermore, this book mostly shows, with the help of the double-page spread, two different sides: the side with a group of children vs. the protagonists who are alone. The side with the group of children is always the brightest while the other side and its darkness demonstrates how much the children are alone. This contrast between the colours and the darker pages highlights the feeling of exhilaration versus the one of disappointment.

In the book *Something Happened in Our Town*, the grey weather at the beginning already predicts a complicated situation. Furthermore, there are parts of the book, concerning History, that are partly in black and white, and where the only colours on the pages are the representation of the characters. This demonstrates how dark was the time of the war. Other pages in black and white are illustrated and these portray situations where children are not accepted as they are, like for instance, when Malcolm, Josh's brother defends him as he is laughed at because of his glasses. Another darker moment is when Omad faces his new classmates who are all in a shadow as if they were a danger, which may suggest a disappointment for the boy. However, this boy is portrayed in the light which may mean that a discovery is expected as he will be welcomed by Josh and Emma.



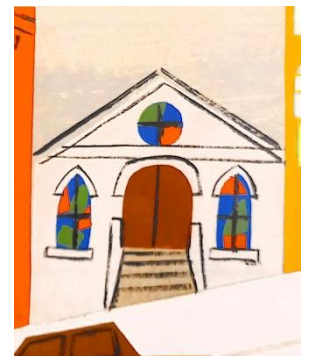
Sulwe is represented twice, at the very beginning and the end of the books, in front of two opposite backgrounds. The first one is dark and the second is bright, showing that Sulwe has developed towards the discovery and acceptance of her own self. The colours are also explicitly put in opposition as she compares her skin colour to the ones of the members of her family. The discussion with her mother also highlights the difference between the light and the darkness as she does not deny the fact that the light in her has more importance than her skin colour. Then, the star

brings colourful impacts to her life literally and figuratively as her bedroom is full of colours as the star enters, but it will also have an impact on her self-acceptance and confidence. The contrast is also visible between Night and Day with their story showing that people also need dark colours in their life. Therefore, Sulwe lives in disappointment at the beginning of the book but discovers how to feel exhilaration even in darkness.

Concerning *The Silence Seeker*, all the colours give the appearance of a noisy environment with a lot of people. The boys seize the moment to go outside surrounded by yellow walls and thus, light colours. However, the light is different when he searches for the silence seeker in the city on the next day, it is thus rather dark mirroring his disappointment.

In *Last Stop on Market Street*, the grey weather justifies the dark colours until a rainbow appears at the end of the book when CJ's grandmother has achieved her aim, which was making her grandson aware of all the beautiful things life has to offer.

Three colours are predominant throughout the book: orange, green and blue and they can be found on the stained glass of the church at the beginning, as well as at the moment when CJ becomes aware of his grandmother's lessons and the bright colour highlights the discovery aspect of his life.



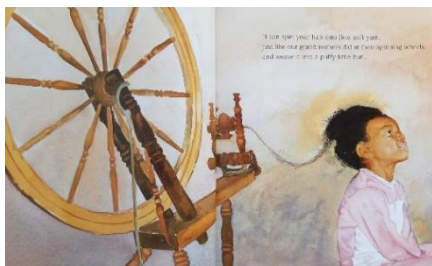
Overall, the code of the colours is consistent with what Moebius says: the backgrounds in a lot of these books change a lot depending on whether the situation is unpleasant for the protagonists or whether the situation is in their favour as in *Hair Love* or *Saturday*. Other books have neutral backgrounds, such as *All Are Welcome* and *I Believe I Can* so the characters are put in the centre and emphasised. There is also a contrast between some colours as in *Something Happened in Our Town* and *The Day You Begin*. However, this code does not allow us to conclude that there is any additional specificity about the corpus.

It can be noticed that the images generally play a supporting role in the text by expressing the same content rather than adding a lot of information or contradicting the text. This is probably characteristic of children's books since it helps to clarify the meaning and avoid adding too much to keep the meaning accessible. It does not seem to be particular to books representing racial minorities, with the exception of whether or not some characters are given the importance discussed in the subsection about size. This relationship between text and image will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

4.9 Text-Illustrations Relationship

Nikolajeva and Scott influenced concepts taken on by Wolfenbarger and Sipe; they used to analyse if the text and the illustrations meant the same aspects or if they were poles apart. The concepts are *symmetry*, *complementary*, *enhancement*, *counterpoint*, and *contradiction* (Wolfenbarger and Sipe; 274). This section will be analysed to demonstrate whether the authors and the illustrators use their own artistic method to express different or similar points. Some books of the corpus check the boxes of different concepts, but none of them are parts of the counterpoint and the contradiction, which already suggests that the authors and the illustrators convey similar messages. Concerning the three first concepts, they will all be discussed in respective paragraphs in which the books will be analysed.

The first concept is symmetry, which means that the text and the illustrations express the exact same elements (Wolfenbarger and Sipe 274). All the books, except *All Are Welcome*



and *I Believe I Can* have parts of their story that belong to this category. For instance, in *I Love My Hair*, all the metaphors expressed by the mother are quite well represented in the images so the reader can clearly see the representations that

Keyana imagines. In *Hair Love*, for instance, Zuri's facial expression corresponds exactly to the situations described in the text. In *My Hair Is a Garden*, the images on the second page are quite obvious even without the text as it is already clear that Mack used to run to the house when she was a



toddler, and this is exactly what the text

expresses: "I used to run right into her house when I was a toddler" (Cabrera). The same occurrence happens at the

beginning of the book *Saturday* when the

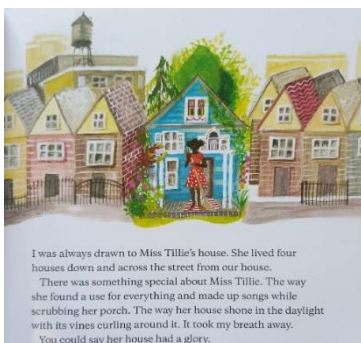
description of how mother and daughter spend their day mirrors significantly the illustrations.



These are all examples of the exact same phenomenon that also appear in the books *Something Happened in Our Town*, *The Day You Begin*, *Sulwe*, *The Silence Seeker* and *Last Stop on Market Street*. Those books have all illustrations telling the exact same story as what the text conveys demonstrating a symmetry between the text and the illustration and between

what the author and the illustrator express; as previously mentioned, symmetry helps the readers to understand and visualise the meaning. It is therefore a way of making the meaning more accessible, which is interesting in the case of literature aimed at a less experienced audience: children. This is the easier case of the relationship between text and image.

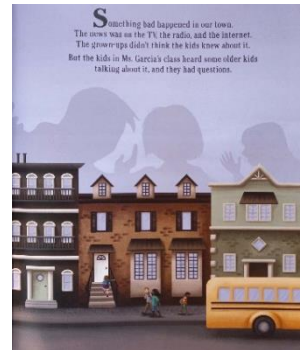
The concept of complementary occurs when the illustrations and the text complete each other by filling each other's gaps; according to Wolfenbarger and Sipe, "each provides information" (274). All the books except, *What Can a Citizen Do?* include this concept on some pages. The book *All Are Welcome* is a great example of the complementary as the illustrations are important to understand what is at stake. Indeed, the title and the mantra declaring that "All are welcome here" (Penfold) is not precise enough and the illustrations help understand the significance of the mantra. The text does not depend on the images because the reader could still understand it in the same way without the illustrations, but the illustrations give more impact to the text; the emotions portrayed on the heroes' faces in the illustrations say a lot about how they feel and therefore add something to the story that is rarely expressed in the text. Furthermore, the illustrations can provide additional information, such as the fact that, for instance, in *The Silence Seeker*, *Last Stop on Market Street* and *Saturday*, it is not explicitly stated that the protagonists are Black children, so this is an additional piece of information provided by the illustrations, which is crucial and changes everything since these books are in the focus of this dissertation precisely because they represent children from racial minorities. The text also provides additional elements such as in *I Love My Hair*, in which the teacher reassures Keyana about her hair, and without the text, the reader would not understand the illustration and the sudden change of environment, but the text provides the main information that she has been teased because of her Afro hairstyle and that her teacher reassures her. Furthermore, in the book *Hair Love*, without some information added by the text, some part of the story would have been misunderstood such as when it rains, and Zuri says: "My hair even does magic tricks" (Cherry). One could assume



without the text that the illustration pictures a rather negative situation as people, in general, do not like when it rains, but the text conveys the message that Zuri feels content. The illustration on the third page of the book *My Hair Is a Garden* does not provide enough information, so the text completes by explaining the reason why Mack runs to Miss Tillie's house. The text is also essential on the first page to understand who

Miss Tillie is and how different her house is, which is quite important for the story as

everything revolves around the fact that Miss Tillie, her house and her garden are extraordinary, virtually surreal. In this book, the text also fills in the gaps concerning teasing and the way the children at school are mean to her. This text then provides a large amount of information that the illustrations do not and therefore, is complementary to the illustrations. The category of complementarity is also to be found in *Saturday* as the text demonstrates the significance of this day. In *Something Happened in Our Town*, the first illustration could not be understood without the text because of its vague nature, but at the same time, it conveys a certain vibe helping to interpret the context of the story: a darker day with people talking and being shocked about the situation.

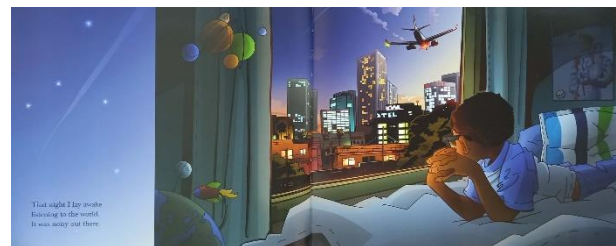


The same phenomenon happens throughout the entire book, the story could lose the context without the text as it provides a large amount of information for a better understanding of the story; without the illustrations, the vibe of the book would not be the same. In *I Believe I Can*, on one hand, the images would miss the idea of ability, as the illustrations may be interpreted as children playing together without this mention of ability. On the other hand, the images also complete the content of the text such as: “Grounded firm, I’m like the soil. Like the sky, I’m boundless” (Byers) because this quotation would not be understood without the



illustrations. In the books *The Day You Begin* and *Sulwe*, the texts add some material information to the stories and the illustrations communicate the fantasy aspects. In *The Silence Seeker*, the text on the first page gives the context of the story,

however, the illustrations throughout the book are not useless and also bring material as they demonstrate how much noise there is in the city. Lastly, in *Last Stop on Market Street*, the



conversations between CJ and his grandmother are not expressed in the illustrations, and without the text, the questions CJ asks her would not be articulated. Complementary is slightly more complex than the concept of symmetry, since it is necessary to observe carefully (and therefore understand the codes) both means of expression to fully grasp the meaning. However, the differences remain minimal, and the theme can generally be understood without the illustrations, which is proof that the themes are rather simple.

Concerning the concept of the enhancement, which suggests that the text depends on the images to be understood (Wolfenbarger and Sipe 274), it is only present in *Saturday*.



Indeed, the penultimate page does not need any explanations, as it is marked by only a text of three words: “So they did” (Mora). The illustration is therefore essential in this case because the text does not provide information enough about

what they did; the reader, without illustration, would be forced to interpret the implicit image when the illustration rather shows explicitly what they actually did; the interpretation is therefore more complex. This is not astonishing as the illustrator and the author are one unique person, so Mora is more able to play with the difference between the text and the images whenever she wants.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that the authors and the illustrators are on the same page and convey the same message as no contradictions are to be noticed. Differences of opinion between the authors and the illustrators do not appear, which is important when themes such as racial minorities are approached. It can therefore be assumed that the authors and illustrators are a single entity in this case. The proof is that *Saturday* and *My Hair Is a Garden* are two books written by the same person and show no significant differences from the others in terms of the agreement between the text and the illustrations. It should also be noted that the absence of contradictions and the small number of enhancements show that the main aim of the illustrations is clarity in all the books we have analysed. This is probably a general characteristic of books aimed at children, but it is not the subject of this dissertation; from the point of view of racial minorities, no structural difference in the relationship between text and image is observed.

4.10 Question of Authors’ and Illustrators’ Ethnicity

The point of this section is to determine if the content of children’s books differs depending on the authors’ and/or illustrators’ ethnicity. According to the CSDE, “[a]ll authors write from a cultural as well as personal context” (2), therefore, it is essential, for this dissertation, to analyse the production in relation to the author's and illustrators’ ethnicity. There are two distinct sides with different opinions related to the authors’ and the illustrators’ legitimacy to write about different ethnicities. On one side, McNair is rather restrictive in her definition, as

she states: “I have chosen to define African American children’s literature as books written by and about African Americans that are intended for youth” (192), arguing that only African Americans writers are legitimate to write about this topic. Ann Trousdale agrees as she declares, echoing Sims’ ideas, that White authors writing about the black minority are restricted by their legacy (Sims 147; Trousdale 119) because “[w]henever writers write about a culture that is not their own, some distortion is bound to occur” (Trousdale 136). According to Trousdale, African Americans are subordinated to White characters when the stories are written by White authors (136). On the other side, “[other scholars] define African American children’s books as any titles featuring African American characters, even if the authors themselves are not African Americans” (McNair 192). However, just like Trousdale, McNair thinks that it would lead to stereotypes (192). To get a general idea, the corpus in this dissertation is composed of stories written and illustrated by people from different ethnicities: American, African American, African English, Indian, Caribbean American, African Mexican, and British. It seems relevant to return to the inter- and intracultural categories for this section; the following paragraphs will be divided according to the inter- or intracultural poles.

First, the most intercultural books were *All Are Welcome*, *What Can a Citizen Do?* and *I Believe I Can*. It should be noticed that the first two books are quite similar in that they are about diversity, but not representing real life as they cannot get what people coming from racial minorities mean, even though the book is supposed to include everyone, since they are both written and illustrated by White Americans. They put everyone in the same basket without distinguishing and individualising the characters. It might be argued that the authors wanted to write about inclusion but may not have felt legitimate to place particular interest in one culture and have therefore treated all cultures and situations equally. It could also be considered that the authors wanted to propose a text on total inclusion in the hope that the world would be a little better; this could be considered inopportune because they belonged to the majority culture. Finally, tokenism is also to be considered. These two works illustrate perfectly the question asked earlier: “Is it legitimate for an author who does not belong to the culture to write about that culture?”; more about this will be discussed in the conclusion. By contrast, *I Believe I Can* is written by a Caribbean American woman and the illustrator is African American. The book can be linked with the first ones as they include everyone but the focus in *I Believe I Can* is not on inclusion, but on the fact that every child can achieve what they want. As explained on the back cover, the author, Grace Byers, is “a multicultural biracial CODA (Child of Deaf Adults)” and is well aware of what it feels like to be left aside

as she was bullied during her childhood. This book does not aim its attention at the interculturality, which depends on the readers, but at the celebration of “both boys and girls as they strive for their highest potential” (Byers), and her dedication “[t]here will always be one person who might not believe in you; let that person never be you” (Byers) demonstrates that the book is about believing in you. The distinction is made because interculturality is included, firstly in the books written by White authors and secondly, in a rather implicit way since it is not the main theme of the book; it shows that the different ethnicities of the authors and/or illustrators play an impacting role in the results and messages that these stories convey.

The intercultural books with intra-elements were *The Silence Seeker* and *Something Happened in Our Town*. The first book is also written and illustrated by White people, but unlike *All Are Welcome* and *What Can a Citizen Do?*, the British author and illustrator of *The Silence Seeker* did not publish a story exclusively about inclusion, but about meeting and discovering someone as well as wanting to help this person without even knowing where he comes from. *Something Happened in Our Town* is written by two Americans, one African American and the illustrator is Indian. What is interesting is that the three authors had parts of their own culture to enrich the story as each of them can add what they know about racial injustice. It can be supposed that each of them focused on the section that concerns them. This is the ideal plan for sharing points of view with complete legitimacy; the interculturality of the story meets the interculturality of the authors like a mirror. Furthermore, the three authors are psychologists who work as members of Emory University School of Medicine faculty, with children and families, and thus, are well aware of what the children need to know and understand.

The next category was about intraculturality with inter-elements and the books belonging to this category were *My Hair Is a Garden*, *Last Stop on Market Street* and *The Day You Begin*. The dedication in *My Hair Is a Garden* is: “To Jana, who is learning to love and appreciate all things beautiful, including her hair”, which seems very personal for Cabrera, the author and the illustrator, who is African American. This author therefore represents her culture, which is also the case of *The Day You Begin* since the author is African American and the illustrator, Mexican. *The Day You Begin* also presents a cultural perspective as the story revolves around being accepted as racial minorities. Furthermore, the story shows that whoever you are (intracultural perspective), you should appreciate what you have, the little things can become more significant. The author of *Last Stop on Market Street* is American, and the illustrator is African American, the illustrator explains that he spent time with his “nana” too, just like the protagonist. Therefore, the fact that the little boy is depicted as Black

is not insignificant and represents what the illustrator and his grandmother shared; this may also explain why the text does not mention that the little boy is Black, as this mainly relates to the illustrator's world.

The last books, *I Love My Hair!*, *Hair Love*, *Saturday* and *Sulwe* were all intracultural books. The first three books are written and illustrated by African Americans and thus, the perspective of cultural minorities is respected in the sense that the artists have written and illustrated these books knowing exactly what was significant to share as they can certainly relate to the experiences of the main characters. In the case of intracultural books, it would be inappropriate for an author from another culture to write a story about a culture that is not his own as Trousdale argues. Natasha Tarpley, the author of *I Love My Hair!* says on the first page that she lived the same situations and knows how it feels to be between one's mother's legs and being combed while it hurts. Furthermore, the illustrator shows all the pain through the pages, a pain that only people with similar backgrounds can feel and relate to. The author and the illustrator of *Hair Love* both the book: the author, to all the daughters in need of their father, as well as the fathers, and the illustrator to her own father. With these notes, the readers can easily understand that a part of their own story is represented in this book. Concerning *Sulwe*, the author is Mexico-Kenyan and the illustrator is African American; in a note by the author at the end of the book, she explains that she was also teased as a child and that she also wanted to be paler (Nyong'o), and thus knows exactly what the protagonist of this story and some other little girls relating to *Sulwe* are going through.

It is essential to note that the intercultural books were all written by at least one White author, except for *I Believe I Can*, which is different in that the intercultural element is to be built by the readers and not explicitly expressed in the book. By contrast, the intracultural books are mostly written and illustrated by people who represent the culture depicted in the books. It is important to add that White authors have expressed equality and inclusion in a way that leaves the reader unsure of the authors' intentions (such as the right to citizenship or overinclusion). It is also essential to note the presence of intracultural novels written by people from the African American culture, which reflects the emancipation of the literature of this culture; this literature shows that people from a culture can write about this culture without always defining themselves in relation to a dominant culture, as the dominant culture does most of the time. This emancipation that children are exposed to is very important and kind of expressed equality between cultures without leaving aside cultural heritage or individuality, as in the case of overinclusion. In cases where the author is White and the illustrator is Black, such as *Last Stop on Market Street*, the books represent, without any

mention in the text, a Black character, who could be representative of the universe they create as they belong to a culture. The coexistence between a White author and a Black illustrator, who both may have imagined the story with characters from their culture demonstrates the multiplicity of points of view, but also the permeability of universes: one does not exclude the other, and the two can coexist without any influence on the story. However, the identification for the readers depends on the heroes and their culture. The YouTube video with Black children watching the trailer of *The Little Mermaid* for the first time shows how the children were excited because the heroine looks like them and demonstrates the fact that a story written by a White author and illustrated by a Black man does not necessarily seem to have an impact on children's identification, as long as they can identify with the story because the hero has the same skin colour.

4.11 Application to Teaching

As a future teacher of foreign languages (English and German) in secondary schools, it was important for me to be able to take into account the teaching that these books could transmit to children and teenagers. Analysing books like the ones in the corpus can be beneficial for young people's minds, allowing them to understand some hidden meanings and think a little further than when they first read a text.

It could be argued that teaching children's literature to teenagers is too simple and not advanced enough, but on the contrary and just as this dissertation proves, children's books are rich in terms of content, culture, illustration and language. Furthermore, teaching children about children's literature might make sense, however, the hidden messages and the analysis, as presented in this dissertation may seem very complicated to them. As Germain Simons states in his syllabus of didactic, reading literature can be part of what is taught in secondary schools in a foreign language class (5-6). Indeed, as children's literature is intended for young native readers, it is simpler for a language learner, and this is not because it is simpler that it is not interesting and worth reading and analysing (Simons 5). Furthermore, the books in this corpus deal with themes that I think should be addressed at school, and teaching teenagers in a foreign language class could be a good opportunity. Literature for children and not for teenagers because the language is easier to understand and therefore, the books and in particular, the analysis that can be done will have more impact because teenagers will not be totally blocked by the language barrier, which will be less felt and therefore, the message conveyed, and the possible analysis will have more effect.

McNair argues that: “White teachers need more education about children’s books featuring people of color as well so that they can share it and learn to do so thoughtfully and carefully” (195), it is thus essential that educators learn about racial minorities and their culture to teach books to children or teenagers. Sally McClellan and Evelyn Fields argue that: “Authentic African American children’s literature can bring [a] rich history into the lives of all young children” (53). This quotation is not only useful for young children, but also for young adults in the making who will find themselves in situations where they will have to make choices on their own and based on what they have learnt; this is the reason why even in secondary school, children’s literature representing racial minorities is interesting to learn and to analyse, but foreign cultures are also essential to understand these books.

There are two different possibilities to integrate children’s literature into teaching without having to do a whole sequence on it, since it would be relatively complicated given certain constraints that the sequences impose, such as maintaining a particular thematic vocabulary throughout the whole sequence and thus, in a listening comprehension and a reading comprehension (that would be a children’s book) etc. Apropos reading comprehension, the first possibility would be to integrate a children’s book in a sequence as the reading comprehension because it matches the thematic vocabulary and/or the grammatical point to learn. However, children’s books would not be investigated enough when they are considered as a fully-fledged textual genre, which deserves more teaching. Furthermore, without handling it fully, the rich history mentioned by McClellan and Fields would not be explored and the cultural aspect would be ignored when this should belong to a big part of teaching children’s literature. The second possibility is to ingrain children’s literature by teaching an isolated lesson throughout the whole year, which means in different steps and to give the pupils time to work on specific parts. These parts could be, for instance, a teaching of the culture and the history of African Americans as enslaved people until nowadays, and the racism still present today. The second step could be the explanation of what is a children’s book as a textual genre, different from a novel for example, and to show the pupils an analysis of a children’s book. Then, they would be given a list of children’s books with a summary and by groups of three or four, they would choose the book they want to analyse, which would be followed by an individual analysis to end up in a jigsaw classroom. This means that pupils work in groups on a specific topic, and then change groups in order to discuss their results and add other results to the previous ones. In this case, the first groups would work on a specific book and then share their results with the other groups, leading all the groups to discuss the differences and the similarities in their analysis. The

moment when they come together again with the initial group could also be very rich and beneficial to improve their primary analysis. At the end of the year, it would also be very interesting to do a recap of all the analyses to bring the ideas together and highlight the main points of these books.

The project of isolated lessons would be very interesting, first of all, because the topic is quite important and should be integrated into classroom, as well as in English as a foreign language class, since the topic is culturally significant in the United States of America, but also in the United Kingdom. Indeed, as the Little Mermaid suggests, racism never ended and nowadays, still continues to kill. Furthermore, in this teaching format, what the children learn would not be replaced two or three weeks after the end of the sequence by another one but would stay in their minds and would mobilise several different points that the pupils will have to work on by themselves at certain moments. For all these reasons, teaching children's books representing racial minorities is quite important, but finding a good way to approach the topic is just as important; isolated lessons would be a good possibility to be considered.

5 Conclusion

This dissertation has two sides: firstly, it shows that theoretical elements such as the actantial model, developed for novels, are also efficacious in the analysis of children's literature. It has been demonstrated that the study of illustrations and their link with the text is relevant, as well as the formal elements expressed, which sometimes nuance the meaning. It has also been shown that in the case of books representing racial minorities, it is counter-productive to distinguish completely between the authors and their work and that it is extremely important to take into account the cultural background of both the author and the illustrator. Secondly, it shows significant differences within the corpus, notably centred around what has been called in this dissertation *interculturality* and *intraculturality*. Characteristics that could be structuring at the level of children's literature in general have also been highlighted and would also merit a study.

Firstly, by examining the relationships between the characters through the actantial models, regularities between the results of all these books appeared. It is apparent that when stories are about several subjects, who are ultimately all children, even though they are all different, they search for the same object as they all have the same expectations and desire to achieve things. The fact that the subjects are children simplifies the identification for the readers and thus, the fact that it can reach them directly, increases the chance that the lessons given, and the values taught by the books will be more easily received. Furthermore, the subjects and the receivers are often the same unique characters while the senders, most of the time adults, act as transmitters of knowledge whom the subjects can trust and thus, by identification, it also shows young readers that they can trust authority figures in their own life. Another aspect of the relationships that is worth being mentioned in this conclusion is the community without evidence of real individual relationships, seen mainly in *All Are Welcome*, as they all seem to be placed on an equal footing, in a relationship qualified as overinclusion. In the relationship aspect, family plays a big role, and it appears that adults of reference are almost exclusively mothers or motherly figures. Other adults of reference who build relationships with the protagonists are the teachers who always play the same role by being kind and telling exactly what the children need to hear. Moreover, these adults, parents or teachers are never questioned as they are the authority figures. These are all the similitudes that were quite obvious in the books of the corpus, despite their differences. This model made it possible to identify two different categories: characteristics that are probably part of every children's books such as young readers' identification with the heroes and features specific to

children's books representing racial minorities, thus distinguishing between intercultural and intracultural books.

The themes are also relatively recurrent in the books, including girls' hair, nature or city, unity, inclusion, gender, outer space, political message and technology. It means that even though these books are different, all children's books about representing racial minorities revolve around more or less the same themes.

The lifestyles of the main characters can however be very different according to their degree of wealth, but the books show that racial minorities are more represented in poverty than White characters.

The formal analysis has proved that all the children's books demonstrate the same formal elements to emphasise particular situations, such as the repetitions of events or of certain sounds, alliterations, metaphors and comparisons, or words emphasised by their fonts (italics or bigger size). These formal elements highlight the fact that the books in the corpus are aimed at children and are therefore there to help the reading, understand and remember the book. Some elements are characteristic of intercultural books, and thus impact the inclusion of for example the readers, such as the use of the personal pronoun "you" in *All Are Welcome*.

Concerning the illustrations, most of the codes were respected with the exception of two or three books. In other words, the difference of size does demonstrate the significance of the characters, and as a way to emphasise their emotions. Size is therefore relevant to this corpus because it was found that the books in which several characters are the same size are intercultural books while characters in intracultural books are highlighted. The diminishing returns show that at particular moments, the protagonists do not control their situation, also the presence of the horizon marks the security of the children while its absence, the fact that the children are in trouble or danger. However, the use of different shapes of frames, circular when the children are presumably safe, and rectangular when they are in danger and/or unsatisfied, shows a lot of inconsistencies. Furthermore, the background does change colour depending on the situation and some books show neutral colours to highlight the protagonists. However, most of these codes do not really add information to the corpus, but probably to children's books in general.

The relationship between the text and the illustrations is mostly symmetrical or complementary demonstrating that the author and the illustrators convey the same message. The fact that they both express the same meaning shows that the purpose is that the signification stays understandable and to clarify some elements for readers who are supposedly very young.

Significantly, the dissertation has highlighted the different kinds of children's books depending on the authors' and illustrators' ethnicities. On one hand, the books that are written and illustrated by White (American and British) authors and illustrators mostly focus on inclusion with an intercultural aspect. On the other hand, the African American authors and illustrators, who, on the contrary, provide books focusing on one single child and some daily preoccupations such as, for three out of four of these books, their hair. The last group of people are when one of the authors or illustrators is African American, it can be about a group of children feeling the exact same way for different reasons or about one single character, but the result is that they all try to be accepted as they are.

Thanks to all this analysis, this dissertation can support the objective of teaching children's literature in secondary foreign language classes with the isolated lessons system. It has been argued that teaching children about racial minorities is essential for children, but it is just as important to develop positive values in young teenagers, and the linguistic richness of these books, without being too complicated or too time-consuming, is a good opportunity.

However, there are some limits to this work: this analysis was carried out on a relatively small corpus, mainly developing results on a very small scale. It is therefore necessary to take these results with caution and to use them mainly as hypotheses for a larger corpus. Furthermore, since this corpus only contains books about racial minorities, a clear statement cannot be made about children's literature without racial minorities being represented. The differences cannot be objectified between books about minorities and other ones either, since the main focus is on the differences within a corpus representing racial minorities. Another limitation of this dissertation is the method of selection of the corpus: the nature of the selection risks that the books are more oriented towards interculturality (since the websites were about books to be read to promote awareness of the representations of racial minorities) than another selection of corpus.

In addition, it would be interesting to expand this corpus by selecting books using a different methodology to have a wider and more representative sample of all children's literature with racial minorities represented. It would also be possible to compare this with children's literature portraying White heroes.

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