“Don’t Judge Me By the Cover, ‘Cause I’m A Real Good Book”:
A Critical Content Analysis of the Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library Book Collection, 2021

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my efforts to:

Joseph Harrigan

Emily Harris

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and

Elliott Matthews

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Abstract

Within children's picturebooks, race representation is lacking in many ways. The benefits of including racially and culturally diverse characters in children's literature is well known, and yet children's literature remains a largely all-white world (Larrick, 1965; Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2021). However, the pervasive whiteness of children's literature can be seen not only in the large number of white characters, but also in the ways that whiteness is represented within children's literature. The purpose of this study is to examine aspects of whiteness within a text disseminated by the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. This study was guided by the following research question:

1. How is whiteness represented and reproduced in a select DPIL book?

This study engages Critical Whiteness Studies as a lens to examine a random text from the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, and includes a critical content analysis of this text in an effort to examine the aspects of whiteness and white culture within the text. Findings indicate that several aspects of whiteness appear within the selected text, and in a variety of both hidden and more visible ways, including the ways that both narration and dialogue discuss or ignore race. Implications for the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and future children's literature and race representation researchers are included within this study.

Keywords: picturebooks, multicultural children's literature, whiteness, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, critical content analysis, critical whiteness studies

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Chapter One: Introduction

My Relationship with Race

I have not always been cognizant of racial identity, either in myself or in others. I was raised in an almost totally homogeneously white, middle class suburb in upstate New York, and was raised to be colorblind – to not notice nor talk about issues of race. Talking about or noticing race was considered rude, and so I did not do these things. It has only been in the later stages of my life that I have been able to look past my privilege and truly examine my own racial identity, and how issues surrounding race are so prevalent in American society. With my increased awareness, I also became aware of racial identity within literature, and more specifically, within children's literature. Upon reflection, I was shocked at how few books I had read which featured authentic and contemporary characters of color, despite being an avid reader. Looking back at my childhood, I realize that I could only remember independently reading a single children's book which had a Black character. I came to realize that my reading life had massive gaps with regards to the inclusion and centering of non-white characters, and I believe now that I am not the only reader who had such gaps in their literary diet.

While the lack of multicultural children's literature in my life was certainly the result of many factors, it is not to say that children's books which featured characters of color did not exist; simply that I was not reading them, or that they were not readily available to me. In fact, while multicultural children's literature as a genre has not historically enjoyed mass market publication, it has existed for centuries. In fact, one of the earliest examples of Black characters in children's literature dates back to 1845, with German author Hoffman's *Struwwelpeter* (Martin, 2004). So, if multicultural children's books existed when I was a child, why wasn't I reading them? I would suggest that this may have been for several reasons; the main reasons

being a lack of availability within my specific community (for example, my local library perhaps not carrying a diverse book catalog), a lack of encouragement by my community to be seeking out multicultural literature (such as my teachers not actively providing multicultural texts within the classroom, nor recommending that students seek out books with diverse characters), or a lack of interest on my part (perhaps only being interested in characters who looked like me).

Whatever the reason, as a result, I was missing out on what Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) termed the "windows" that multicultural children's literature can provide. Bishop wrote that "Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange…When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience" (n.p.). In this way, the children's literature that I was reading when I was a child acted as a mirror, reflecting back my own life and lived experiences. At the same time, I was missing the window that literature can provide, and the view of a world which was unfamiliar and different than my own. Because of the lack of windows in my reading background, my being colorblind was perpetuated; furthermore, I was continually teaching myself to expect that all characters within books would match my own white identity and life experiences, a phenomenon known as the white default (Morrison, 1992).

Upon attending college for my undergraduate degree, I enrolled myself in an African post-colonial literature class, as I recognized that this was a genre and topic with which I had no experience. On the first day of class, my professor asked us to label each country on a map of Africa, and it finally clicked for me that while I felt failed by my past education, I also shared the burden of responsibility. Why didn't I take it upon myself to learn even just the names of the

countries of Africa? Why had I not been proactive in educating myself? Why had I rarely if ever chosen to read a book with a Black, Indigenous, or person of color (here abbreviated as BIPOC) main character? More importantly, I began to wonder what could I do as a teacher to directly combat this for my future students.

Since this time, I have thrust myself into reading multicultural literature, seeking out BIPOC art and culture, and learning more about BIPOC history as it relates to America and the world at large. I wrote about and presented on what I learned, often to somewhat humorous results; for example, I gave a presentation on colorism in American culture at an Africana studies conference, to a room of almost entirely Black attendees, most of whom probably had far more experience in colorism than I did. However, these initial ventures into race research acted as my entrance into a field in which I am still learning about and finding my place within.

Since this time, I have become interested in how children and adolescents gain access to multicultural literature, the authors who write these stories, the quality of said multicultural literature, and how youths turn these stories into social lessons to be learned. Upon moving to Tennessee, this interest in multicultural children's literature was further enhanced by my learning about the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (here abbreviated as the DPIL). In providing free books to children, the DPIL has a unique opportunity to provide rich multicultural texts to their readers. However, it is my belief that the books sent out by the DPIL were, and still are, largely focused on whiteness culture and white experiences.

Therefore, I found myself drawn to a project which would center the DPIL and race research for several reasons, the first being that I believed that the DPIL was primarily disseminating stories which center whiteness as opposed to stories which center BIPOCness. I was also drawn to this project because I knew firsthand the experience of growing up with a lack

of multicultural literature, and the possible outcomes of this lack. However, my interest in this project was also based in my Jewish identity. I was born and raised in a Jewish family, and we trace our Judaism back through my maternal side of the family, with my ancestors hailing from Germany and Hungary, and my great grandparents immigrating to American in the years between 1900 and 1940. Judaism has been a thread which connects the maternal side of my family for generations, and which has forced many of us into situations which were difficult, to say the least. I give this background because my Judaism has affected my stance on life, as both a child and as an adult. I attended Sunday school for the better part of my childhood, was bat mitzvahed and confirmed in the Jewish faith, taught cultural studies classes at my temple, and attended a Birthright Israel trip. Though the intensity of my religious practice varies, my Jewish identity is one that I take pride in, and one that I center in many aspects of my life. It is also an identity that is complicated, due to my increasing understanding of world politics and my increasing awareness of the Israeli government's crimes and discrimination against Palestinians, while also being an identity that I grapple with due to my instinct to hide my Judaism out of fear.

In Judaism, there are 613 commandments, as well as other more general guidelines, that Jews are expected to uphold in their lives. Almost like a cosmic checklist, many of these ideas have impacted how I interact with the world from an early age. One such idea is the concept of tzedakah, or giving charity either via monetary donations or time donations; Jews are taught that tzedakah should be given freely, and given without expectation of receiving anything in return. Another concept is tikkun olam; literally translated, tikkun olam means acts of kindness. As a child, I was taught that tikkun olam is used in practice to "heal the world." Of course, as an adult, I am skeptical (and rightfully so) of any one person's ability to heal the world. However, the idea of acts of kindness has always appealed to me, and I like the idea of constantly striving to do acts

of kindness, and to act in a way that benefits a community at large, in an effort to benefit all people.

In recent years, tikkun olam has become a Jewish calling for social justice. Tikkun olam places the onus of responsibility for each person, individually, to act in a way that benefits our community at large, in hopes that a collective of individuals, all acting in a way that benefits the community, will impact greater change. It is not enough that we care for our friends and family, but we should strive to better the world around us; likewise, the onus of responsibility for fixing the world is placed at the feet of each individual, but the burden is spread amongst the collective community. The idea of tikkun olam led me to the DPIL and my interest in race based research. It is here that I see the overlap between my beliefs in social justice and my identity – all of us should strive to better the world around us for all people. I felt, and still feel, that working with the DPIL is a fantastic way to work towards social justice in a way that is meaningful and far reaching. I also felt, and still feel, that I have a duty to leverage the privilege given to me as a white woman and as a person whose marginalized identity can be easily hidden.

At this moment in time, I believe that I can do good in partaking in a project like a critical content analysis of the DPIL, in hopes of illuminating the ways in which whiteness appears in their disseminated books, which I hope will, in turn, increasing awareness of the whiteness within DPIL books, in an effort to impact change. I believe that social justice work is everybody's work, and believe that we must be working to purposefully and consciously uphold and celebrate communities who are being pushed to the margins. This strand of reasoning is not unique to me – many white people involved with social justice and social equity work feel similarly in the duty that we all should undertake. Additionally, many other Jews have aligned their social justice work with communities who have been socially marginalized: Jews have

historically been able to empathize with the plights of the Other, due to historical mistreatment of the religious and racial Other experienced in America (Wilkerson, 2020; Schorsh, 2019; Lerner & West, 1996; Berman, 1994). While I do not wish to claim that I understand what it means to be a BIPOC American, nor do I wish to claim that every other Jew has similar ideas of racial justice and equity, I do understand the Jewish American experience and can empathize with other members of groups pushed to societal margins.

My completing a research study based in race studies has been complicated by my identity as a white woman completing research on whiteness. However, this work would be equally as complex if I were to study non-white book characters; a demographic for which I have no lived experiences, and for which I am an outsider. On top of my concerns regarding the complex nature of race research, I also felt a fear of accidentally dominating a conversation about children's literature and race representation which has existed long before I was even born, or that by engaging in Critical Whiteness Studies as my theoretical frame, as opposed to Critical Race Theory, that I am engaging in centering whiteness. However, whiteness is a group to which I belong, and a group that I believed I could examine authentically and accurately. While the lack of multicultural characters is certainly an important topic, and one that has been written about in the past by scholars of prestige, the overwhelming whiteness of children's literature is where my attention and efforts were drawn, and where I perceived there to be a gap in existing research. This research also allowed me to tap into the research ideal of "racial matching" (Twine & Warren, 2000, p. 7), which often allows for more open examination of a topic due to inherent knowledge of a group. Studying race representation as a white woman can be tenuous and full of pitfalls. However, this does not mean that one shouldn't attempt to do so.

My relationship with race is also continually shifting and changing as I become more aware of my own racial identity. To this point, this study itself has undergone radical changes as I continue to learn where exactly a white person completing race research belongs in such a research stream. In the spirit of full disclosure, this research project began as a critical content analysis in which I endeavored to analyze the quality of BIPOC characters within DPIL books. However, upon reflection with members of my dissertation committee and having read several texts written by white women thinking about their whiteness, I came to realize that a project like this would be disingenuous and quite frankly inappropriate; I was, in actuality, engaging in a form of a "white 'redemption fantasy,' in which the good white 'supposedly comes to know and be at one with the 'racialized other' and his or her 'struggles against racism,'" which Thompson (2010) argues is in fact a "new form of white privilege" (p. 17). As I came to learn, and am still learning, in my desire to mark myself as a "good" white person, or a white person doing "good" things, I was, in fact, moving in white supremacist ways.

In reading research completed by BIPOC researchers, I became so enamored by what I read that I wanted to join this research stream, when in reality, I was acting as a white savior, a person in a position of privilege who took it upon herself to swoop in, make judgment calls, and join the struggle against racism by being at one with Black researchers, Black authors, and Black communities art large. However, this is not my place – I cannot possibly know what constitutes as quality or authentic BIPOC representation, as my knowledge of BIPOC communities itself is not authentic. When confronted with the fact that this was not the correct project for me to be engaging in, my knee-jerk reaction was immediately that I must have just not explained myself correctly, and to become defensive, interpreting this feedback as if I was being accused of being racist. I found myself needing not only to examine the correct path of this study and my place

within in, but also how I had gotten to that point and why I became defensive when confronted. This desire to complete research about BIPOC character quality, perhaps based in white saviorism or white guilt, is one that I am purposefully not indulging in, and for two reasons: the first being that again, it is not my place, and the second being that I could easily see a paper like that devolving into an exploration of white guilt and white rage. To again quote Thompson in her article about whiteness in antiracism work, "Taking on the alleviation of white guilt as an antiracist project keeps whiteness at the center of antiracism" (2010, p. 24). Ironically, though I am specifically centering whiteness through my theoretical stance, I sought to reject the instinct to center my own whiteness and white identity by involving any potential feelings of white guilt.

I approached this work as a learner – I am still undergoing the process of unlearning and relearning about race, and I anticipate that process to be a lifelong project of self-reflection, education and discomfort. Throughout this project, I was continuously fighting the impulse to simultaneously center whiteness while not centering whiteness – that is, how could I examine whiteness in texts without engaging in white supremacy, especially given my background in colorblind racism and the bias of whiteness that I bring to this and all projects? How could I navigate race research as a newcomer to race researcher, and walk the line between critiquing, examining, and accidentally endorsing whiteness? This unlearning and relearning process will be evident throughout this study, as I was actively engaged in the process of continuously checking my own biases and beliefs through each stage of this project. However, I believe that this process is exactly what the great Maya Angelou was referring to in a quote widely attributed to her; "I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better." This work is also crucial in being a white person involved in antiracist work – in citing Johnson and Thompson, Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides write that "whites are always becoming, continually struggling to

recognize the understand the implications of whiteness and white privilege. In other words, [w]hite racial identity work is never ‘done’” (2019, p. 110). Thus, in an effort to honor my own tikkun olam, to acknowledge my place as an outsider to BIPOC communities, to focus my efforts on antiracist work, and to leverage my own whiteness and the insights gathered from my racial upbringing, all in an effort to know more and do better, I decided to examine how aspects of whiteness and whiteness culture are represented and reproduced in DPIL books.

My Relationship with Picturebooks

I did not foresee myself becoming a picturebook scholar. In fact, I dedicated my past two education degrees to adolescent literacy education and secondary ELA education, with only rudimentary coursework with regards to younger students. However, despite my intended coursework, time and again, I found myself pulled to working with younger children. As a graduate assistant during my Master’s degree, I served as a literacy specialist and worked with children in grades k-3; upon beginning my doctoral program, I again found myself delving into elementary education content as I co-instructed two courses focused on picturebook use in the classroom. Even now, my graduate associateship has me teaching and supervising pre-service elementary teachers. During recent years, I also became an aunt for the first time of my now almost four-year-old nephew, and found myself thinking critically about the picturebooks that I wanted to provide for my nephew, in an attempt to help him become a well-rounded and empathetic human being. Though I do not have children of my own, I found myself looking through hours of picturebook research and catalogs, looking for the “right” books with the “right” messages to send to my nephew. However, I still had no practical experience in the use of picturebooks as a pedagogical and social tool.

Because of my background as a middle school teacher and my past degrees in adolescent/secondary education, I entered my doctoral program intending to specialize in middle grade and young adult literature. Upon my meeting Dr. Deborah Wooten and the beginning of our work together in co-instructing two courses regarding the use of picturebooks in the classroom, as well as co-authoring a book chapter regarding using picturebooks in Holocaust instruction, I was quickly persuaded as to the use of picturebooks as a pedagogical tool with massive value. I found myself learning more from Dr. Wooten in her class than I had anticipated, and found myself blurring the lines between co-instructor and student during many a class. I was also quickly persuaded as to the inclusion of picturebooks into my research interests, and how the entire spectrum of children's literature has value, especially with regards to reinforcing social messages. It was around this time that I also read Ishikuza and Stephens's (2019) article about anti-Blackness and orientalism in Dr. Seuss texts, which created a massive shift in my understanding of children's literature as a genre, and its historically laden and racist past.

It was around this time that I became interested in how picturebooks implicitly teach child readers about the world around them. Having learned about Rudine Sims Bishop's ideas of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors with relation to young adult literature, I came to realize that picturebooks also serve as an ideal format for reinforcing messages about identity, as well as educating children about the world around them, alongside whatever more explicit instruction is taking place. Again, my Jewish identity was immediately inserted, through both the Holocaust instruction chapter with Dr. Wooten, as well as my involvement with the Association of Jewish Libraries, or the AJL. My involvement with the AJL, which includes my serving on a book award committee, has shown me the lack of diversity even within book collections which strive to be inclusive in other ways.

As I am not a traditional picturebook scholar, my decision to complete a dissertation study on the topic of picturebooks may seem odd at first glance. However, as I saw this dissertation and the majority of my junior scholarship as serving as my foray into academia, I saw no better time to engage in learning about a new type of children's literature. I approached the DPIL and picturebooks in general from a learner stance; additionally, as I was learning about picturebooks in conjunction with this study, as opposed to having learned about the genre prior, I believed that my research will be less filtered through my personal bias and opinion regarding picturebook authors, illustrators, or picturebooks in general. As I was late to learning about picturebooks, I do not have a publishing house that I feel strongly about, an author that I use most often in my research or teaching practice, or an illustrator whose proofs I hang on my walls. I entered this project as close to neutral as I believe I could be, and was therefore able to critique the DPIL picturebooks without any personal connections or beliefs about the books within.

My Relationship with the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

During my blossoming relationship with picturebooks, and in tandem with my moving to Tennessee, I came across the DPIL. Due to my late coming to picturebooks as a genre, my understanding of picturebooks has grown entwined with my knowledge of the DPIL, and thus I have used the DPIL and other similar book collections to enhance my understanding of picturebooks. In fact, a large part of why I have endeavored to take on this particular study, as opposed to completing a critical content analysis of any other collection of books, is that I feel strongly that this project chose me, as opposed to me choosing the project. I was led to the DPIL by happenstance, as opposed to seeking out the program, nor having even heard of it prior to the beginning of my doctoral degree. In August 2019, within days of my moving to Knoxville, I was meeting a cohort member and future friend for lunch. However, as is my nature, I arrived half an

hour early because I was nervous about getting lost (as I am wont to do). To kill the time, I walked into the Lawson McGhee Library in downtown Knoxville, figuring that it would be 1) air conditioned, and 2) an effective use of my time as I wanted a library card anyways. While standing at the circulation desk and filling out information for my library card, I saw a small tri-fold pamphlet which stated "Get on Board! A GIFT to the Children of Tennessee," with the DPIL logo, apparently in partnership with the Governor's Books from Birth Foundation. Opening the pamphlet, I saw that it was advertising some sort of free book program, in which books were sent to children's homes each month.

I took this pamphlet with me to lunch, figuring that I would look into the DPIL at a later time, as it was a program I had never heard of before. I assumed at this point that the DPIL was an actual, physical library, and that it may be an interesting place to volunteer, or at which I could complete research. Upon a cursory Google search after lunch, I found that the DPIL was not an actual place, so I endeavored to ask my advisor more about the program. In the following weeks, upon meeting the other members of my academic program, I asked them about the DPIL – was this a program we as a department were involved with, and if so, how could I become involved. I learned about the mission of the DPIL, and I learned that most every recent parent in Tennessee had some sort of connection to the DPIL through the enrollment of their child into the program. I also learned that while the DPIL is a nationwide program, I had never lived in a place where the DPIL was available, which explained why I had never heard of the program. This did not surprise me with regards to where I grew up, as my hometown is considered to be a literacy-rich location with resources like several public libraries. However, I was surprised to learn that the towns where I had subsequently moved to and taught in did not have DPIL branches, as I assumed that the DPIL existed primarily in locations which either served more rural or urban

students, or locations which had a higher population living under the poverty line, both of which would apply to several places where I had lived. However, as I learned more about the DPIL, I saw that the existence of programs in specific locations is entirely dependent on funding partners, as opposed to community needs at certain locations.

After learning more about the DPIL, I immediately connected the program with my research interests of diverse representations in children's and young adult literature. I then tried to find the past DPIL book lists because I wanted to know the titles of the books that were being sent to children; I was stymied, however, as the lists available on the DPIL website only went back only to the year 2014. The next time I met my cohort as a group, I asked my peers and my advisor if we, as a department or university, had any connections at the DPIL, so that I could request these book lists. As it so happened, a professor emerita from UTK, who was involved in CYAL work, was now employed at the DPIL, and was serving on the book selection committee. Once I had this individual's contact information and established contact, she asked me to submit a research brief regarding my use of the book lists and what I was hoping to do with the books if I was granted access to the lists. My contact brought this brief to the next book selection committee meeting, and I was given permission to contact the head of the book selection committee, Dollywood Foundation Director of Operations, Mr. Samuel Roberts[1]. I established contact with Mr. Roberts, and spoke with him over the phone regarding a more in-depth research plan. After our conversation, Mr. Roberts emailed me a 16-page document which contained the DPIL book lists from 2001-2013, as I had requested. He explained that prior to 2001, there were no remaining book lists, so much as there were notes on scraps of paper which had largely been lost to time. Thus, the DPIL book collection could only be analyzed with accuracy from the year

[1]For the sake of transparency, Samuel Roberts, Dollywood Director of Operations, is serving on this dissertation committee

2001 forward.

This series of events would eventually lead me to a general dissertation project; a critical content analysis of the DPIL collection. After receiving the book lists, I worked towards gathering as many physical DPIL books copies as I could, so that I could analyze the specific books copies sent to children; this was important to me as the DPIL book copies often contain reading tips for families, and ways for adults to discuss the text with their child. Gathering the DPIL version of each book was also important as many books have been published by more than one publisher over time, but only the versions published by Penguin Random House are used by the DPIL – thus, I need to make sure that the text and images I am analyzing are true to the DPIL program's book selections. I also tracked down several Braille copies of DPIL books, to ensure that all physical versions of DPIL books were the same, so that my findings could be applied across the board. This process of gathering DPIL books is further commented on in chapter four of this study.

Based on my knowledge of children's literature, my understanding of the DPIL, and my beliefs about social justice and equity, I believe that a study like this is critical, especially as the DPIL is arguably the largest free book dissemination organizations in the United States. The DPIL has great influence within the educational system, and students who are enrolled in the DPIL show literacy gains (Imagination Library, n.d.-h), which, in turn, has led to several states adopting the DPIL.

While the DPIL was started in East Tennessee and has since spread across the country, other countries outside of the U.S.A. have their own DPIL programs. There is proof that non-U.S. DPIL programs do consider carefully the types of books they are sending to children, and the types of characters and stories that appear in the disseminated books, in an effort to provide

mirrors and windows. The United Kingdom's DPIL Executive Director remarked on this topic by stating that

> It's very, very important to us to make sure that children's experience is reflected in the books that they receive through the Imagination Library. We take great care to look at diversity in terms of ethnicity and family composition and different types of story, different characters. Females as the main character when we can. We make sure firstly that children see themselves reflected somehow in the stories, but also that it opens their minds to the experience and to other worlds and different experiences (Betts, 2021, n.p.).

Interestingly, a similar official statement for the United States DPIL program could not be found on the DPIL website, but the idea could be discerned through interviews and personal communications. In fact, in both personal communications and interviews with Mr. Roberts, he has referred to windows and mirrors by the exact terminology as given by Bishop (1990). In a 2019 interview, he specifically stated that the book selection committee for the DPIL looks to provide mirrors and windows in the texts they select. (Lambert, 2019). Therefore, it's known that the United States DPIL recognizes that books must both reflect back a child's life but also afford them a view of lives unlike their own.

Study Purpose and Key Terms

My background as a reader, my understanding of the need for multicultural literature, and my desire to practice tikkun olam and antiracism work were integral in my decision to complete any content analysis with regards to children's literature. Additionally, my path to picturebooks as a genre, and my relationship with the DPIL and the Dollywood Foundation, created a project

to which I felt a distinct calling. It is unknown if a content analysis of the DPIL collection has ever been completed, let alone a content analysis with regards to race. However, given that the DPIL book collection information is not formally compiled elsewhere, I believe that this study will be the first examination of the DPIL book collection with regards to race representation. A guiding belief of this project, which I held before beginning my study, was that by examining the DPIL collection, I would find that whiteness norms were pervasive amongst the majority of the books selected by the DPIL. This belief was bolstered when I began examining books from 2021 book cycle and found that many of the books which featured BIPOC characters did not identify character racial identity; for example, when examining *The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story* (Bruchac, 1993), I saw that despite the literal title of the book informing readers that Indigenous Peoples would be centered somehow, nowhere in the text are readers told that the two human characters are Cherokee – their appearance is not described other than their gender, and any clues regarding the character's identity is inferred from the book's title and illustrations. This example of a book engaging with the white default and colorblindness despite having what was supposed to be an obviously Cherokee main character further cemented my beliefs. Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to examine how whiteness is reproduced within DPIL books, despite the racial or ethnic identity of characters.

This study is made up of two levels of analysis: the first in which I completed an overview, surface level, critical content analysis (Krippendorf, 2004; White & Marsh, 2006; Schreier, 2014; Johnson et al., 2017) of all DPIL books sent in the year 2021 across all age bands, and the second, more deep level, in which I completed an in-depth and complete critical content analysis on one specific 2021 DPIL book in depth, in an effort to understand how whiteness and whiteness aspects are represented. I used critical whiteness studies (or CWS)

(Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; Casey, 2021; Kolchin, 2002; Nayak, 2007; Twine & Gallagher, 2007) as an analytic framework to analyze how whiteness is shown in DPIL books; the guiding beliefs of CWS were used to analyze how whiteness is represented and reproduced within the selected DPIL book. Using CWS as a frame for a CCA allowed me to examine how whiteness as a race and as a social construct is present within the selected picturebook, and forms a process which I have termed a CWCA, or critical whiteness content analysis.

Key Terms. There are several terms and acronyms used by scholars which are used throughout this study. As a white race scholar, I recognize that many of these terms are not perfect, nor are these terms widely used outside of the academe; for example, in 2005, it was found in 2005 that only 48.1% of surveyed Black individuals actually preferred the term "Black," while 49.2% preferred the term "African American" (Sigelman et al., 2005). However, my selected terms are a reflection of current academic research and best ethical practices within academics. Future best practices will most likely be reflected in changes in racial group terminology (Sigelman et al.), and my future research will certainly reflect those terminology shifts, but these terms reflect a best effort of correctness, specificity and accuracy in the year 2022, in America, to the best of my knowledge.

- *BIPOC*: Stands for "Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color." This term is used as a catch-all term for when referring to multiple different non-white populations of people. This term, pronounced "bye-pock," dates back to 2013, but rose in popularity in 2020, in conjunction with social justice movements in America (Garcia, 2020).

- *Black*: A group of people who are from, or who are descendants of people from, the continent of Africa, as well as other geographic locations where Black populations settled after the African diaspora. The term "Black" is used here instead of the term "African

American," as "Black" does not infer a locationally bound identity. Additionally, some members of the Black community prefer to self-identify using the term Black in an effort to highlight their culture more so than their race (Sigelman et al., 2005, p. 436). Therefore, the term "Black" includes populations who are from, or who are descendants of people from, countries in Africa, the Caribbean, or South America, and is used primarily to denote skin tone and/or culture as opposed to a country of origin.

- *CWS:* Stands for "critical whiteness studies." CWS is a field of study which examines how whiteness exists and interacts within society.
- *CCA:* Stands for "critical content analysis." CCA is a research method which analyzes the contents of a bound collection of (often text based) materials, using a critical theoretical lens.
- *CWCA:* Stands for "critical whiteness content analysis." This is a combination of the abbreviations "CWS" and "CCA," manufactured for the purposes of this paper to indicate that both the theory and the method are inextricably tied together in the process of completing a critical whiteness studies critical content analysis, or a CWS CCA.
- *CYAL:* Stands for "children's and young adult literature." CYAL is an umbrella term used to describe literature intended for readers ages 0-18, and includes picturebooks, early readers, chapter books, middle grade books, and young adult books.
- *DPIL:* Stands for "Dolly Parton's Imagination Library." The DPIL is a book dissemination organization, which sends one free book per month to enrolled children ages 0-5 years old, in hopes of increasing childhood literacy and love of reading.

- *Ethnicity:* "A collectivity within a larger society having real or punitive common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 19). That is, ethnicity is a group for which membership is marked by such elements as religious practices, foods, clothing, language, hairstyles, etc., and is often a part of a person's life by choice or tradition.

- *Latinx:* A group of people who are from, or who are descendants of people from, Latin America. The term "Latinx" is used here as opposed to Latino, as the "x" ending infers gender neutrality. Latinx differs from the term "Hispanic," in that Hispanic is in reference to Spanish language use (and being from or descended from Spanish-speaking places), whereas Latinx is in reference to location (that is, being located in Latin America) – this means that a person from Spain is Hispanic but not Latinx, a person from Mexico is both Latinx and Hispanic, and a person from Portugal is Latinx but not Hispanic. It must be recognized that there is controversy surrounding the term Latinx, especially in relation to the origin of the term Latinx. There are a great deal of Hispanic and Latinx people who do not use "Latinx" when describing themselves, and a great deal of whom find the term Latinx offensive (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020). This is, in part, due to the origins of the term coming from white scholarship – white scholars, seeing that "Latino" was a masculine-gendered word, strove to "fix" the gendered term and to be more gender inclusive. However, as argued by Giancarlo Sopo in *USA Today*, many within Latino/Hispanic communities find the term "Latinx" offensive, and believe that it has come from white supremacy and saviorism, in that white scholars endeavored to solve a problem that did not exist (2019). My choice in using the term Latinx is one I have

thought carefully about, and am choosing to use as a reflection of contemporary American scholarship, and out of a lack of a better, more accurate term. However, it is important for me to note that Latinx is not the perfect term, nor one that Latino/Hispanic communities largely use to describe themselves (Meraji, 2020), and that by choosing to use the term Latinx, I may be engaging in white saviorism.

- *Peritext:* Text or images which are before and/or after the main story of a book; in essence, "all physical features within a book aside from the author's words" (Sipes & McGuire, 2006, p. 291). Peritext includes such features as an introduction, author's notes, an annotated bibliography, an author biography, footnotes, cover art, end paper design, dust jackets, a dedication page, or front and back book jacket flaps.

- *Picturebook:* Books written for and marketed to younger children. Picturebooks must include pictures of some sort, and often (but not always) include text with the pictures; picturebooks typically have fewer than 50 pages, and feature large illustrations and fewer text on the page than is present in books for older readers. According to Kümmerling-Meibauer, the term "picturebook" is preferred by scholars, as opposed to "picture book," as the use of one word serves to "emphasize the inseparable unit of pictures and text" (2018, p. 3).

- *Race:* Race is inclusive of physiological differences such as skin color, hair texture, or facial features (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 23), but is not, in fact, a biological feature of humans. Instead, most scholars agree that racial groups are socially constructed categories in which we place one another, as opposed to deciding for ourselves into which groups we belong. Thus, for my purposes, I will be referring to race as a "human group defined by itself or others as distinct by virtue of perceived common physical

characteristics that are held to be inherent" (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 25). As opposed to ethnicity, inclusion into a racial group is typically not due to a person's choice or tradition, but is placed upon an individual by society at large, often without the consent from the individual in question.

- *White:* To be white is also to be the recipient of centuries of privilege, power, and engagement in a system with placed whiteness as the neutral or default identity, often even lacking racial markers. The white identity is constantly shifting to include or exclude specific groups of people. For example, early Irish citizens who immigrated to the United States and their descendants were not historically considered "white," but gradually were accepted into the identity of "white" over time (Ignatiev, 1995); likewise, the identity of "Latinx" is not currently recognized by the United States as a racial group, and instead, Latinx people can only note their ethnicity as "Hispanic or Latino" (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001), and thus are forced to select a racial group that may not match their identity of Latinx. Often, Latinx people will select their race as "white" and thus are considered white in terms of policy shifts and demographic information, but not included into whiteness as it pertains to social privilege. Shifts of inclusion or exclusion into the white race are political in nature, and are arbitrary. Beyond skin tone, however, white identity operates as a group identity which uses skin tone to signify belongingness – that is, the white identity is simply a racial classification, determined by such aspects as socio-political divisions, history, and economics. Too often, the white identity is defined by other identity group boundaries, but it is important to note that like with all racial groups, race and the white identity is not a biological factor. To be considered white is a combination of centuries of politics, sociology, history, economics, and power, combined

to create a stratified organization of society which remains intact to this day. It is also important to note my choice to use the term "white" as opposed to "Caucasian," as "Caucasian," like "African American" implies location-bound identity.

- *Whiteness:* Whiteness operates in the abstract as a social gatekeeping mechanism, which rewards some specific behaviors, thoughts, and beliefs with privilege, and punishes other behaviors, thoughts, and beliefs which are perceived to be less desirable and therefore not privileged. In this way, whiteness is a form of social power and privilege granted to people who pass in society as white. Whiteness is a social construct, used in reference to behaviors, actions, and beliefs that dominant culture finds acceptable; the behaviors, actions, and beliefs of white people become the acceptable standard, with all others operating outside of the norm, subsequently being "othered" (National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2021; Guess, 2006; Twine & Warren, 2000). Many whiteness scholars posit that whiteness is "not a culture but a social concept" (Leonardo, 2002, p. 32), and that '"whiteness' is a racial discourse, whereas the category 'white people' represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color" (p. 31), with both ideas supporting that whiteness and the white racial group are two separate entities; one is a "performance" (Leonardo, 2002), and the other is the group identity which is being performed.

Aside from definitions and acronyms, it is important here to note capitalization choices throughout my writing.

- When referring to race, the word "Black" will be capitalized, as influenced by Johnson (2018). This is in an effort to "show a radical love…for Black and Brown people who are constantly wounded by white supremacy" (p. 121).

- When referring to race, the word “white” will not be capitalized, as influenced by Corces-Zimmerman & Guida (2019). This is in an effort to “challenge hegemonic grammatical norms and ‘reject the grammatical representations of power capitalization brings to the term ‘white’’” (p. 92).

Both of these capitalization choices are reinforced by the Associated Press, who released a statement in July 2020, which states that the news source capitalizes the word “Black” when “in the context of race and culture,” but would not be capitalizing the word “white” in the same contexts (Bauder, 2020, n.p.). The Associated Press stated that “white people in general have much less shared history and culture, and don’t have the experience of being discriminated against because of skin color” (n.p.), and that “capitalizing the term white, as is done by white supremacists, risks subtly conveying legitimacy to such beliefs” (n.p.). Therefore, in a rejection of white supremacy culture, in recognition that whiteness acts as a system of privilege which moves in a way that benefits white people and that is a detriment to BIPOC people, and in an act of co-conspiracy with BIPOC communities, these capitalization choices were made.

Research Question

My understanding of the necessity for diverse multicultural representation in picturebooks, and my understanding of the DPIL book collection, led me to develop the following research question:

2. How is whiteness represented and reproduced in a select DPIL book?

Positionality

Due to my background and identity, I bring to this project unique beliefs, privileges, and biases, which influence how I view race research and literature for children. I am a white,

cisgender, heterosexual woman. I was born and raised in a middle class suburb in upstate New York, located in the U.S.A. Both of my parents are college educated, as is my sibling. I am ethnically and religiously Jewish. I am a teacher by trade and training, and I prior to beginning my doctoral studies, I taught in a school district located in southern New York, U.S.A., which had an almost entirely white student demographic. I am writing this project located in Knoxville, Tennessee, U.S.A., where I have lived for the last three years as I work towards my Ph.D. As stated before, I grew up in a socially segregated community. I had only one Black classmate until I entered middle school; the number then doubled and held constant as I progressed through high school. The majority of any racial diversity at my alma mater came from a small group of students whose families were first or second-generation Americans who had primarily immigrated from Pakistan, Lebanon, and India. Despite this, my town shares a border with a larger city with much more diversity. This city has a refugee resettlement agency which draws in refugees and immigrants from across the world. As a result, this city is very diverse; as an undergraduate student teacher, I was placed within this city's only high school and had students who had immigrated from Burma, Myanmar, Bosnia, Vietnam, and Cambodia, amongst other countries, and who supplemented the city's already large population of Latinx, Black, Italian, and Polish populations. However close geographically, I spent little to no time in this city growing up. I was, in fact, scared to go into this city, and was actively discouraged from spending time in this city by people in my town, as I was told it was dangerous. This attitude from those in my town towards this neighboring city is still very prevalent. I have to assume that this attitude towards the city and its population is heavily influenced by the city's large non-white population.

I give this background as I believe it is integral in understanding my racial identity formation. I can liken myself and my knowledge of my whiteness as a fish in a fishbowl, trying to identify the concept of water – I was so surrounded by whiteness in my own small community that I wasn't even aware that I was surrounded by it; it simply was. My whiteness, and the whiteness of those around me, was never acknowledged because it never needed to be. It was the default setting, the norm, and the ideal. Whiteness, and the color-blind racism that I grew up steeped in, formed my outlook in life. As such, I am not immune to racism and bias. In fact, I would argue that because our society is racist, few people are truly immune to thinking and behaving in ways that are racist or biased. Unfortunately, I believe that this is the norm for many white people – we participate in whiteness and racism due to white American culture and the communities in which we live. Though we may never purposefully act in ways that are racist, we each are involved in the system of racism, and we draw benefits from it by the very nature of our existence. This is a concept that I continue to struggle with, and probably always will. I feel deeply unsettled by the ways in which I perpetuate whiteness in my teaching craft and in my personal life, and I know that I will continue to make mistakes as I am learning. I struggle on a weekly basis with talking about race, and find myself feeling shy or uncomfortable talking about race with BIPOC people, because I still feel that I am being rude in noticing their racial identity. At the same time, my whiteness gives me this privilege and space to learn about race, as opposed to experiencing racism firsthand as so many BIPOC children and adults do. Despite this, I also believe that there is value in this struggle, and that it is work that I need to undertake.

As a white woman in America, I feel that I can and should leverage my own privilege, and should seek to complete research like this project. As I navigate an educational system rife with race-based inequities (Morris, 2015; Ravitch, 2014; Delpit, 1988; Taylor et al., 2016), I

believe it is both important, and also an ethical necessity, to not only engage in social justice and equity work, but also to relate this work directly to the educational system. I also see my engagement in social justice and equity work to be an integral aspect of my tikkun olam, as well as being integral in my role of an ethical and moral educator and researcher. However, as noted prior, I also need to balance my desire to do good with the reality that my voice should not be louder than those who are already contributing to the body of research about multicultural literature and who may also BIPOC. As this project is focused on whiteness, it is important for me to recognize that I am inherently centering whiteness in my work. I choose to see this centering as a form of naming and knowing one's enemy, because I subscribe to the idea that you can't fight what you can't identity; in other words, "Because [w]hiteness maintains power, in part, through maintaining invisibility, one of the main goals of antiracist education is making [w]hiteness visible (Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides, 2019, p. 9). I know, however, that many race researchers purposely do not engage in whiteness theories and studies, in a purposeful effort to de-center whiteness, and I see a great deal of merit in this thought process as well.

Chapter Summary and Organization of the Study

In this chapter, I delved into my background regarding race awareness, stated my beliefs surrounding multiculturally diverse picturebooks, identified where I see my place in this research stream, and the need for projects such as this study. Chapter two provides a background into past research on multicultural children's literature, showing both a general lack of quality diverse children's literature, as well as a need for research like this project.

Chapter three delves into the method of qualitative critical content analysis, my process of text selection, my data source, and how critical whiteness studies is used to guide the text selection and data analysis process. Chapter four features the collected data and findings from

the data, as well as providing discussion of collected and analyzed data. Finally, chapter five discusses conclusions and recommendations as implied by said data.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter one of this study delved into my background as a learner and scholar of multicultural literature, and my place within the research stream of multicultural literature. Chapter one also contained my research question and important background regarding racial terminology, my racial upbringing, and my relationship with the DPIL. This chapter offers a history of multicultural children's literature in America, a brief history of Black children's literature in America, a history of children's literature as a site to examining whiteness, and a history of critical whiteness studies as a theoretical framework. This chapter also outlines a brief history of content analysis and critical content analysis as methods, and provides a history of the DPIL, as well a brief biography of Dolly Parton. Finally, this chapter illuminates the history and themes of CWS and its relation to other race theories, as well as how CWS could be used to analyze children's literature, as well as how the DPIL came to exist as an educationally philanthropic organization dedicated to increasing childhood literacy.

A History of American Children's Literature

A general history of children's literature in its entirety is fairly linear, and is provided here to act as a counterpoint for specific demographic based histories. The beginnings of children's literature as a genre can be placed back to the late 1400s Europe, with educational texts intended for children which informed young people on manners and proper behavior. This date ignores earlier texts used in school settings, but which were intended for educational purposes, and were not texts for children as much as they were texts used by children for didactic purposes; examples of these texts include the Bible, or horn readers (Stevenson, 2011). The honor of the first children's book not specifically intended for use in schools goes to *Aesop's*

Fables (Caxton, 1484), printed and translated from French in the year 1484 (Stevenson, 2011, p. 184). The distinction of the first picturebook for children is largely attributed to Comenius's *Orbis Pictus*, published in 1658, which was an illustrated encyclopedia written to "delight and inform" child readers (p.185). However, it was not until the popularization of fairy tales that literature for children more formally left the domain of explicit education, and turned to the purposes of entertainment. These tales, gathered first by Charles Perrault in 1697, formed the backbone of literature which maintained entertainment value without overly stating morals or lessons (Stevenson, 2011).

Keeping in mind the debate between author's intent versus actual audience as to what constitutes as children's literature (meaning literature intended for children to read versus literature intended for adults to read to children), many early "children's texts" were full length novels which featured child characters, and included stories and elements which appealed to child readers; however, the language and length of these texts were arguably a barrier than many child readers would find impossible to cross, thus perhaps being intended for adult readers to read to children. Thus, many early children's literature can be debated as to their inclusion into the genre of children's literature. Such early children's texts include 1719's *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe), and 1751-1752's *Gulliver's Travels* (Swift) (Stevenson, 2011, p. 187). During the 18th century, the genre of children's literature began to expand to include readers who were children, and a true market for children's literature began. Thus, many scholars in children's literature agree that the genre of children's literature has its most significant and true beginnings with John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, published in 1744 (p. 188). This text was accessible for child readers, and, for the first time, was published by a large publishing house, thus also making the text available to a much larger child audience.

After Newbery and the more official formation of children's literature as a genre, the market for children's literature swelled. By the 19th century, children's literature had expanded into a popular means of entertainment specifically intended for child audiences, marketed towards children, and written at the level of child readers. Books during this time include Sinclair's 1839 book *Holiday House* (Stevenson, 2011, p. 191), and 1845's *Struwwelpeter* (Martin, 2004). Soon after came more traditional children's literature texts, such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865). Books like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* would pave the way into more modern children's literature, which has proven to be both extensive and primarily focused on white characters.

Because I am focusing specifically on American children's literature, many of the above classic examples of children's literature are applied only by extension; the books were popular in America, but were not published in America. For example, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Struwwelpeter*, and even *A Little Pretty Pocketbook* should not technically be included in a history of American children's literature, as they were published in Europe. Even Stevenson's comprehensive review of the history of children's literature seemingly glosses of American children's literature, stating only that America initially began its history of children's literature by "importing its books for young people" (2011, p. 186). Stevenson gives the example of the *New England Primer*, a publication which ran from 1686 to 1690 in Massachusetts as an early American children's text, but it was more truly an anthology of religious texts and educational materials (p. 186), but Stevenson marks Alcott's *Little Women*, published in 1868, as the first American children's book (2011, p. 191); however, again with the discussion of intended audience, it is possible that *Little Women* may not be considered children's literature so much as it can be considered literature which would be appropriate to read to a child. Thus, one must turn

to Tunnell and Jacobs' comprehensive history of American children's literature to pinpoint the year 1928, with Wanda Gág's picturebook *Millions of Cats* being credited as the first true American children's picturebook (2013, p. 82). Despite having been over hundred years since Newbery's book being published in England, America was only beginning to recognize children's literature as a viable and profitable genre. As stated before, prior to this time, American children's literature were largely imported from other countries, or was arguable in terms of if the text were truly intended for child readers. Additionally, while there were texts for children available before *Millions of Cats*, these books were often anthologies or illustrated songbooks, and thus cannot be described as picturebooks. Quickly after Gág's *Millions of Cats* came several perennial American picturebook classics: *And to Think I Saw It On Mulberry Street*, by Dr. Seuss, written in 1937, *Goodnight Moon*, by Margaret Wise Brown, and *Madeline*, by Ludwig Bemelmans, both written in 1939, and *Make Way for Ducklings,* by Robert McCloskey, written in 1941 (Tunnell & Jacobs, 2013, p. 82). Ironically, Seuss's *And to Think I Saw It On Mulberry Street* has since ceased in publication due to racist and stereotypical images of Asian characters (Dr. Seuss Enterprises, 2021).

Of course, this is not a complete history, but the year 1928 acts as a historical ballast for a specifically American history of picturebooks. However, literature for children outside of picturebooks (that is, chapter books, short story anthologies, fairy tales, or non-illustrated children's books) are much older, as are books published outside of the US and became popular once they entered American society. Examples of these exceptions will appear throughout this chapter.

Multicultural Children's Literature

Examining whiteness in children's literature is difficult for several reasons. Due to the white default, or the assumption that racially unmarked characters are white until proven otherwise, whiteness in children's literature is often not examined, as whiteness serves as the norm and therefore not the subject of interest to many scholars. At the same time, due to the vague nature of whiteness, it can be difficult to even identify whiteness in literature beyond the skin tone of characters; even this practice leaves much to be desired and is an imperfect process. I believe that whiteness in children's literature must first be explored by seeking the inverse, and then filling in the gaps. For my purposes, this means an examination of multicultural children's literature, focusing on Black representation in children's literature as an example, and then an examination of white character representation as a foil to Black representation.

Defining multicultural literature should be a fairly simply task. However, there is a great variety of definitions for what exactly multicultural literature constitutes as. According to Cai (1998), multicultural literature has several, often contradictory, definitions, and these definitions often suffer from being either too inclusive or too exclusive. Multicultural literature can be defined as "works that focus on people of color," or "literature about racial or ethnic minority groups outside the mainstream culture of the United States" (Cai, 1998, p. 311). However, multicultural literature can also include diversity outside of race; another definition of multicultural literature is "books that feature people of color, the elderly, gays and lesbians, religious minorities, language minorities, people with disabilities, gender issues, and concerns about class" (Cai, 1998, p. 312). An alternative definition, given by Kruse and Horning (1990), is that multicultural literature is simply literature that focus on people of color.

For my purposes, I am seeking to be as inclusive as possible with regards to race and ethnicity, but also exclusive of topics outside of my research scope, like religion, sexuality, or socioeconomic status. Therefore, my definition of diverse literature mirrors the definition of multicultural literature that Kruse and Horning give: diverse children's literature, for the purposes of this project, is defined as books written for children, which feature characters of color. This definition, by using the term "feature" instead of "focus," will allow me to examine secondary or tertiary characters of color, as opposed to only examining main characters, while also excluding other diverse groups outside of the scope of my project, such as LGBTQ+ representation, age representation, and social class representation. This definition is exclusionary enough to keep my project scope aligned with my research question, while still being inclusionary to the demographic groups I am seeking to examine.

A complete history of multicultural literature is difficult to provide, given the disagreement with what exactly constitutes as multicultural literature for children. However, I believe that history of multicultural children's literature is best given with specific identity group boundaries – that is, due to the wide disparity of timelines and quality, it is difficult to give an overarching history of all identity groups under the BIPOC umbrella because of the great variety of each identity group under said BIPOC umbrella. Thus, examining Black children's literature serves as just one microcosm of a larger system, and one from which we can extrapolate multicultural children's literature trends and histories with relative success.

In general, multicultural children's literature as a genre follows as such: multicultural literature largely arose in tandem with multiculturalism and the Civil Rights Movement (Gopalakrishnan, 2011). Multicultural books went through several phases in America, the first being before and during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. However,

multicultural literature for children existed far before the Civil Rights Movement; for example, the magazine *The Brownies' Book Magazine,* created in 1912, which was followed by *The Brownies' Book,* both written by W.E.B. DuBois and published in the mainstream (Miller, 2004), both which featured children's stories about Black children, intended for Black child readers, and both which predate the Civil Rights Movement.

Despite this early multicultural literature availability, multicultural children's literature accounted for only a small section of children's literature. It was not until Nancy Larrick's "The All White World of Children's Literature" (1965) that multicultural literature was thrust into the mainstream spotlight, despite many other (often BIPOC) researchers having noticed and written about the same exact topic, and coming to the same exact conclusions. After Larrick's essay came other important changes in the children's book industry; the Council on Interracial Books for Children, or CIBC, was founded in 1965, and the Coretta Scott King book award was founded in 1972 (Gopalakrishnan, 2011). The 1960s and 1970s in America ushered in many new and progressive changes to the children's literature industry, but by the 1990s, quality multicultural literature for children had begun to decrease in quantity, and texts which did exist rested upon stereotypes of often white authors – as Gopalakrishnan writes, "although books were being published about children from diverse backgrounds and of people from different experiences, these seemed to reiterate many of the stereotypical depictions, giving rise to unrest about the authenticity of these stories and experiences" (2011, p. 26). Sentiments like this seem to have led to a number of critical publications which questioned issues of cultural authenticity in children's books being published during and after the 1990s. It was these critical scholarship publications that largely led to racially distinct organizations to form in an effort to provide accurate and quality multicultural books for children, such as independent publishing houses, as

well as research organizations such as the Cooperative Children's Book Center, or CCBC. Heeding the call for the need for more quality multicultural children's literature, independent publishing presses came into popularity. While independent publishing houses had existed for decades at this point, the 1970s-1990s saw an increase in independent publishing houses focused specifically on stories which gave authentic and quality accounts of racially distinct demographic groups. Larger indie presses now include Lee & Low (founded in 1993), Cinco Puntos Press (founded in 1985, and acquired by Lee & Low Books in 2021), Just Us Books (founded in 1988) and Groundwood Books (founded in 1978), which focus on Asian, Latinx, Black and Indigenous Peoples stories, respectively (Nel, 2017; Flax, 2018; Nawotka, 2021).

In the 21st century, multicultural literature has been thrust into the spotlight. A commitment to diversity has been on the forefront of the minds of many publishers with the #WeNeedDiverseBooks movement. The movement, started by the organization WNDB (which stands for We Need Diverse Books), began in 2014, and aimed to spread the message that good quality diverse books were difficult to find. WNDB is traced back to a Twitter conversation between Ellen Oh and Malinda Lo, two young adult literature novelists, who were discussing the lack of diversity in young adult literature. Lo and Oh were specifically discussing an all-male, all-white panel of children's book authors at a children's literature event, and the fact that this panel was a symptom of what was occurring in children's literature at large; that publishing houses were primarily publishing white authors, who were writing about white characters, with a white audience in mind (WNDB, 2021). From this Twitter exchange came the hashtag, and from the hashtag came a movement. As #WeNeedDiverseBooks became more widespread, it caught the eye of many publishing houses, who began to pledge their dedication to providing a more diverse book catalog, and, by extension, contracting with more diverse authors to achieve this

goal. Scholastic Books, for example, even partnered with WNDB starting in 2015, and offered special We Need Diverse Book flyers in an effort to highlight their catalog of diverse titles and stories (Barrett, 2015). Though WNDB is no longer partnering with Scholastic Books, the Scholastic Book Club website does offer a collection titled "Celebrating Diversity," which most likely is intended to continue showcasing their attention to the need for diverse books (Scholastic Book Clubs, 2021).

Alongside #WeNeedDiverseBooks came another literary equity movement, titled #OwnVoices. This movement began on social media as well, and was coined by young adult literature writer Corinne Duyvis on Twitter, where she lamented that an increase in multicultural character representation often came from white authors; Duyvis wanted to see a push for diverse characters being created by diverse authors, as opposed to diverse characters written by authors whose identities do not match the characters (Duyvis, 2021). Though the discussion of who should write for Black audiences is in fact an old conversation (Brown, 1933), it is still a conversation that must be had, especially as American publishing continues to struggle to produce authentic diverse characters.

To further illustrate the nature of whiteness in contrast to multicultural children's literature, a brief history of Black character representation in American children's literature follows here. I am not providing a history of other racial category's character representation in children's literature, as the focus of this research is whiteness. In this way, a history of Black representation serves as an example through which we can examine whiteness, as opposed to serving as a history for the sake of setting the scene. There is an inherent danger in thinking of race as just relating to Black and white racial groups, but I chose to focus on Black representation due to the wealth of information regarding Black representation in children's

literature, whereas other racial group representation histories are often less examined – therefore, I was able to find a great deal of research regarding Black representation and am therefore able to give a more complete picture of Black representation. Furthermore, a precedent of examining whiteness through examining Blackness and Black representation was set by Morrison (1992) and Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019), in which these researchers sought to examine how whiteness operates within literature through examining Blackness. Both texts argue for focusing only on Blackness and whiteness, as opposed to being inclusive of the entire BIPOC community, because "Whiteness in American literature has been defined, in large part, due to Blackness" (Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides, p. 13). Taking my cue from these texts, I too am focusing on whiteness representation through its contrast to Black representation.

In exploring Black character representation in American children's literature, it is important to note that this is simply *a* history, not *the* history of the topic. The very nature of race research demands that it is near impossible to present a comprehensive history of a topic, and especially so for an outsider to a group. Thus, in presenting a history of Black children's literature in America, it is very possible that information is missing either due to gaps in research or due to a lack of easily accessible research. This is not to say that the work is not being done, but that race research is often completed by BIPOC scholars, whose work is too often ignored by the mainstream academe, and therefore unavailable to me during my completing this project. Furthermore, due to ever-shifting nature of race terminology, it can often be difficult to present a comprehensive history of a topic due to different key terms which can make older research difficult to find or properly categorize under specific theoretical or racial frameworks. This sentiment exists throughout histories of BIPOC children's literature in general; as such, this history is not the comprehensive history of a subgenre, but simply a history. Additionally, this

history is rife with examples of racist language, racist stereotypes, and racist imagery of non-white characters. These terms are written in this project because bowdlerization or redaction of racist terminology for the purpose of relieving feelings of guilt and discomfort on the part of white people is not in line with critical race scholarship at large.

A History of Black Children's Literature in America. Black characters in children's literature largely arose in the mid-1800s, and largely out of Europe. Some of the earliest books from this time are Hoffmann's *Struwwelpeter*, which featured "The Story of the Inky Boys," and Bannerman's *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (Martin, 2004). These stories, published in 1845 and 1899, respectively, tell of two young Black African boys who engage in misadventure. As noted by Martin, both Hoffmann and Bannerman's texts are noteworthy as some of the earliest portrayals of Black characters in children's literature, due to the fact that prior to the mid-1800s, any Black characters in children's literature were uncommon in the first place, let alone how uncommon it was for Black characters to be titular characters in stories (2004, p. 3). Both of these stories enjoyed great popularity upon publication, and attracted young readers for decades without any major controversies or critiques. These controversies and critiques did come, but not until several decades after publication. In fact, *The Story of Little Black Sambo,* a text which is largely agreed upon to have racist portrayals of Black characters, was not criticized for being racist until the 1940s, when professional journals began publishing articles which stated opinions like that "Sambo had the potential to destroy the self-image of African-American child readers," and that "the book damaged 'the developing minds of white children by giving them a model caricature that demeans that ridicules [B]lack children'" (Martin, 2004, p. 7).

Despite these future critiques, both books maintained fairly high levels of popularity for quite some time, most likely due to the fact that they were some of the only portrayals of Black

children in literature during these early years. Martin argues that this popularity due to the filling of a niche was simply a matter of timing, as "[the authors] wrote about minority characters at a time when minorities in society and especially in literature were marginalized to the point of invisibility" (2004, p. 14). Therefore, the damage that may have been done in racist portrayals of Black children was almost excused to an extent due to the novel nature of the Black character being portrayed, as well as the idea that some representation is better than none at all. Of note is the fact that Bannerman was a contemporary to Beatrix Potter, as well as many other Golden Age children's literature authors, almost none of whom wrote about or created Black characters, while Bannerman went on to write several additional African characters into existence, such as *Little Black Mingo* (1902) and *Little Black Quibba* (1903) (Martin, 2004, p. 15).

One of the first seminal text in the timeline of Black portrayals in American children's literature was the McLoughlin brothers' *Ten Little Niggers*, which was published in 1875. This story was originally a song by the same name, and had enjoyed mass popularity, which lead to an illustrated songbook version. Important to note here is that this story is not a picturebook, but does hold a place in the history of Black representation in texts intended for children. The story, alternatively titled "Ten Little Nigger Boys" or "Ten Little Injuns," tells of 10 Black brothers who are "eliminated" (Martin, 2004, p. 21) in succession, and is set to rhyme. These eliminations often ended in death in a variety of ways, such as cutting oneself in half with an axe or being mauled by a bear, but left three brothers with less injurious eliminations, such as oversleeping, a bee sting, and staying home from a trip. The popularity of this book and its story can be seen in more modern interpretations, such as Agatha Christie's *Ten Little Niggers.* Later retitled as *And Then There Were None* (1939), Christie's book takes inspiration from the means of elimination of the brothers, as well as taking both titles from the song and subsequent picturebook.

After *Ten Little Niggers* and its multiple iterations and reprints came a series of abecedaries, or ABC books, which includes Kemble's *A Coon Alphabet* (1898) (Martin, 2004, p. 27). Kemble's book is written in rhyme, and features Black characters in gross stereotype, as well as being written in a version of dialect which implies a southern accent, a lack of education, or perhaps both; for example, the letter D features a quartet which reads "D is for Didimus / what blew down a gun / now he and his sister / ain't havin' much fun." The poem is paired with an illustration that shows a picture of a Black boy and a Black girl playing with a rifle, which then discharges into the boy's face (Martin, 2004, pp. 29-30). Other quartets for other letters read very much the same, and most utilize disparaging racial stereotypes and racist language, with all concerning young Black children.

Continuing in the timeline of Black portrayal in children's literature, we next move into the 20th century, which is ushered in by Kempson's *The Sad End of Erica's Blackamoor*, published in 1903 (Martin, 2004, p. 32). Though originally published in England, *The Sad End of Erica's Blackamoor* was widely available in America, and told the story of a Black child puppet turned real boy, much like the story of Pinocchio. The unnamed "blackamoor" plays with Erica and her brother Dick, but the play ultimately culminates into the "blackamoor" hitching a dog to a cart, in the style of a horse and carriage; his reckless driving of the cart ultimately kills him. Upon finding his body, Erica "only shed a very few tears for him, for she knew now what a bad black ungrateful heart he had" (Martin, 2004, p. 35); Erica, Dick, and their governess then bury the body, which had also been disarticulated by wild animals.

These early texts, though early representations of Black children in children's literature, also seem to serve a social purpose. Martin notes in recounting the story of *The Sad End of Erica's Blackamoor* that the story of the blackamoor offers a moral to white readers regarding

Black children: “expect the worst, and don’t trust them with anything you own” (Martin, 2004, p. 36). In fact, it seems that the majority of early Black children’s literature served two purposes at once: to entertain white children, and to educate white children about the dangers of Black children. However, it’s important to note that these early portrayals of Black characters were created and written by white authors, and intended for a white audience. Stories for children which featured Black characters, written by Black authors, were far less common, and was ushered in with the W.E.B. DuBois’s magazine *The Brownies’ Book Magazine*, created in 1912, which was followed by *The Brownies’ Book*. *The Brownies’ Book Magazine* is seen as a turning point in Black representation in children’s literature, as the published stories portrayed positive images of Black children, both fictional and real, as well as representing a shift in authorship and audience, with these publications being some of the earliest in which Black writers were writing specifically for a Black child reader. As noted by Miller (2004), prior to *The Brownies’ Book Magazine*, “children who wanted to read about [B]lack characters in children’s literature could read about buffoons, mammies, Sambos, or savages, but not about the beauty of ‘Children of the Sun’” (p. 20).

In fact, these early portrayals of Black characters, written largely by white authors, fell into 7 major stereotypes, as identified by Sterling Brown in 1933: “The Contented Slave, the Wretched Freeman, the Comic Negro, the Brute Negro, the Tragic Mulatto, the Local Color Negro, and the Exotic Primitive” (Bishop, 2007, p. 68; Martin, 2004, p. 20). These 7 stereotyped portrayals represent most Black characters which were available in literature prior to *The Brownies’ Book,* and can still be found in many text published after. Not only were these stereotyped portrayals harmful to the understanding of race as held by white children, but they also served a social education purpose, which was to continually place Black individuals within a

social hierarchy below white individuals, or to teach about how Black people should be treated by white people. For example, the Wretched Freeman stereotype teaches white readers that Black people in fact enjoyed their enslavement during American chattel slavery, and continue to need a lower place in social hierarchy in order to feel safe – this narrative not only comforted white enslavers into feeling that they were right in enslaving and abusing other human beings, but also taught that white enslavers had actually done enslaved Africans a favor.

The Brownies' Book Magazine and *The Brownies' Book* both filled an important void in children's literature. Created by DuBois, Dill, and Fauset, the intention of both Brownies' Book publications was as follows:

> They [DuBois, Dill, and Fauset] wanted African-American children and young adults to know about the history and achievements of Negro people. They wanted Negro children to know that even though [B]lack people in America had endured many struggles, they had also achieved many goals. For them, it was important to have a magazine that taught [B]lack children about the lives of other [Bl]lack people, because most of the other children's magazines, movies, schoolbooks, and picture books in 1920 portrayed [B]lack people as being ugly and rarely, if ever, doing anything important. (Martin, 2004, p. 39)

This objective was met by normalizing being Black, familiarizing readers with Black American history and achievements, and providing stories which both educated and entertained Black children navigating in a white America. Likewise, *The Brownies' Book* publications provided a first true window for Black child readers to see stories about themselves which were accurate and written for them, as opposed to being relegated to reading stories about Sambo.

In the year 1932, Arna Bontemps, with Langston Hughes, published *Popo and Fifina: Children of Haiti*. Unlike many early Black child characters, who often presented in racist and stereotypical ways, Popo and Fifina were represented in a way that was authentic culturally, and whose portrayal was positive (Harris, 1990). This book also represents one of the very first picturebooks which featured Black characters, and which was published in America. However, characters like Popo and Fifina were far and few between, and overall, the 1930s can be seen as lacking a significant number of Black portrayals in children's literature. By the 1940s, Black characters in children's literature were featured not only several revisions of Kemble's *Ten Little Niggers*, like those titled *Ten Little Colored Boys*, by Gondor (1942) and *Ten Little Negros*, by Trier (1942), but readers were also introduced to some of the first examples of positive portrayals of Black children as written by white authors. Two such examples include *Two Is a Team*, by Beim, was published in 1945, which is now recognized as being the "first racially balanced picture book," as well as 1947's *Nappy Has a New Friend*, by Inez (Martin, 2004, p. 46). Both of these stories were about Black children who are friends with white children. The 1940s also saw some of the first Black authors, writing for Black children, who were able to enter the mainstream publishing world of children's literature, as opposed to self-publishing their stories (Martin, 2004, p. 49).

At this point, it is important to again tie the history of American children's literature to American history at large. The 1950s and 1960s saw school desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement, which would last into the 1960s. Prior to the Civil Rights Movement, BIPOC characters in children's literature were far and few between, and largely presented in a racist way. Black portrayals in children's literature published in the 1950s and 1960s are reflective of this massive social shift. Books like Keats's *The Snowy Day*, Urdy's *What Mary Jo Shared*, and

Scott's *Sam* were published during this time, each which portrayed Black children in a way that felt normalized. In fact, many of these books do not mention any child's skin color or racial identity at all, reinforcing the idea in the 1950s and 1960s that being color-blind, or not noticing race, was the correct way of dealing with racism and racial differences. Additionally, professional organizations like the CIBC were created – the existence of organization like the CIBC coincided with research which sought to examine depictions of racial minority characters in children's literature. Jumping forward in time, the 1970s saw a great increase in Black portrayals within children's literature. Several abecedaries and counting books were published which featured African language and traditions, which reflects the American social interest in Africa and African pride (Martin, 2004, p. 53).

The 1980s were arguable one of the most influential decades in children's literature with regards to racially diverse portrayals. With publishing companies like Just Us Books, and books series like the Afro-Bets, the normalization of Black stories and Black bodies was beginning to gather steam in the literary world. This progress was furthered in the 1990s – Black children were increasingly more present in books for kids, and the children present in such stories were not part of a didactic agenda, nor elements of cautionary tales (Martin, 2004) – they simply existed in the world, as so many children do. With the turn of the new millennium and lasting into 2022, Blackness in literature was enhanced with a new agenda; the celebration of Blackness. Characters were no longer relegated to color-blind roles, but instead embraced their racial and ethnic backgrounds, with books which showcase and name different skin tones, eye shapes, and hair textures, and which tell stories that affirm the beauty and joy of Blackness.

In examining a history of Black characters in American children's literature, there obviously exists a great spectrum of literature which included secondary or tertiary Black

characters, or are inspired by but do not show Black people, which I have not included, as they will not be within the scope of my dissertation. These texts include such titles as *The Cat in the Hat* (Seuss, 1957), *The Story of Doctor Dolittle* (Lofting, 1920), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Dahl, 1964), and *Mary Poppins* (Travers, 1934), all of which were explored by Nel in his seminal text *Was the Cat in the Hat Black?* (2017). In these books, as well as many others, BIPOC characters appear as minor characters, or act as inspiration for anthropomorphized animal characters. Many of these appearances were problematic and led to bowdlerized editions of these texts, as well as a more contemporary critique of these texts as being problematic (Nel, 2017), a direct harkening to the story of Sambo and many other texts which, in more modern times, have been recognized to be racist. Additionally, the children's literature community has also become more aware of the dangers of portraying raced characters as animals, such as with the Cat in the Hat (Nel, 2017; Ishizuka & Stephens, 2019)). For example, Black children in literature were often shown with an ape-like appearance, or are represented by anthropomorphized monkey or ape characters, a practice referred to as simianization (Hund et al., 2015; Campbell, 2019), and research has slowly begun to delve into the topic of simianization and its inherent dangers.

The CCBC, in compiling their diversity statistics, have reported that, on the whole, children's literature which feature Black characters has increased between 1994 to 2001 (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2021). This frequency count can be seen on Table 1, found on page 163 of this study. All figures are rounded to the closest whole number unless noted. As of the year 2002, the CCBC was continuing to analyze books to compile diversity statistics. However, these frequency counts differ, as they are based on books received by the CCBC, as opposed to an estimated total of books published in a given year (Cooperative

Children's Book Center, 2021). The years of 2002-2020 can be seen in Table 2, found on page 163 of this study, and shows a frequency count of CCBC data from 2002-2020 (with data from 2021 yet to be compiled or analyzed). All figures are rounded to the closest whole number unless noted.

Of note is that the statistics in Table 2 represent sum total of books received at the CCBC, of which most, if not all, are published in America. However, frequency counts of U. S. published books were only tracked as of 2018. When comparing sum total received books to only the U. S. published books, book totals do vary slightly. For example, in the year 2020, the CCBC received 400 books about Black people, and of them, 392 were published in the United States (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2021). These differences in publication location account for a total of 52 books out of a total 3,299 books received, or 1.6% of all books analyzed. While these books are significant when examining frequency, I do not believe that this margin of differentiation greatly affects frequency trends overall, nor the calculated means. Therefore, while these figures are not perfectly aligned to the American publishing industry, they serve as a close facsimile. All figures from the CCBC are representative of all books received by the CCBC, as opposed to only U. S. published books.

Whiteness in Children's Literature. The history of multicultural children's literature stands in stark contrast with white representation within children's literature, in that not only are white people the most represented demographic group within children's literature, but also in that white people are rarely examined as a demographic group within children's literature; thus, a formal history of white characters in children's literature does not exist, as it has too often been synonymous with the overall history of children's literature. Additionally, whiteness is rarely ever remarked upon by authors when describing characters. Instead, authors tend to lack racial

descriptors when describing white characters, and only including BIPOC characters with racial markers like descriptions of skin tone or hair texture. As a result, while there are entire books dedicated to the history of Black representation within children's literature, texts which track the dates and titles of books which portray Black characters, a white counterpart of such research does not exist. As with white characters in literature, white literature seems to stand as the unspoken norm, and is therefore unremarkable. Thus, whiteness in children's literature is difficult to track in that whiteness lives in the absence of markers, and the unmarked nature of whiteness leaves a great deal of ambiguity.

The CCBC began tracking Black/African characters in 1985, and by 2018 were tracking statistical data for Black/African, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Arab representation in children's books. However, the CCBC has not remarked upon nor compiled whiteness or white identity data. Instead, one must extrapolate white representation from the gaps of the data, much as one must do so for white representation in children's literature. For example, in the year 2020, 3,299 books were received by the CCBC (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2021). These books are represented on Table 3, found on page 164 of this study. The data provided from each racial category add to a total of 1,001 books, which leaves 2,298 books unaccounted for. It is possible that these 2,298 books are about white characters, which accounts for 69.7% of the books from 2021.

This data, translated into percentages, is shown on Table 4, found on page 164 of this study. The data serves two purposes: it first outlines the stark difference in white representation versus any other demographic group, but also shows by not including white representation within their data, the CCBC shows an incomplete picture. This also shows that the CCBC, like many other research organizations and researchers, have fallen into the same danger of not closely

examining whiteness and white characters, thereby reinforcing the idea that whiteness is the norm and any deviation from whiteness is the Other. It is important to note here that the CCBC does track an uncharted demographic under the name “Brown skin,” which they use when they are unable to make an accurate assumption about a character’s identity from an illustration, they code this character as having brown skin (personal communication). As this category is uncharted, it also stands to reason that some of the 69.7% that I attributed to white representation could also be attributed to the “Brown skin category,” but I am unable to make any determination between the two categories, nor does the CCBC track the “Brown skin” category within their data. However, based on the 2019 CCBC data, statistics showed that Black/African characters made up 11.9% of books, Indigenous Peoples 1%, Asian 8.7%, Latinx, 5.3%, Pacific Islander, 0.5%, “Brown skin” 9.2% and white 41.8% (Cooperative Children’s Book Center, 2020). Therefore, it stands to reason that approximately 10% of the total CCBC book population could account for the “Brown skin” category, leaving the remaining 59.7% to account for white characters. However, this figure may not be stated with total accuracy, given the lack of definite CCBC data in this regard.

Kirkus Reviews, a leader in children’s literature reviews, did not note white character racial identity within their published book reviews until fall 2015 (Smith, 2016); prior to this, non-white character racial identities were specifically stated in each book review, but whiteness was unnamed and seemingly unremarkable. This movement towards recognizing that whiteness needed to be named, as opposed to being the unstated and therefore the default or neutral identity, is relatively new to literary criticism, and works to specifically battle the ideas of white invisibility and white supremacy. In his 2017 book, Philip Nel writes that white supremacy is tied directly to the idea of white invisibility, or the idea that whiteness is a stand-in for neutrality

and the social norm. Despite the fact that the author may not have intended to specifically write a white character, when the author refuses to put in racial markers in the written text, racial markers describing characteristics like skin tone or hair texture, most readers assume that the said character is in fact a white person, which then furthers the idea that whiteness is equal to neutrality. Furthermore, Nel writes that "culturally unmarked [w]hite characters read as 'universal' characters" (2017, p. 109), which explains the mass appeal of unmarked (and therefore white default) characters in books in the eyes of many publishers and authors – it is easy for children to project themselves, but easier for white children to do so. In quoting Richard Dyer, Nel writes that much of the power that whiteness holds in society comes from its ability to pose as neutrality, or as a stand in for humanity itself; in opposition, therefore, any character or person not marked as white is automatically othered, or placed outside of the norm. As Nel quotes "Other people are raced, [white people] are just people" (2017, p. 119), and that white characters serve as "beings without properties, unmarked, universal, just human" (2017, p. 131). This lack of white racial markers creates a cycle in which whiteness is unremarked upon, and therefore unremarkable, which allows for future authors to not remark upon whiteness, thereby creating a system in which only non-whiteness is remarked upon, and as a result, whiteness escapes both being marked and being examined – by the very fact that whiteness remains unnamed, it remains largely unexamined, and therefore remains as unremarkable and uncritiqued.

Children's literature is rife with examples in which white people are the only people present, as they act as a stand in for the every-man, which feeds into the cycle of white supremacy in children's literature and in society. In fact, Nel makes the argument that by including racist or white supremacist children's literature within our classrooms and homes, we

allow racism to persist for future generations. Nel writes of his 2017 book, *Was the Cat in the Hat Black?* that his book "is about how racist ideologies persist in the literature and culture of childhood, frequently in ways that we fail to notice on a conscious level. It is about how race is present especially when it seems to be absent" (p. 4). In aiming to create "race neutral" texts, authors often accidentally engage in racist tropes or beliefs, or pigeonhole characters or storylines to specific genres or historical periods, which are then published and consumed by children, who, in turn, internalize these beliefs as fact until they are taught otherwise.

As a result of all of this, whiteness is rarely remarked upon in scholarship. Whiteness still remains the unspoken default in children's literature. Too often, authors will mark raced characters with descriptions of hair texture, eye shape or skin tone, perhaps even evoking comparisons to food or tree species, as opposed to outright stating a character's racial identity. In these descriptions, readers can infer a character's racial identity. Whiteness, on the other hand, is rarely if ever described or stated in relation to a character's identity, and therefore stands as the default.

Of course, this business of using racial markers to identify race, as opposed to simply stating a character's racial identity, can be messy to say the least; in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games,* the character Rue (a young Black female character) is racially marked by the following description; "She has dark brown skin and hair, but other than that, she's very like Prim in size and demeanor" (2008, p. 45). However, other than these few words, Rue's racial identity was never specifically stated – readers were left to infer based on having dark brown skin and eyes that Rue is a person of color. However, as a result of not reading closely, a simple act of forgetting, or any other number of reasons, the majority of *The Hunger Games* readers did

not pick up on the fact that Rue is a person of color, and instead focused on the second part of the sentence – that Rue reminded the main character of her younger sister, a white girl.

This all came to a head in 2012 when *The Hunger Games* was released as a movie. Upon seeing Rue represented on screen with a Black child actress (as was accurate to the description in the text), many readers and watchers of *The Hunger Games* movie exploded in anger. The New Yorker ran an article soon after the release of *The Hunger Games* movie, summarizing the scandal at hand. Aptly named, "White Until Proven Black: Imagining Race in Hunger Games," journalist Anna Holmes delved into the dark underbelly of Twitter to dredge up proof of the racist outrage surrounding the character of Rue. Such examples include Twitter users stating "I was pumped about the Hunger Games. Until I learned that a [B]lack girl was playing Rue" (2012, n.p.) and "Kk call me racist but when I round out [R]ue was [B]lack her death wasn't as sad" (2012, n.p.). Holmes connected these tweets and the sentiments behind them to the death of Trayvon Martin, and to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, exploring the ways in which Blackness both takes away the innocence of Black people while simultaneously taking away their ability to be seen by society.

While a fascinating dive into the nexus between race, social media, and children's literature, I wish to digress here and refocus on the nature of whiteness in children's literature. What this anecdote shows is the danger of the white default, and what seems to be typical reactions of readers when the white default is disrupted. Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides write that the entire situation where Rue was imagined to be white, and the subsequent outrage upon discovering that Rue was in fact a Black girl, connects to the white default in that "because literature has been dominated by [w]hiteness, readers assume that characters are [w]hite unless they are explicitly names as otherwise; and [w]hite readers steeped in dominant [w]hite racial

ideology bring their own assumptions and expectations to texts…White readers are so used to assuming [w]hiteness, but they often, as was the case with Rue, resist when their assumptions turn out to be inaccurate" (2019, p. 35). However, as it stands, within the domain of children's literature domain, whiteness still remains largely invisible and unremarkable. Children's literature authors, publishers and reviewers (before the year 2015) rarely remarked upon the whiteness of characters – whiteness was the unspoken identity of characters, while all other non-white racial identities were, in some form of another, inferred to the reader. Whiteness became, and still is, the unspoken neutral identity stand-in for characters; whiteness remains so neutral that it does not deserve notation in most texts. In this way, whiteness became, and still operates as, an invisible, difficult to pinpoint or identify, aspect of literature that pervades most all children's literature. Just like whiteness within society, whiteness in children's literature remains largely unremarkable, the standard to which all others must silently conform or clearly separate from, with serious repercussions to either choice.

This issue is complicated further by the assumption of the white reader. As Nel (2017) alludes to, many writers create white characters in an effort to appeal to majority readers; therefore, it follows that many authors assume that the majority of readers can be assumed to be white. Assumed white readership, while not a theme of scholarly research nor a specific race theory tenet, impacts whiteness in children's literature by increasing the likelihood that authors create white characters to stand as neutral characters, and increasingly the likelihood that white authors who write about BIPOC characters use these characters for ulterior purposes, such as teaching the assumed white reader a moral about interacting with BIPOC people. Rudine Sims (who later published as Rudine Sims Bishop, 1990) alluded to the assumed white reader in her

text *Shadow and Substance* (1982), in which she creates three categories that multicultural literature will fall within. These categories are:

1. Social conscious stories, which are books intended to create or develop a social conscious for non-Black readers in an effort to "encourage [white readers] to develop empathy, sympathy and tolerance for Black children and their problems. They are typically written by white authors" (Sims, 1982, p. 17). These types of books are perhaps inspired by a belief that children were socialized through literature, and that children's literature is a means of "stabilizing social assumptions" about specific people, or that this literature reaffirms social beliefs about specific people, furthering societal constrains and racist ideology (MacCann, 1998, p. VX).

2. Melting pot stories, which reinforce the idea that America is a "melting pot," or a homogenous and color blind society, cured of social ills like racism. These books often lack textual race markers, relying solely on illustration to show the race of characters; therefore, these books "do not concern themselves with racial prejudice, discrimination or conflict. Nor do they project any distinctly Black experiences of traditions. Their topics and themes are the same as any of other realistic picture books for young children – friendships, family relationships, familiar every day experiences" (Sims, 1982, pp. 33-34).

3. Culturally conscious stories, which are books that "reflect…the social and cultural traditions associated with growing up Black in the United States" (Sims, 1982, p. 49). Culturally conscious books are typically written by Black authors, are intended for Black child readers, and use both text and illustration together to depict life as a Black

American child, utilizing cultural markers, linguistic features, and other lifestyle markers which create a more authentic image of Blackness and Black identity.

These categories prove integral in examining the quality of Black characters, as well as determining the intended audience of books which center Black characters. On the other hand, these categories show powerful insight into what occurs when white readership is assumed. For example, if one were to examine very early representations of Black characters using the story of *The Sad of Erica's Blackamoor* (Kempson, 1903), one can infer that this story meets the qualifications of a social conscious story, in that the book teaches an explicit moral about what white children should expect of Black children in terms of behavior and trustworthiness. Additionally, the story was written by a white author, and reaffirms social beliefs at the time about the social places of Black and white children. Furthermore, whiteness appears throughout Kempson's book in that whiteness is unmarked (with the Blackamoor's Blackness marked in illustration, in name, and in the peritext, which compares the book's Blackamoor character to the "real life [B]lack men [who] live in Africa (Martin, p. 33). While one example, a similar analysis of many other children's books could be completed with the same findings. In this way, the assumed white readership and the unmarked nature of whiteness work in tandem to obscure whiteness within children's literature, framing whiteness as the normal or default race, and placing a premium on the identity of whiteness for character and reader alike. Other categorizations of Black characters in literature read by children comes from Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides, who wrote that books tend to present stories which feature Black characters through one of three different lenses: stock stories (which "impose a view of the world based on [white] perspective"), white savior narratives ("stories which feature good [w]hite people 'saving

the day' for people of color"), and counterstories (stories which "feature perspectives of people whose voices historically have been marginalized or silences") (2019, p. 78).

Making Whiteness Visible in Children's Literature. The practice of making whiteness visible in children's literature is not a new practice. The CIBC published in 1974 an article titled "10 Quick Ways to Analyze Books for Racism and Sexism," which acts as a form of critical image analysis, and prompts readers to examine 10 specific aspects of children's literature, from illustration, plotline, author background, copyright date, and historical context, in an effort to reveal latent examples of racism and sexism. This text, though not specifically aimed at examining whiteness, is an earlier example of scholarship which asks readers to specifically examine relationships between BIPOC characters and white characters, in an effort to illuminate the dominance of whiteness culture within children's literature, as well as the prevalence of racist portrayals of characters. For example, on page 1 of the text, the CIBC recommends to "check the illustrations," and to "look for tokenism," which explained with the following: "If there are non-white characters, are they just like the white faces but tinted or colored in? Do all minority faces look stereotypically alike or are they depicted as genuine individuals?" (1974). Echoes of this CIBC publication appear throughout this study, and despite being an older text, the "10 Quick Ways…" have greatly impacted the analysis of racially diverse children's literature still to this day, as well as acting as a trusted tool for parents, educators, librarians, and scholars alike.

Increasingly over the last few years, both children's literature and scholarship around children's literature have seen developments within the calling out of pervasive whiteness aspects within American children's literature. Novels like *Dig* (King, 2019) and *All American Boys* (Reynolds & Kiely, 2015) have named and addressed whiteness, and discuss topics

surrounding whiteness and white privilege. Of course, the story of race is told in averages, not outliers (to paraphrase from Irving's 2014 memoir), and thus we must recognize that these types of books, books which name and examine whiteness, are outliers and not the norm. So too is scholarship specifically examining whiteness within children's literature more of an outlier than a norm – however, as stated before, increases in this type of scholarship is occurring, and is spreading outside the academe into more widely available venues. Take, for example, Capshaw's examination of King's *Dig*. Capshaw wrote in her 2019 post on PublicBooks.org that *Dig* examines whiteness not only by examining power structures, but also in examining the power that racism and white privilege are given when they are unspoken, unnamed, and uninterrogated. Capshaw explains that the novel's treatment of whiteness and racism, separate but intertwined ideas, is indicative of a lineage of CYAL which seeks to act as a force of social education and instruction – Capshaw gives examples of CYAL texts which speak directly to BIPOC beauty and joy instead of focusing on racism, as well as CYAL which focus on historical racial oppression (n.p.). However, the examples she gives, Capshaw notes, are primarily those written by BIPOC authors; "Yet children's books by white writers about white characters rarely engage with whiteness, be it in terms of is social advantages, its systems of perpetuating power, or its history of discrimination" (2019, n.p.). Capshaw notes that the majority of CYAL authors are white, and one can assume a white intended readership (as discussed prior), so she queries: is this silence about whiteness contributing to the myth of white childhood racial innocence?

Capshaw's examination of *Dig* is representative of a newer wave of CYAL literary scholarship, in which whiteness is examined both in its presence and its absence. Writers and scholars have begun to grapple with how whiteness is named or unnamed, how it is used or ignored, and how it operates within larger power systems. However, as Capshaw noted, much of

this work is being done by BIPOC authors, who by writing about racism, confront whiteness. White authors writing specifically about whiteness still remains uncommon, but slowly white authors are beginning to examine whiteness in CYAL. Picturebooks like *Not My Idea: A Book about Whiteness* (Higgenbotham, 2018) and *Race Cars* (Devenny, 2016) both name and explore whiteness in their own ways, and seek to examine whiteness at level appropriate for picturebook readers. *Not My Idea: A Book about Whiteness* delves into the topic of white racial colorblindness. Higgenbotham addresses white people's roles in racism, both in our explicit acts of microaggression and racism, and also in our passivity and refusal to be antiracist. The picturebook specifically features child characters, and tells the story of a young white girl as she moves through her white community, seeing instances of racism, and questioning the ways that racism and whiteness work for her and for Black people. Higgenbotham writes, "Racism is a white person's problem and we are all caught up in it…mostly by refusing to look at it" (2018, pp. 23-24), a sentiment echoed by many race scholars but largely absent in picturebooks.

Likewise, *Race Cars* (2016) examines racism; however, the book engages in metaphorical race representation by telling the story of a black car and a white car engaged in a literal car race, meant to represent a Black person and a white person (or perhaps, a Black community and a white community). *Race Cars* varies drastically from *Not My Idea: A Book about Whiteness* in two regards: the first is that *Race Cars* would likely take more parental involvement and explanation due to the nature of the metaphor of car color representing race. It's possible that without an adult guiding them, a child reader would not understand the implied message of race and white privilege behind this story. Additionally, unlike *Not My Idea: A Book about Whiteness*, *Race Cars* ends when the "Race Commission," a group of white cars who make the rules, decide that the Black car may rejoin the race; this happy ending is not reflective

of reality, nor does it help child readers grapple with racism. While *Not My Idea: A Book about Whiteness* ends with uncertainty and discomfort, *Race Cars* ends with a sense of false hope. However, despite their differing approaches, both picturebooks do examine aspects of whiteness, and both tackle the topic of whiteness in child friendly methods. Interestingly, Higgenbotham is a white woman, as is Devenny, yet neither authors' biographies mention their racial identity, (Quarto Kids, 2021; Higginbotham, 2022), though both have stated their white racial identities in interviews (Lavoie, 2021; Vilas, 2018) which is ironic considering that both texts speak to the power that whiteness holds when it remains unnamed.

Both *Not My Idea: A Book about Whiteness* and *Race Cars*, as well as several other CYAL texts, make a concerted effort to make whiteness visible in children's literature; a task often not undertaken for a multitude of reasons. These texts appear to be increasing over time, and though not accounting for a majority of CYAL texts, the fact that these texts even exist certainly shows that CYAL as a genre is beginning to examine race and whiteness. It follows, then, that academic scholarship regarding making whiteness visible in CYAL is also increasing. For example, Melissa Schieble wrote a 2012 article on the topic of discussing whiteness in the secondary classroom through the use of young adult literature. Using the texts *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007) and *Speak* (Anderson, 1999), Schieble seeks to "critique systems of oppression and to empower students" by "attending more explicitly to whiteness in instruction [which] is a critical competent of literacy teaching" (2012, p. 212). More specifically, Schieble used Critical Race Theory as a lens through which to examine how whiteness is interpreted within young adult literature, and then examines how whiteness intersects marginalized identities of the two main characters of the two chosen novels, in an

effort to model how in-service teachers could do the same within their classrooms, with their students.

Schieble notes in her text, as many other whiteness scholars do, that attending solely to whiteness when discussing race has its inherent dangers. She writes, "Although such conversations [about whiteness] are well intentioned, we must acknowledge that explicitly attending to whiteness in YA literature risks recentering whiteness as central to work on antiracism…Without bringing multiple representations of whiteness into the discussion, whiteness remains unseen and normalized" (2012, p. 214). This quote is the crux of Schieble's text – examining, naming, and defamiliarizing whiteness is integral to antiracism work. Though Schieble engages in Critical Race Theory within the text, she also overlays whiteness studies as a frame, and utilizes discourse analysis to study how identity is "tied to certain dominant Discourses of whiteness" (p. 214) – in essence, how examining whiteness appears both thematically and literally for both white and BIPOC characters, and how was whiteness named and addressed in the text (if at all).

Ebony Elizabeth Thomas also examined whiteness in her text *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games* (2019). In this text, Thomas examines the prevalence of whiteness within CYAL fantasy texts and other youth media. In examining *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), Thomas notes how poverty overlays white identity when the novel looks at appearances of characters – those with features more often associated with whiteness were of a higher social class than those whose features trended towards darker coloring or Black racial markers. Likewise, Thomas notes that when *The Hunger Games* was turned into a film, the main character was cast with an actress who had features associated with whiteness, and whose hair was dyed dark in an attempt to portray a character

with darker features. Thomas explains that this act of "strategic whiteness," which "re-centers [w]hite people within our popular media without explicitly calling attention to that fact" (2019, p. 40) is one of the more insidious ways in which whiteness is both pervasive and amorphous, able to constantly shift to take positions of power.

Thomas also addresses the idea of the white default in terms of fantastical worlds, explaining one of the many reasons why Black characters in fantasy literature seem to be scarce. She writes, "seeing a dark-skinned character, particularly one who is of discernable African ancestry, seems to break the spell [of suspension of disbelief]" (2019, p. 75). Including a Black character in a fantasy space disrupts the idea of whiteness as neutrality, but it also forces the audience to attend to racial identity. As a result, often Black characters and other characters of color in fantasy or fantastical texts are far and few between (unless, of course, the setting demands it, such as a fantastical world set in a pseudo-African continent). Even in historical fiction and historical fantasy, in which the locations and time periods tend to closely mimic real human history, BIPOC characters are largely absent, so much so that when they are present in storylines, their presence disturbs some fans (Thomas, 2019, p. 102). Thomas notes that this "emotional investment in the whiteness of fantasy culture" (p. 102) cannot be corrected by simply proving that BIPOC people existed within that time and space, nor can it be solved by inserting new BIPOC characters to fill the vacuum; instead, a counternarrative must be created – a new space for BIPOC characters and BIPOC imagination.

Other scholarship which seeks to make whiteness visible in analyses of CYAL include Brynn Welch's 2016 text "The Pervasive Whiteness of Children's Literature: Collective Harms and Consumer Obligations," and Katie Sciurba's 2020 text "Depicting Hate: Picture Books and the Realities of White Supremacist Crime and Violence." Welch's text examines the "pervasive

whiteness" of CYAL, which in turn "contributes to the cultivation of racial biases and stereotypes, [and] impedes the cultivation of compassion for others" (2016, p. 369). Though focusing primarily on the economics behind CYAL , Welch states that she is focusing specifically on whiteness in children's literature in that a lack of BIPOC characters actively harms all child readers. In defining pervasive, Welch refers to CCBC data to show the overwhelming majority of children's literature as featuring white characters, a fact remarked upon in chapter 2 of this study. Examining then a whiteness-controlled narrative within CYAL, Welch states that children's literature is integral to the formation of children forming their set of morals. As a result, when whiteness norms are the acceptable norms, and all other norms are subsequently othered, Welch points to a considerable lack of compassion for children – the children are unable to engage in empathetic practices, as the information they are intaking are filtered through whiteness, warping their understanding and creating biases and stereotypes that, if left unchallenged, affect the child throughout their life.

Sciurba (2020) examined white culture's assumption of white supremacy through an examination of picturebooks. Sciurba directly engages in both CRT and CWS, as well as critical multicultural analysis to create a complex set of frames through which she examines CYAL as a tool against weaponized white supremacy. While Sciurba examined five texts which were on the topic of a white supremacist crime or violence in America, she ultimately concluded the need for more picturebooks "that challenge whiteness in its overt and covert forms, particularly in contemporary contexts" so that children would have the opportunity to engage in difficult conversations (2020, p. 1). Sciurba completed a picturebook content analysis of her chosen texts, coding for explicit mentions of white identity, and analyzed for themes or messages about white supremacy – did the texts shy away from hate crimes, or suggest ways for child readers to

combat white supremacy? Ultimately, Sciurba found that the texts fell into three non-discrete categories: they directly interrogates and un-silenced white supremacy, they deflected away from white supremacy, or they required Black individuals to rise above white supremacy (2020, p. 29). She found that of the many texts she examined, few if any showed white perpetrators being held accountable. She also found that books which confronted acts of white supremacy also tended to place the burden of responsibility on Black children alone as the sole combatants against white supremacy. Sciurba concluded by stating a need for further research into whiteness in children's literature.

While the CCBC does not add whiteness statistics to their data on the CCBC website, this information has been interpreted by other scholars, with access to CCBC data. In 2019, Sarah Park Dahlen and David Huyck interpreted CCBC data to create an illustration, detailing 2018 CCBC data regarding racial representation data. This illustration includes the following information: of the 3,134 books published in 2018 which were analyzed by the CCBC, 23 books, or 1%, depicted American Indians/First Nations characters; 170 books, or 5%, depicted Latinx characters; 218, or 7%, depicted Asian Pacific Islanders/Asian Pacific Americans; and 301 books, or 10%, depicted African/African American characters. This illustration details two additional pieces of information not typically included in CCBC data – 846 books, or 27% of books analyzed by the CCBC, depicted animals or other non-human characters, and 1,558 books, or 50%, depicted white characters (Huyck & Dahlen, 2019). CCBC data interpreted by Huyck and Park in 2016 present similar statistics: in 2015, the CCBC found that only 0.9% of books which they received depicted American Indians/First Nations characters, 2.4% of books depicted Latinx characters, 3.3% of books depicted Asian Pacific/Asian Pacific American characters, 7.6% of books depicted African/African American characters, 12.5% of books depicted animals,

trucks, etc. (with an annotation that a quarter of the CCBC books received in 2015 were picturebooks, and half of those depicted non-human characters), and a whopping 73.3% of books received which depicted white characters (Huyck et al., 2016). While the image from 2016 does not identify the total number of CCBC books received in 2015, nor the total number of books for each demographic group, it can be assumed to match the total given on Table 2 of this study, located on page 173, which is 3,400 books for the year 2015.

Critical Whiteness Studies

Critical whiteness studies is not a theory, nor even a theoretical field. Instead, as Beech (2020) writes, CWS is "an interdisciplinary project" (p. 3), in which scholars from a variety of domains seek to examine whiteness as a social invention. In quoting Gregory Jay, Beech writes that CWS seeks "to trace the economic and political history behind the invention of 'whiteness,' to challenge the privileges given to so-called 'whites,' and to analyze the cultural practices (in art, music, literature, and popular media) that create and perpetuate the fiction of 'whiteness'" (2020, p. 3). In this way, CWS places whiteness, and the practice of whiteness, under a microscope, seeking to examine how exactly whiteness works and has worked, and how we can seek to dismantle whiteness. To better understand CWS, a more full history must be provided.

A History of CWS. Critical race theories as used in America have largely developed out of critical race theory, or CRT. As a theoretical field, CRT draws heavily from other fields, like critical legal studies and radical feminism, as well as European philosophers and American activists. Delgado & Stefancic assert that CRT "sprang up in the 1970s, as a number of lawyers, activists, and legal scholars across the country realized, more or less simultaneously, that the heady advances of the civil rights era of the 1960s had stalled and, in many aspects, were being rolled back" (2012, pp. 4-5). Delgado and Stefancic, who are among the founders of critical race

theory, wrote that despite the beliefs of many, both covert and overt racism in America still very much exists, and affects the lives of BIPOC people, as well as white people, and thus many scholars were seeking new ways to examine racism in America.

Though CRT primarily focuses on issues of Blackness and whiteness in America, it is widely recognized that race issues are inclusive of other racial groups; thus, CRT has "splintered" over time (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) in recognition of other racial and ethnic group having experienced similar race issues, and out of this splintering, other critical race theories have developed. This splintering can be imagined by Solórzano and Yosso's "critical race theory's family tree" (2001, p. 120), as seen in Figure 1. From this splintering, other racial and ethnic groups have developed their own critical race theories based on CRT, such as TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005), AsianCrit (Chang, 1993), and LatCrit (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001), each which have their own bodies of research, priorities, tenets, and scholars. Many of these racial theoretical tenets align closely with CRT tenets. Alongside these new race theories emerged critical whiteness studies, or CWS, the formal name for an idea spanning back decades. Just like many other racial theories, CWS builds upon ideas presented in CRT, but frames these ideas through the lens of whiteness and white supremacy in American society.

CWS has undergone three general waves of ideology and use, dating back to the writings of W.E.B. DuBois in 1899. DuBois, in three separate writings, laid out the basis of CWS: "white labourers [sic] in the United States came to embrace the racial identity of the dominant group, rather than adopt an identity framed around a class solidarity with recently freed slaves, because white workers received a 'public and psychological wage' by joining or at least queuing themselves up for admission into the white race" which granted these workers privileges (Twine

& Gallagher, 2007, p.7-8); “most white people are unconscious of any such powerful and vindictive feeling [as

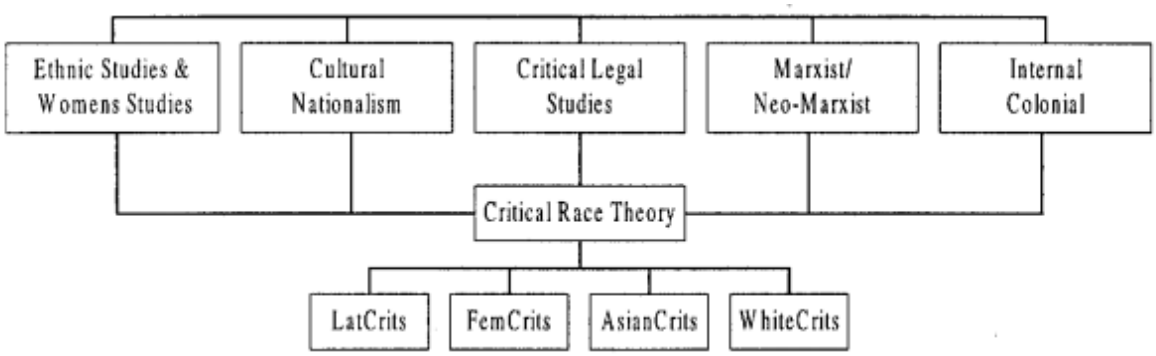

Figure 1: Solórzano and Yosso’s “Critical Race Theory’s Family Tree”

white supremacy]; they regard color prejudice as the easily explicable feeling that intimate social intercourse with a lower race is not only undesirable but impractical if our present standards of culture are to be maintained," which was directly related to how white supremacy leads to discrimination, prejudice, systemic racism, and color-blind racism (Twine & Gallagher, 2007, p. 8); and the idea that "the problem of the twentieth century is the color line" (Twine and Gallagher 2007, p. 9). From these building blocks, the general waves of CWS delve into how researchers can use these fundamental ideas within practice: the first wave (spanning from 1899 to the middle of the 20th century) looked to "identify, describe and deconstruct the structures of white supremacy" in America (Garner, 2017, p. 1583). The second wave (lasting from the mid to late 20th century) expanded on the ideas of the first wave, but also looked at "challenging and making white supremacy and institutional racism visible" (Garner, 2017, p. 1583). The third wave of CWS, the wave which is occurring now, no longer sought to prove that white privilege, white supremacy and systemic racism exist within modern American society, but instead focuses on how aspects of white privilege, white supremacy, and systemic racism are utilized within everyday life, and in a variety of settings; in essence, third wave CWS seeks to examines ways in which "whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed, and reinvented" (Garner, 2017, p. 1583). This dissertation project is situated squarely within third wave CWS, by examining how whiteness as a form of power is used within children's literature. Specifically, this project seeks to examine how white is perpetuated within the DPIL

Themes. Due to the existence of three separate theoretical waves of CWS, it is difficult to pin down specific tenets that span each wave. However, there are themes that run through each wave and could loosely be deemed CWS "tenets." These themes include the following:

whiteness is a modern invention [that] has changed over time and place (Nayak, 2007, p. 738); whiteness is a social norm and has become chained to an index of unspoken privileges (Nayak, 2007, p. 738; McIntosh, 1989); built within our society are structures which uphold whiteness and white privilege (Applebaum, 2016); the salience of whiteness can be used as an explanation for exploitation, injustice, and more generally, the American past (Kolchin, 2002, p. 160); whiteness enforces a correct way of thinking, speaking, and behaving (Corces-Zimmerman & Guida, 2019); and whiteness not being "a descriptor of, or equivalent to, white people as a homogenous racial group, but rather as a term used to explain a system of policies and practices codified in law and maintained by society that conceptualizes white ways of being and thinking to be superior and more deserving" (Corces-Zimmerman & Guida, 2019, p. 94).

As CWS emerged from CRT in some aspects, there are many significant overlaps between the two theoretical frames, as well as many differences. For example, in a direct parallel to CRT's tenet of counter storytelling, Kolchin notes that many CWS works include the author's "accentuation of self" by including "supplemental analysis and prescriptive proposals with personal anecdotes, recollections, and ruminations – sometimes, but by no means always, confined to an introduction or conclusion" (2002, p. 166). Additionally, many themes from CWS seem to echo the CRT tenets with regards to issues of societal origins and repercussions of race. The biggest difference that I see between these two theories is that while CRT aims to refocus attention on issues of BIPOC lives and stories, CWS seeks to examine the implications of social focus on whiteness and the white identity. In examining the guiding principles of CRT and CWS, the overlap is immense; they ask very similar questions from different stances. Where CRT could examine the lack of Black child representation in picturebooks and draw conclusions regarding interest convergence on the part of publishers, CWS might instead focus on the

multitude of white representation in children's literature, and draw conclusions regarding the abundance of white publishers, authors, editors and reviewers within CYAL, with each group neglecting to include BIPOC characters while simultaneously not naming the racial identity of white characters. While there has been a great amount of CRT research with regards to children's literature, seeking to examine BIPOC representation in children's literature, as well as examining the lack thereof, the inverse, CWS framed research, is less common, despite issues of racial diversity and multiculturalism being at the forefront of so much research regarding children's literature. However, due to a desire to not center whiteness, it is also clear why many researchers will not engage in whiteness studies as a research frame. Furthermore, in aiming to examine whiteness, there is a great deal of vagueness and complexities that exist which cannot be analyzed due to the lack of tools in existence (as Thompson (2003) alludes to). Both CRT and CWS identify racism and white supremacy as social ills which should be actively pushed back on, but each lens highlights different aspects and facets of the problem. This entire matter is complex and complicated to parse out, let alone to complete in practice as a novice race researcher, but keeping my learner stance in mind, this research represents a best effort to examine whiteness through CWS, knowing that the overlap between CRT and CWS, alongside the hazy nature of whiteness, making this project intricate to say the least.

Many past critical content analyses of children's books that seek to examine issues of multiculturalism are aligned with CRT tenets (Hughes-Hassell & Cox, 2010; Bishop, 1892; Brayden & Rodriguez, 2016). However, in recent years, a newer form of critical content analysis has been in the works, often referred to as a "critical race content analysis" (Pérez Huber et al., 2020). Such an example can be found in an Asian Critical Race Theory content analysis (Rodríguez & Kim, 2018). To my knowledge, there is not a whiteness critical race theory content

analysis methodology or method that I could use as a model, as from what I can tell, a project like this does not yet exist, and as noted above, there is no tool to be used as a precedent.

Whiteness Aspects. Separate from the themes that CWS holds true are the ways in which whiteness appears within society. These appearances, which I refer to as "aspects," are ways in which whiteness can be seen in action. Unfortunately, whiteness is nebulous, and perhaps is so by design. It often seems that as soon as researchers can pin down what "whiteness" truly means, it shifts and moves away, forming a new meaning. As such, it can be difficult to pinpoint what exactly whiteness is, what it looks like, or how it can be measured. The same can be said about white culture – white culture too is vague and constantly shifting. In fact, white culture, like whiteness itself, is often left unmarked and therefore serves as a default or neutral stance, which leads into the idea that white culture is, in fact, American culture. Due to the fact that many whiteness culture aspects have significant overlap with white supremacy culture (Okun, 2021) and American culture (Kohls, 1984), this can often lead to discomfort for white people who seek to examine whiteness. Toni Morrison touched upon this idea when she wrote in her 1992 text *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* that "American means white, and Africanist people struggle to make the term applicable to themselves with ethnicity and hyphen after hyphen after hyphen" (p. 47). This sentiment was echoed in 2001, with Perry's article, titled "White Means Never Having to Say You're Ethnic," which explores the idea of whiteness as cultureless and unremarkable, thus allowing whiteness to operate as neutrality.

There is no one definitive list of what whiteness is, nor the norms, themes and practices of whiteness. However, many point to work by Okun and Jones (2001), Katz (1985), and Barndt (2007) to identify aspects of white culture and whiteness within society, in an effort to identify and illuminate whiteness culture. These aspects include the belief that society acts as a

meritocracy, the needs for a specific type of work ethic, valuing some ways of knowing over others, decision making which reflects cultural assumptions over the primacy of individuals, assigning higher value to some ways of thinking and behaving over others, and privileging the individual over the group. I also found similar themes in texts by Irving (2014), Frankenberg (1993), and Bonilla-Silva (2006) which point to the same general aspects of white culture. Other researchers, such as Cabrera et al. (2016) argue that whiteness is further exemplified by systemic ignorance and denial of racism, whiteness being entitled to space, and that whiteness demands a "safe space" to discuss race, while other researchers show that whiteness often blinds good intentioned white people to the damage they do, which can be seen play out in a white savior mentality (Miller & Harris, 2018; Aronson, 2017), while still other researchers argue that whiteness itself is a form of social contract which white people have agreed to follow and prioritize (Mills, 1997).

When examining aspects of racial representation within literature, other aspects of whiteness are introduced. Morrison's 1992 text added to the discussion the idea of whiteness as default and the lack of acknowledging race within literature. Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019) posit that whiteness can best be seen in comparing white and BIPOC characters and their interactions. Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides argue that whiteness can be examined within literature specifically by using the following questions:

- What accomplishments to [w]hites achieve, especially in relation to people of color?
- What expectations do [w]hites demonstrate, especially in relation to those expectations being available to people of color?
- How do [w]hites treat people of color?

- How are people of color depicted in relation to [w]hites (e.g., grateful, resentful)?
- What feelings does the book rally for [w]hite characters, especially in relation to people of color? (p. 60-61)

As of yet, there is no one definitive list of what constitutes as white culture, let alone whiteness cultural aspects and values. This lack of a concrete definition of whiteness and a lack of distinct whiteness cultural markers has led many critical whiteness scholars to struggle with this same problem. However, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (or NMAAHC) published in 2021 an infographic titled "Aspects and Assumptions of Whiteness and White Culture in the United States," which is a comprehensive and expansive list of white cultural aspects. This infographic, seen in figure 2, which was removed from the website due to outcries by several political figures, outlines the following hallmarks of white culture: rugged individualism, family structure, emphasis on scientific method, history, protestant work ethic, religion, status, power and authority, future orientation, time, aesthetics, holidays, justice, competition, and communication (Watts, 2020). Unfortunately due to the political nature of identifying whiteness and the warping of these traits to point to an inverse relationship (for example, arguing that if "hard work is the key to success" is relevant to whiteness and is an aspect of white culture, then the inverse must be true; that BIPOC people must not work hard, or that certain BIPOC cultures therefore do not value hard work, nor do members partake in hard work), outrage quickly followed. Taken out of context, the infographic could potentially be inflammatory. This can even be seen in the very title of Watts' article: "In Smithsonian Race Guidelines, Rational Thinking and Hard Work are White Values."

Based on the NAAMHC infographic and the above mentioned research articles, I have made a list of the perceived whiteness aspects which I will be engaging with for this research

study: rugged individualism, family structure, Protestant work ethic, religion, communication, and the white default. These themes were selected, as I believe that they will be most easily visible within children's picturebooks, while still capturing the aspects of whiteness which are present throughout American culture and the American education system at large. These themes were coded for and tracked throughout the selected book from the DPIL to develop a tool to identify whiteness within picturebooks. Chapter three of this study delves more into how each aspect was identified within literature, as well as what these whiteness aspects perpetuate about whiteness when they appear within children's literature.

The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, or DPIL, is a book dissemination organization, which sends one free book, per month, to all enrolled children. Children (and by extension, their families) can join the program for free, so long as they live in a location where the program is provided through community partners. Started by musician and philanthropist Dolly Parton, the DPIL has had a massive influence on American early childhood literacy. In discussing the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, as well as examining the goals of the organization and the process of achieving their goals, it is critical to first examine the woman behind the scenes: Dolly Rebecca Parton herself.

A Brief Dolly Parton Biography. Dolly Parton, here referred to as Parton, is not only an accomplished musician, songwriter and performer, but has proven to be a staunch proponent of education and literacy. As a general note, some of the information from Parton's early life seems to be fairly flexible in terms of specificity, be it dollar amounts, years, or locations.

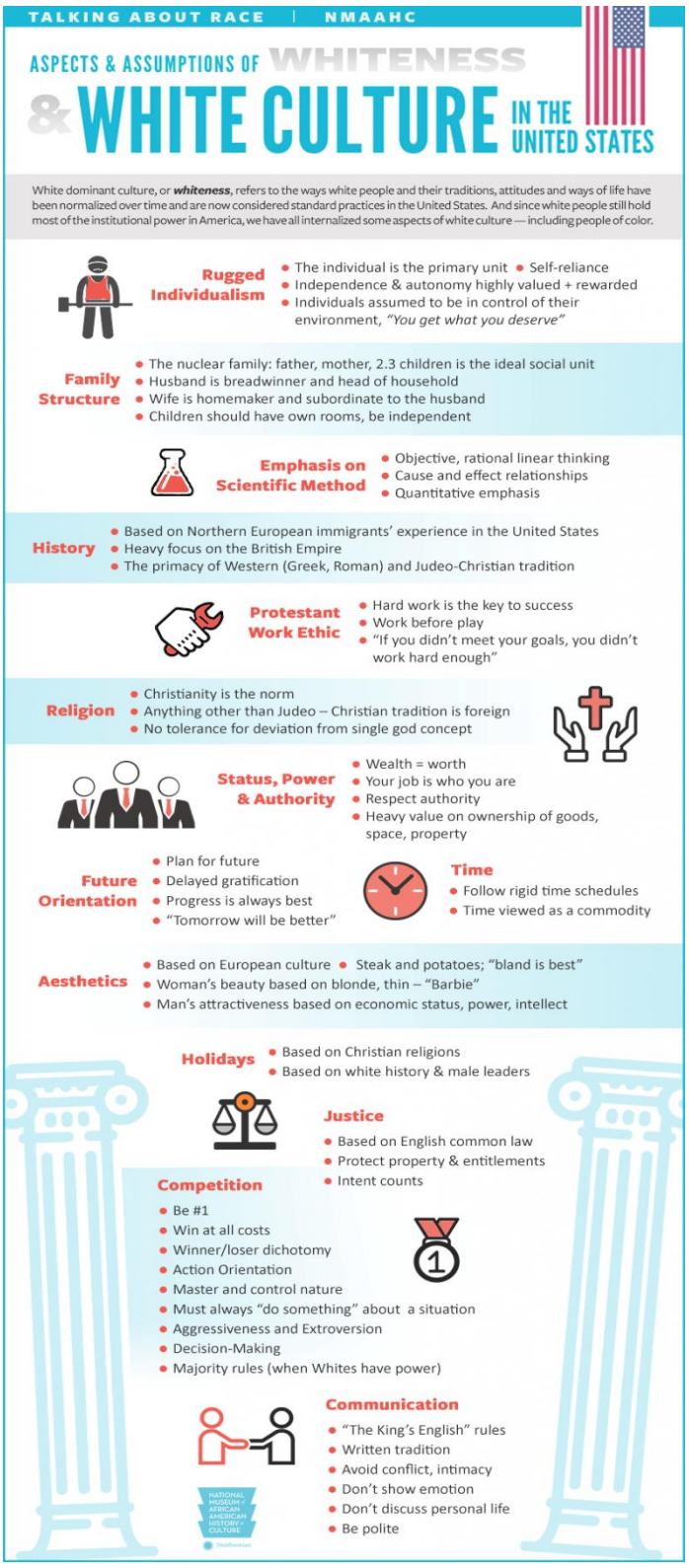

Figure 2: NAAMHC Aspects and Assumptions of Whiteness and White Culture in the United States

Unfortunately, due to the nature of Dolly's more transient upbringing and lack of documentation of childhood events, combined with the nature of such early childhood memories which can be difficult to recall correctly, there is some ambiguity in Parton's early life. This ambiguity further enhanced by differences in how locations and names within the Appalachian mountains are spelled or referred to; some locations in the Smoky Mountains also have two or more names by which they are known (colloquially, officially, or otherwise). In fact, a record has been discovered from the Vital Records Department of Tennessee which refer to a "Dollie Rebecca Parton born January 9, 1946," while legal documents, like a song contract, was signed by one "Dollie Parton" (Miller, 2015, p. 21), though Parton herself and most all other sources spell her name as "Dolly." Even Parton herself sometimes added to the confusion: when interviewed in 1967 about where she was from, Parton stated, "I guess you'd call it a community but it was…called Pittman Center Road, but…I lived on Birds Creek. But it was called Locust Ridge," and that her hometown was "Sevierville, Sevier County, but it's called Birds Creek" (Miller, 2015, p. 9). As such, for the purposes of my research, I have used the information which presented itself most frequently, even if it was contradicted by other researchers or Parton herself in other writing. I have not marked these discrepancies, as they are numerous, and the difference of a town name or a few months of time does not greatly affect her life story. When discrepancies are those that do affect Parton's life as related to her education and philanthropy, they have been noted as such, or have been written in such a way to include the discovered ambiguity.

While much of her career is known in terms of Parton's time in Nashville, her rise to stardom on the *Porter Wagoner* show, and her many hit singles, Parton's beliefs about education and community service are illuminated by examining her childhood prior to achieving fame, as

well as by examining her philanthropy upon achieving fame. Therefore, due to the scope of my project and the fact that I am not focusing on Parton's musical career, I have limited my examination of Parton's life to her childhood until her high school graduation, and her philanthropic involvement in literacy initiatives after beginning a successful musical career. Thus, to achieve this, we must begin by first examining Parton's parents. The Parton genealogy, as written by Willadeene Parton in her book *Smoky Mountain Memories*, is as follows: Robert Lee Parton, child of William Walter Parton and Bessie Rayfield, was born on March 22, 1921; Avie Lee Caroline Owens, child of the Reverend Jacob Robert Owens and Rena Kansas Valentine, was born on October 5, 1923 (1996, p. xxii). As the story goes, Robert, referred to as Lee, was attending church in White Pine, Tennessee, and saw Avie Lee through a church window. He, of Scotch-Irish descent, was "immediately smitten" by the quarter-Cherokee Avie Lee's long dark hair and high cheekbones, and as they say, the rest was history (Miller, 2015, p. 18). They were married by Avie Lee's father on August 17, 1939, after a very short courtship (Parton, 1994; Nash 2002; Miller, 2015), and Willadeene, their first child, followed quickly after, in the year 1940 (Nash, 2002).

Some quick math will show that Avie Lee was a mere 15 years old when she and Lee married, and Lee was 17 years old, facts which Parton has confirmed in interviews (Schmidt, 2017, p. 24). Early married life for the couple was difficult; they struggled both financially and in their relationship with one another. Adding to the already difficult relationship between Avie Lee and her husband was the fact that Lee was a sharecropper, and was not always able to bring in enough money to provide necessities for his growing family, let alone luxuries; his job also forced Lee to work long hours away from his family.

Eleven more children followed after Willadeene's birth; in order, the Parton children are David Wilburn, Coy Denver, Dolly Rebecca, Bobby Lee, Stella Mae, Cassie Nan, Randy Huston, Larry Gerald, Frieda Estelle, Floyd Estel, and Rachel Ann (Parton, 1996, p. xxiii). While Floyd died at birth, the surviving 11 Parton children lived with their parents in the Smoky Mountain foothills throughout their childhoods. Parton would often joke in interviews that her mother was pregnant more often than not, as she had given birth to 12 children, plus being pregnant several other times which ended in miscarriages; Parton has said on more than one occasion that her mother always had "one in her and one on her" (Miller, 2015, p. 23).

Lee and Avie Lee first settled together in Pittman Center, Tennessee, also called Mountain View or Locust Ridge, in a one room cabin on the banks of the Little Pigeon River (Schmidt, 2017, p. 35). This home is where Parton would be born, as well as two of her older siblings. By the time that Dolly was born on January 19, 1946, the Parton family was in such financial straits that they could not pay the doctor who came to the cabin to help guide Dolly into the world – instead, the doctor was paid with a sack of cornmeal for his troubles (Nash, 2002, p. 9). While Lee worked long hours to provide what he could for his family, Avie Lee, just a teenager herself, was the primary adult caretaker of the children. As a result of their lack of luxuries like toys, let alone utilities like running water and electricity (Hoppe, 2018), Avie Lee entertained her children by singing, reading the Bible, and teaching skills like cooking and sewing (Parton, 2012). Parton recalls that the family Bible was the only book regularly available in the home, and so biblical stories are what Avie Lee would read to the children. Parton felt that this early exposure to books and storytelling made her a lifelong reader, writing that "[listening to biblical stories] made me want to know more, and most of all, it made me want to read more" (2012, p. 31). In her 1994 book, Parton recalled that "I loved books [as a child], and would read

anything I could get my hands on" (p. 22), and that she would read "the Bible, The Farmer's Almanac, the Funeral Home Directory, the directions and descriptions on the garden and flower seed packets, all medicine bottles, catalogues, any and all kinds of mail, school books…but mostly [I] loved fairy tales (p. ix). However, in earlier interviews of hers, Parton stated that "I don't reach that much. I probably should be ashamed to say that. I read mostly articles and things I'm interested in. I always like Agatha Christie, but I never did read all that many of her things" (Schmidt, 2017, p. 123). These discrepancies in her early reading habits, while thought provoking, pale in comparison to Parton's adult reading habits: in a 2014 interview, Parton stated that she reads at least 50 books per year (Schmidt, 2017, p. 367).

The Parton family moved often while the children were young; from the one room cabin in Locust Ridge, to a house on Middle Creek Road, to the home on Pittman Center Road, followed by a move to Birds Creek, and then moving to Caton's Chapel, all which are located in Sevier County, Tennessee (Nash, 2002, p. 30). It's recorded that by around the year 1949, the Parton family had saved enough money to move to a farm in Locust Ridge, where Lee owned the land, as opposed to sharecropping (Nash, 2002, pp. 9-10; Miller, 2015, p. 24), and so the family stayed on this land for a significant amount of time. At this home, the family grew tobacco for profit, in addition to growing pumpkins, corn, beans, potatoes and turnips for personal use (Nash, 2002, p. 11).

By the time that the 1951-1952 school year arrived, Parton was enrolled in school at Locust Ridge, for her first year of school. In interviews, Parton recalled that she and her siblings walked barefoot to the schoolhouse every day (Miller, 2015, p. 39). The schoolhouse was a one room building, at which 10-15 students were enrolled – there may only be one or two students in each grade, and the school held students in grades first through eighth (Schmidt, 2017, p. 35; p.

98; Miller, 2015, p. 39). Additionally, there was only one teacher for the entire school, a young lady that Parton believes may not have had much higher education herself (Miller, 2015, p. 39). School records show that Parton missed thirty one days of school during this first year (Miller, 2015, p. 26), but there are no records to explain these missing days.

After the family moved back to Caton's Chapel somewhere between 1955 and 1957, Parton attended a two-room schoolhouse with her siblings. At this time in her life, Parton would be around 10 years old, and most likely enrolled in fifth grade (Miller, 2015, p. 39). Several important events in Parton's would occur surrounding this school house. First, Parton would become employed in Knoxville, TN, as a performer for local store owner Cas Walker (Nash, 2002, pp. 49-50). Her fairly regular job brought her to her peer's attention, as she was often featured on the radio, advertising for Walker's grocery store by singing. The Caton's Chapel school was also the location of the now-famous "Coat of Many Colors" story, in which Parton's mother had made Parton a jacket to wear to school, made up of scraps of other clothing sewn together, as the family could not afford luxuries like a new jacket. Parton's classmates, spurred on by their dislike of her growing local fame, as well as their dislike of the Parton family's poverty, teased Parton mercilessly about the jacket, eventually bringing Parton to tears (Nash, 2002, p. 40). Parton's classmates also once locked her into the cloakroom of the school for at least ten minutes while Parton cried and beat on the door in an effort to escape; instead of releasing her, her peers enjoyed her torment (Parton, 1994, p. 105). In another incident, several classmates would harass Parton by trying to literally rip off her shirt when she began physically maturing (Miller, 2015, p. 51).

Around this time occurred another, lesser known, incident which affected how Parton viewed school. At the two room school house in Caton's Chapel, Parton's teacher used colored

chalks on the blackboard, as well as providing several boxes of crayons for pupil use, both of which Parton came to covet. One day, Parton took a box of crayons and two pieces of chalk, hid them in her shirt to smuggle them out of the school house during recess time, and placed them in a hollow tree trunk with the intent of taking them home once the school day was over (Parton, 1994, pp. 29-30). Unfortunately, Parton was quickly found out by another classmate, who promptly informed the teacher about Parton's theft. When she returned to the hollow tree trunk after school to retrieve her stolen goods, her teacher was waiting for her. Her teacher, a "big man" who "used to whip the boys with a razor strop" to scare the children in an effort to keep them in order, did not beat Dolly for the theft, but instead called the other children around her, grabbed her by the shoulders, and shook her, while shouting "Do you all see what Dolly has done? She has stolen!" (Parton, 1994, p. 30). This event both scared Dolly and gave her a deep sense of shame, which would affect her feelings towards school for the rest of her time as a student (Parton, 1994).

Despite these early challenges, Parton would be the first in her family to attend and graduate high school (Schmidt, 2017, p. 98). During her time as a high school student, Parton was a member of the Sevier County High School marching band, but did not excel academically, maintaining a fairly low grade average. Parton has freely stated that she hated school as a student, and when interviewed as a recent high school graduate, she stated that she did not look back fondly at her time as a student (Schmidt, 2017, p. 99; Miller, 2015, p. 39). However, she would state in a 1978 interview that she attended high school of her own volition, with her mother not caring if she attended and her father not wanting her to attend school at all (Schmidt, 2017, p. 98; Miller, 2015, p. 40). Later, she could contradict this information, stating that her father was the reason why she needed to graduate high school, as he felt that her degree was a

necessity for her to leave home and pursue fame (Schmidt, 2017, p. 37). For whatever the reason, Parton was determined to graduate high school and put in enough effort to earn her degree while simultaneously balancing an increasingly demanding musical career in the Knoxville and Nashville areas (Nash, 2002) – she would state later that she "wanted to finish high school…just to show that [she] could, just to prove to [herself] that [she] could," and graduated "by the skin of her teeth" (Miller, 2015, p. 71). The day after graduating high school in June 1964, Parton boarded a bus and moved to Nashville to pursue fame (Schmidt, 2017, p. 37).

By either 1967 (Miller, 2015, p. 98) or 1970 (Team Dolly, 2015b), only a few years after moving to Nashville, Sevierville would begin celebrating Dolly Parton Day (more commonly referred to as Dolly Day or Dolly Days), in honor of their most famous resident. A few months after Dolly Parton Day 1970, Parton called up the Sevier County High School and told them that she was planning to establish a scholarship fund for three or four graduating seniors; she also planned to donate half of the proceeds from the recent Dolly Parton Day, as well as any future Dolly Parton Days, to maintain this scholarship fund, as well as to help fund the band so that the school could afford instruments, uniforms, and other equipment as needed (Schmidt, 2017, p. 26; Nash, 2002, pp. 53-54).

With this act of generosity, Parton completed her first venture into educational philanthropy. Despite the fact that Parton had suffered during her own school days, she did not hold a grudge against the educational system or her alma mater; instead, she would continue funding scholarships at the Sevier County High School, in addition to pursing other philanthropic endeavors. Several events regarding Parton's educational philanthropy would then occur in quick succession: first, in the early or mid-1980s, Parton would associate herself with a campaign entitled "Read America, Win America," which was run by Project Literacy US (Miller, 2015, p.

220). Then, in 1986, Parton would open Dollywood, a theme park not unlike Disneyland (Dollywood, 2021). By 1988, the Dollywood Foundation, a foundation which used income from Dollywood to engage in educational philanthropy in Sevier County, would be formed (Imagination Library, n.d.-e; Miller, 2015, p. 256). Parton recalls that the early days of the Dollywood Foundation included being involved "in the local schools, and [giving] small scholarships to high school seniors interested in music and the environment. At the time, it seemed right and natural to do what [she] could to help the local school system" (Parton, 2012, p. 34). To date, The Dollywood Foundation continues its charitable ventures in Sevier County, and still provides scholarship opportunities for graduating high school seniors (Hoppe, 2018, p. 7).

Parton's first major philanthropic undertaking was The Buddy Program, which ran somewhere around late 1980s until the early 1990s (Team Dolly, 2015a). Through her continued involvement with giving scholarships to graduating seniors, Parton was also seeing that "nearly one-third of the kids in [Sevier county] schools were not graduating – a 34 percent dropout rate. Research showed that most of them were making up their minds in fifth and sixth grade that they didn't need to graduate to work on the farm or in the tourist business" (Parton, 2012, p. 43). Concerned with this finding, Parton took a route of action within the Sevier County middle school where she created a program in which middle school students would select a friend who would help motivate them to graduate high school; if both students graduated, each student was given somewhere between $500 and $1000 from Parton herself. This initiative, called the Buddy Program, while only running for a few years, was considered a massive success (The Dollywood Company & Geidner, 2020; Miller, 2015, p. 257, Schmidt, 2017, p. 279), and led to a decrease in the dropout rate at her alma matter, from 34% to a mere 6% (Parton, 2012, p. 34; Team Dolly, 2015a), a figure which Sevier County schools still roughly maintain to this day.

During this time, Parton and her foundation also sought to discover what was occurring in earlier school grades which so greatly impacted students in their decision to drop out of school in the first place. She found that many students had actually begun to struggle academically in the first grade, which impacted their motivation and achievement with regards to academics. With this knowledge, Parton and her team interviewed first grade teachers, and learned that a major problem for first grade teachers was that there were "too many kids at different levels and not enough help to give the slower ones the personal time they needed" (Parton, 2012, p. 35). The root of this problem, as Parton saw it, was that "some kids who entered first grade could already read and write and had a huge jump on the others. The others were not dumb or any different, really, except that their parents had not exposed them to reading or helped them to love reading and learning, because they believed that would be the teacher's role" (2012, p. 38). From this, Parton had an epiphany; "if kids had books in the home, just maybe somebody would read to them and help them love books" (p. 39). Parton also sought to address the root of this issue in other ways, such as creating "a pilot first-grade teaching assistant programme [*sic*], adding a teacher and assistant for the county's Alternative Learning programme [*sic*], computer labs for a Principles of Alphabet Literacy programme [*sic*] and emergency support for children in need of school clothes and supplies" (Miller, 2015, p. 257).

A History of the DPIL. The Dollywood Foundation would shift rapidly in the early years, so that by 1995, the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, here referred to at the DPIL, would be created (Imagination Library, n.d.-e). The goal of the DPIL would be in service of helping Parton's hometown education system, in an effort to "foster a love of reading among [Sevier County's] preschool children and their families" (Imagination Library, n.d.-e). Of course, this goal has expanded to be inclusive of children outside of Sevier County, Tennessee, but

largely remains unchanged over 25 years later in terms of its mission. The DPIL aimed to achieve this goal by giving every child in Sevier County one book per month, mailed to their homes, from the birth of the child until their 5th birthday. The books would be free to every child, paid for by Parton's other endeavors such as Dollywood, as well as other charitable sponsors (Parton, 2012, pp. 39-40). The DPIL began sending books to children in 1996 with the first shipment of a little under two thousand books sent to children in Sevier County, Tennessee (Parton, 2012, p. 40). At the end of its second year, the DPIL had sent nearly 70,000 books to around 5,000 children in Sevier County (Miller, 2015, p. 295). From that point, the DPIL rapidly expanded across the state of Tennessee, with the help of politicians and donors, and eventually entered each state in the United States and also became available within the U. S. Virgin Islands and the Northern Mariana Islands (Imagination Library, n.d.-d), as well as spreading via a partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, allowing the DPIL to enter into approximately100 Native American communities located mostly on reservation land (Miller, 2015, p. 322). Furthermore, through careful planning and partnerships, the DPIL also disseminates books to children in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, and Australia (Imagination Library, n.d.-a). The DPIL even sends books to some of the most remote locations on the planet: as of 2015, the island Tristan de Cunha, a "British territory in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean about halfway between South America and South Africa" was enrolled in the DPIL – books arrive via a "6,000-mile flight to South Africa, followed by a week-long fishing boat trip to the island," and are disseminated to the thirteen children under age five who live there (Miller, 2015, p. 359). Arguably, the DPIL is the largest and farthest reaching book dissemination organization in America, and in the world.

As of December 2021, the DPIL now sends out over 1,927,849 books per month; the DPIL has gifted over 172,752,307 total books since its inception (Imagination Library, n.d.-g). Due to her efforts in the DPIL, Parton has been awarded several accolades: the Association of American Publishers Honors Award in 2000, the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval in 2001, and the Child and Family Advocacy Award in 2003, to name a few (Imagination Library, n.d.-a). In more recent years, Parton was recognized in 2012 by the academic journal *Reading Psychology* for increasing parental reading, and in 2014, she was given the Best Practices award from the Library of Congress (Imagination Library, n.d.-a). Accolades aside, several research projects in the last few years have shown that enrollment into the DPIL not only fosters a love of reading for children, but also increases school preparedness and academic achievement for enrolled students. These findings not only occur for children prior to age five, but also apply to children who were enrolled but have since graduated out of the program (The Dollywood Company & Geidner, 2020; Imagination Library, n.d.-h). This shows that DPIL is not only wildly popular for families across the world, but also that the program is effective in helping increase childhood literacy and increasing a love of reading for children, thus achieving their goal.

Of course, this is not to say that the DPIL has not been met with criticism, especially with regards to the adoption of statewide programs. Miller states that the Beacon Center, a Tennessee research center, has "consistently argued that using millions of taxpayers' dollars every year to contribute to the purchase of books through the program was inappropriate; they argue that only privately sourced money should support the Imagination Library. State officials invariably counter that it is a necessary, appropriate and desirable investment in education" (2015, p. 360). As recent as 2022, concerns about the DPIL have reached other locations as well – a Kentucky

senator, during a meeting to establish a Kentucky statewide DPIL program, voiced concern that the DPIL may be sending inappropriate books, stating his concern stemmed from the fact that he had "seen some literature that's considered preschool that I truly think is inappropriate content for children that age" (Krueger, 2022, n.p.). Concerns like these are typically related to the fact that every child across the given state is given the opportunity to enroll in the DPIL, regardless of county or town, and that this initiative is sponsored not by a private donor group but by state funds instead.

At its core, the DPIL is a labor of love for Parton; she attributes the inspiration for the Imagination Library to her father's illiteracy, and thus created the DPIL to honor her father (Team Dolly, 2020). As quoted by Miller in his 2015 biography of Parton, "she recalled that her father was hindered by his lack of schooling, being unable to fill out forms, decipher labels or read stories to his children. It was a loss for Dolly and her siblings, and a source of shame for Lee" (p. 256). Parton has stated that Lee did not attend school beyond a year or two of early education (Schmidt, 2002, p. 102; Nash, 2002, p. 12), and that Lee was, for all intents and purposes, illiterate for the duration of his life. Additionally, it is possible that Lee may have been dyslexic (Miller, 2015, p. 20), which may have impacted why Lee did not attend much schooling, and was therefore illiterate. Parton has stated many times in interviews and in her own writings that her father was frustrated by his illiteracy, and that the family felt that Lee's inability to read and write hindered his career, and therefore, the family at large. Parton has stated on many occasions that "when [she] started the Imagination Library, it was a way to honor [her] Daddy." In her book *Dream More: Celebrate the Dreamer in You*, Parton writes that her father inspired her to create the Imagination Library. She also wrote that despite her many accolades as

a performer, her father was most proud of her reputation as the “Book Lady” (Parton, 2012, p. 33).

DPIL Book Selection Process. The DPIL, as of the year 2000, has contracted exclusively with Penguin Random House publishers as a source of their books (The Dollywood Company & Geidner, 2020). Due to this partnership, all books sent out by the DPIL as of the year 2000 have been printed by Penguin Random House. As such, the DPIL is confined to a specific publishing house, and therefore their ability to choose books to send to children is limited by what Penguin Random House has to offer for a given year. This big change was partnered with another; around the same time, the book selection committee was created (The Dollywood Company & Geidner, 2020); prior to the committee, book selection largely fell upon the shoulders of individuals. Parton’s influence can still be felt in with regards to book selection – she personally decided that the first book each child would receive (called a Welcome Book) for every American child is *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper (1930/1976), and that ethe final book a child would receive (called a Graduation Book) is *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!*, by Nancy Carlson (1999) (Imagination Library, n.d.-f). The other countries who have DPIL programs do not use these same books, but they do have their own set of Welcome and Graduation Books; for example, within Ireland, the Welcome Book is *Tin*, by Chris Judge (2014), and the Graduation Book is *The Selfish Giant* by Oscar Wilde (2015) (Imagination Library, n.d.-c).

As a result of the DPIL’s partnership with Penguin Random House, the book selection process is fairly simple: the book selection committee gathers each book printed by Penguin Random House during a given year, and reads the books aloud during their time together. The committee itself is made up of several members, and as of December 2021, had 7 individuals

serving on the committee (Imagination Library, n.d.-c). These members have brief biographies on the DPIL website. One is a picturebook author, one was a book buyer at a bookstore, and four members were educators (and of them, two specifically state that they are retired educators), while one is a librarian. Also, three of the seven are somehow affiliated with the University of Tennessee Knoxville through employment or degree granting. Interestingly, the children's book author also has one of their books in the DPIL, and this title was one of the 73 selected books for 2021 (Imagination Library, n.d.-b)

Using a variety of tools and rubrics, the committee selects 12 books for each of the six different age groups, totaling in 72 selected books for any given book dissemination cycle (The Dollywood Company & Geidner, 2020). In a 2021 interview, book selection committee member Jinx Stapleton Watson describes the book selection process as follows: "Once a year, they put us in a room with 300 books and give us two and a half days. We do our selection. We read every single book aloud to each other so that we can hear how it sounds as if we were the child listening to the cadence, rhyme, or rhythm" (DeVoe, 2021, n.p.). Despite reading 300+ new books being read each year, the committee estimates that only 35% of books will be replaced each year with new books, meaning that approximately 65% of books repeat from year to year (Betts, 2021). When choosing a book, Watson said that the book selection committee looks at art styles, topics, and word choice (DeVoe, 2021). For the American DPIL selection process, books are also selected with consideration of the format of the book (be it a board book or a soft cover book), and the desire for at least each age group to receive two bilingual titles each year (Imagination Library, 2017). Furthermore, the DPIL does gather feedback from enrolled families, which they use to make book selection choices. Overall, enrolled children appear to be satisfied with the selected books – research out of Cuyahoga County, Ohio, reflected that seven

out of ten surveyed children always enjoyed their received books, with nearly three out of ten usually enjoying their book. Furthermore, 19 out of 20 survey respondents "appreciated the uniqueness, variety, and diversity of the characters in DPIL books" (Dorman & Fair, 2022, p. 14).

Some of the international DPIL branches also specifically "cater to a particular country's cultural makeup and interest": for example, the DPIL Canada branch tries to select books which are relevant to the First Nation's people (Betts, 2021). The United Kingdom's DPIL Executive Director also stated that "it's very, very important to us to make sure that children's experience is reflected in the books that they receive through the Imagination Library. We take great care to look at diversity in terms of ethnicity and family composition and different types of story, different characters. Females as the main character when we can. We make sure firstly that children see themselves reflected somehow in the stories, but also that it opens their minds to the experience and to other worlds and different experiences" (Betts, 2021). While a similar statement for the United States DPIL program could not be found on the DPIL website, the sentiment has been echoed through interviews of several DPIL employees, as well as through personal communications. The DPIL also provides braille books (The Dollywood Company & Geidner, 2020, Betts, 2021), and audio books (Imagination Library, n.d.-a), and is even considering instituting electronic books (Miller, 2015, p. 359).

Multicultural literature is held to the whims of publishing. Above data from the CCBC proves this point, in that there can only be as much multicultural literature on the market as is published, and when published diverse texts lack, there are less texts available. Research results from the CCBC was recently used by Reflection Press (a small independent book publishing house) to analyze specifically the lack of diverse authors and the lack of diverse characters in

children's literature. Reflection Press found that some demographic representations would need huge increases in order to be equal to white character representation. For example, Asian Pacific Americans, who made up 5.5% of the American population in 2017, were represented in 256 books, or 7.2% of books published that year. In order for book representation to match population representation, only 15 more books were needed, or an increase of 5.4%. In another, more stark, example, Latinx people, who made up 17.5% of the population in 2017, were represented in 108 books, or only 3.1% of books published that year. In order for book representation to match population representation, a total of 753 books would need to be published, or an increase in 87.5% (Reflection Press, 2020). Facts like these help explain the creation of independent presses (as noted in chapter two of this study) – many independent presses came into existence to begin increasing racially diverse book offerings. With this information in mind, it's clear to see how even the best DPIL book selection committee, with the best intentions and the most knowledge, could still primarily select books which center white characters and white stories from the books in the Penguin Random House pool; there is simply not enough multicultural children's books to choose from within any given year that are published by any one publishing house.

Summary

This literature review has addressed multicultural children's literature as a genre, as well as a brief history of Black representation and representations of whiteness within children's literature in America. This chapter also reviewed critical whiteness studies and its history, as well as a brief biography of Dolly Parton, a history of the DPIL, and a breakdown of the DPIL book selection process. Children's literature, and literature in general, is laden with a history that affects readership and future publications; additionally, understanding racial representation in

CYAL, as well as scholarship surrounding representation, is a cornerstone of this dissertation. Chapter three explains the methodology used to guide this study, as well as providing more in-depth information on the chosen research method and process.

Chapter Three: Methodology

As specified in chapters one and two of this study, the purpose of this study is to examine a book within the DPIL book collection, in an attempt to draw conclusions about the representation of whiteness. This study was guided by the following research question: How is whiteness represented and reproduced in a select DPIL book? In this chapter, I explore critical content analysis as a method, my analytic framework of CWS, and my data selection and analysis methods. This chapter also includes information about the ways that validity and reliability were controlled for throughout this study.

A History of Critical Content Analysis

To fully flesh out critical content analysis as a tool, content analysis must first be understood. In fact, as critical content analysis arises from content analysis, a more comprehensive look at the method of content analysis must be understood before a critical lens can be placed over the method, turning it into a critical content analysis.

Content Analysis. Content analysis is a tool that can be used in qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research designs. Klaus Krippendorf, a researcher known for his writings on content analysis as a practice, states that the earliest documented content analysis of text dates back to 18th century Sweden, and was an examination of religious hymns in an effort to discover the meaning of symbolism within songs (2004, p. 4). Since then, content analysis has been used in a variety of research fields, and with a variety of texts and images to be examined. Other notable content analyses include a spate of quantitative newspaper analyses (in an effort to discover if newspaper do, in fact, give news), and propaganda analysis (which sought to use propaganda broadcasts to predict enemy actions during World War II) (Krippendorf, 2004).

Krippendorf writes that qualitative content analysis (such as discourse analyses, theoretical analyses, ethnographic content analyses, or conversation analyses) each follow different protocols, but at their essence, all follow the same general research approaches; he writes that qualitative content analyses all "require a close reading of relatively small amounts of textual matter," "involve the rearticulation (interpretation) of given texts into new (analytical, deconstructive, emancipatory, or critical) narratives that are accepted within particular scholarly communities that are sometimes opposed to positivist traditions of inquiry," and "acknowledg[ing] working within hermeneutic circles in which [the researcher's] own socially or culturally conditioned understandings constitutively participate" (2004, p. 17). In this way, a content analysis demands that the researcher directly interacts with the text with the full strength of their background, as opposed to attempting to complete a more objective analysis.

At its core, content analysis "is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (and other meaningful matter) for the contexts of their use" (Krippendorf, 2004, p. 4). That is, a content analysis simply analyzes the contents within an item or set of items, for the purpose of drawing inferences regarding the use of the item or items. With regards to picturebooks, a content analysis could examine both the written words and the images on each page, in an effort to infer how these items interact and are used to send a message to a child reader, such as this study does. Krippendorf goes on to state that amongst its many uses, content analysis can be used to examine unobservable or indirectly accessible phenomena, using textual, visual, or other characteristics to address extratextual phenomenon (2004). He writes that content analysis can be used to examine the presence or absence of something, the frequency with which something appears, the number of favorable or unfavorable characteristics are attributed to something, how ideas are qualified, or the frequency of co-occurrence of two concepts (p. 59).

Many of these items directly connect to past children's and young adult literature content analysis projects, many of which seek to examine the presence or absence of specific types of characters, the frequency in which a type of character appears, the favorable or unfavorable attributes assigned to certain types of characters, the ways in which characters are described using specific adjectives, and how often two concepts are tied together, like a type of character and a specific set of adjectives. However, as research projects which center these types of questions can tend to lean towards quantitative methods, Krippendorf is quick to point out that content analysts must then take this quantitative frequency data and qualify it; that "researchers must distinguish between quantifications that lead to the testing of a statistical hypothesis and qualifications that indicate something other than what is counted" (2004, p. 60). For my purposes, this means that my content analysis pushes beyond any gathered frequency data to draw implications.

As a method, content analysis enjoys a great deal of flexibility in terms of purpose, the sources of types of data that can be gathered, and the coding scheme. White and Marsh (2006) lay out example content analysis research studies in the Library and Information Sciences domain (pp. 24-26). These research studies gather data from a variety of sources, like interviews, job advertisements, obituaries, web pages, and questionnaires. These studies vary greatly in terms of using pre-existing coding schemes, as well as the ability to create one own's coding scheme. Content analyses of picturebooks are relatively common in the field of CYAL research, and cover a wide span of topics. In the last few years, content analyses of picturebooks covered the topics of representations of farming and rural environments (Bertolini & Perazzone, 2021), realistic fiction set in rural locations (Youngs et al., 2021), depictions of autism (Azano et al., 2017), aspects of ecology (Martin et al., 2019), dealing with the impacts of cancer (Yamaji, et a.,

2020), and diverse representation (Koss, 2015). Though not all of these scholars are CYAL scholars, each content analysis adds to the field of CYAL and the methodology of content analysis with regards to CYAL. Each of these projects engage with different coding processes and schemes, all while using similar data sources.

Critical Content Analysis. Building on content analysis, a *critical* content analysis, or CCA, is a content analysis completed with the use of a critical theoretical frame. Dr. Kathy Short, a children's and young adult literature researcher, popularized a critical content analysis methodology for examining children's and young adult literature. In a 2017 text which she co-edited, *Critical Content Analysis of Children's and Young Adult Literature: Reframing Perspective*, Short contributed to the field of children's and young adult literature by providing examples of content analysis research using critical theoretical frameworks (Johnson et al.). This book helped set a standard for critical content analysis for children's literature as a research method, and asks that researchers begin with a set of research questions or focus prior to engaging with a theory. It is only after developing research questions that Johnson et al. recommend selecting a critical theory frame. Afterwards, researchers should immerse themselves within the text, completing at least two readings of each text, with the second read involving actual note taking regarding content (2017, p. 8).

Just like content analyses, critical content analyses have enjoyed a long history within children's and young adult literature, though sometimes not under the technical name of a critical content analysis. Text-driven critical content analyses seem to be one of the most common forms of critical content analyses for children's literature. Text-driven analyses begin with the researcher first looking through the body of texts, exploring content like story, theme, etc. Afterwards, the researcher rereads the texts, summarizing how the texts play into the given

research topic (Krippendorf, 2004). All of this is then overlaid with a critical theory, such as feminist theory, CRT or queer theory. One such example of text-driven critical content analysis is Rudine Sims's 1982 research study, published under the title *Shadow and Substance*, which was discussed in chapter two of this study, in which Sims examined a large dataset made up of children's books, seeking to examine racial representation, using a racial theoretical lens.

My study builds on race-based critical content analyses (Rodríguez & Kim, 2018; Pérez Huber et al., 2020; Rodríguez & Vickery, 2020; Sun, 2021), which is a practice of content analysis with the use of a racial theoretical lens. Rodríguez & Kim completed an Asian Critical Race Theory content analysis of picturebooks, and examining the dominant narrative of Asian people through an exploration of the following categories: representing Asian American diversity, genre, cultural authenticity, portrayals of home and cuisine, portrayals of traditions and customs, portrayals of self and family, language, forever foreigner stereotypes, and model minority stereotypes (2018). Each category of findings delved into what was noticed in each book, with specific examples, and were aligned with the Asian Critical Race Theory tenets of Asianization and strategic (anti)essentialism (p. 19), which guided the research project by narrowing the research focus.

Sun (2021) used a critical literacy framework in her examination of representation of transracial Chinese adoption in picturebooks, seeking to examine the negative stereotypes and ideologies presented in such books, so to combat these portrays with a "call for inclusivity and respect" (p. 231). In this effort, Sun provides a rationale that transracial adoption depictions are integral in CYAL, states her theoretical frame of critical literacy, delves into her critical content analysis method background, and then writes about her data source of 3 picturebooks which she found through several resources. Sun coded for publication frequency, if the text is an Own

Voice text, and then looked for thematic and narrative patterns with regards to Chinese transracial adoptions.

Rodríguez & Vickery (2020), on the other hand, approach their critical content analysis through an examination of picturebooks which portray the Civil Rights Movement by using CRT. The authors engage the CRT tenet of counter-storytelling in an effort to examine how picturebooks about the Civil Rights Movement perpetuate tropes about the movement, as opposed to accurate historical portrayals (2020, p. 110). The authors found when examining a picturebook in depth that the book misrepresented aspects of the Civil Rights Movement, oversimplified other aspects, and overall, despite being an award winning book, dealt more in trope than reality. Likewise, Pérez Huber et al. (2020) used a critical race content analysis to examine children's literature. By seeking to discover the ways "historically marginalized groups are portrayed within [literature in schools]" with the purpose of allowing "teachers, educators, families, and children the possibility to understand the discursive storylines being reproduced in the books they use in their classrooms and homes" (p. 4), Pérez Huber et al. found that a critical race content analysis, or CRCA, would be the best tool for such an analysis, and propose a CRCA framework for research, and then apply it to their own work, finding with an example book representations of race, immigration status, and class were more prevalent in the story, with gender less so; they also found that the main characters of the book were "assigned the identities of poor Latinx migrants" (16), though this was never explicitly stated within the text, nor are the characters' immigration statuses, which provided an oversimplification of the immigrant story, and "the erasure of a broader social context to situate an understanding of immigration" (p. 17).

The critical race content analysis proposed by Pérez Huber et al. provided state the following: "a CRCA centralizes racism and intersecting forms of oppression in the storylines of books about People of Color; uncovers ideologies of white supremacy that underlie racist storylines and literacy practices; centralizes culturally authentic experiences of People of Color in texts/images; use of interdisciplinary knowledge to consider the socio-historical, cultural, political, and economic contexts of the text; committed to social justice by challenging and transforming inequity in stories for children" (p. 5). As the CRCA seeks to centralize BIPOC characters with regards to racism, oppression, white supremacy, and contextualized understanding, it is my hopes that a fully developed CWCA tool can provide similar understandings with whiteness in the central space.

According to Krippendorf (2004), critical content analysis should include the following steps: unitizing, sampling, recording/coding, reducing, inferring, and narrating (p. 83). He goes on to explain each step: unitizing is the segmentation of the items of interest to the analysis; sampling allows the researcher to create limitations in an effort to make a manageable subset of data, which is representative of the population; recording/coding connects what is on the page to the interpretation of what the researcher see on the page; reducing allows for the use of representation in the case of large data sets; inferring moves the analysis from beyond what is on the page and includes the process of quantifying; and narrating includes the researcher making their findings "comprehensible to others," likely by the process of writing (2004). Krippendorf also writes that these six steps do not need to follow in the exact same pattern as laid out (the steps can be reorganized, can repeat, or be absorbed into one another). However, for purposes of replication, Krippendorf states that these six steps, as well as instructions regarding their use, are critical to include in any content analysis study.

Analytic Framework: CWS

The analytic framework of this study is critical whiteness studies, or CWS. While critical content analysis using racial theories are fairly common, critical whiteness studies aligned content analyses are not. This could be for several reasons, but I believe that the primary reason is an unwillingness for many racial scholars to engage in critical whiteness studies, in an effort to not center whiteness. As a white woman engaged in race research, I am striving to carefully balance using CWS as a frame by seeking to engage with exposing unnamed whiteness and its representations within picturebooks, in an effort to take away the power that whiteness yields.

Whiteness Aspects. The ways in which whiteness can be analyzed are still under development. Thompson (2003) writes, "Perhaps in a few years we will know better how to talk about whiteness in academia without reinscribing all the instrumentalities of academic whiteness, but for the moment, we are still building the tools we need to build antiracist tools" (p. 9). It stands to reason, then, that the heavy lifting of this study is in developing a tool to examine aspects of whiteness within CYAL. Furthermore, as a white person, I often find myself engaging in what Haviland (2008) calls white educational discourse – ways in which white people talk about race while still resisting discomfort – in my everyday life, and especially so with other white people who are more conservative in their approaches of race. Examples of such discourse include avoiding "avoiding words, false starts, safe self-critique, asserting ignorance or uncertainty, letting others off the hook, citing authority, silence, [and] changing the topic" (p. 44) as ways which evade the power of whiteness, as well as "affirming sameness, joking, agreeing and supporting, praising and encouraging, teacher and student caring, socializing and sharing personal information [and] focusing in barriers to multicultural education" as ways in which whiteness maintains power (p. 47). These white educational discourses act as barriers in

the way of my own thinking, speaking, and writing about race. Therefore, my word choice within this study is intentional, and is reflective of best efforts to avoid white educational discourse. As many whiteness scholars note, examining racism can be uncomfortable for white people due to a variety of reasons, but ultimately there is no other choice than to accept the discomfort, and attempt to use it productively.

As stated before, I examined a randomly selected DPIL book for specific aspects of whiteness: rugged individualism, family structure, Protestant work ethic, religion, communication, and the white default. These aspects were chosen due to my belief that they would be more common within picturebooks than other aspects, and that they would be more obviously present and therefore easily included within my CWCA. This assumption was based on my knowledge of CYAL's typical avoidance of more heavy topics, like racism, as well as my belief that many aspects of whiteness are socially desirable (as whiteness itself is privileged and socially desirable), and thus many picturebooks would reinforce whiteness aspects in an effort to reinforce the correct ways of thinking, behaving and speaking in American culture. These whiteness aspects are understood to be represented in text and through illustration in children's literature in the following ways, though these are not the only representations (definitions taken from NMAAHC). These aspects have been defined, and are also given with examples and non-examples of CYAL appearances:

- Rugged individualism: the individual is the primary unit; self-reliance; independence and autonomy highly valued and rewarded; individuals assumed to be in control of their environment; "you get what you deserve." Interestingly, the idea of getting what one deserves is directly linked to the Protestant work ethic, which is also included in my chosen whiteness aspects, and was bolstered when Bonilla-Silva wrote about the concept

of abstract liberalism, in which individuals overlook systemic racism by focusing instead on the belief of equal opportunity, hard work, and individual choices to be the sole cause for situations (2006); this is heard with such phrases as "pulling oneself up by their bootstraps," or "everyone has the same 24 hours in the day," both implying that personal choices are solely responsible for situations, and context like social inequality and economics do not play a part. Examples of rugged individualism within CYAL could be references to an individual only relying on themselves to solve a problem as opposed to working through collective effort, or a character not seeking assistance in situations where assistance would be advised, such as dealing with a bully. Disruptions of rugged individualism could be when child characters are not forced to act independently, or if child characters push against the idea of receiving something only after earning it.

- Family structure: the nuclear family of a father, mother, 2.3 children being the ideal or sole social unit; husband is breadwinner and head of household; wife is homemaker and subordinate to the husband; children should have own rooms, be independent. This could be seen within CYAL by representing families as having two heterosexual biological parents and their offspring, with little to no mention of extended family or divorce. Likewise, a whiteness aligned family structure could be seen by showing a father who goes to work and a mother who stays home to take on traditional roles like cooking, cleaning or child rearing. Disruptions of the family structure could be stay at home dads, depictions of step-parents or step-siblings, storylines which includes extended family, inclusion of nonbinary parents, or single-family households.

- Protestant work ethic: hard work is the key to success; work before play; "if you don't meet your goals, you didn't work hard enough." Depictions of the Protestant work ethic

in CYAL could be represented as children engaging in hard work to earn things like playtime or other rewards, or in the depiction of children only meeting goals due to extreme hard work, while showing other children who did not "work hard" and therefore do not succeed. Disruptions of the Protestant work ethic could show depictions of all student achieving goals based on effort as opposed success metrics, or children being allowed to play or have fun without earning it.

- Religion: Christianity is the norm; anything other than Judeo-Christian tradition is foreign; no tolerance for deviation from single god concept. Aspects of whiteness aligned religion could be seen in the centering of Christmas celebrations or the depiction of Hannukah as "Jewish Christmas." Disrupting whiteness religion aspects could be seen in being inclusive of other religious beliefs, including atheism, agnosticism, and polytheism, without positioning these religions or belief systems (or lack thereof) as "odd" or "other."

- Communication: Standard English is the best and only way to communicate within America; written tradition and a primacy of written communication and research over personal anecdotes or oral tradition; avoid conflict or intimacy by using careful communication; don't show emotion; don't discuss personal life; be polite. CYAL which engages in whiteness communication aspects will feature children who speak in Academic English, with the text's narration written in Academic English, marked with a lack of slang. Likewise, a story could feature characters who are not overly emotional, who are always polite, and who avoid conflict. Disruptions to whiteness communication norms could show characters engaging in verbal or physical altercations, who cry or yell when upset without being shamed, who are rude without being shamed, or who speak in

forms of English or pidgin languages which are not Academic English, such as using slang or location-specific dialects or accents.

- The white default: racial identity is not stated. The white default can be seen in CYAL when character's race is not stated within the text, and the reader must rely on illustration clues or textual racial markers to assume character racial identity. This can be disrupted by the character's racial identity being clearly stated in the text.

Of course, whiteness can and does show up in many other aspects, and I may find in my coding and analysis aspects of whiteness that I was not anticipating, hence the creation of my "other" category, which will work as a space to gather other non-NMAAHC identified whiteness aspects, or other related information which informs my content analysis. In an effort to battle white educational discourse, and in an effort to build my own tools of analyzing whiteness, I will be examining DPIL books by coding each book for instances of whiteness aspects. This coding process is described later in this chapter.

It is important to note here, like my key terms, is that these ideas and phrasings of whiteness aspects are not perfect in their terminology. For example, the idea of "Judeo-Christian religions" has recently come under fire. Much like the vague nature of whiteness allowing the identity of "white" to include or exclude certain identities for the purpose of gaining members and therefore power, so too has the vague nature of Judeo-Christian religions allowed the dominant Christian religion to include the minority Jewish religion while simultaneously disempowering Judaism. Skipp Porteous wrote in a 1993 op-ed that not only is the term "Judeo-Christian" used to cover antisemitic sentiments, but also that the term is used in a way that sounds inclusive, but in practice, is not inclusive. This sentiment has been echoed in more recent Jewish publications, which, though not of academic nature, have been pushing back on other

hegemonic power structures in which dominant groups include minority groups as a form of subversion as opposed to inclusion.

Data Sources

The data source for this project began with the intention of examining the entirety of all DPIL books from 2000-2021, and focusing on any titles which had been repeated more than 5 times, which would have totaled somewhere around 100 discrete titles. However, upon reflection with my dissertation committee, it was brought to my attention that an examination of books which had repeated 5+ times would skew my data towards books which were older, as this would inherently exclude any books published during or after 2017. As stated before, from 2014 to the current year, the DPIL has specifically strived to include more diverse texts, so by excluding texts published in 2017 or after, this sampling would effectively remove half of the years for which the DPIL had diversity in mind during the book selection process.

With this consideration in mind, and with guidance from Sam Roberts and my dissertation committee, the data for this project now comes solely from the 2021 DPIL book list, as it is the most recently completed year for the DPIL and is therefore reflective of the DPIL's current mindset and diversity initiatives.

The 2021 DPIL book list

Each year, the DPIL formally releases their book selections for each age group. As such, their 2021 book list is provided on the official DPIL website. This list provides three important pieces of information – the book titles; if the book is new to the DPIL; and if the book is "bilingual English/Spanish" or has "Hispanic content" (Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, 2021). Unfortunately, this list lacks an ISBN identifier or author's last name, which became slightly complex when the DPIL has used multiple versions of similarly titled books; for

example, the DPIL has used the story "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," as written by three different authors, various times throughout the years, and one of these books was used in 2021; independently, I could not hazard a guess as to which version of the story was sent to children. Mr. Roberts was integral in helping me ascertain in this situation which of these books were used during the 2021 book cycle, which allowed me to add author information to my list. Based on the clarification provided by Mr. Roberts, the official DPIL 2021 book list is provided on Table 6, on page 164 of this study, and has been formatted into a simple table for ease of reading, and has had author last name added for the sake of clarity.

Despite this study being qualitative, I believe that quantifying some of these figures will provide more clarity: For the year 2021, Groups 1-5 have 12 books, Group 6 has 11 books, and 2 books are un-grouped, as they are the Welcome and Graduation books that each child receives – this brings the book total for the 2021 cycle to 73 books. These groups are the DPIL's way or organizing children by ages – Group 1 is always children ages 0-1 year old, Group 2 is always children ages 1-2 years old, and so on; a child is added to their appropriate group no matter when they join the DPIL program. Of these texts, 12 of the 2021 books are new to the DPIL program (noted in Table 6 with an asterisk) and 13 have bilingual English/Spanish text, or have Hispanic content (noted in Table 6 with a +). Two books are both new and are bilingual/have Hispanic content, being *Brick by Brick* (Sheffield, 2020) and *Baby Builders* (Guest, 2020). The number of bilingual books is reflective of the DPIL's initiative to include two bilingual books for each age group.

Text Selection. As stated above, my text selection process has been heavily influenced by my dissertation committee member, Mr. Roberts, who also works for the DPIL and is involved in the book selection process. As guided by my committee, I decided to only examine

DPIL books sent during the 2021 cycle. During the year 2021, the DPIL sent 73 books; this figure comes from 5 of the 6 age groups who each received 12 books, with Group 6 having only 11 books listed, with the addition of the Welcome and Graduation Books. Of these 73 books, I was able to examine 67 of the 73 books, thanks to the Knox County Library System, who provided me DPIL versions of each book within their system for examination purposes.

My exclusion process was as follows: After gaining access to the 2021 books from the DPIL, I screened each book for the existence of human characters. This is due to the scope of my research project, and the fact that I was specifically seeking to analyze human characters; thus, any book that I used in this project needed to have at least one human character. As stated before, the practice of using animal characters as stand ins for BIPOC characters is common, so much so to the point where Black children are more likely to be represented as monkeys or apes in a process called simianization (Hund et al,, 2015; Campbell, 2019). However, I chose to only examine human characters for the purpose of this study. Of the remaining books, all which contain at least one human character, I then read each book for the second time, examining the characters, peritext, story, setting, and otherwise familiarizing myself with the story at hand. After this second read, I gathered information about each text with regards to general character identity, author identity, publication dates, if the text is bilingual, or other additional information, and placed this information in a table. As the scope of this project is not to decide racial identity of characters for the entire DPIL collection, I have not matched this information to CCBC statistics. However, future research into this certainly be illuminating.

After this, I assigned each of my selected texts a number. I used a random number generator to select one text. For this selected text, I completed a full critical content analysis to

analyze the contents of the book for my chosen aspects of whiteness. When looking broadly, this study followed these steps in order, as influenced by White and Marsh (2006):

1. Create a compiled list of each DPIL book from the year 2021, complete with author name. Gather as many DPIL 2021 books as possible.
2. Read each 2021 DPIL book available to me, in an effort to exclude any books which do not have at least one human character.
3. Complete a second read of all 2021 DPIL books which have at least one human character to familiarize myself with each text, and taking notes as I read.
4. Select one 2021 DPIL book at random for an in-depth critical content analysis.
5. Complete multiple reads of the selected text, seeking out whiteness aspects and coding each aspect when found.
6. Infer how whiteness culture aspects appear in the randomly selected book in an effort to understand how whiteness is reproduced within the selected text.

In practice, using this list of 73 titles, I gathered as many books as I could for the purpose of analysis from the Knox County library system, with the help of Danielle Velez and her team. I was able to gather 67 total books from this book list. The six books that I was unable to gather were not available to me in their DPIL form, and thus were excluded from further analysis. The titles that I was unable to gather due to a lack of access to the book are listed in Table 7, found on page 166 of this study.

Of the available 63 available DPIL titles, 29 books were excluded due to a lack of human characters. This process included my going through the 67 gathered DPIL texts, and searching

each page for human characters. Of these 29 titles, almost all of them had solely animal or insect characters, but some featured personified toys, or inanimate objects like art material or rocks instead of, or alongside, animal or insect characters. These excluded titles are listed on Table 8, found on page 167 of this study.

As a result of these two elimination processes, 38 DPIL books remained for possible analysis. These titles range in a variety of genres (spanning fiction and non-fiction alike) and topics (covering such topics as sports, weddings, body parts, zoo animals, and modes of transportation), as well as publication dates (with the oldest book published in 1955, and the newest book published in 2020). Though this information is not noted for each title, I do feel it is important to note that some of the 2021 books selected by the DPIL are significantly older than others: *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (Brett, 1996), *The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story* (Bruchac, 1998), all of the Grosset & Dunlap *Pudgy* series selections (1983a, 1983b, 1984, 1989), as well as *Who Says Quack* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1989), *The Snowy Day* (Keats, 1976), *The Little Engine That Could* (Piper, 1930), and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Potter, 1902) were published in the 20th century, with some titles were over one hundred years old at the time that the 2021 books were disseminated.

Of the 38 DPIL books which met the qualifications of exclusion process, each title appears on Table 9 of this study, in order of when they were listed on the official DPIL 2021 book list. Table 9 of this study can be found on page 167. From this list of 38 titles, I used a random number generator called Research Randomizer to select one text at random to analyze. I entered the information for one set of numbers, with 1 number in the set, with numbers ranging from #1-#38. This process presented me with #8, which is matched to *Milo's Hat Trick*, by Jon Agee (2017). As stated prior, in an effort to provide an in-depth CWCA, this book will be the

only book analyzed for this study, not so that my findings can be generalized for all DPIL books, but as a start towards the process of analyzing the collection at large, in an effort to draw conclusions. However, the process that *Milo's Hat Trick* undergoes throughout this study could be applied to any other book by using the same process. My reason for only selecting one DPIL text for a full CWCA is twofold: the first being that I wish to provide an in-depth of analysis on one book as opposed to a breadth of analysis of many books, and the second being that this process could be repeated for any other book, but can be done more easily with an example of only one book being analyzed. As stated above, this study is the first step of a larger research trajectory, which would include a CWCA of multiple other DPIL books, in an effort to draw conclusions about the book collection as a whole. The analysis of just one text acts as a foundation upon which more data could be collected. At its core, this study acts as the first phase of a longer research trajectory, and while this study's findings cannot be generalized, it is my hopes that future findings could be.

My choice to randomly select a DPIL text, as opposed to purposefully selecting the text, is twofold. The first reason is that I was hoping to mitigate any personal bias on my part by selecting a book which I felt more clearly exemplified whiteness aspects, thus allowing me to avoid any more difficult or nuanced analysis. The second, more complex reason, is related to my study involving the DPIL to begin with – as the DPIL is massively influential in East Tennessee, and across America (let alone internationally), I wanted the book that I chose to be representative of any book from the collection. By ensuring that the book I chose would be randomly selected, as opposed to purposefully selected, I hoped to create a sample which was a stand-in for any book in the collection with human characters, free from selection bias or my personal opinions and beliefs about which books may or may not have more whiteness aspects present. In this way,

it is my hopes that my research process could be applied to any DPIL books, not just those with very clear and obvious whiteness aspect inclusion.

Coding

With regards to recording/coding, my study included recording aspects of whiteness referred to in dialogue, in peritext, in narration, and in illustration. By nature, this is a deductive coding method (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 2006), in that the study began with a theoretical frame and a set of codes, as opposed to beginning this project by first examining books and drawing codes from similarities in texts. Deductive coding was used in this project due to my prior understanding of racial representation in picturebooks, and my decision to begin the project with a theoretical frame in mind, as opposed to first reading the text set and discovering themes. Because I chose to analyze this content qualitatively, my theoretical frame was included in the construction and the carrying out of my coding process. This coding process was done manually, as artificial intelligence programs have yet to effectively identify racial identity from illustrations (Adukia et al, 2021), nor am I aware of any artificial intelligence program which can identify subjective racial appearances within literature. This process directly tied to the sampling process of the study, and is the reason why the only books used in this study were books for which the DPIL version can be physically examined. I then re-read the text several times, with each read through in the context of a specific whiteness aspect, seeking to infer how these aspects work together to reproduce whiteness. The codebook for this project can be seen in Table 5, as seen on page 164 of this study.

With regards to noting white identity, I determined racial identity using recommendations made to me by the CCBC to seek out author or illustrator interviews or check other outside sources, such as Kirkus Reviews, which specifically often notes character race or ethnicity.

When the CCBC is unable to make an accurate assumption about a character's identity from an illustration, they code this character as having brown skin (personal communication). Thus, when I determined a character's racial identity, I noted if they are white or white passing if they lack racially signifying elements within the text and no information can be found to indicate a BIPOC identity. Likewise, I noted if a character is BIPOC by using the above supports, and more often than not, noted a character being BIPOC by noting skin tone, hair texture, hair color, and eye shape.

Data Analysis

In order to ensure reliability, this project employed communicable coding instructions and clear selection criteria (Krippendorf, 2004), for the purposes of ensuring replicability of this study. Additionally, as this study included only one coder (due to the nature of dissertations), I do not need to worry about intercoder reliability; however, having only one coder affects my validity. Therefore, I instead considered intracoder reliability, or "the stability of a given coder's measurements over time" (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 165), which I addressed over time by completing multiple readings of the randomly selected book and ensured that my notes were aligned – each time that I read *Milo's Hat Trick*, I took notes on a blank codebook, and would combine any new notes onto a master codebook – once this process no longer found any new information after several additional readings, I felt that my data was at saturation, and that my measurements were stable.

In terms of validity, I believe that this project has inherent face validity (Neuendorf, 2017; Krippendorf, 2004; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999) with regards to children's publishing as a whole – when the entire industry of children's literature suffers from a lack of diversity, it stands to reason that any sample of CYAL texts will reflect this lack of diversity.

Therefore, it was also reasonable that the DPIL collection would reflect a lack of diversity, due to the nature of children's publishing. By completing these steps, the project has inherent internal validity. In terms of external validity (Neuendorf, 2017; Krippendorf, 2004; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999), this project suffers greatly, in that there is no way to generalize the findings of this project to any other book dissemination organization, nor to any other book collection at large. However, as this project only examines the DPIL, findings will be immediately applicable to the DPIL itself, and it is my hopes that I have created a tool to examine whiteness which can be generalized to any population or sample of children's picturebooks.

As stated by Neuendorf (2017), external validity can be assessed by considering the representativeness of the sample, as well as whether the content analysis measurement process is true to life (p. 125), neither of which this study can actively engage in due to the nature of the research and the book collection being analyzed. With regards to criterion validity (Neuendorf, 2017; Krippendorf, 2004; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999), this project suffers here as well, as the coding and measurement process is largely invented for the purposes of this project, and does not build on criterion already established and tested in other studies. Because I completed a human-coded analysis (Neuendorf, 2017), as opposed to a computer analysis, validity is further muddied. However, as I have emphasized prior, I attempted to navigate human-coded analysis with my own ethical practices and transparency in the process.

Ultimately, due to the nature of content analyses and the fact that CCAs rely upon a researcher making subjective interpretations based on personal schema (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein 1999, p. 260), issues of validity and reliability are difficult to fully address. Qualitative CCAs are highly subjective, and thus often lacks methods of traditional validity and reliability that are afforded to more quantitative studies. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985)

bring into the conversation the idea of trustworthiness – that is assessing a study for its ability to tell the truth, to show that findings can be applied in other contexts, that findings are consistent and could be repeated, and that the study itself is not motivated by researcher bias or interest. According to Elo et al. (2014), trustworthiness can be achieved through, amongst other aspects, an accurate reporting of the research process. This can look like researcher self-awareness of the process, transparency in the interpretation of findings, and a presentation of findings that allow for contextualization of the data source.

In an effort to account for my identity as a white woman, analyzing whiteness, I undertook several steps. The first was to keep in the forefront of my work the following questions as recommended by Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019):

- What is your racial identity? How does your racial identity shape your reading of this text?
- Does this text position you as a racial insider or outsider? How do you know? How does your positioning influence your reading experience?
- What are aspects of the text to which you can relate? How might not relating to a character in a novel in terms of race or power be important for you as a reader-- or important for learning about your racial identity?
- Are there aspects of the text that you find unfamiliar, uncertain, or challenging? What might those aspects reveal to you about your own racial assumptions and perspectives?

- Are there aspects of the text that cause feelings of discomfort, uncertainty, or resistance? What might these aspects of the text reveal to you about your own experiences or assumptions? (p. 47).

Though aimed towards a racialized reader response, these questions seek to purposefully disrupt readers like myself, who are examining race within children's literature. I specifically answered these questions for *Milo's Hat Trick* upon my first reading of the text, and then upon my last reading of the text, combining both sets of responses into one larger response set. These responses can be found on Table 11 of this study, found on page 168.

Summary

Chapter three presented a methodological and theoretical basis behind this dissertation project. A critical content analysis (CCA) will be used to analyze approximately 300-500 DPIL books for instances of race representation. The theoretical framework of critical whiteness studies (CWS) will guide the analysis of the frequency and quality of BIPOC characters present within the selected DPIL titles. This dissertation will add to the body of research by carrying on the proud tradition of critical content analyses of children's literature, as laid down by Nancy Larrick in 1965. More importantly, this analysis will inform the DPIL of their progress in providing mirrors and windows for their readers.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

Chapter three examined the critical content analysis methodology. Chapter three also provides an overview of my data source, as well as delving into my coding and analysis processes. This chapter provides the DPIL data from the 2021 book list, the procedure undertaken as part of my exclusion process, and an in-depth CWCA of one 2021 DPIL book, chosen at random, being *Milo's Hat Trick*. This chapter also includes a discussion of my findings, based on the CWCA of *Milo's Hat Trick*.

DPIL 2021 Book List General Trends. Though this study sought to examine only one title in depth, I felt it was prudent to examine some general book trends from the DPIL book list with regards to my chosen whiteness aspects. As stated before in this study, it is not my intent to determine character race beyond the information I can find, nor am I seeking to decide the quality of character's racial representation. However, I feel it is critical to address certain trends that I saw within the 2021 DPIL book list. These trends emerged during my book selection process, during which some books stuck out to me due to their text and/or peritext and my having already created a whiteness aspect codebook. While these books did not undergo a full CWCA process, some whiteness aspects could be seen.

Of the 73 DPIL books from the 2021 book list, only 13 titles were marked as being new to the DPIL program. As such, one can infer that 60 books have been disseminated at least once before in the last two decades, coming out to 82% of these books being repeats, which is even more drastic than Betts (2021)'s reported figure of only 35% of titles repeating. In addition, some of the books which are new to the DPIL are not books which have been recently published; for example, Brett's *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* was new to the DPIL for 2021, but was first published in 1987. As such, though the book selection committee may strive to infuse each book

cycle with new texts, it seems that there is a block in this process – I am unable to speculate why the 2021 book list had so many repeating titles, but did find it interesting that so many were repeated titles.

We can see examples of rugged individualism with the books *Coat of Many Colors* (Parton, 2016) and *Police Officers on Patrol* (Hamilton, 2009). In *Coat of Many Colors*, the main character (based on Parton herself) deals with an incidence of bullying independently, without asking for help from adults, the very advice we now give to children, whereas in *Police Officers on Patrol* shows three separate police officers and one commissioner, with each officer acting independently to accomplish tasks like traffic patrol, reuniting lost children with their parents, and stopping bank robbers, each tasks which police officers in real life could likely respond to in pairs, if not in a larger group. In these books, we see examples of individuals undertaking tasks without the help of a collective or a community, completing difficult or scary tasks independently and without complaint or concern for personal safety. For *Coat of Many Colors*, understanding of rugged individualism is also predicated upon one's knowledge of Parton's upbringing – her family's poverty is the reason why Parton had the coat in the first place, and when she is bullied in school. In the text, the narration states that "I tried to make [the classmates] see that one is only poor only if they choose to be" (Parton, 2016, n.p.). Of course, the reality of poverty is far from choice, but this statement invokes the idea of being in control of one's environment in all situations, and the meritocracy of hard work and choice which can overcome difficulties.

Within the 2021 DPIL book list, family structure is typically reminiscent of the whiteness aspect of the nuclear family of two heteronormative parents and 1+ children. The whiteness aspect of family structure shows an image of a family living in a one-family home, without

aspects of multigenerational living or extended family living under the same roof being shown. One book which disrupts this whiteness aspect of family structure is Cooper's *The Ring Bearer* (2017), which tells the story of Jackson, who is attending his mother's wedding to Jackson's new stepfather, named Bill – alongside these three characters, we also see Bill's daughter, Sophie, and Jackson's grandfather, Grandpop. Mama, as she is called, by marrying Bill, disrupts the white family structure – though we do not know the instances surrounding how or why Mama and Bill are marrying, we do know that Bill is not Jackson's father, and he queries on the first page of the story, "What will it be like to call Bill "Dad"? (n.p.), and though readers do witness the wedding, we are not privy to if Jackson does call Bill "Dad" after the wedding. Though Jackson does not use the words, Bill and Sophie are his new stepfamily. Despite the lack of representation, occurrence of stepfamilies are increasingly common in America. The Pew Research Center (2011) found that "more than four in ten American adult shave at least one step relative – either a stepparent, a step or half sibling or a stepchild" (n.p.). However, despite the commonness of stepfamilies, none of the other 2021 DPIL books show a stepfamily.

Baby Builders (Guest, 2020) and *Brick by Brick* (Sheffield, 2020), engage in the whiteness aspect of the Protestant work ethic. *Baby Builders* tells a story of a group of babies working together to build a clubhouse to share, whereas *Brick by Brick* tells the story of a little boy, informing the reader about his day at school as compared to his father's work day on a construction site. Interestingly, these examples often show work ethic in concert with others, as a collective; however, both specifically show examples of characters engaging in literal physical labor. Of particular note is that both of these books highlight BIPOC characters; *Brick by Brick* tells the story of a Spanish speaking father, who the narrator calls Papi, who eats empanadas and drinks horchata, and who engages in manual labor by way of bricklaying, whereas *Baby Builders*

shows several babies (appearing to be of a variety of racial groups as indicated by differing skin tones, hair textures, hair styles, and eye shapes) working on a construction site together. These babies, referred to as "builders" and "masons," eat from a food truck selling "baby food and [mint] ice cream" (n.p.) One must wonder why these books which engage in showing physical labor often portray BIPOC characters – why is it that both DPIL books which showcase labor in the context of construction, why do both highlight aspects of food, and why are some characters placed within this context and not others? Unfortunately, these questions don't have answers, but they stand as curious musings for an unexpected book topic. We also see at least one book which puts labor on the part of the reader in *Find Fergus* (Boldt, 2020), in which the main character, though an animal, is looking to play a game like "Where's Waldo," and the reader, by way of narration, gives instructions for how best Fergus can hide – the book even ends with a list of items for the reader to find throughout the illustration, asking the reader to take on this aspect of labor for the book to be finished.

Within the books which featured characters of color, few if any actually mentioned race within the text, leaving readers to infer racial identity with the use of content clues from illustration, book topic, peritext, or other book aspects. Take, for example, the two books written by Floyd Cooper, *Max and The Tag-Along Moon* (2013 and *The Ring Bearer* (2017). Though he has now passed away, Cooper was a Black author and illustrator, well known for creating stories which celebrated Black lives; it was his intention to showcase Black stories and Black culture. In an article published by The New York Times (Vadukul, 2021), Cooper said, "To put a book about a little Black child into the hands of a little white child, and to put a book about a little white child into the hands of a little Black child…it has always been something that has been part of my career from the very beginning" (n.p.). Despite this intention, neither of Cooper's

books disseminated by the DPIL in 2021 explicitly mention any character's racial identity; however, with knowledge of Cooper's identity, and the fact that he illustrates his own books, readers can infer that each of Cooper's Black characters are intended to be Black. Other texts, however, give textual clues as to racial or ethnic identity; for example, *My Papi Has a Motorcycle* (Quintero, 2019) is written with Spanish interspersed within the English narration and dialogue, and one can infer, despite it not being stated, that the characters of Daisy's family are Hispanic in that the character's speak Spanish to one another. Likewise, *At the Mountain's Base* (Sorell, 2019) tells a story which the peritext explicitly states was inspired by a Lakota female pilot during World War II; the peritext also states that the family involved in this book is Cherokee. Though neither of these identities are stated within the story's narration, concrete textual clues help readers decide identities. These books are the most clear in their contextual clues for character's identities, while others relying purely on illustration.

One interesting theme that I noticed within the 2021 collection, which does not have a corresponding whiteness aspect and would be thus placed in the "other" category is *names and naming practices*. Looking again at Cooper's two texts, we see the importance of names within texts that highlight BIPOC characters. In her 1982 book, *Shadow and Substance,* Sims writes about "melting pot" books, which are stories which "reinforce the idea that America is a melting pot, or a homogenous and color blind society" (p. 33) These books lack textual race markers, relying on illustrations for clues about racial identity, and do not discuss topics like race of racism, nor do they engage in distinctly Black [or BIPOC] culture, traditions, or themes (pp. 33-34). In this text, Sims later comments on the "specific details" of melting pot books, commenting that many melting pot books which show characters who are Black in illustration alone often fail to accurately capture Black culture. She writes, "…melting pot books vary in their use of terms

of address for parents. It is interesting to speculate on whether the author's use of "Ma and Pa," "Mother and Father, "mom and Dad," or "mama and Daddy" is related to social or cultural associations" (p. 43). Sims continues this thought when thinking about "terms of address" (1983, p. 71), when she writes that "Children are often referred to as "Baby…Mothers are often called Mama, and grandmothers sometimes Big Mama. Siblings often called Sister or Brother (or Bubba) within the family." Turning to Cooper's two books, we see a mother called Mama, and grandfathers referred to as "Granpop" or "Granpa." Not only are these two books some of the only non-nuclear family representation, but these naming practice imply a more authentic cultural context.

Ultimately, though the 2021 DPIL book list as a whole may showcase a great deal of diversity in terms of skin tone, eye shape, hair color and hair texture, it is important to note that racial diversity is not just skin tone; accurately cultural representations should also be included, be it in the words used for people, how characters relate to one another, and the types of family showcased. Diversity should reach beyond the color which the illustrator has chosen to use for a specific character, and like Sims wrote in 1982, must seek to push away melting pot stories which do not provide enough illustration nor textual clues for racial identity to be determined.

Milo's Hat Trick

The book which underwent a CWCA for this study, *Milo's Hat Trick*, was published in 2001 by the publisher Hyperion Books (Kirkus Reviews, 2001), which is now owned by Hachette books (Publishers Weekly, 2013). Hachette, one of the Big Five publishing houses, sold *Milo's Hat Trick* to Penguin Random House, who began publishing the book under the imprint Dial Books in 2017 (Penguin Random House, 2022). As such, this analysis is for the 2017 version of the book, as it is the version owned by Penguin Random House, and is therefore

the version disseminated by the DPIL. *Milo's Hat Trick* was first disseminated by the DPIL during the 2020 book cycle, and was one of the books given to children born in 2016 (at this point, these children were in Group 5, and would be 4 years old). During the 2021 book cycle, *Milo's Hat Trick* was one of the books given to children born in 2017 (which was also Group 5, and also intended for children who would be 4 years old). In the 2022 book cycle, *Milo's Hat Trick* appears yet again in Group 5, sent to children born in 2018 (and again, who are 4 years old) (Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, 2021). Before the book itself can be analyzed, however, I believe that the author must first be examined.

Author Background. According to his website, Jon Agee is from Nyack, New York (Agee, n.d.-a), which is in Rockland County, located right above New York City. Agee was born in 1960 to a teacher and an artist; in an interview with *Publishers Weekly*, Agee is quoted as having said that his mother, the artist, encouraged both Agee and his sister to "dabble in art" (Encyclopedia.com, 2018). After graduating high school, Agee attended Cooper Union School of Art in New York City, where he achieved his B.F.A. Eventually, Agee moved to Brooklyn, New York, where he entered a contract to publish a holiday picturebook in 1982, titled *If Snow Falls* (Encyclopedia.com, 2018). According to his author biography, Agee now resides in San Francisco, California (Agee, n.d.-a). Agee is white or white passing, as indicated by his appearance, and I could not find any interviews which contradict this assumption. I was unable to find any information about Agee's ethnic identity, which leaves me to believe that he does not volunteer his racial or ethnic identity during interviews, nor is he specifically asked questions about his racial or ethnic identity. This is in direct opposition to most BIPOC authors, whose racial identity is often discussed or provided in interviews.

Due to my familiarity with my home state, I feel comfortable editorializing for a moment on where Agee grew up. Nyack, NY is part of what is considered "upstate" NY, but is close enough to NYC, bordering the Hudson Valley, where NYC's wealth is disseminated by city dwellers looking to escape "upstate" for the weekend. A quick search of Nyack's cost of living shows that Nyack sits above the national average for every aspect of cost of living: grocery costs, health costs, housing, utilities, transportation, and miscellaneous – in fact, housing in Nyack, NY is more than twice the national average, with the median home cost in Nyack being $531,000, as compared to the New York state average of $373,000 and the USA average of $291,700 (Best Places, 2022). Granted that these figures are adjusted for the year 2022, these figures are likely on-trend for the last several decades for Rockland County.

The town of Nyack is served by the Nyack school district, which is also reflective of a population of an urban city center – over half of the student body population is BIPOC. As of the 2021 school year, 45.5% of the student body is white, 23.6% Hispanic, 21.4% Black, 6.8% Asian, 2.3% two or more races, 0.3% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island, and 0.1% American Indian/Alaskan Native (U. S. News, 2021). Agee would have most likely graduated from Nyack high school around the year 1977, but no racial demographic information could be found on the Nyack school district from this period of time. It is likely that the district would maintain similar student demographics.

Agee officially became a children's picturebook author and illustrator in 1982, when his first book, titled *If Snow Falls*, was published by Pantheon books (Agee, n.d.-b). Since then, Agee has published picturebooks with relative regularity, totaling 24 picturebooks published by the year 2021 (Agee, n.d.-b). *Milo's Hat Trick*, originally published in 2001, has won several awards and accolades – the text was named an ALA Notable Book, an Irma Black honor book,

and found itself on several “best of” or “recommended” book lists by several publications (Agee, n.d.-b). Agee’s picturebooks, on the whole, are well received, often winning awards and being placed on “best of” book lists, making Agee an author/illustrator of fairly high repute within the children’s literature community. The topics of his picturebooks are widely varied, but are typically fictional books; he features both human and animal main characters, though more frequently showcase human main characters. On his author’s website, reviews of his books describe Agee is “an absurdist of long and beloved standing,” and a “a master of humorous books,” which aligns with his body of picturebooks being primarily comedic in nature (Agee, n.d.-b). Agee has also illustrated several books which he has not written, starting back in 1989, and has dabbled in playwriting and composing for off-off Broadway musicals (Encyclopedia.com, 2018).

Story. The story within *Milo’s Hat Trick* follows the same trends as Agee’s picturebook oeuvre – the book is fiction, focused on a comedic storyline with touches of absurdism. The book features primarily human main characters, with an animal character (a bear) playing an important role in the story. The main plot of the story is as follows: Milo is a down-on-his-luck stage magician, performing for small crowds. The theatre manager, named Mr. Popovich, demands that Milo master the trick of pulling a rabbit out of his hat or be fired. Milo sets to this task by seeking to catch a rabbit, but accidentally catches a bear instead. The unnamed bear, simply called “the bear,” shows Milo that he too can be useful in the hat trick, stating that he learned how from a rabbit. Milo, enthused by having what he needs to pull a whole bear out of his hat on stage, heads back to the theatre. He does so by train, which takes him “back to the [unnamed] city”; however, upon arrival, he realizes that he had taken the wrong hat from the train and has lost the bear. Milo goes back to the train station to look for his hat, but readers see that the hat

has been taken by another man, and brought to a restaurant. The bear emerges from Milo's hat, causing mass chaos. For the middle section of the book, the bear disrupts city life, and eventually finds his way to the theatre where he reunites with Milo for their magnificent hat trick. Finally, the bear becomes tired after performing too many shows, and retires; however, before he does so, he teaches Milo the secret of the hat trick so that he may perform it solo (Agee, 2017).

Reviews of *Milo's Hat Trick*, published in 2001 following the book's initial publication, were published by *Publishers Weekly* (2001a) and *Kirkus Reviews* (2001), amongst others; Publishers Weekly provided a starred review of the story, and the review itself simply follows the plotline, calling the book "accomplished" (2001a, n.p.), while *Kirkus Reviews* also provides a plotline summary, and reported that the picturebook is a "beautifully shaped story, symmetrical and decidedly odd and bright with laughter. The pacing and delivery are stage-worthy, as is Agee's vastly expressive artwork, which is chockful of visual humor" (2001, n.p.). Neither review delves into a deep examination of Milo himself or the other characters – however, Publishers Weekly did comment that "Milo could be Little Orphan Annie's uncle or a caricature of John Lennon. His brick-red mop of hair and thick mustache bracket pupil-less eyes and a voluminous nose, and a too-tight gray suit adds to his hangdog appearance" (2001a, n.p.). Notably missing from that description is mention of Milo's race or skin tone.

Neither review specifically states the racial identity of any character within the book, though had this book been published after 2015, *Kirkus Reviews* would have identified Milo's racial identity, as inferred by Smith's 2016 essay. *Kirkus Reviews* has not retroactively revised their book reviews to add such information, and thus neither *Kirkus Reviews* nor *Publishers Weekly* specifically comment on Milo's race in their 2001 reviews. As a result, we too are left to infer Milo's identity. Readers can infer, due to Milo's race not being commented on, that he is

white (which falls under the idea of the white default and whiteness as neutrality), as well as the fact that Kirkus Reviews was identifying racial identities of BIPOC characters in 2001, as illustrated by a review of Polacco's *Mr. Lincoln's Way* (Publishers Weekly, 2001b), in which several Black characters are specifically referred to as "African-American" (n.p.). Readers can also infer Milo's race due to his description as being related to Little Orphan Annie, a well-known character who is white, with red curly hair. Outside of Milo, there are several named and un-named human characters; Mr. Popovich, the theatre manager, is shown as a large-statured and bald white man who wears glasses and a light blue suit and appears several times in the story, and a great multitude of un-named human characters who serve as background characters. Like Milo, these characters lack any racial descriptors.

Text. The actual text of the story comes in two forms; the first is the written narration and dialogue, and the second is text which is included within the book's illustration. The text within illustration is of particular interest to this study, in that this text acts as a series of clues which point to the setting of *Milo's Hat Trick*. The first instance of text which implies location occurs during a scene where Milo returns to the train station to look for the bear. In the train station, we see a train station board, showing arrival and departure locations and times. Of the locations, readers can clearly see the names of Hoboken, Ossining, Ludlow, Sparkhill, Greenwich, and Nyack (an obvious calling to Agee's home town) (Agee, 2017, n.p.). These locations are each located relatively close to one another, and range from downstate New York to upstate New Jersey. This is our first clue that this book may be set near or around the New York City metro area, which is further reinforced in another scene, soon after the train station, which shows the bear looking for Milo in the city, where he is causing panic to the humans. In this scene, several examples of text within the illustrations are visible. The bear stands below a street sign that reads

"Broadway," and on the opposite page, a yellow taxi cab is seen, with the message "NYC TAXI 7653" emblazoned on the door (n.p.). A final location clue is found on several pages, all which refer to the location of the theatre itself. A theatre patron holds a program for the Rialto Theatre, Milo's magic show is advertised on the marquee of the Rialto Theatre, and Mr. Popovich is shown reading a newspaper which also refers to the Rialto Theatre. These illustration clues all point to the Rialto Theatre, located in New York City, a theatre which actually closed in 2002, but which was located on Broadway, a few blocks down from Times Square (International Broadway Database, 2022). The importance of the story's location will be expounded upon in later sections of this chapter.

With regards to how characters communicate with one another, only three characters speak throughout the book: Mr. Popovich, Milo, and the bear. Mr. Popovich, ever dressed in his light blue suit, speaks to Milo twice throughout the book – the first time, he states "I'll give you one more chance. Tomorrow night you better pull a rabbit out of your hat – or else" (Agee, 2017, n.p.), and the second, he tells Milo that "Rabbit or no rabbit, you've got to go on. Just look, the house is packed" (n.p.). Milo and the bear share the bulk of the dialogue throughout the book, and both speak casually to one another. Speech mannerisms will also be expounded upon in later sections of this chapter.

Peritext. As noted above, the DPIL placed *Milo's Hat Trick* within books intended for four year old readers. As such, the peritext provided by the DPIL, placed within the front flap of the book, is intended for children who are four years old. The typical DPIL peritext intended for the adult reader is split into three categories: "starting up," "reading the story," and "after the story," with each category providing activities for adults and children to do together. In this text, the suggestions can be seen in Table 10, found on page 168 of this study.

While I am unsure about the author of this, or any, DPIL Reading Activities, there is a note below this text, which states that "These Reading Activities are Presented in Collaboration with the Library of Congress, loc.gov" (Dolly Parton's Imagination Library & Library of Congress, 2017, n.p.). Of the reading activities for *Milo's Hat Trick*, the majority of them ask readers to focus on aspects of the illustrations, or connecting the text to background knowledge or real-life experiences. Other peritext within the text include the endpapers of the book, which both show a scene of a wooded space like a forest (presumably where Milo had found the bear). The choice of endpaper design is interesting, seeing as how the majority of the book takes place in an urban setting, yet we see a more pastoral backdrop both preceding and concluding the story.

Self as Researcher

Connecting back to the questions provided by Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019), it is critical that I examine myself as an instrument of research. As this is a study which examines whiteness, and as I am a white researcher, examining a mostly white body of texts, Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides' questions help center my own practice in analysis, to ensure that my own identity aspects do not blind me in the analysis process. These responses can be found in Table 11, found on page 169 of this study. As noted on Table 11, question 3, *Milo's Hat Trick* aligns with several aspects of whiteness. To quote from this question's response, "I relate to many aspects of this book – I connect thematically with the idea of being told a directive – accomplishing said directive, alone, and without questioning it —accomplishing it through force and trial-and-error instead of asking for help, and then enjoying the feeling of accomplishment (with or without applause). In fact, this is often how I approach most of what I do – alone (to some extent), forcing my way through, and then enjoying my accolades. However, these are

several aspects of whiteness – a lack of community reliance, a lack of asking for help, the use of sheer determination and stubbornness and the idea of "hard work" leading to getting what I feel I have earned, and seeking out accolades or acknowledgement for tasks (even the small ones)." Even the process of accomplishing tasks with instead of feeling weak and asking for help plays directly into whiteness aspects like rugged individualism in the refusal of seeking help.

This answer also directly harkens to my positionality as a researcher and reader; I grew up in a privileged position, where traveling to New York City was commonplace; I have had the opportunity to attend Broadway, off-Broadway and off off-Broadway performances, and have a working knowledge of theatre and live performance as both a performer and an audience member. Furthermore, I understand emotionally Milo's motivation and actions – in fact, I empathize with Milo, and can see myself in the character, in that we both undertake tasks which we are assigned, perhaps even mucking up the situation a little bit, and we find solutions of our own volition, instead of asking for help. As I wrote on Table 11, question 2, I am very much positioned as an insider of this text. These elements which I see and enjoy as a reader potentially blind me as a researcher. Once aspect that I could not be blind to is how the setting of this book affects my reading – once I figured out that *Milo's Hat Trick* was set in New York City, I flipped back through the book and began looking at crowd scenes, looking for reflections of the city demographics. Since the setting of Milo's show is not a Broadway theatre, it stands to reason that tickets wouldn't be astronomically expensive, and thus I would expect that the crowds in the theatre would be more diverse. I also expected that the scenes set on public transportation, or on the sidewalks, to be much more diverse. Instead, I saw scenes which do not match the reality of New York City, no matter the time period – the sidewalks, streets, train station, and theatre audience reflected back primarily white faces.

Whiteness Aspects

Again, we turn to Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019) question prompts (pp. 60-61), which can be found on Table 12, found on page 171 of this study, to consider whiteness in the context of CYAL. Unfortunately, many of these questions ask readers to consider whiteness as opposed to Blackness or BIPOCness, which *Milo's Hat Trick* cannot engage in due to the sheer lack of BIPOC characters. This set of questions seems to imply that whiteness can only be examined in opposition to non-whiteness, or that whiteness is only worth examining in relation to BIPOC character, but as noted before in this study, it is common for researchers and academics to consider whiteness as opposed to Blackness. When examining a specific set of texts, this becomes doubly complex in the light that BIPOC characters are less common than white characters – thus if we are only to examine whiteness in the context of Blackness, there are a great deal of texts that we would not be able to analyze in depth.

With respects to the previously identified whiteness aspects, my codebook for my analysis of *Milo's Hat Trick* may be found on Table 13, found on page 172 of this study, and expands on the evidence which I discovered for each of the 6 identified whiteness aspects, as well as elements which I discovered and placed under the "other" category. This table includes much more of a deep analysis, looking for examples of whiteness aspects from *Milo's Hat Trick* which I did not find prompts for from the Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019) questions seen on Table 12. Ultimately, I found that while some of my chosen whiteness aspects did apply easily to the text, other aspects did not fit as well to the text, indicating that my scope of what I believed would be the most common or easily observed whiteness aspects were not, in fact, the most common or easily observed for this specific text.

One of my more interesting findings with regards to the specific whiteness aspects is within the white default category. Taking my response from Table 13, “There is no textual reference to race – the text is colorblind. There are few if any identifiable BIPOC characters, with the most notable one being a dark-skin-toned schoolchild, walking with a group of other school children, to Milo’s show. The child is shown wearing a backwards baseball hat, and is overweight as compared to the other members of the group.” I feel that this one child in the background of a crowd showcases not only a stereotypical image of an urban Black child, but also acts as a literary quota which has been reached, as if by the inclusion of this single child that now there was some BIPOC representation, so all was well with the book.

I am frustrated by the overall lack of BIPOC characters in the book, but also in that the whiteness aspects I did find are core and integral aspects of the book – if Milo didn’t buy into rugged individualism, he could have sought help from Mr. Popovich and found a rabbit, thus preventing the entire story – in addition, when Milo lost his hat, he literally could have asked anyone for help, but chose to not seek help and therefore could not find his hat or the bear within the hat. Had Milo not engaged with rugged individualism, he could have avoided the entire adventure to begin with, and told Mr. Popovich that if a hat trick was required, that Milo needed training and help. Likewise, when Milo engaged with the Protestant work ethic of doing the hard work of hunting for a rabbit as a means to his ends, or with the threat of losing his job being his ultimate motivator, as opposed to a more intrinsic drive for bettering himself and his trade. Likewise, the bear itself also engaged in the aspect of the Protestant work ethic, wherein the bear benefits the least, but engages in a great deal of labor, which only Milo and Mr. Popovitch benefit from.

The element of rugged individualism stuck out to me most in this book, and made me consider why exactly rugged individualism appeals to whiteness and white people. Rugged individualism gains its name from a speech by President Herbert Hoover, who stated in a 1928 campaign speech that Americans were "faced with a…choice between the American system of rugged individualism and a European philosophy of diametrically opposed doctrines" (Digital History, 2021). However, the idea of rugged individualism reaches back to the American frontier (Bazzi et al., 2020), and has been seen in depictions of romanticized American frontier media in the form of texts like *Little House in the Big Woods* (Wilder, 1932) and the rest of the "Little House" book series, as well as an infinite number of representations of American cowboys and brave settlers, and harkens back to the determination that many white Americans felt when they colonized lands to claim it for their own. It makes sense, then, that rugged individualism appeals to whiteness in America – it is a direct call back to the American sense of manifest destiny and the deservedness that many white Americans felt, and still feel. When thinking about *Milo's Hat Trick*, the visible aspects of rugged individualism seem to invoke those feelings of earning rewards for hard work (even if the hard work was actually completed by someone else), and the sense of accomplishment one feels from a job well done (even if the job was finished by someone else).

In a different vein, this entire book is positioned towards a specific audience; one with at least some knowledge of urban locations, theatre/magic performance, and absurdity as a genre. In addition, the vocabulary choices in the book are potential barriers for many readers. I do not believe that the intended reader for this text was a BIPOC child nor a child with low socio-economic status, and this is bore out not only in the lack of representation and also in the necessity of background knowledge for this story to make sense.

A CYAL CWCA proto-tool

During my CWCA of *Milo's Hat Trick,* using my selected whiteness aspects, I realized that there were some elements that could not be applied to every book, nor could all of them be seen; additionally, many took a great deal of inference, background knowledge, and time for research into aspects like Agee's life. This process of examining a picturebook for whiteness aspects is not feasible for the long run, which necessitates to me the need for a CWCA tool. The following represents a proto-tool with which whiteness can be examined in CYAL more holistically. As the entire process above is unreasonable for the majority of educators, parents/guardians, students, or organizations, the development of a CWCA tool also felt necessary to provide educators, parents/guardians, students and organizations with a more simple and quicker tool to examine how whiteness is represented and reproduced within children's books. This tool takes root from the work of Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019), Youngs et al.'s content analysis of picturebooks with rural settings (2021) and the CIBC's "10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism" (1974), along with borrowing from the whiteness aspects of the NMAAHC's (2021) infographic. This tool is intended for use no matter the races or ethnicities of books within characters, and does not seek to examine whiteness as opposed to another racial identity. This proto-tool consists of 10 subtitles, with explanation and guidance for the person doing the analysis.

1) Check the author's (and illustrator's) background: Look for the author's official website, or their biography as given by the publishing house of the book in question. Has this author written similar books before, on similar topics or in similar genres? Have they been the recipient of book awards or accolades? If so, which ones? What themes does their body of text seem to examine or engage with? What is their level of understanding or belongingness

to the cultures, ethnicities, or racial groups represented in their books? If the illustrator is named and is different from the author, these same questions should be applied. Is this book an Own Voices book, in that the main character's identity matches the author's identity?

2) Check the setting: Do the characters in the story match the known demographics of the book's location? Consider also the time setting – are the characters and actions accurate to the time period that the story takes place in? If this book is set in a specific time and place, is it historically accurate given your background knowledge of this time and place? Are the characters acting in ways that would be appropriate or accurate? Which people belong in this time and space, and are they seen within the story?
3) Look for stereotypes: Within the text and the illustration, check your book for stereotypical appearances, dress, behavior, and names of characters.
4) Check for racial markers: How can the reader learn the racial identity of the characters? Are there illustration markers, such as different skin tones, hair colors, hair textures, hair styles, or eye shapes? Are these clues that are definitive, or are the characters presented in a way that is racially ambiguous? Is the race of the character(s) ever explicitly stated in the story, or in the peritext? If characters are represented as animals or non-human objects, are these representations engaging in racist tropes and caricatures like simianization? If the character is only described with racial marker adjectives, are they likened to food or plants? What connotation do these adjectives carry?
5) Check for necessary background information: Based on the setting and the plot of the book, is there any background information that you would need for this book to make sense? Is there any historical or social background that readers need to understand the context of the

story or the setting? Have there been any controversies about the topic of the book, or the location where the book is set?

6) Check for morals and lessons: Is the reader supposed to learn a moral or lesson from this story? What does the story teach about morals regarding to work ethic and deservedness? What message might different types of readers get from this book, and how might that messaging be different depending on the reader's identity?
7) Check the relationships: How do characters interact with one another? Do they work together, or are they in opposition to one another? Are characters shown as members of a family, and if so, who is the family composed of? Which people hold more power, and which hold less? How do those in power act towards those who are disempowered? Is there an exchange of money or services, and if so, who is benefitting, and how?
8) Check for cultural markers: How are people named or nicknamed? Are these names culturally authentic or accurate, and how do you know? What holidays or celebrations are being celebrated? What clothing is being worn? What sports or games are being played? What weather is shown? How do people talk to one another, and what cultural or locational slang is used (if at all)? If the book is bilingual, which language comes first on the page, or is in larger print (called linguistic supremacy)?
9) Check the story's action: whose perspective and point of view is shown, and whose is missing? Which characters are engaged in the action, and which act as sidekicks or observers? Which characters create the conflict, and which help solve it? Do characters seek help from significant others to solve problems, or do they work independently?
10) Check the peritext: who is portrayed on the cover and/or end pages, and what are they doing? How are characters described in the peritext, if at all? Does the author provide any additional

context, resources, or information in the peritext which can help readers navigate the content of the book, and if so, does this information attend to issues of racial identity?

With this tool in mind, we can finally complete a CWCA for *Milo's Hat Trick.*

1) Check the author's (and illustrator's) background: Agee is a white man from downstate New York, with familiarity of New York City. He has written several other picturebooks, each on similar topics. While Agee has won some accolades and honors for his books, he has not won any major children's literature awards. Agee's body of work deals with absurdist humor. He more often portrays human characters, and a quick look at his book covers reveals that the majority of his human main characters have light skin tones. Agee illustrates his own work. In both his author website and his publisher biography, his race is not mentioned.
2) Check the setting: The book is set in New York City, a location well-known for its ethnic and racial diversity. There is a secondary setting of a rural, forest location, but no details are shown. The two main characters of the book are white or white-passing, and the majority of the background characters are as well. This does not match the demographics of New York City. The time setting of the book is difficult to pinpoint, but it is somewhere between 1970-1990. Given New York City's long history of being a center for immigration, the images portrayed in this book are not historically accurate to the reality of New York City. There are huge demographic groups that are missing, especially seeing as how the part of New York that includes Broadway is just a 20 minute drive or public transportation to ethnically specific neighborhoods like Little Italy, Chinatown, and Koreatown, let alone other ethnic neighborhoods a little further away, including Little Senegal, Little Odessa, and Little India – none of these ethnicities are visually represented in the story, but it is more than possible that they would be seen in this public space on any given day.

3) Look for stereotypes: The only definitive Black character in the book is shown in stereotypical dress – a backwards baseball cap, and all white socks with sneakers. This character is also noticeably overweight; one of the few characters who are overweight. Other characters, almost all who pass as white, are not shown in stereotype – they wear a variety of clothing, and appear in a variety of body shapes.
4) Check for racial markers: No character has their racial identity specifically stated in the text or peritext of the book. There are illustration markers for all characters, which include different skin tones and hair color; the majority of characters are light skinned and white passing, and others are racially ambiguous enough where they could be placed into the category of "white." The bear does not appear to act as an anthropomorphic racialized character, and acts, speaks, and thinks in "neutral" ways, leading me to believe that if the bear was a human, he too would be white or white passing.
5) Check for necessary background information: Though it is not critical for making sense of this story, knowledge of New York City and its demographics are helpful, as this illuminates exactly which characters are missing from this story. Knowledge of live performance is also helpful, as vocabulary in relation to performance is throughout the book. Vocabulary choice for the book in general also demands some background knowledge in more specific vocabulary usage (indicative of being well-read, or having received a formal education). To my knowledge, there have not been any controversies regarding the topic of this book, though I do know that other books which deal with ideas of magic (or witchcraft, as it were) have been recently banned (and burned) across Tennessee. Though *Milo's Hat Trick* has not been targeted in this regard, it is possible that in the future, this book could become controversial.

6) Check for morals and lessons: One of the biggest morals of this story is the necessity of doing as you are told, and succeeding even in the face of failure – Milo goes on stage to perform the hat trick without even having his hat, as opposed to putting off the performance, explaining the situation and asking for help, or finding an alternative solution. Thinking about this question in terms of race, this book also could teach that magic and magicians are a purely white practice, and that BIPOC people need not practice nor attend magic shows. The story centers around the necessity of achieving goals and benefitting (either financially or emotionally), but does not highlight aspects of cooperation, of other people also benefitting due to doing the work (as the bear does not benefit, but Mr. Popovich, who has done no work, does benefit professionally from the bear's labor), nor do we learn a lesson about working hard to achieve ones goals, as Milo is not actually the character who does any labor (in fact, he benefits seemingly by luck and happenstance).
7) Check the relationships: There is a definite power differential between characters – Mr. Popovich has the most power (and makes the most money upon Milo and the bear's success). Milo is next most powerful, and the bear is the least powerful character. Milo and the bear seem to work together at first glance, but upon further examination, it appears that the bear is subordinate to Milo in terms of the amount of work the bear does compared to Milo, and the benefits that the bear gathers as opposed to Milo. Readers can assume that the bear is not compensated for his services.
8) Check for cultural markers: Mr. Popovich, despite having a name which indicates European descent, is absent of all cultural markers. Milo, too, lacks cultural markers. They are, in essence, neutral in their dress, manner of speaking, actions, etc., which leads directly to whiteness as neutrality. Holidays are not celebrated. Both Milo and Mr. Popovich are

wearing suits (and are in a professional setting, where they may be required), and background characters are shown in a wide variety of casual and professional dress, all neutral in their markings with the exception of the one Black background character, who wears a backwards baseball cap (almost every other hat in the book is a fedora or top hat). Games and sports are not shown, but we do see a group of children who appear to be on a school field trip. Weather appears neutral in the book, and looking at character dress, the weather is temperate. There is no slang used in the book, and often the language seems more formal than the typical picturebook. Mr. Popovich speaks mostly in demands, Milo speaks as if he lacks confidence, and the bear speaks confidently. The book is not bilingual.

9) Check the story's action: The story is told from Milo's point of view – we are not consistently privy to the feelings of other characters. Milo is engaged in all action, and we see some of the bear's actions and thoughts as he looks for Milo; the bear acts as a sidekick to Milo, and his storyline is only in relation to Milo. Mr. Popovich and all other characters are observers of the action, and do not place significant roles. Mr. Popovich begins the conflict by giving Milo a call to action, but ultimately the bear is the character who solves the conflict – Milo is relatively passive in this regard.
10) Check the peritext: Milo is portrayed on the cover page. He is dangling a carrot over his top hat, as we see him do in the book as he is searching for a rabbit. Milo is described in the peritext as a magician with a failing act – no other character is described.

Though this proto-tool still demands refinement, this early version illustrates the ways in which whiteness can be observed within picturebooks, as well as providing a more simplified method of analysis which does not demand a great deal of labor on the part of the user. It is my hopes

that further refinement will result in a tool which quantifies whiteness aspects, so that there is less inferential demand on users.

Summary

Chapter four offered a brief CWCA of the 2021 DPIL book collection, as well as an in-depth CWCA of *Milo's Hat Trick.* Within chapter four, the author of *Milo's Hat Trick* was researched, the literature thoroughly examined and made sense of, and the six aspects of whiteness were laid out, for the purposes of drawing conclusions about how whiteness is represented not only in skin tone but also by whiteness aspects and assumptions. Chapter four also provided a CWCA proto-tool, with the hopes of replication of the process of examining how whiteness is represented and reproduced within the selected text with more ease, and for use by laymen.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter four contained a CWCA proto-tool, a brief analysis of the entire 2021 DPIL book list, and an in-depth analysis of *Milo's Hat Trick*. Chapter five provides the conclusions of this dissertation, as well as recommendations for future practice, additional research, and improvements for the DPIL.

Children's Literature Publishing Industry

As noted before in this study, a great deal of whiteness within children's literature is as a direct result of the children's literature publishing industry as a whole. Even if the DPIL book selection committee were to choose every single culturally diverse picturebook published by Penguin Random House in a given year for dissemination, the fact of the matter is that this would not be equal to 70 books. There is a gap in publishing that directly leads to a lack of representation within the DPIL, and this gap is then filled with books which place whiteness at the forefront.

Research cited in this study has shown that BIPOC authors have fewer opportunities to publish with Big Five publishing houses, and research cited in this study has shown a lack of diverse representation in CYAL texts, but findings like these do not account for whiteness representation, only representation of white characters. However, it can be assumed that, as this study indicates, a great deal of CYAL texts do engage with whiteness aspects, no matter the identity of the author or the identity of the characters within the story. As such, a first step towards lessening whiteness representation could be in increasing the number of BIPOC-authored texts. Of course, this is easier said than done, as research in this study also indicates that the books which center white experience and are intended for the assumed white reader helps

drive the publishing industry, and BIPOC authors would most likely disrupt these norms. However, diversifying authorship would lead to an increase in diversifying representation in literature, which could in turn, lead to a decrease in the primacy of whiteness aspects within children's literature.

Ultimately, the leaders of the children's publishing industry must approach diversifying their book catalog and author contracts with intention – too often, books about BIPOC characters are seen as special interest texts, or texts that only a small demographic of readers could enjoy. Publishing companies have the power to re-brand BIPOC centered texts as stories for all readers, and they have the ability to seek out and contract with BIPOC authors to tell stories about BIPOC characters, instead of, or in addition to, white authors telling stories with BIPOC characters. While the publishing statistics cited in this study are stark, they are an indication of decades and centuries of neglect, racism, and white supremacy within the publishing industry. However, now that organizations like the CCBC have gained visibility within the general public, and non-CCYAL scholars are beginning to take up the mantle of demanding more diverse and authentic texts, it follows that in a capitalist system, this demand should drive the supply. It would behoove the children's publishing industry to diversify their offerings not only because it is simply the right thing to do, but also because this would be reflective of a general desire from readers.

The Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

As stated prior in this study, the DPIL has made a concerted effort to provide diverse children's literature in recent years. However, due to the scope of this project, I am unable to state if the DPIL has in fact increased its diverse book offerings over time, and I am unable to state with any authority how closely the DPIL book statistics with regards to race representation

match the CCBC data. As the CCBC has not yet analyzed its 2021 data, any conclusion I may be able to make would not be totally accurate, and as I am not seeking to qualify the number of characters or their identities as the CCBC does, I have not provided such information with regards to the DPIL 2021 book list. Furthermore, as I only examined in depth one DPIL 2021 book, I am not able to state with any confidence the amount of diverse representation about the full DPIL collection – the analysis of one book is not enough data to draw conclusions about a larger population. As such, future research should be completed with regards to the DPIL 2021 list – this could be in the form of completing a CWCA for several other books, in an effort to create a sample size large enough to draw conclusion about the population at large. This study represents the first of what will hopefully be multiple DPIL book analyses, working together to show a more in-depth picture of the state of diverse representation and whiteness representation within DPIL books.

The diversity initiatives that the DPIL has undertaken with regards to purposefully providing multicultural texts has not been received by all families as a positive initiative. Samuel Roberts shared in a personal communication that of the texts from the 2021 book lists, the DPIL received race-related feedback for *Hair Love* (Cherry, 2019), *Max and the Tag-Along Moon* (Cooper, 2013), *Families Belong* (Saks, 2020) and *The Night is Yours* (Zachariah, 2019), each which feature BIPOC main characters. Thought only one of these books is new to the DPIL, Mr. Roberts clarified that when these books were sent back to back to children during the 2021 book cycle, it behooved adults to send feedback.

Mr. Roberts also noted that other books which received more than usual feedback were *Blue Sky White Stars* (Naberhaus, 2019), *Old Rock (Is Not Boring)* (Pilutti, 2020), *Police Officers on Patrol* (Hamilton, 2009), *The Ring Bearer* (Cooper, 2017), *This Beach is Loud!*

(Cotterill, 2019), and *Brick by Brick* (Sheffield, 2020). Of these, only *Old Rock (Is Not Boring)* and *Brick by Brick* are new to the DPIL, and both *Brick by Brick* and *Blue Sky White Stars* are notated as being bilingual or having Hispanic content. Interestingly, though *Police Officers on Patrol* (Hamilton, 2009) had been sent by the DPIL before, during the 2021 book cycle, the text was sent to Group 4 children during a time of significant societal unrest in America, in which police officers were under extreme scrutiny, and thus this book may have been perceived as the DPIL taking a political stance on law enforcement. Of particular note is that this same group of children who received *Hair Love* (Cherry, 2019), *Max and the Tag-Along Moon* (Cooper, 2013) and *Families Belong* (Saks, 2020) back to back.

As can be seen in Table 6 of this study, found on page 164, many of these books which received more than usual amounts of feedback are more likely than not to be either new to the program, or to be bilingual/have Hispanic content. When examining these titles, another theme stands out – of these books, every single book which had at least one human main character who is portrayed as a person of color (in illustration, if not within the text). One must wonder if this is an example of correlation or causation, and unfortunately, I am in no place to speculate any further.

Despite the feedback gathered from adults, it is my opinion that the DPIL should continue to provide a variety of diverse texts, covering a variety of topics. However, the DPIL should also seek to provide diversity beyond skin tone, and seek books which showcase cultural diversity and representation, as well as books which center non-white cultural aspects. I believe that this could be accomplished by the DPIL contracting with a smaller publishing press, and selecting one book per age group from this smaller publishing press, in an effort to include more diversity in skin tone and in story topic. However, I also understand that the DPIL is constrained

by their contract with Penguin Random House as their sole publisher, and recognize that this recommendation may not be feasible. In this case, I would recommend the incorporation of more inclusivity and purposeful questions in the reading activities published in each book. These questions could ask children to identify characters which look, act or speak like them, which do not, and then to discuss any discrepancies in this question. These questions could also ask parents to engage in conversation about non-whiteness aspects, such as an emphasis on collaboration and community; for example, questions could ask parents and children to think about how goals are achieved in the book (e.g., how do we see examples of cooperation in this book?). It may also be useful for the DPIL to purposefully add an extra member to the book selection committee whose expertise is in diversity, equity and inclusion regarding literacy, education or CYAL texts, so that this member can add additional layers of analysis during the book selection process beyond the metrics stated in chapter three of this study.

With regards to necessary additional research on the topic of racial representation and whiteness representation in DPIL texts, it is my recommendation that the DPIL seek to use tools like the CIBC "10 Quick Ways…" to fully examine their chosen books for diversity beyond skin tone, or to complete a CWCA on their selected books, using a tool similar to the proto-tool outlined in chapter four. While the DPIL, again, has made a specific effort to provide mirror books and window books, it seems to be more than likely that both their mirror and window books are reflecting back whiteness culture more so than any other cultural aspects, no matter the skin tone that a character is painted. This being said, many of the books which received feedback from the 2021 book cycle are those which do delve into non-white culture, such as *Hair Love* (Cherry, 2019) which is a celebration of Black hair, a specifically Black cultural element. In order for the DPIL to engage in providing more accurate mirrors and windows, and providing

them in a more culturally authentic way, it is possible that the DPIL may need to address this choice, as it may not be popular for all families who have an enrolled child. The American DPIL program may need to formally release a statement, giving their intention and dedication to BIPOC representation within their books, and, more than likely, also be prepared for backlash in this regard. As the DPIL rapidly expands across entire states, it will be increasingly critical that the DPIL provide mirrors and windows of a wider variety of races and ethnicities, so that all enrolled children have the opportunities to see themselves and their lives reflected in the books they receive. The DPIL may also wish to consider instituting an extra step in the book selection process which gives more control to parents and guardians, in that the book selection committee of the DPIL would choose more options, and then families would select of those choices which books they are interested in receiving. Such a process can be seen in the book dissemination organization PJ Our Way, run by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. This program provides one free book per month to enrolled families, with the caveat that each book is related thematically to Judaism. The book selection process for the program is as follows: the organization selects four books per month, and during the first 10 days of a month, families are asked to enter their account portal to select the book they wish to receive. In this selection process, families are able to examine the book, look at ratings and reviews, and watch media like videos, to make their decision. After the book is selected, it is sent to the enrolled child that month (PJ Our Way, 2022).

The caveat to such a shift for the DPIL is that PJ Our Way is a much smaller program, and thus this individualization can be handled at a smaller scale. With the DPIL sending out over one million books per month, the logistics of providing so many choices may become overwhelming and lead to issues in shipping, or lead to a discrepancy between which books are

ordered by the DPIL and how many of them are selected for dissemination. One solution could be to provide a choice of 15 books per year to families during the last 15 days of the year, and have them select the 12 books they are interested in receiving during the coming year, and to provide a statement that the DPIL does its best to honor choices, but cannot guarantee that book reception will match the choices made.

It is also possible that the 2021 book list indicates a specific shift towards more cultural and racial inclusion within their books, and that the feedback received indicates to the DPIL that there will be pushback. However, it is my belief, and the belief of many in the CYAL research and education fields, that this is work which must be done, no matter the feedback or consequence. As the DPIL is arguably the largest book dissemination organization in the U. S. A., and with far reach in several other countries, the DPIL should strive to be inclusive in all aspects, not just in the skin tone that an illustrator chooses to paint a character.

In addition, as the DPIL seeks to diversify their book formats, it will become increasingly important that books selected by the DPIL have more obvious racial representation. Many of the illustration clues which point to character identity cannot be represented for readers who are, for example, reading the Braille or audiobook versions of these stories, and therefore would not be able to infer racial identity of characters. This intersection of format and text will certainly affect how readers are able to understand character identity and plotlines, and should be accounted for. Finally, the DPIL may benefit from increasing or diversifying their book selection committee. Intentionally adding book selection committee members who have demonstrably worked towards diverse representation in children's literature may be beneficial; however, I believe it would be most beneficial to add committee members who are BIPOC, who are parents or guardians of BIPOC children, and/or who are abreast of children's publishing beyond Penguin Random

House. This could be done by adding one or two more members of the committee to form a larger group, or by intentionally seeking out and recruiting community members, scholars, or other individuals to join the committee and replace a current member upon their leaving. It is unknown to me how long a committee member can sit on the book selection committee, and what the process of joining and staying on the committee looks like. This process may also need to be changed to attract more diverse voices to the committee. There is an idea that people of color want a "seat at a table," so to speak, to be welcomed into white spaces and allowed to speak and be heard, but I believe that this metaphorical table must be dismantled and rebuilt with new intention. The book selection committee should be built with diversity at the forefront, not just a consequence or second thought, and this may take significant work on the part of the DPIL to attract and retain BIPOC committee members, but this would be critical work.

Ultimately, though the DPIL program is undoubtedly a wonderful one and one made with love and care, it is not perfect. It was my belief entering this study that the DPIL has sent out books which primarily centered white characters. This is in direct opposition to the demographic makeup of the United States. Recent research shows that the United States is quickly racially diversifying in terms of the population, and that American K-12 students are more likely to be a BIPOC student than they are to be a white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). This, for me, is critical, in that I believe that the DPIL should send books to students which reflect accurately not only the lives of people within the reader's culture and identity group, but also the lives of people who are different than the reader, especially if those reflections match the majority of child readers in the United States. Again, drawing on Bishop's metaphors of windows and doors, in that when students lack real-world windows into communities and lives different than their own, and if they are lacking in literary windows to fill those gaps, then it

stands to reason that these students would have little to no knowledge of lives different than their own. Additionally, I still feel a sense of moral obligation in my own tikkun olam practice and my desire to engage in antiracism work, as well as my wish to contribute to the field of children's literature in a way that is meaningful. I knew that just like within my own childhood, there are many child readers in the United States who are not reading mirror stories.

Furthermore, when the DPIL disseminates books which focus on white experiences, child readers can take in implicit messages about whiteness, which, in turn, could impact their thoughts about race and multiculturalism for years to come. In thinking specifically about American literature and American ideas about racial identity, Morrison (1992) wrote that

> Just as the formation of the nation necessitated coded language and purposeful restriction to deal with the racial disingenuousness and moral frailty at its heart, so too did literature, whose founding characteristics extend into the twentieth century, reproduce the necessity for codes and restrictions. Through significant and underscored omissions, startling contradictions, heavily nuanced conflicts, through the way writers peopled their work with the signs and bodies of this presence – one can see that a real or fabricated Africanist presence was crucial to their sense of Americanness. And it shows. (p. 6)

Or as paraphrased later by Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides, "literature does not simply *reflect* race and racism in American society; literature has played a role in *constructing* race and racism in American society" (2019, p. 7). Children's introductions to race through literature quite literally affect American culture in a back-and-forth relationship – literature reflects ideas about race, and literature builds ideas about race. If children are not exposed to literature which shows raced characters, or are not in a community in which discussing race is normalized, then they are left to construct their own ideas about race, often to the detriment of American society.

Ultimately, the centering of whiteness in the DPIL is due to a combination of several overlapping factors: the publishing industry, the DPIL book selection committee, and the historical and social constraints that imbue both children's publishing and the DPIL. There is no one magical fix that can solve the amount of whiteness in the DPIL, no one solution that can be proposed to fix every perceived ill of the program. Due to America's long history of prioritizing whiteness, almost every aspect of America is filled with whiteness as ideology – the supremacy of whiteness touches all things, and cannot be fixed with a simple addition of a few DPIL books. Some of the above proposed changes to the DPIL work towards fixing a small element of the pervasiveness of whiteness, but they do not work towards fixing the larger issue of children's publishing as a whole, nor do they get at the root of white supremacy in America. However, that's not to say that there isn't a solution, or a set of solutions, which can work towards betterment. To again invoke Thompson (2003), while we do not have the tools or solutions at this time, we are laying the groundwork to build the tools and solutions which can solve these core issues.

CWCA Proto-tool

There is much work to be done to refine this method into a more user-friendly tool. However, it is my intent to work towards the finessing of this tool, in an effort to create a product which can act as a method of analysis which can be replicated for future research. Again, however, this proto-tool needs work; it stands in a moment of time which indicates my desire to create a CWCA tool, and to bring awareness to the fact that skin tone in illustration or narration is not enough to call a text "diverse," especially when these racial markers are not presented in tandem with authentic cultural aspects; that is, pairing a raced character with only whiteness aspects and representations is not only inappropriate, but it works to continually represent

whiteness and white culture as the norm or the only desirable ways of acting, thinking, speaking, and being. In this way, we can see how whiteness is reproduced and represented in children's books, and we can also see a way forward.

In order for this tool to be more refined, more CWCAs should be completed, and for a variety of books, so that other whiteness trends and aspects can be revealed, and so that the tool can be more refined with the inclusion or exclusion of whiteness aspects which are more clearly observable in CYAL, as well as providing more context and information for people outside of the academe to use this tool with more ease. The proto-tool in chapter four is focused in on the six whiteness aspects that I identified for this study, and ignores the other aspects from the NMAAHC; a better CWCA tool will be more inclusive of all whiteness aspects, and provide more clarity and guidance on how users can define, decide, and discover whiteness beyond skin tone. At the same time, a CWCA tool must go beyond simply naming whiteness aspects and how they can be identified, which has the potential for making this tool too massive for regular and easy use.

As mentioned before, defining whiteness is a difficult task, and it cannot be reflected in any one resource. However, the inclusion of text analysis which names white supremacy and provides context for more obvious aspects of whiteness may be beneficial for this tool and its uses, especially for those who do not have a working background in whiteness studies. Furthermore, the tool currently stands as 10 steps for text analysis, without any guidance as to a more quantitative analysis of how these aspects can combine or work together to make a text more or less white than another text. This tool would certainly benefit from providing more context for its use, providing information for users regarding CCBC data, definitions of whiteness, and stressing the importance of a tool that can examine whiteness representations in

CYAL. Because whiteness is not often examined, it is possible that a tool which seeks to examine, assess and analyze whiteness may seem redundant to many.

Finally, in order for this tool need to provide more clarity and guidance on how users can define, decide, and discover whiteness beyond skin tone. While tools which examine rural settings, racism or sexism in CYAL texts are more definitive in the markers that show racism, sexism, or setting, a tool which measures whiteness is more difficult; users may be unaware of how to look for whiteness beyond skin tone, and even the most perfect tool could be rendered obsolete over time due to shifts in the definition of whiteness. Of course, this would then be predicated on the user finding such a tool in the first place, finding value in such a tool, and deciding to use it, which would imply some level of understanding on the part of the user. That being said, ultimately this tool will be refined by its continued use, and by keeping the tool in proto-tool stage for a while longer, while it undergoes changes based on its use with young adult novels versus picturebooks, changes in book publication dates, and other factors which were not controlled for in this study and development of the tool.

Self as Scholar

This project stands as a point in time where I have begun to truly see whiteness and white culture as something beyond skin tone. The original version of this study sought to first quantify the number of BIPOC characters versus white characters; a second version of this study sought to qualify the accuracy and quality of BIPOC characters – both versions represent attempts which I made to limit whiteness either only in skin tone, or only examine whiteness when opposed to Blackness or other racial identities. This third and final version of the study represents a more full understanding of whiteness and whiteness aspects, as well as a more full understanding of how whiteness is represented and reproduced in literature with only white

characters, as well as with a multitude of racial representation within a book. There is a great deal of whiteness culture which I was simply not aware of, and took for granted as something that was "normal" or "neutral," such as names for grandparents – while I understood that some cultural groups in America used cultural-specific terms for grandparents, often in a cultural or heritage language, I hadn't considered that Black Americans too would use different terms for their family members. In this way, the larger takeaway of this project is my own personal growth as a white woman, trying to engage in antiracist work, and striving to become a teacher educator who will pass on ideas of antiracist pedagogy. Too often, teachers see diversity as simply skin tone, and so we choose books which showcase a variety of skin tones, and we believe our work is done. This study has enforced within me the fact that whiteness and white culture goes far beyond simply the choice of skin tone in illustration; that whiteness potentially exists in the actions, words, beliefs, and thoughts of each character in each book, and that until we can identify and name it, it continues to act as neutrality, thus feeding into the cycle of whiteness reproduction and representation beyond skin tone choices.

Additional research should be dedicated to the idea of whiteness within children's literature. Each year, more CWS research is published, and yet so little of it is in regards to CYAL. Too often, CYAL race work is taken for granted, and as I stated above, too often teachers and CYAL scholars believe that they are achieving multicultural representation in their choices. From here, there must be a more dedicated effort to examine whiteness within CYAL, and especially so within texts which highlight ideas of "diversity" and "equity." We must examine how these "diverse" characters are positioned in regards to whiteness, and how they may be reinforcing whiteness culture, no matter their skin tone. We must seek to look past illustrations showcasing diversity and understand the ways in which whiteness is present even

with diverse-looking characters and the way that the characters speak, act, and look. Harkening back to the #WeNeedDiverseBooks and #OwnVoices movements, whiteness acts as an unspoken layer for these movements, wherein we must examine not just the book but also the author, the context of the book, and any number of aspects which affect our understanding of the text.

Despite the great deal of uncertainty that this study has revealed both in me, and in the field of CYAL, I wholeheartedly believe that whiteness research should and must continue within the CYAL domain. Furthermore, this research should and must be expanded to literature for older students, and across several content areas and domains. Whiteness culture exists in all academic spaces, and it is my belief that we all must take up this mantle and expose whiteness when it acts as neutral and when it acts as normal. Furthermore, we must reflect on our own choices as teachers, as parents and guardians, and as researchers, and examine our beliefs and stances on the CYAL we choose to expose children to, our own beliefs about whiteness and white cultural aspects, and where we rely on assumptions instead of doing this hard work ourselves.

Future research for my own research agenda will continue the refinement of the CWCA proto-tool, into a more user friendly tool. I also believe that there can and should be work completed regarding the purposeful disruption of whiteness aspects by authors and illustrators who intentionally disrupt whiteness in their work. Additionally, I wish to continue examining books for whiteness representation through book diversity audits and content analyses, and especially so with specifically organized book collections or book dissemination organizations (for example, an analysis of PJ Our Way, of organizations which provide book awards, or university libraries with CYAL collections), as well as providing insight upon request for my future co-workers regarding book choice in their syllabi if utilizing CYAL within their courses.

Due to my involvement with the Association of Jewish Libraries, I see my next immediate move to be my involvement with a diversity audit of books selected for a specific award, in hopes of drawing conclusions regarding racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse representations within the awarded books.

While I believe that this study carries larger implications for the DPIL, for whiteness research, and for my own research agenda, I think that there is also great potential in the field of CYAL research. Until CYAL race researchers are able to conceptualize that whiteness representation must also be examined, in addition to instead of replacement of BIPOC representation in CYAL, the field of research will continue to lack a more full picture of inclusion. While leading organizations like the CCBC and *Kirkus Reviews* are beginning to name and incorporate whiteness into their own research, the field as a whole is still lacking, and will continue to do so until whiteness as neutrality is directly challenged with regularity.

My largest implication from this work is my realization that I still have far to go on my own inner work, as well as my scholarship. Several times throughout this project, I found that I was contradicting myself in ways that I represented whiteness, and how whiteness aspects could be seen and measured within CYAL. I also struggled with an overreliance on scholarly work published by white race scholars, who were taking original works by BIPOC authors and interpreting it, and in turn, I was using this interpretation to inform my own work. For example, this study shows an overreliance on the work by Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2021), whose framing questions can be seen multiple times, and the responses to which affected my interpretation of the whiteness aspects I examined in *Milo's Hat Trick*. At the same time, I was trying to balance what Dr. Debbie Reese criticized Nel's 2019 book for, which was the idea of "people in privileged spaces being informed by the work of people of color -- and using that

work with little to no acknowledgement," while also positioning myself on the same plane as Black scholars who are also engaging in similar CYAL research (n.p., 2015). In seeking to discuss invisibility, I engaged with white scholarship and made Black scholarship invisible. This was further complicated when I found myself pushing up against what I knew when I began this study versus what I learned during the undertaking of this study. This was then compounded by additional coursework and readings I engaged with, scholars I had the chance to speak with, and questions I was asked by non-CYAL race researchers. That is to say, this study occupies a liminal space in my own research and understanding of race, CYAL, privilege, and whiteness which, quite frankly, represents my burgeoning understanding of my place within CYAL race research. There is no easy solution to this dilemma except to continue the work; to make mistakes, to be criticized, to feel discomfort, to grow, and be better than I was before.

Study summary

This study sought to examine how a specific book within the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library represented and reproduced whiteness. To this end, I undertook a critical whiteness content analysis, or CWCA, to examine the 2021 DPIL book list, as well as to examine one 2021 DPIL book, chosen at random, to complete an in-depth analysis for 6 whiteness aspects, identified by the NMAAHC and chosen for this project based on my understanding of whiteness representation within CYAL. Findings showed that the DPIL generally offers books which align with at least some aspects of whiteness, and *Milo's Hat Trick* engaged with several aspects of whiteness, as expected. Recommendations based on these findings include changes made to the DPIL with regards to book selection, as well as the necessity for more whiteness research in the field of CYAL, and the better development of a CWCA tool to aid in said research.

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Appendix

Table 1: Children's Books about Black People, Compiled by the CCBC, 1994-2001

Year	Estimated # of books published	Books about Black/African people	Average in percentage, rounded to closest tenth
1994	4,500	166	3.7%
1995	4,500	167	3.7%
1996	4,500	172	3.8%
1997	4,500 – 5,000	216	4.5% assuming 4,750 estimated total
1998	5,000	188	3.8%
1999	5,000	151	3.0%
2000	5,000-5,500	147	2.8% assuming 5,250 estimated total
2001	5,000-5,500	201	3.8%
MEAN	5,000	176	3.6%

Table 2: Children's Books about Black People Received by the CCBC, 2002-2020

Year	Books received at CCBC	Books about Black/African people	Average in percentage, rounded to closest tenth
2002	3,150	166	5.3%
2003	3,200	171	5.3%
2004	2,800	143	5.1%
2005	2,800	149	5.3%
2006	3,000	153	5.1%
2007	3,000	150	5.0%
2008	3,000	172	5.7%
2009	3,000	157	5.2%
2010	3,400	156	4.6%
2011	3,400	123	3.6%
2014	3,500	181	5.2%
2015	3,400	270	7.9%
2016	3,400	287	8.4%
2017	3,700	355	9.6%
2018	3,682	405	11.0%
2019	4,035	471	11.7%
2020	3,299	400	12.1%
MEAN	3,264	221	6.8%

Table 3: Children's Books about BIPOC Characters, Received by the CCBC, 2020

Total #	Black/ African	Indigenous	Asian	Latinx	Pacific Islander	Arab
3,299	400	52	317	200	5	27

Table 4: Children's Books about All Demographic Characters, Received by CCBC, 2020

Mean	Black/ African	Indigenous Peoples	Asian	Latinx	Pacific Islander	Arab	White/Brown skin
3,299	8.3%	1.5%	9.6%	6.1%	0.2%	0.8%	69.7%

Table 5: Codebook for Whiteness Aspects

Whiteness aspect	**Code**	**Examples**
Rugged Individualism	RI	Self-reliance; independence and autonomy;
Family Structure	FS	The "nuclear family;" "traditional" family roles
Protestant Work Ethic	PWE	Hard work; work before play; outcome is directly linked to effort; meritocracy
Religion	R	Judeo-Christian holiday as default;
Communication	C	Standard Academic English use; lack of community language
White Default	WD	Lack of textual reference to race; normalization of whiteness and white identity; colorblind text (race is not mentioned at all)
Other	O	Other interesting items of note regarding genre, setting, or other whiteness aspects not coded for.

Table 6: 2021 DPIL Book List

Non-group books	
1. The Little Engine That Could	Watty Piper
2. Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come	Nancy Carlson
Group 6: children born in 2016	
book title	**book author**
3. Last Stop on Market Street	Matt de la Peña
4. Daniel Finds a Poem	Micha Archer
5. Spend It!	Cinders McLeod

Table 6 continued

6. The Tale of Peter Rabbit	Beatrix Potter
7. Violet the Pilot	Steve Breen
8. Blue Sky White Stars +	Sarvinder Naberhaus
9. First Day Critter Jitters *	Jory John
10. My Papi Has a Motorcycle +	Isabel Quintero
11. Max Explains Everything: Soccer Expert	Stacy McAnulty
12. Old Rock (is Not Boring) *	Deb Pilutti
13. At the Mountain's Base	Traci Sorell
Group 5: children born in 2017	
14. Milo's Hat Trick	Jon Agee
15. Find Fergus *	Mike Boldt
16. Raccoon on His Own	Jim Arnosky
17. The Night is Yours	Abdul-Razak Zachariah
18. The Ring Bearer	Floyd Cooper
19. When the Storm Comes *	Linda Ashman
20. The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story	Joseph Bruchac
21. This Beach is Loud	Samantha Cotterill
22. Brick by Brick *+	Heidi Woodward Sheffield
23. Goldilocks and the Three Bears *	Jan Brett
24. Llama Llama Loves to Read	Anna Dewdney
25. Coat of Many Colors +	Dolly Parton
Group 4: children born in 2018	
26. Goodnight, Numbers	Danica McKellar
27. A Story for Small Bear *	Alice B McGinty
28. My Dog Laughs	Rachel Isadora
29. The Rabbit Listened	Cori Doerrfeld
30. Max & the Tag-Along Moon	Floyd Cooper
31. Play with Clay *	Jenny Pinkerton
32. Baby Builders *+	Elissa Haden Guest
33. Hair Love	Matthew Cherry
34. Families Belong *	Dan Saks
35. Police Officers on Patrol	Kersten Hamilton
36. Three Little Pigs *	Nicola Baxter
37. The Snowy Day +	Ezra Jack Keats
Group 3: children born in 2019	
book title	**book author**
38. I Am a Rainbow	Dolly Parton
39. I Hear a Pickle +	Rachel Isadora
40. Little Excavator	Anna Dewdney
41. Just Like My Brother	Gianna Marino
42. One Leaf, Two Leaves, Count with Me	John Mikolos Jr
43. Squeak	Laura McGee Kvasnosky
44. Play with Me	Marie Hall Ets

Table 6 continued

45. Red House, Tree House, Little Bitty Brown Mouse +	Jane Godwin
46. Sleep Train	Jonathan London
47. There's a Hole in the Log at the Bottom of the Lake	Loren Long
48. Shh! Bears Sleeping	David Martin
49. Llama Llama Gram and Grandpa	Anna Dewdney
Group 2: children born in 2020	
50. Good Morning, Farm Friends	Annie Bach
51. The Pudgy Where is Your Nose? Book	Laura Rader
52. Corduroy's Shapes	MaryJo Scott
53. Sassy: Baby's First Words +	Grosset & Dunlap
54. Sleep Tight with The Very Hungry Caterpillar *	Eric Carle
55. I Love My Daddy Because +	Laurel Porter-Gaylord
56. The Home Builders	Varsha Bajaj
57. Little Poems for Tiny Ears	Lin Oliver
58. Vehicles (The Kids' Picture Show)	Chieri DeGregorio, Steve DeGregorio
59. Sassy: Lets Count	Grosset & Dunlap
60. Llama Llama Red Pajama	Anna Dewdney
61. Good Night, Gorilla	Peggy Rathmann
Group 1: children born in 2021	
62. Sassy: Bedtime for Baby	Grosset & Dunlap
63. The Pudgy Pat-A-Cake Book	Terri Super
64. Baby! Talk!	Penny Gentieu
65. Look at the Animals	Peter Linenthal
66. Who Says Quack	Jerry Smith
67. The Pudgy Book Of Mother Goose	Richard Walz
68. The Pudgy Peek-A-Boo Book	Amye Rosenberg
69. I Love My Mommy Because +	Laurel Porter-Gaylord
70. Baby Sounds +	Joy Allen
71. Llama Llama Hide and Seek *	Anna Dewdney
72. I Love You, Spot	Eric Hill
73. Night-Night Forest Friends	Annie Bach

Table 7: Unavailable 2021 DPIL Books

1. Last Stop on Market Street
2. Brick by Brick
3. A Story for Small Bear
4. Families Belong
5. Three Little Pigs
6. Night-Night Forest Friends

Table 8: 2021 DPIL Books with No Human Characters

1. Spend It! 2. First Day Critter Jitters 3. Old Rock (Is Not Boring) 4. Find Fergus 5. Raccoon on His Own 6. Llama Llama Loves to Read 7. Play with Clay 8. Little Excavator 9. Just Like My Brother 10. Squeak 11. There's a Hole In the Log at the Bottom of the Lake 12. Shh! Bears Sleeping 13. Llama Llama Gram and Grandpa 14. Good Morning Farm Friends 15. Corduroy's Shapes	16. Sassy: Baby's First Words 17. Sleep Tight with the Very Hungry Caterpillar 18. Home Builders 19. Vehicles 20. Sassy: Let's Count 21. Llama Llama Red Pajama 22. The Pudgy Pat-a-Cake Book 23. Look at the Animals 24. Who Says Quack 25. The Pudgy Peek-a-Book Book 26. Llama Llama Hide and Seek 27. I Love You Spot 28. The Little Engine that Could 29. Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come

Table 9: Available 2021 DPIL Books with Human Characters

#	Title	Author	#	Title	Author
1	Daniel Finds a Poem	Archer	20	Baby Builders	Guest
2	The Tale of Peter Rabbit	Potter	21	Hair Love	Cherry
3	Violet the Pilot	Breen	22	Police Officers on Patrol	Hamilton
4	Blue Sky White Stars	Naberhaus	23	The Snowy Day	Keats
5	My Papi Has a Motorcycle	Quintero	24	I Am A Rainbow	Parton
6	Max Explains Everything: Soccer Expert	McAnulty	25	I Hear A Pickle	Isadora
7	At the Mountain's Base	Sorell	26	One Leaf Two Leaves Count with Me	Mikolos Jr.
8	Milo's Hat Trick	Agee	27	Play with Me	Hall Ets
9	The Night is Yours	Zachariah	28	Red House, Tree House, Itty Bitty Brown Mouse	Godwin
10	The Ring Bearer	Cooper	29	Sleep Train	London
11	When the Storm Comes	Ashman	30	The Pudgy 'Where is Your Nose?' Book	Rader
12	The First Strawberries: A Cherokee Story	Bruchac	31	I Love My Daddy Because…	Porter-Gaylord
13	This Beach is Loud	Cotterill	32	Little Poems for Tiny Ears	Oliver
14	Goldilocks and the Three Bears	Brett	33	Goodnight, Gorilla	Rathmann

Table 9 continued

15	Coat of Many Colors	Parton	34	Sassy: Bedtime for Baby	Grosset & Dunlap
16	Goodnight, Numbers	McKellar	35	Baby! Talk!	Gentieu
17	My Dog Laughs	Isadora	36	The Pudgy Book of Mother Goose	Walz
18	The Rabbit Listened	Doerrfeld	37	I Love My Mommy Because…	Porter-Gaylord
19	Max and the Tag-Along Moon	Cooper	38	Baby Sounds	Allen

Table 10: Milo's Hat Trick Reading Activities

STARTING UP

- After reading the title, talk about what magicians do and what a magician's hat trick could be.
- Ask what animal the magician might be trying to catch in the over illustration. Use the carrot as a clue!

READING THE STORY

- As you turn to the first page of the story, ask if the audience seems to be enjoying the show. Then read about what is going wrong.
- Look together for the bear in silly places. Point out the bear's nose or feet sticking out of the hat. When the policeman is looking, can your child find where the bear is hiding?

AFTER THE STORY

- Ask your child questions about the story.
    - At the beginning, the theatre manager was furious and Milo was sad. Why? Did the show get more of an audience later? What changed?
    - If you were a magician, what animal would you like to reveal in your show?
- Learning on the Go:
    - Watch a video of a professional magician and see what tricks wow you the most.
    - Try some magic tricks at home! Grab a hat and take turns with your child making common objects such as coins, cards, spoons, or favorite toys appear or disappear. (It doesn't have to be perfect!) Pretend there is an audience and take a bow.

Table 11: Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides Researcher Question Prompts and Responses

Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides question prompts (2019, p. 47)	**Responses**
1) What is your racial identity? How does your racial identity shape your reading of this text?	1) I am white. When I am reading, my whiteness tends to blind me not only to racial differences, but also to cultural representations related to race. In reading *Milo's Hat Trick* the first time, I noticed the lack of any non-white characters fairly immediately. However, if I did not have my background knowledge and my positionality as described in Chapter One of this study, it is very possible that this would not have escaped my mind. In addition, it is possible that I only noticed the lack of skin tone diversity in this book because I was specifically looking for examples of skin tone diversity; reasonably, any person with such a lens would come to the same conclusions. At the same time, without such a lens, the average white person could ignore or not even notice the lack of skin tone diversity, where it is more likely a BIPOC reader could or would not ignore this.
2) Does this text position you as a racial insider or outsider? How do you know? How does your positioning influence your reading experience?	2) Within *Milo's Hat Trick*, I am positioned as an insider – the majority of the characters look like me or people like me – I could see myself reflected in the crowd scenes, and see my lifestyle on most pages of the book. I have experience attending live shows in New York City, and could see myself and my experiences reflected in this story. This positioning affects my reading experience in that I found the story very charming on its first read, and I understood each of the theatrical markers involved through my background and cultural knowledge. However, without this background knowledge, this story would be odd to say the least. Furthermore, knowing the full cost of living in, or visiting, New York City, on top of attending any sort of live show anywhere in the U. S. A., much of this background knowledge would not exist for young child readers, for those without extra money to spend on live performance, and for those who do not live close to areas with live performances and/or cannot travel to such a performance. Additionally, I don't know that I have ever seen a BIPOC magician represented before, so the choice of Milo being white seemed very normal and regular to me.

Table 11 continued

3) What are aspects of the text to which you can relate? How might not relating to a character in a novel in terms of race or power be important for you as a reader-- or important for learning about your racial identity?	3) I relate to many aspects of this book – I connect thematically with the idea of being told a directive, accomplishing said directive, alone, and without questioning it, accomplishing it through force and trial-and-error instead of asking for help, and then enjoying the feeling of accomplishment (with or without applause). In fact, this is often how I approach most of what I do – alone (to some extent), forcing my way through, and then enjoying my accolades. However, these are several aspects of whiteness – a lack of community reliance, a lack of asking for help, the use of sheer determination and stubbornness and the idea of "hard work" leading to getting what I feel I have earned, and seeking out accolades or acknowledgement for tasks (even the small ones).
4) Are there aspects of the text that you find unfamiliar, uncertain, or challenging? What might those aspects reveal to you about your own racial assumptions and perspectives?	4) Honestly, there were no aspects of this book which were unfamiliar, uncertain, or challenging. Every name was one I was familiar with, every animal, every mode of transportation, every social norm was within my scope of understanding. I did not need to search the meaning of any words, nor the pronunciation of any names. This reveals to me that I am the intended audience – the adult reader for whom the story fits perfectly into their experience, and, if I were to read this with a child, I would be able to answer most questions about the story without any additional resources. I could talk about live performance in New York City, public transportation, magic shows, etc. This could reveal how normal white culture is to me – for example, Mr. Popovich's name is easy for me to pronounce, despite it not being as anglicized as other names, like Milo. However, this name did not pose difficulty for me, but a name which was less anglicized, or originating from a country outside of Europe or North America's purview would have certainly proved more difficult for me.
5) Are there aspects of the text that cause feelings of discomfort, uncertainty, or resistance? What might these aspects of the text reveal to you about your own experiences or assumptions?	5) There were no aspects of *Milo's Hat Trick* which caused me discomfort, uncertainty or resistance when I read the book only for plot. I only feel discomfort from the book when I complete the CWCA

Table 12: Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides Text Question Prompts and Responses

Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides question prompts (2019, pp. 60-61)	**Responses**
11) What accomplishments to [w]hites achieve, especially in relation to people of color?	1) Due to the fact that there are very few BIPOC characters in *Milo's Hat Trick*, so answering this question proves difficult. Milo's accomplishments are that he catches the bear, manages to get the bear on stage to perform the magic trick (by sheer determination on the part of the bear; Milo did not help the bear arrive at the theatre), return the bear to its home, and then learn how to perform the hat trick on his own. His overall accomplishment of not being fired is accomplished.
12) What expectations do [w]hites demonstrate, especially in relation to those expectations being available to people of color?	2) While expectations of BIPOC characters is unknown, the expectations of Milo are that he learn to pull a rabbit from a hat, which is accomplishes to some extent. This expectation of success is in an effort to create monetary gains for another person (Mr. Popovich), not due to internal motivation. Milo wears a too small suit with long hair throughout the book (Even in the later parts of the book when he has been experiencing success), which indicates that Milo was not motivated by wealth, nor was he gaining wealth from his new magic trick. Milo is expected to be compliant to Mr. Popovich.
13) How do [w]hites treat people of color?	3) N/A – there is no direct interaction between white characters and characters of color.
14) How are people of color depicted in relation to [w]hites (e.g., grateful, resentful)?	4) N/A – there are no BIPOC characters meaningfully depicted.
15) What feelings does the book rally for [w]hite characters, especially in relation to people of color?	5) Because this book is intended to be humorous, it is difficult to parse out any sort of moral or emotional intention – as such, I am unsure about any feelings that readers may have as a result of the book.

Table 13: ***Milo's Hat Trick*** **Codebook**

Code	Notes
RI	Milo needs to catch the rabbit himself – no help from Mr. Popovich and no friends or family to ask for help. Inversed at end, when bear teaches him the trick for himself. On the inverse, Milo's success is dependent on the bear, and Milo must rely on the bear to keep his job.
FS	No family mentioned nor seen.
PWE	Milo undertakes the work of catching a rabbit and is rewarded by catching the bear (a bigger prize). He is rewarded by being able to keep his job, most likely making money, and then is rewarded by the bear by learning how to perform the hat trick on his own. While Milo isn't doing hard work, necessarily, the bear is doing hard work. The bear does not benefit in any way, and in fact retires due to exhaustion from "popping in and out of seven hundred and sixty-two hats" (n.p.), and a desire to rest (or perhaps hibernate). If neither Milo nor the bear was doing the hat trick, Milo would lose his job, but the bear would have been left alone.
R	No specific mention of religion, but inclusion of Milo as a magician may hint to non-Judeo-Christian defaults. On the other hand, bear says "oh gosh" when hiding from police officer and Milo says "gee" when bear is retiring, which point to an avoidance of saying the word "god," a practice often undertaken by Judeo-Christian religious practitioners.
C	Text is formal and SAE. Vocab include "botched" "daze" "matinee" "ecstatic" and "intermission" which could be difficult for some adult readers. The book also relies on readers knowledge of theatre terms, and theatrical knowledge is somewhat class and fiscally based (I don't think its culturally based, necessarily, but there are boundaries).
WD	There is no textual reference to race – the text is colorblind. There are few if any identifiable BIPOC characters, with the most notable one being a dark-skin-toned schoolchild, walking with a group of other school children, to Milo's show. The child is shown wearing a backwards baseball hat, and is overweight as compared to the other members of the group. Milo, having red hair, is most likely white, and Mr. Popovich is bald; based on his name, I assume he is white and of Russian or Russian satellite country descent.
O	illustration shows mostly white people but setting is NYC which is super diverse.

Vita

Heather J. Matthews is originally from Central New York. She attended the State University of New York at Oneonta where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in adolescent English education in 2014, and then attended the State University of New York at Binghamton, where she was granted a Master of Science in Education degree in adolescent literacy education in 2015. After being employed as a k-12 literacy specialist in the southern tier of New York for several years, she moved to east Tennessee to attend the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she pursued her Doctor of Philosophy degree in education, with a concentration in literacy research and a specialization in children's and young adult literature. Her research interests include antiracist teacher education, racially and ethnically diverse representation in children's literature, and Jewish representation in children's literature. Heather is thankful for her partner, her family, and her larger support system for helping her stay the course in this endeavor.