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'What could I say?' A critical discourse analysis of the construction of race in children's literature

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This article analyzes the construction of Whiteness in children's literature that intentionally brings Whiteness to the surface. We wondered: do the authors re-center Whiteness in their attempts to racialize White people? What literary strategies and linguistic techniques do the authors call on to present Whiteness and, subsequently, Blackness? Using a combination of critical analyses including intertextual and hermeneutical analyses as well as critical discourse analysis, we foreground the reconstructive and deconstructive aspects of White people talking about race. Our empirical analysis also relied on transactional theories of reading informed by cultural criticism and Whiteness studies. We focus on four themes that cut across the books in our findings: White talk, colorblind theories of race, historicizing racism, and the privileging effect. We demonstrate the ways in which the talk in texts between White characters sometimes recenters Whiteness and other times disrupts Whiteness as the center. We discuss our cooperative reflexivity as an inter-racial research team conducting this inquiry.

Introduction

'I don't believe that Black people develop racial identities in the same way that White people.'

'What exactly do you mean?'

'White people form identities as a function of their privilege, Black people are *thrown* into an identity. No matter what we do, we cannot escape our identity, nor can we shrug it off; we have little choice as to how we develop or what we develop in to. It is given to us, expected of us until we prove otherwise.'

'How do the identity scales that Cross (1991) and Tatum (1994) use to describe Black identity development figure into this?'

'I'm not sure how those figure in just yet. Young (1992) talks about the concept of thrownness in an article called the 'Five faces of oppression'. In it, she describes how Black

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folks are thrown into racialized categories. They are both stereotyped and ignored as a result of their racial description. Like Howard (1997) talks about how Whites are able to choose their racial identities. They can choose to reject what racial consciousness or choose to work for equality. Blacks don't have that choice.'

This interaction between June (a Black woman) and I (Rebecca, a White woman) captures our process of deconstructing the social construction of race in four children's books. Our reading and interpretation of the literature evoked our multiple reading stances as readers, teachers, teacher educators, critical theorists, and socially (inter)active beings. Our discussion and debate was not unlike the themes that occurred in a teacher education class I (Rebecca) designed and taught to prepare elementary teachers how to teach literacy to children. In this class, the pre-service teachers read one of the four books that are the subject of this article—*The Jacket*, *Maniac Magee*, *Darby*, and *Iggie's House*—and participated in book clubs where they discussed the ways in which race was constructed in the texts. They were told that these four books would be one set of books within a larger unit focused on 'Struggle for equity: anti-racism from history to the present day'. Similar to our discussion, the book club discussions often led to powerful discussions around race, racism, and anti-racism (Rogers & Mosley, 2006). One question that arose through the book club discussions was whether the books—all of which explicitly address Whiteness as a racialized construct—recentered Whiteness at the expense of people of color.

This question stuck with us, as teacher educators who actively take an inquiry stance in our teaching. It seemed that the question the students were raising identified a central tension in Whiteness studies—a question which sparked further inquiry into the children's literature. In the way in which focused inquiry often emerges from praxis, we used this question as the springboard for our analysis. Additionally, we asked: In what ways is Whiteness represented in children's literature? Do the authors recenter Whiteness in their attempts to racialize White people? What literary strategies and linguistic techniques do the authors call on to present Whiteness and, subsequently, Blackness? What positions are available for children to take up as they read these books? Finally, is there room in the multicultural canon for literature that engages with Whiteness?

The resulting analysis of the children's books represents an effort to shift the critical gaze from people of color to White people or as Morrison (1993) writes, 'from the racial object to the racial subject from the described and imagined to the describers and the imaginers; from the serving to the served' (p. 90). In this article, we closely examine the construction of race within children's books that intentionally bring Whiteness to the surface. As an interracial research team, our readings, interpretation, and criticism of the literature were shaped by transactional theories of reading informed by cultural criticism, Whiteness studies, our histories as readers, and the racialized ways in which we live our lives.

Relevant literature

Multicultural literature is defined as literature that is representative of the perspectives of people of color (Bishop, 1982; Harris, 1992; Banks, 2003; McNair, 2003) and as

literature that reflects the lifestyles and viewpoints of marginalized cultural or social groups that are traditionally underrepresented in publications, mass media, and school curricula (Banks, 1993). Specifically, Harris (1996) defined multicultural literature as:

> … literature that focuses on people of color (such as African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Native-Americans) or religious minorities (such as Amish or Jewish) or regional cultures (such as Appalachian or Cajun), or the disabled, and on the aged. (Harris, 1996, p. 145)

As multicultural theorists point out, the literary canon overwhelmingly includes texts written by European-American males and has often excluded the literary work written by historically underrepresented groups. Culture has often socially-constructed to encompass intellectual, spiritual, and moral ways of being and material attainment—or, *a* way of life (Williams, 1983); and, in most of these canonical books, cultures are not represented from the historical perspective of the oppressed but often from the view of the oppressor. However, the inclusion of multicultural literature on bookshelves in classrooms does not ensure meaningful engagement with matters of race and culture. Indeed, Ladson-Billings (2003) has demonstrated that often times when White teachers do read or teach a piece of literature that directly engages with racial issues the teachers manage to avoid race.

Including literature that complicates White racial identity as normal or exposes typified cultural characteristics further authenticates Whiteness as a culture and White people as a racialized group. Matters of cultural authenticity in children's literature have been subject of much debate (Mo & Shen, 1997). When placed in the midst of multicultural curricula discussions, White racism is often hidden in the discussion of cultural variety and difference. Sleeter (1996) writes:

> … often multicultural education as a discourse mutes attention to White racism, focusing mainly on cultural difference. Culture and culture difference is certainly important and ought to be a central construct. However, White racism and racial oppression, as well as capitalism and patriarchal oppression, should also be central constructs. (Sleeter, 1996, p. 138)

Lee (2003) has argued that multicultural studies that do not explicitly address matters of racism, simply serve to perpetuate the status quo.

Whiteness studies are related to the intellectual movement of critical race theory (CRT). Whiteness scholars agree that Whiteness is connected to institutionalized power and privileges that benefit White Americans (Helms, 1992; Giroux, 1997; Karenga, 1999; Roediger, 1999; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Stoakes-Brown, 2002). Often Whiteness is viewed as the presence or absence of the dimensions of racism. This view of Whiteness, however, completely ignores the many ways in which Whites benefit from unearned privilege at the expense of people of color. Rather than being endemic and inherent in social interactions and reactions, compounded by the infrastructure of social institutions and policies that uphold race, race is determined by the discourse of racial formation. The complex and dynamic interplay of a 'Black–White' binary builds a constantly shifting, rarely permeable boundary that bestows upon Whites advantages and entitlements that that often

include a naïveté of such privileges and confer dominance over people of color (McIntosh, 1992; Frankenberg, 1993; McIntyre, 1997; Roediger, 1999).

In other words, the absence of racist ideology and discourse hides Whiteness and, again, defines normal. Too often discussions about race are limited to *raced* individuals, excluding Whites. In this sense, 'raced' refers to groups of people who are thrown into racially ascribed categories (Young, 1992). People of color must often function within the bounds of their racial ascription regardless of whether they choose to operate within these boundaries or not. These labels, usually placed upon an individual based upon an immediate recognition of racial phenotypic features, function to identify and explicate the detriment of race upon people of color. Bringing Whiteness studies to the reading and interpretation of children's literature can contribute to our understanding of the complexity of reading and teaching literature in a diverse society.

Design and methodology

As noted in the introduction, I (Rebecca) chose four books for a set of book club discussions with pre-service teachers that focused on a unit of inquiry into anti-racism. I selected children's books from a range of genres, that covered multiple points in time (contemporary America and historical America), that presented young children as racialized protagonists, and were written for children in third and fourth grades. I was interested in diverting the gaze from the 'other' to interrogating Whiteness. The titles were collected through a snowball process of recommendations.

The Jacket

The Jacket takes place in a predominately White suburban school in a contemporary context. Phil, a sixth grader, accuses Daniel, a Black fourth grade male, of stealing his brother's jacket. After realizing that he falsely accuses Daniel as a result of Daniel's race, Phil seeks to better understand prejudice through exploring the roots of his own discriminatory actions.

Darby

Darby is based loosely upon a series of oral history interviews conducted in Marlboro County, South Carolina. Darby, the novel's namesake and protagonist, is a young White girl living in South Carolina during the 1920s. She decides to be a 'newspaper girl' after her best friend, a Black girl named Evette, expresses a similar desire. Much to her surprise, Darby writes two articles that the publisher of the town newspaper agrees to print. When the son of an African-American tenant farmer is beaten to death by a neighboring White landowner, Darby recognizes her obligation to 'tell the truth' about the racial disparities she has noticed in her community. In her third article, Darby tackles the issue of racial inequalities running rampant in her small Southern town. Her article sparks a controversy that prompts an outpouring of cruelty including the Ku Klux Klan's intimidation of Darby's family and friends. The conflicts that

arise as a result of Darby's article spark the community's open discussion of racial issues and conflict.

Maniac Magee

Maniac Magee, winner of the 1991 Newberry Medal, is a folk story about an orphaned European-American boy sent to live with his aunt and uncle. Unable to live with the constant bickering between his aunt and uncle, Jeffrey Magee runs over 200 miles to escape the unpleasant living situation. Gaining the nickname Maniac for the spectacular feats he somehow pulls off, Jeffrey 'Maniac' Magee manages to seamlessly transition between homes in both the East End, the predominantly Black part of town, and the West End, the predominantly White part of town. As Maniac runs between the East and West End, he confronts the racially divided neighborhood and seeks to change existing racial divisions between the two parts of town.

Iggie's House

Winnie Barringer, the book's protagonist, lamenting over the move of her friend Iggie, spies the new family moving into Iggie's old house. She notices immediately that the family has three children and that they are Black. In an effort to be neighborly, Winnie extends her friendship to the Garber children—Glenn, Herbie and Tina. Their relationship is not without its problems, however. Neighbors sign a petition to force the family to move out of fear of desegregation. When the petition doesn't force the family to move, a sign is posted in the Garber's front yard telling them to 'GO BACK WHERE YOU BELONG. WE DON'T WANT YOUR KIND AROUND HERE!!!!!' This further exacerbates the tenuous relationship between Winnie and the Garber children. Through letters written to the absent Iggie, we see Winnie's White racial development. At the end of the text Winnie's recognizes and admits that she doesn't know as much about racial relations as she thought she once did.

Reading practices

Theoretical frameworks

We were reading from the perspectives of Whiteness studies, cultural criticism and a transactional theory of reading. We viewed these stances as necessary to examine systemic privilege and normative oppression. A transactional theory of reading recognizes the reading process as a dialogue between the reader, the text, and the author rather than as a unilateral interaction where the reader is uncovering the authorial intention or where a passive reader is acted upon by the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). As a reader reads she/he is engaged in the simultaneous processes of reading, interpretation and criticism (hooks, 1991; Enciso, 1997; Sipe, 1999; Ketter & Lewis, 2001; Sumara, 2002). The text, itself, does not contain the meaning but holds a chain of possible meanings—brought to life by particular readers in particular contexts, times,

geographic locales, etc. This chain of meaning is inevitably intertextual and historically situated (Fairclough, 1992). This view of reading does not exclude the author's intention but, rather, places the reader as the interpreter of the author's cultural representation. The presence of racism in texts reiterates the social milieu as the social milieu shores up the cultural representation of race embedded in texts. Given that literature reflects social values and those values are reinforced and perpetuated by teacher and internalized by students, Banfield (1985) asserts that:

> In a racist society children's trade books and textbooks must be viewed as one of the most effective tools of oppression employed by a dominant majority against powerless minorities. The effectiveness of the educational institutions in socializing students to accept racist values guarantees that there will be an ever-renewing supply of persons from which the creators, editors and publishers of materials which espouse these ideas will be drawn. This has important implications, both for the methodology and criteria employed in analyzing such materials and to counteract their damaging effects on all children. (Banfield, 1985, p. 23)

Because authors and readers are located in specific contexts that are raced, gendered, classed, aged, historicized, and so on, literature might be viewed as a cultural artifact. Eagleton (1996) suggests that readers engage with 'forms of activity inseparable from the wider social relations between writers and readers' (p. 206). Social and political meanings are always an arena of political struggle. Greenfield (1985) reminds us that while politics do not constitute art:

> … art is political. Whether in its interpretation of the political realities or in its attempts to ignore these realities, or in its distortions, or in its advocacy of a different reality, or in its support of the status quo, all art is political and every book carries its author's message. (Greenfield, 1985, p. 20)

In so far as Blackness is political (Williams, 1983), literature that uses and/or creates literary Blackness for the purpose of story development ought to also be considered highly political. Further, each piece of literature establishes a network of perspectives which includes the author (their intended and implied authorship), the intended and unintended readers, the characters, plot and narrator. This network is built into a literary work in the production, consumption and circulation of texts. The author's sum of choices consciously or unconsciously is represented through their choice of details, words, descriptions, type of dialogue, people's relationships, as well as through silences and gaps. Thus, we turned to the theories and analytic tools of critical discourse analysis to provide not only a description and interpretation of the construction of race in the children's books but also to offer an explanation for the ways in which the themes located in the books connect to larger societal themes about race.

Analytic procedures

To more closely analyze the discursive themes and literary strategies used in these books as well as the range of available positions available for readers, we used a combination of critical analyses including an intertextual and hermeneutical analysis. We also relied on the tools of critical discourse analysis to provide insight into the ways in which the texts were constructed.

We read and discussed the books in the following order: *The Jacket*, *Maniac Magee*, *Darby* and *Iggie's House*. We each took notes of the books as we read and provided a 'thick description' of the way in which race, racism, and anti-racism are represented. We used a coding chart to guide our reading and discussion of the book (see Appendix 1). We targeted sections of the books in our discussions that seemed particularly important in terms of how Whiteness was represented. Then we returned to these sections to conduct a multi-modal analysis of these sections of the text. Each of our discussion/analysis sessions lasted between two and three hours. Additionally, we shared our analysis over email after our discussions.

After combining our analyses, we developed a set of themes that extended across each of the books. We came up with seven themes/discourses that cut across all of the books: White talk; inter-racial conversations; noticing and naming race; hybridity; youth as racialized protagonist; context; and privileging White feelings over the material realities of people of color. We sorted our analysis of each of the books into these themes, including the key events, dialogue and events in the books under these categories. From here, we conducted a closer discourse analysis of both the form and the function of talk (Fairclough, 2003) (see Appendix 2 for the critical discourse analysis chart). Next, we reduced themes for repetition and developed our cross-case analysis of each of the books by theme.

We decided to spend more time with the parts of the books that were at once problematic and provocative. We conducted a focused critical discourse analysis on portions of the texts. Critical discourse analysis attends to the ideological intent and impact of talk and texts, as it is communicated in the form and the function of talk. CDA frameworks provide a means to investigate the linkages between talk at local, institutional, and societal levels and an additional three levels at the micro-level of interacting: what, in systemic functional linguistics terms, are called genre, discourse, and style. We attended to the genres of talk that characters called on when they talked with each other—at this level of analysis we asked: How do silence, humor, overlapping talk, interruptions, metaphors and literary strategies function in the text? We also attended to the themes, or discourses, that arose in the dialogue in the book and how the dialogue both constructs and represents the social world. Examples of themes included: colorblind discourse; privileging White feelings over the material realities of people of color; interracial alliances; and so on. Finally, we attended to the ways in which racialized identities were encoded at the syntactic level of the text. At this level we asked: What types of verb processes are there? Are sentences in the active or passive voice? Are the agents of the actions implicit or explicit? Are there metaphors used? Which verbs, nouns and pronouns are used to identify people? What kind of vocabulary dominates the text?

We combined genre, discourse and style with discursive theories of race (see van Dijk, 1984; McIntyre, 1997; Smitherman & van Dijk, 1998; Chubbuck, 2004; Rogers & Mosley, 2006) to guide our analysis of the way in which race was constructed in the books. We then reconnected the local level of analysis with larger institutional and societal discourses.

Inter-racial research team

In a reflexive manner, it is also important to attend to our role as an interracial research team as we analyzed these books. There were a number of things that prepared us for this analysis. First, both of us participated in a series of anti-racist workshops sponsored through Dismantling Racism Institute for Educators. We shared with each other our personal and professional understandings of alliances. We have a relationship where we can challenge or resist statements/understandings that the other person makes. We consciously evaluated the process of our interracial inter-actions as we analyzed these books. Both of us tried to be respectful of the other's thoughts while also offering honest critiques of these books. There were times where our viewpoints were different because of our racial backgrounds, the ways in which we view race, and the different selves that influence who we are and what we are when we engage in the reading process. However, it has been extremely illuminating for me (June) to understand Rebecca's analysis of these books. I have been able to push past the social niceties as they pertain to race and voice many personal thoughts that would have ordinarily been left unsaid for fear of offending a White woman. For me (Rebecca), I have appreciated coming to a deeper understanding of the book by hear-ing June's interpretation. I consciously recognized that there were moments when I struggled to make sense out of racial themes rooted in Black peoples' experiences that June pointed out. June was graciously patient with me—giving me the time to construct an understanding and then gently offering another way of looking.

As readers, we brought our histories of participation as readers to this analysis – that is, who we have been as readers, who we are as readers, and who we are becoming as readers. Each of these reading selves is informed by the contexts in which we read, who we are as readers and as people, the experiences we have had, and the books we read. As we analyze children's books for the presence of race, racism, and interracial alliances, our social selves are also employed. The social selves, at times, may contra-dict or affirm our reading selves. Social identities may also stand in the way of our vocalizing our connections or disconnections with a particular text.

As a White woman reading these books, I (Rebecca) had to both engage with and set aside my past, present, and future experiences as a reader. That is, I have been and continue to harbor a simmering anger at the way in which my racial identity had been hidden from me as a child and young adult. Reading and talking about books such as the ones we have analyzed would have evoked a racial consciousness much earlier than I had. One aesthetic experience for me as a White reader, reading from my past life as a reader, I experience a deep sense of gratitude that someone has named what has not been named; someone identifies Whiteness rather than on focus-ing on the 'other'. Another equally vivid aesthetic experience for me as a reader in the present, as a woman committed to an anti-racist journey, was anger at the authors for falling shamefully short in terms of representing the complexity of Whiteness. I found myself wondering: Are these cultural models of Whiteness the best that we have to offer young readers? Each of these stances evoked different responses for me as a reader—responses that were then mediated by working in an interracial team.

The experience of reading these books, for me (June), was complicated by the interracial alliance that Rebecca and I chose to form. I am usually very critical of the texts I read, often analyzing texts in terms of race, gender and my own experience. Many concerns arose for me in terms of how to express my dismay and, sometimes, anger at what I believed to be racist acts of negligence across these texts to a White woman in a way that would not be offensive and would be productive for and true to the goals of our project. My reading and subsequent analysis of each book was influenced by this concern. So, often, when I read, my reading self and my, what I would like to call, 'socially-conscious Black self' were at odds over how much of my own disappointment and, sometimes, rage I would share with Rebecca. I believe that the same silence and evasion Morrison (1993) found surrounding the presence of race in the literary imagination are actively present in the social milieu and serve to preclude interracial alliances. I was often upset by the use of Blacks to further the action in these texts, how Whites' feelings were privileged over the feelings of Blacks, and, most importantly, that racism is not named as if it seemingly does not currently exist. I was best able to harness and communicate my intense feelings as disappointment for the lack of literature that best models and accurately describes the nature, development and work necessary to build an interracial alliance.

Our interracial analysis often highlighted the multiple ways in which books can be read based on different experiences and perspectives. One example of this was in our discussion of *Maniac Magee*. Rebecca thought the Cobras were a Black gang instead of a White supremacist group. June thought the Pickwells' were a Black family when they were a White family. Spinelli's intentional use of racial ambiguity was not lost on us as readers and it was through our discussion and analysis that we realized the way in which our racialized frames were evoked in the texts.

In many of our discussion of analysis, I (June) would bring up a number of moments where the authors failed to discuss race and racism realistically or even at all. This failure was painful for me as it neglected my own personal experiences with race and reduced my experiences as a Black woman living in the US to a literary device too often devoid of the full dimensions of pain, agony, happiness and joy I've experienced. There were moments when I (Rebecca) wanted to keep saying, 'but what about … [the work that the White characters *had* done towards dismantling racism]'. Indeed, there were moments when I (Rebecca) was genuinely pleased that the White characters recognized their racialized identities and were actively engaging in anti-racist talk and actions. Ultimately, I learned to suspend my analyses to really listen to the interpretation that June developed from her history as a woman of color reading the books. These discussions allowed me to see aspects of the literature that I would not have noticed as a White reader.

I (June) used rants written as asides in my coding charts to express my dissatisfaction with the texts without channeling it towards my collaborator. These rants existed in response to the book and, hopefully, did not attack her personal feelings and thoughts. The rants were a way for my to express what I felt needed to be communicated. I didn't have to respond to something Rebecca said and thereby appear to

attack her personally. I could respond to the book in a less personal more analytic manner that seemed more constructive and respectful of our project.

Interpretations

Children's literature serves to socialize children as well as mete out their roles, vis-a-vis race, in society. The reconstructive portion of our analysis shows the ways in which each book departs from the cultural expectation that socializes children to ignore race through silence, colorblind approaches, and/or neglecting to engage youth with race as a result of age. However, at the same time, the deconstructive analysis reiterates the subtle and not so subtle messages about Whiteness. For the purposes of this article, we chose to highlight four themes found in each book: White talk, colorblind theories of race, historicizing racism, and privileging White feelings over the material conditions of people of color. Although, for the sake of brevity, each theme/discourse has been discussed in only one book, it is important to recognize that these themes are interconnected, occurring throughout each text, sometimes simultaneously, and need to be addressed both collectively and individually. Where it was possible, we attempted to show the intertextual nature of the discourses themselves.

White talk: The Jacket

In *Making meaning of Whiteness: exploring racial identity with White teachers*, McIntyre (1997) describes White racial identity as 'sense of group or collective identity based on one's perceptions that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group' (p. 3). In this vein, 'White talk' is naturally occurring talk that shores up the common privileges Whites share while avoiding the roles they play, both individually and collectively, in maintaining racism. Whites 'talk themselves out' of individual responsibility for current articulations of racism by:

> … derailing the conversation, evading questions, dismissing counterarguments, withdrawing from the discussion, remaining silent, interrupting speakers and topics, and colluding with each other in creating a 'culture of niceness' that made it very difficult to 'read the White world'. (McIntyre, 1997, p. 46)

Further, McIntyre (1997) finds that interrupting other speakers, silence, switching conversation topics from Whiteness and privilege, blindly accepting racist notions and stereotypes, talking over another speaker, participating in collective laughter to ease anxiety and stress, and collusion with other Whites serve to further keep interrogations of privilege at bay thereby paralyzing the critical examination of Whiteness and recentering Whiteness as normal.

   It is generally acknowledged that White people talk very little about White racism (Scheurich, 1993; Sleeter, 1996; McIntyre, 1997). They do, however, engage in a significant amount of what Sleeter (1996) refers to as 'White racial bonding' (p. 150), which refers to the discursive and nondiscursive moves which keeps White racism off the table for discussion. 'White talk' occurs at many different levels—including both *what* is said and *how* it is said. Further, as we will demonstrate in the following section,

White talk can construct and represent positive and progressive understandings of White racial identity development such as in the case of White allies (Stoakes-Brown, 2001). When White people directly engage (with other Whites as well as with people of color) in discussions around race, racism, and anti-racism, and use linguistic strategies which center (rather than dismiss) their responsibility as White people, this too, becomes a form and function of White talk.

Phil, the book's young, White protagonist, acts on his guilt resulting from self-identified prejudice. Racism is not named in the book. Instead, Clements uses the term 'prejudice'—itself a discursive stronghold in White talk—allowing the characters to (1) blindly accept and exhibit some racist notions and stereotypes; as well as (2) ignore the pervasive albeit surreptitious nature of the deep historical, economic and material consequences of racism upon people of color. Phil's feelings of guilt over accusing Daniel of stealing the jacket coupled with his racial 'awakening' underlie the motives that drive his actions throughout the book. Phil is the active agent while Lucy (Daniel's grandmother and Phil's housekeeper) and Daniel receive the acts of kindness that are predicated on Phil's guilt. At the same time, Daniel is used as a point of cruces for Phil to explore prejudice, a theme that will reemerge.

In the following interaction, Phil confronts his mother about his own prejudice. As we will demonstrate, this is a complicated example of White talk. Phil charges:

> 'How come you never told me I was prejudiced?'
>> 'What? What are you talking about?'
>> 'I'm prejudiced. I am, and you never told me.'
>> 'Who says you're prejudiced? Somebody call you that?'
>> 'No, but it's true. I know what it means because we learned about it on Martin Luther King Day. It means you don't like Black people.' (Clements, 2004, pp. 37–39)

In this brief interaction, Phil directly confronts another White person (his mother) about matters dealing with race (genre, style). While he engages in a direct confrontation with matters of race, he (Phil/Clements) names racism 'prejudice' which serves to reduce the systemic and material/tangible impacts of racism on people of color to feelings/emotions felt by White individuals toward individuals of color. The damaging effects of racism, both past and present, are ignored and, equating prejudice with an emotion in this instance serves to eventually liberate Phil from being prejudiced as a result of simply shedding those feelings. Further, Phil owns his prejudice ('I'm prejudiced. I am, and you never told me') but then puts the responsibility of revealing racism/prejudice on his mother, refusing to shoulder the responsibility of his individual actions. This interactions shows his mother's expectation for his collusion which provides a powerful example of 'White racial bonding'. Phil's mother evades his questions by refusing to answer the question and by posing her own questions ('What? What are you talking about? Who says your prejudiced? Somebody call you that?') (genre). Her questions completely shift the conversation from the direct and explicit engagement with prejudice to finding out the source of Phil's questions. When Phil continues to press the issue (an aspect of talk where White people continue, rather than shut down the conversation) his mother simply tells him he is not prejudiced. While Phil further tries to explore the issue with his mother, she offers

two counterarguments against the possibility of Phil being prejudiced. First, she asks Phil, 'Did you even choose to be White? Is that your fault?' (p. 39). She adds, 'you had this problem with another boy and the boy happens to be Black. That's all. And we live in a part of town where it's mostly White people. Tell me this, did you choose to live here' (p. 40)? Here, Phil's mother refuses to take responsibility for answering Phil's questions. She poses her responses in the form of rhetorical questions that serve to end the discussion and put Phil at ease with his racial anxiety. And, although she tells Phil that he is not responsible for his racial description or the family's location, she does not make obvious the ways in which she has benefited from White privilege. A bit later in the same interaction, Phil again directly confronts the existence of his mother's prejudice as it appears in the form of a superficial understanding. His mother explained to him that she gave the jacket to Lucy because she knew that Lucy had a grandson about Phil's age (Daniel). She stated:

> 'When you have something nice to share, you share. Besides, Lucy's my friend.'
> Phil nodded, 'Only, not really your friend, right?'
> His mom looked at him sternly. 'What's that supposed to mean?' (p. 41)

The combination of a child directly confronting an adult's behaviors and the stern looks and desire to protect the innocence of childhood, Phil and his mother co-construct a form of White talk that both directly engaged and directly avoids racism. The benefits Phil and his mother receive, as a function of White privilege, remain uncomplicated and the origins of the unearned benefits remained unengaged and unnamed. Phil is left to project his individual discomfort with privilege to a function of society. This vignette ends with Phillip's mother telling him not to mention this conversation to his father. In this way, she uses her age and familial position to force Phil to acquiescence in the continuation of the dominant racial status quo that McIntyre (1997) labels the 'culture of niceness' which prevents Whites from reading their own world. As a result of this conversation, Blackness is seen as the problem and 'racial polarization comes from the existence of Blacks rather than the behavior of Whites' (Lipsitz, 1998, p. 1).

Further, in an interaction where Phil and his father discuss Phil's participation on the basketball team, Phil's father states, 'it would be nice if some other folks got some game, too' (p. 60). Here, Phil's father does not name White people as a marked category—rather he states 'other folks'—leaving only non-White readers to infer the racial identifier of the group to whom he is referring. This type of White talk is not uncommon by Whites who minimize the extent of racism to isolated expressions of prejudice rather than a piece of systemic racism, further entrenching Whiteness as normal and unremarkable, specifying its in-group and *out*-group by omitting a racial identifier. As Morrison (1993) contends, 'Whiteness, alone, is mute, meaningless, unfathomable, pointless, frozen, veiled, curtained, dreaded, senseless, implacable. Or so our writers seem to say' (p. 56). Moreover, prejudice is a particular entity that is held by Whites not exacted upon and against people of color. In this worldview, reparations, actions, or policies aimed at racial equity are generally interpreted as 'unfair' by White people (Prendergast, 2003). In each of these cases, Phil's thoughts (and his father's

thoughts) are rooted in his White experiences which function to privilege his world-view at the expense of the people of color in the book, a theme to which we return.

Colorblind theories of race: Maniac Magee

The aversion of naming race and racism denies the marginal experiences and existence of people of color in the US. Guinier and Torres (2002) list the disabling elements of colorblind ideologies:

> First, colorblindness disables the individual from understanding or fully appreciating the structural nature of inequality. Second, it disables groups from forming to challenge that inequality through a political process. The denial of race not only reduces individuals' psychological motivation for challenging unfairness but also contributes to their internalization of it as a purely personal problem. (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p. 56)

McIntyre (1997) labels ambiguity and colorblindness in discussions around race as another form of 'White talk'. However, our analysis indicated that it was not just the existence of ambiguity that mattered but the ways in which ambiguity functioned. For example, Spinelli, in *Maniac Magee*, a fantastical legend, is intentionally ambiguous in naming race, time and place. This ambiguity invites the reader to bring his/her cultural models of race to bear on their read of the book and evokes a higher degree of engagement and participation from the reader. On the other hand, Fuqua, in *Darby* (which we will turn to next) is explicit in his treatment of race, racism and the naming of difference. His directness of discourse, however, is mediated by the fact that the book takes place in the 1920s—a time when racism was rampant and obvious. The temporal context of *Darby* allows Fuqua to bring the existence of racism to a tidy finish—a finish without ruptures or any indication that racism exists in the present context. The other authors employ a similar belief in the present context that defines racism as overt, life-threatening acts and places racism in the past. The present, more implicit racism that severely limits and impacts the material, social, and political rights of people of color is ignored.

At the beginning of *Maniac Magee*, we learn that Maniac has run away from his aunt and uncle. As he is 'running' he encounters a racially divided town and is credited with changing racial divisions with his actions. Overall, we read an experience of a White boy confronting a variety of racial attitudes. In some ways, Maniac Magee *is* Hector Street. That is, he exists as the connection between the West End Whites and the East End Blacks. Throughout the book, Magee crosses the physical boundaries of East and West fluidly as he does the socially constructed boundaries of race. The metaphor of running, itself, is a symbol of White privilege—that is, Maniac can run wherever he wants—often away from his own privilege. Indeed, he is accepted at the Beale's house (an African-American family), he is challenged but accepted in the East End, he can find temporary shelter at the zoo (without going to juvenile detention or a foster home). Overall, the story privileges Maniac's traversing the social constructions of race. Regardless of whether or not Maniac chooses not to see color, Black people in the East End suffer racial antagonism from West End Whites. White people are more willing to disconnect history from the present context because the present

system reinforces and maintains their privilege. The recognition of the oppression and racism that results from Whites' unearned privilege fails to touch their daily realm of experiences. In order to reproduce White privilege while not having to acknowledge it or its marginalizing and socially debilitating effects upon people of color, some Whites take a colorblind approach to reading their world.

Spinelli (1990) uses such a colorblind approach and, thereby, avoids a discussion of race and racism. When Maniac discovers that West End John McNabb and his White supremacist gang are preparing for the East End Blacks to revolt, Maniac feels uncomfortable. Spinelli (1990) writes, 'Now there was no room that Maniac could stand in the middle of and feel clean. Now there was something else in that [McNabb] house, and it smelled worse than garbage and turds' (p. 152). What is the unnamed presence that Maniac experiences here? Earlier in the text, Maniac is at a loss to recognize the same presence that he identifies as putrid. Spinelli (1991) writes:

> Manic kept trying, but he still couldn't see it, this color business. He didn't figure he was White any more than the East Enders were Black. He looked himself over pretty hard and came up with at least seven different shaded right on his own skin, not one of them being what he would call White (except for his eyeballs, which weren't any Whiter than the eyeballs of the kids in the East End). Which was all a big relief to Maniac, figuring out he wasn't really White, because the way he figured, White was about the most boring color of all. (Spinelli, 1991, p. 74)

Colorblindness is indicated by the refusal to see color. However, the refusal to see color implicitly recognizes color as well as the social denotations and connotations of race in this social setting. The reduction of race to the simple of color of one's skin does not require Maniac to identify his own privilege and its effects upon the people he professes to love (i.e., the Beale family). The putrid smell Maniac identifies and cannot escape is his complicity in the exacting and perpetuation of privilege onto his own Black loved ones. Maniac's colorblind worldview coupled with his ability to run from his unearned privilege allows race and racism to remain unnamed and its effects unowned.

The reduction of motivation for challenging racism negatively impacts interracial alliances that may form to combat the pernicious effects of racism. Spinelli (1991) uses the text to identify Maniac's neutrality to color. In order to avoid making judgments based upon color, Maniac acknowledges his own pigmentation in order to reject a racial description. A refusal to see race negates the realized racial antagonism and concrete material deficits people of color continue to suffer as a result of White domination, entitlement and privilege. Further, colorblindness, similar to White talk, shifts the individual responsibility of racism onto a collective unknown (Guinier & Torres, 2002). If a White person is shrouded in White racial naïveté, then there is no personal responsibility for the oppression of people of color. Here, we see Maniac creating and maintaining social reality through the telling of his story. Critical race theorists argue that the dominant group uses standard accounts to justify its power, construct reality and maintain privilege (Delgado, 1989; Matsuda *et al.*, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1999, 2003; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). The social realities of people of color are ignored and dominant stories become immutable truth. By

refusing to see color, Maniac withdraws from any discussion about the lived reality of people of color—a reality he has observed first hand—and, like Phil's mother in *The jacket*, colludes with other Whites and perpetuates the 'culture of niceness'.

Later in the story, after leaving the Beales' home, Maniac comes to live with Grayson, an older White man, on the West End. In a conversation about the similarities between Whites and Blacks, Maniac tells Grayson that Blacks living in the East End are 'the same as us' (p. 88). While earlier in the book Maniac asserts that he does not see color; in this instance, he takes on a White racial identity asserting that East End Black are the same as 'us'. While he notices shades of color—for example, almond brown, coffee and seven shades of White—he identifies these colors as surface level markers rather than as signifiers of macro-level social, material and political symbols. Moreover, both East End Blacks and West End Whites identify Maniac as White. As a result, he experiences rejections from both areas due to his *chosen* affiliation with East End Blacks and his phenotypic identification with West End Whites. However, the fluidity with which Maniac moves from the East End to the West End validates his White entitlement. Maniac does attempt to disrupt racism a few times throughout the book; in the end, however, Maniac's refusal to see race which doubles as White racial naïveté allows Spinelli to write a book that does not actively engage race and racism. In this way, Spinelli's (1991) *Maniac Magee* functions in much of the same way that Clements' (2002) *The Jacket* does.

Historicizing racism: Darby

In each of these books, a critical discussion of racism is absent from each book with the exception of Fuqua's (2002) *Darby.* By setting his book in the distant past, the time period distances the reader from the impression of racism upon the lived realities of people of color in the present context. The implicit message is that as society moves further from overt displays of racism and racial antagonism, racism ceases to exist. Sleeter (1996) points out that, often, White authors are often more willing to disconnect history from the present than are people of color because for Whites, racism is outside the scope of their daily experiences. It exists outside of the realm of recognition for most Whites because, as Bell (1987) points out, the social institutions of education and information promote an ideological hegemony of White racism that is not the result of duplicity or wily conspiracy, but rather, it is sustained by the culturally ingrained response by Whites to any situation in which Whites aren't in a clearly dominant role. This ideological hegemony, whether tacit or explicit, justifies, explains, legitimizes and tolerates racism (Bell, 1987, 1992).

It is precisely under the conditions that books like Clements' *The Jacket*, Spinelli's *Maniac Magee*, and Blume's *Iggie's House* are able to discuss race yet avoid the discussion of racism. As an example, Phil, in *The Jacket*, describes prejudice as meaning 'you don't like Black people' (Clements, 2002, p. 37). However, Phil's disdain for Daniel extends past dislike vis-à-vis prejudice. Phil's privilege allows him to act upon his prejudice which allows his accusation to be pursued by the proper authority. Clements (2002) writes, 'and instinctively Phil knew that his being White and

Daniel's being Black was part of this. Maybe a big part' (p. 18). As it is not named, racism, by omission, ceases to exist in the current context.

In *Darby*, Carmichael's store is vandalized when the Ku Klux Klan maliciously throws a brick through the store's window. In this except, Darby (a young White protagonist) recounts how her father addresses the growing crowd outside his store.

> 'It's because of race,' my daddy declared, holding up the brick so that people could read what it said. 'It's about Black and Whites and what people believe. That's why this happened … to think my daughter and a customer were in here when these bricks were thrown and both could have been injured or killed because the Klan doesn't agree with an article in the paper. To me, that's unacceptable. That's cowardly … the Klan is trying to prevent free speech about an issue we all know we're going to have to address. We all know we've gotta talk about it.' (p. 152)

In this passage, we see the ways in which race is both acknowledged and unaddressed. In the beginning of the passage, Carmichael breaks the silence around racism. However, the vignette highlights the way in which racism is never directly discussed in the book. Here, Carmichael mentions the cause of the incident as 'race' instead of 'racism'. The malicious and nearly murderous reactions of Whites are precipitated by the *existence* of Black people—in other words, Blacks are responsible for their own mistreatment. Language is further used to distance the incident from a discussion of race and racism as Carmichael identifies the onus of the Klan's behavior as a means to show the violent disapproval of freedom of speech rather than referring to the incident as possibly stimulated by a child's acknowledgement of rampant racism and, subsequently, the potential dissolution of White privilege. Further, Carmichael's rage, as written in the book, lies in part with the fear his daughter could have been hurt and the danger to his business had the customer inside the store when the brick was thrown been injured. These reasons evokes Bell's (1992) interest convergence in which people of color fortuitously benefit when Whites exert policies that further embed their privilege in the social fabric of institutions and interactions. The theory of interest convergence is that remedies for the negative effects of discrimination are only implemented when the remedy is in the interest of White people (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Carmichael's discussion of race was directly tied to the dangers that he faced as a result of the brick being thrown through the window of his store while his daughter and a customer were present. Although he does help to relocate the Black family whose son was killed, Carmichael is moved to bring up race only after his family and livelihood were threatened.

Carmichael then goes on to say that the reason the Klan targeted his store was 'because they didn't agree with an article in the paper' rather than the group's hateful and malicious acts of violence used to protect White dominance and supremacy. Darby's father further evades identifying Whites' fear of the loss of privilege by diverting the issue at hand to one of 'free speech.' He concludes by saying, 'we all know we've gotta talk about it'. However, the ambiguous use of 'it' functions to move away the discussion away from racism, racial intimidation, and White supremacy to the issue of free speech.

The privileged effect: Iggie's House

This discourses we see throughout these books are not only about how individuals reframe understandings of racism as portrayed in these books but also how one frames the contemporary and historical patterns of interactions among sociocultural models. Further, Sleeter (1996) demonstrates how the present White understanding of race and ethnicity, 'emerged into prominence during a period when the civil rights movement was most active and racial minorities were challenging in basic respects the fairness of the American system' (p. 138). As a direct result of White society *feeling threatened* by the exposure of the measures taken to ensure the benefits unearned White privilege, Whites attempted to reframe the conversation within a meritocracy—or, a European purview of a just and open society that is open to individual opportunity, advancement, and achievement. Thus, the discourse that we noticed in each of the books—that of Whites' feelings being privileged over the material realities of racism for people of color—is partially rooted in the discomfort Whites have felt historically when a focus has been placed on the role of White people in maintaining and reproducing the material, political, psychological, and social oppression of people of color.

Blume exemplifies this theme of the 'privileged' effect in other places in the book as well. Winnie is at the Garber's house when she puts the sign in and Blume writes the following:

> Winnie felt her cheeks burning. She was shaking all over. 'We're not all like that,' she heard a small voice say. 'We're not … we're not … we're not.' She realized the voice was her own and that she was crying. She turned and fled, tears streaming down her face. (p. 64)

Rather than systematically examine her feelings or talk with the Garber children about such an obviously racist act and their feelings toward the intended racial intimidation, Winnie simply begins to cry and runs away. Similar to the other young characters in each book one might argue, drawing on a construction of childhood where children are naïve about race, that crying and inquisitiveness are a normal behaviors for children. However, each character offers superior responses to issues of race, prejudice and privilege. In *Iggie's House,* Winnie is not actively confrontational when a young neighborhood girl, Clarice, is openly racist to Glenn, Herbie and Tina Garber. Instead, she writes a letter to Iggie rhetorically asking 'what could I say?' Similar to *Maniac Magee,* when Winnie runs from the sign placed in the Garbers' yard, she appears to be running from implicating herself in confronting the unearned benefits granted by White privilege.

In each of the books we analyzed, the characters of color seem to function solely to allow White people to reflect on their racial identities. That is, each of the books is responsible for what Morrison (1993) calls, 'the choked representation of an Africanist presence' (p. 17). The authors employ these Black bodies for their own purposes of inquiring into race in a safe manner—on White terms. Morrison (1993) writes:

> Explicit or implicit, the Africanist presence informs in compelling and inescapable ways the texture of American literature. It is a dark and abiding presence, there for the literary imagination as both a visible and invisible mediating force. Even, and especially, when

American texts are not 'about' Africanist presences or characters or narrative or idiom, the shadow hovers in implication, in sign, in line of demarcation. (Morrison, 1993, pp. 46–47)

In a climactic scene in *Iggie's House*, Mrs. Landon who is represented as actively racist throughout the book puts a sign in the Garber's yard that reads 'Go back to where you belong! We don't want your kind around here!!!' In the following excerpt (pp. 66–69) Blume writes:

> 'She put a sign in their grass. A SIGN! Can you imagine! She's the most horrible person that ever lived! And I hate her!' Winnie flopped backwards and stared up at the ceiling.
>
> 'What are you talking about?' Mrs. Barringer asked, shaking her head. 'I haven't any idea. You're not making sense.' She handed Winnie a tissue …
>
> 'What an awful thing to do.' She put the washcloth back on Winnie's face. 'But I am certainly relieved to find out there's nothing wrong with you. You had me worried Winnie!'

In this interaction Winnie is angry with another White person's (Mrs Landon's) act of overt racism. She disrupts the silence around racism and tells her mother how Mrs Landon put a sign in their front yard telling the Garbers, the new Black family on the block, that they were not wanted (genre). Winnie's mother privileges her own feelings over the Garbers' feelings ('But I am certainly relieved to find out there's nothing wrong with you. You had me worried Winnie!'). With this statement, Winnie's mother reiterates that racism can be set apart from an individual White person. That is, that racism could not personally impact Winnie because she is White and she was not directly involved with Mrs Landon's act of racial intimidation; therefore she does not have to shoulder the responsibility for the actions of another White person. Mrs Barringer refuses to allow Winnie to reject and thereby call attention to their shared privilege. The social responsibility of racial intimidation is shifted to the act of an individual, further situating their privilege. She tries to force Winnie to collude in the 'culture of niceness'. Winnie rejects colluding with her mother and charges,

> 'Nothing wrong? How can you say that! Everything is wrong. EVERYTHING! Didn't you just hear what I said? I ran away when I read the sign. I ran away Mom. I didn't even say anything. I just ran. They'll probably hate me now. I could just die.'
>
> Mrs Barringer laughed softly. 'Oh Winnie! You're being ridiculous. I think you're making too much out of the whole thing. Why should they hate you?'
>
> Winnie looked straight into her mother's eyes. 'Why should they hate me?' she asked. 'That's easy. I'll tell you why. Because I'm White!' (p. 69)

Winnie seeks to lay bare the racialized Whiteness that seemingly implies collusion with Mrs. Landon by virtue of shared skin color and, instead her mother tries to talk Winnie out of her individual responsibility through engaging in a powerful example of 'White racial bonding'. Mrs Barringer dismisses Winnie's racial anxiety through a number of discursive strategies including laughing at her, calling her 'ridiculous' and telling her she is 'making too much out of the whole thing', seeking her collusion in White racial dominance. Indeed, both *what* is said and *how* it is said function to minimize the pernicious effects of racism on not only people of color, but Whites as well, to include managing the guilt Whites may experience as a result of recognizing their collusion.

In an important moment in the book, Winnie looks directly in her mother's eyes in a confrontational stance, 'Why should they hate me?' she asked. 'That's easy. I'll tell you why. Because I'm White!' This interaction is also the first time in the book where Winnie verbalizes that she is underskilled to span the racial gulf of differences that exists between herself and the Garber children. While Winnie seems to shoulder the responsibility of White group membership and takes individual responsibility, at least discursively, for the privileges associated with Whiteness; she also collapses the social construction and connotations of White privilege, dominance, and supremacy into skin color.

> 'Winifred! You're not thinking. Mrs. Landon is one person. You are another! No one is going to hate you for running away!' Mrs Barringer insisted.
>
> 'But mom … maybe they'll think we're all like Mrs Landon. She hates the Garbers and she doesn't even know them! So maybe the Garbers will think we're all the same! We've got to prove it to them Mom.'
>
> 'Prove what? Winnie?' Mrs Barringer asked.
>
> 'Prove that we're not all like Mrs Landon!' Winnie said, throwing her hands up into the air.
>
> 'Winnie!' Mom sighed, annoyed. 'You're carrying this thing too far. You're devoting all your time and energy to the Garber cause. You've got to learn to think things through. You're always jumping into new situations with both feet, before you know what you're jumping into!' (p. 69)

Winnie fears that the Garbers will attribute a similar racially antagonistic identity to that of Mrs Landon, assuming that all White people are racist and seeking to intimidate them. Her mother counters with yet another form of White talk where, unlike people of color, White people are seen as individuals ('You're not thinking. Mrs Landon is one person. You are another! No one is going to hate you for running away!'). Without adult guidance, Winnie independently generates a scenario that many White people do not have to or chose not to face—that is, having to consciously prove themselves as different from the group. She looks to her mother to provide the skills that she will need to be a successful ally ('"We've got to prove it to them Mom." "Prove what? Winnie?" Mrs Barringer asked. "Prove that we're not all like Mrs Landon!" Winnie said, throwing her hands up into the air'). The interaction draws to a close when Winnie's mom asks her 'What is it you want me to do?' To which Winnie responds, 'Anything mom. Anything to prove we're different. Anything to show we're interested' (p. 69). Hinging on the statuses of age and familial authority, Mrs. Barringer overrides Winnie's attempts to move toward an anti-racist White identity and categorizes Winnie's overwhelming desire to be a White ally as no different from other various 'causes' Winnie had taken on and abandoned in the past—including saving turtles.

Winnie and her mother both get to the edge of evaluating how their own actions might contribute towards problematizing and possibly interrupting the cycle of systemic racism but Winnie/Blume falls short with her evasive and ambiguous response of 'anything to prove we're different'. Here, it appears that Winnie is more concerned with the Garber's perception of her and her family than she is with the consequences of racism on the Garber family. However, quite possibly ill-equipped

in the relationship to provide answers to her mother, Winnie looks to her mother to model the appropriate behaviors to indicate an alliance with the Garber family. In a telling turn, Winnie screams at her mother that they should take an interest in the Garbers' problems with the other racist neighbors—this provides insight into Winnie's understandings of racism—as the entreaty of people of color, not White people.

Discussion and conclusion

It has been argued that White identity theories continually recenter Whiteness at the center of anti-racism; in other words, anti-racism is organized around White people's growth with little attention paid to the psychic, discursive, and material realities of racism for people of color (hooks, 1995). Overall, the negative consequences of anti-racist work for White people are privileged over the material/emotional/psychological consequences of racism for people of color. McIntyre calls this the 'privileged effect' (p. 69) which are emotions that minimize the consequences of racism for people of color and maximize the 'feeling realm' for White people. There is a growing number of children's literature which notices and names Whiteness as part of a racialized discourse. Our analysis points to the ways in which authors, educators, and publishers might think more carefully about the ways in which messages about race are communicated through discursive themes and syntactic patterns in the text. Such textual configurations can serve as the basis for critical literacy and critical language awareness in classrooms and communities. Indeed, attention to the ways in which authors construct, reproduce and resist these discourses is an important aspect of anti-racist pedagogy.

Our aim in this article was to identify, through a critical discourse analysis, the functions of Whiteness and Blackness in children's literature that specifically addresses race. We chose four primary functions: the privileged effect, contextualizing racism as a historical victory, the presence of White-talk embedded in the text and talk within the text, and the authors/characters' desire to overlook the presence of racialized identities and White privilege. While we chose not to focus on the presence of each theme in each text, each theme was present in each text.

Each function hinges on the 'Africanist presence' in the literary imagination (Morrison, 1993). This literary strategy is useful, according to Morrison (1993) 'in evoking erotic fears or desires and establishing fixed and major difference where difference does not exist or is minimal' (p. 68). The illumination of minimal differences further exacerbates the dichotomous nature of cultural extrapolations of race, racism and anti-racism made available through media—to include children's literature—schools, and any number and combination of social institutions intended for children to transform, transgress, reject, and re-vision race and racism. Identifying and, subsequently, expunging the ways in which privilege, the fictive historical death of racism, and the fetishization of the 'other' impacts the ways in which children are taught and the transmission of requisite skills to critically engage literature.

With this study, we have sought to identify places where impaired cultural models can be disrupted in children's literature for all children. Too often multicultural

children's literature seeks to focus on the victimization that has occurred due to the denial of self and social interaction. Morrison (1993) points out that much well needed time and effort has been placed on uncovering the effects of racism on the victim. However, she argues that more inquiry should be made into 'the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it' (p. 11). Or, put another way, 'the scholarship that looks into the mind, imagination, and behavior of slaves is valuable. But equally valuable is a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behavior of masters' (pp. 11–12). The promise of interrogating race and racism through a discursive standpoint gives insight into how to negotiate talk and text. Along with the disruption of colorblind national policies, talk and talk embedded in text should be scrutinized to better show the ways in which those cultural models are perpetuated and how they are disrupted.

Further, the patterns we noticed in the children's books do not occur in isolation. They reflect larger societal themes of the privileging effect, colorblind theories of race, a historicizing of racism, and ongoing White talk that does not engage directly with matters of race, racism, or anti-racism. Understanding the societal themes as well as the way in which these themes play themselves out in local contexts such as children's literature, can support people as they move from noticing, to naming, to changing such discourse practices. Such critical analyses might provide models for conversations that move beyond the pervasive silence which currently characterizes race in literacy education—the silence that was captured by Winnie in *Iggie's House* when she exclaimed 'What could I say?' The analysis provided here might serve as resource for educators to support people (adults and children) read children's literature from a critical race perspective.

Currently, there are few, if any, constraints placed upon talk embedded with in text. The absence of a feedback mechanism present in conversations around children's texts creates a portrait of an unrealistic alliance that forces forward-movement of the talk for the sake of the plot without regard to the reality of conversational talk bringing about slow change. Talk has to take place over time in order to produce social and individual change. Understanding that the talk that occurs within the text is both a reproduction and a construction of larger social themes, better insight and examination of talk embedded in text in necessary to fully grasping the impact of race and racism on children's developing cultural models.

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Appendix 1.   Analyzing children's literature: book clubs

Title
Author/illustrator (and race)
Summary of the book
Year published
Genre of literature

- What is the setting of the book?
- When does the book take place?
- Whose perspective is the story told through?
- How are the White characters represented?
- How are the people of color represented?
- Do they correspond to someone in history?
- What do you notice about the language of the text?
- What do you notice about the illustrations in the text?
- In what ways do the illustrations correspond with the text (or don't they)?
- How is racism defined in the book?
- How else might it have been defined?
- How does the language construct understandings about race?
- How do the illustrations construct understandings about race?
- What are the ways in which White people question, challenge and resist racism (e.g., through interior thinking, actions, behaviors)?
- In what ways do the people of color question, challenge and resist racism (e.g., through interior thinking, actions, behaviors)?
- How are White people represented in relation to people of color?
- What was left out of the text?
- Is race explicitly talked about? If so, how?
- How are allies constructed? Are they? Who are allies? How do you know?
- What are the different positions that White people take up in these books?
- What are the different positions that people of color take up in these books?
- What else could the characters have done to be a 'White ally' [a White person who fights against racism]?
- What else could the characters have done to be an 'ally of color' [a person of color who fights against racism].
- What do you notice about the inter- and intra-racial relations?
- Is race (including Whiteness) mentioned in the text or is the burden of explanation placed on the illustrations?
- Is anti-racism represented as a personal or collective responsibility?
- In what ways is membership in racial groups marked?
- Is racism represented as a personal or institutional issue?
- Are strategies for anti-racism different across gender lines (i.e., do the men represented in the literature use different strategies to resist racism than women)?

Appendix 2.   Noticing and naming White talk: forms and functions (see also Rogers & Mosley, 2006)

Genre (Smitherman & van Dijk, 1988; McIntyre, 1997)

- Interruptions.
- Humor.
- Resistance.
- Metaphors.
- Overlapping talk.
- Changing the topic.
- Silences.
- Evading questions.
- Dismissing counter-arguments.
- Drawing on intertextual resources to support arguments.
- Repetition.
- Truncated speech.
- Consensus.
- Statements moving into questions in a single turn-take.
- Questioning for clarification.
- Co-construction.
- Making a counter point.

Discursive themes (Howard, 1998; McIntyre, 1997; Chubbuck, 2004)

- Exceptions to the rules.
- 'We' *vs.* 'them'.
- Reverse discrimination.
- Difference from the 'other'.
- Privileging White feelings about racism over people of color's feelings about racism.
- Locating racism as personal deviance rather than institutionally sanctioned and reproduced.
- Myths of individualism, hard work, and meritocracy (along with White, working class myths of 'that's life').
- 'The rush to complexity' (e.g., 'The issue is class, not race').
- Philosophy of education (high expectations, equal treatment, get to know my students).
- Colorblindness.
- Blaming or not taking responsibility.
- Equating age-ism with racism.
- Activism as martyrdom.
- Myth that separate can be equal.
- Establishing a 'White' viewpoint.
- Resolving issues of race by reducing race to a discussion of color.
- Positioning color before the person 'Black people' rather than 'people that are Black/African-American'.

- Alliances.
- Protecting children (or other White people) from discussions of racism.
- [White = White privilege].
- [White = alliances and dismantling racism].
- Stereotypical representations.

Style (Fairclough, 1992)

- Lack of using 'I' voice (favor the third person versus the first person).
- Distancing language.
- Politeness conventions.
- Use of research studies to back positions (e.g., intellectual or academic talk).
- Passive/active construction of sentences.
- Nominalizations (turning verbs into nouns) [discrimination instead of discriminated against].
- Not naming race, Whiteness, anti-racism or Whiteness.
- Absence of talk (invisibility of language).
  Qualifying language.
- Cognitive/affective statements.
- Affective responses (e.g., feeling hopeless, feeling overwhelmed, feeling guilty) [minimize the consequences of racism for people of color and maximized the 'feeling realm' for White people].
- Making affect into a cognitive state (having a problem with, I wouldn't care if …).
- Rhetorical questions used to get the floor or truncate a conversation.