HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

The Merits of Multicultural Literature:

*Exploring the inherent values of Multicultural Literature and the
need for its inclusion in children's early reading books*

Ritgerð til M.A. í ensku

Letetia B. Jonsson

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Abstract

Iceland is gradually changing from a homogenous Nordic society to a multicultural state, as evident in official demographic data and most noticeable in recent decades. These changes reflect an increasingly culturally diverse state, as the first government policy on the integration of immigrants confirms the reality of foreign citizens in Iceland.

As a consequence of demographic changes, compulsory schools are becoming increasingly diverse and the need to develop all students' knowledge of cultural diversity is through the use of multicultural literature. Teachers' levels of awareness of the importance of using multicultural literature to reflect the schools' changing environment are also necessary.

An objective of this study was to establish the merits of multicultural literature, by exploring the inherent values of the concept, and why this genre of literature should be included in children's early reading books. Another objective of this study was to examine teachers' awareness of multicultural literature.

This research involved both a literature review and qualitative inquiry. Central to this study were reader-response theories that affirm the value of multicultural literature. Second and equally important was the field work, involving a survey of teachers, using a semi-structured interview guide. Five schools in the city of Reykjavik agreed to take part in the study and nine teachers, acting as participants, were interviewed. The results support the argument for the inclusion of multicultural literature in children's early reading books. Findings reveal low levels of awareness of multicultural children's literature among teachers. A chronic lack of multicultural children's books was evident across participating schools.

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1. Introduction

In this chapter I introduce several background topics to support this study. These are the changing demographic patterns of immigrants in Iceland, the integration of immigrant policy, and multicultural children's literature.

1.1 Immigrants in Iceland

Iceland is in the process of shifting from a homogenous Nordic society to an increasingly diverse multicultural society. Historically Iceland's foreign nationals born overseas or whose parents were born overseas include immigrants, migrant workers and refugees. Refugees as one category of foreign nationals are culturally and ethnically diverse from the homogenous population and have contributed to Iceland's emerging multicultural society. Foreign nationals in the early 20th century include four hundred German refugees who arrived in Iceland in June 1949 (Eiriksson, 2008). A steady flow of refugees continued to arrive between 1956 and 1991 from Hungary, Yugoslavia, Vietnam and Poland, in total 204 foreign nations. From 1995 to 2010, refugee groups include foreign nationals from Slovakia, Kosovo, Columbia and Palestine which gives in total 312 foreign nationals (Ministry of Welfare, 2011). If the stream of refugees were low in numbers, the surge of Eastern European migrant workers was significant, arriving mainly from Poland circa 1996-2008. The latter foreign nationals formed the core of the manual labour force and contributed in changing the demographics in contemporary Iceland.

In 1994 foreign nationals were 1.7% of the population, rising in 1996 to 2% of the population. Just over a decade later in 2007, Icelandic employers' demand for labour, contributed to a surge of foreign workers to an estimated 10% of the population. By December 2009, a year following the financial crisis in Iceland, the number of immigrants in Iceland settled at 9%, totalling 28,644 of the population as shown in Table 1. These figures suggest immigrants in Iceland are directly comparable to figures seen in other Nordic countries (see Hagstofa, 2009).

The significant growth in immigrant children of diverse ethnicity and cultural background in Icelandic schools is an indication that the National Curriculum, Schools Curricula and teacher education programmes will require a new approach based on educational equity. An approach that values and respects increasing diversity

in classrooms is necessary. Leeman's (2006) study found teachers in the Netherlands face new dilemmas in the context of emerging multicultural diverse schools.

Table. 1. Immigrants in Iceland January 2009			
	Total	Males	Females
Total of all immigrants (Top 5 Countries Listed Below)	28.644	15.499	13.145
Poland	11.575	7.158	4.417
Lithuania	1.572	937	635
Germany	1.325	500	825
Philippines	1.313	422	891
Thailand	887	209	678
Source: www.statice.is accessed on 05.03.2010			

The purpose of this study is to establish the merits of multicultural children's literature, by exploring the inherent values of the concept, and why this genre of literature should be included in children's early reading books. Central to this research are reader-response theories that affirm the value of multicultural literature. Second, the qualitative inquiry involves a survey across a sample of schools in Reykjavik in order to determine the level of awareness among compulsory school teachers. Specific research questions of the qualitative inquiry are: What does multicultural literature mean for compulsory school teachers? What multicultural education training experiences do teachers bring to the classroom?

1.2 Integration of Immigrants Policy

The government in Iceland has taken steps to formally endorse the first policy on the integration of immigrants in January 2007. The following year, the government outlined a number of projects to facilitate implementation of the goals of the policy (Þingsályktun um framkvæmdaáætlun í málefnum innflytjenda, 2008). The immigrant policy aims to ensure that all residents of Iceland benefit from equal opportunities and are active participants in society without limitations where possible (Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security, 2009b). A significant point raised in the policy states Icelandic society in general needs to be able to react to new and altered circumstances in the labour market, in the school system and other welfare provisions. A specific policy goal on education issues across preschools, elementary and secondary schools states students whose native language is not Icelandic shall have

the opportunity, where possible, of maintaining their native language. The progressive approach of the policy emphasizes the importance of students 'self-image' by raising skill levels in their native language, instead of focusing solely on the acquisition or lack of Icelandic language skills. Decades previously, Woodson (as cited in Brown, 2004) found ignoring the histories and cultures of minorities contributed to the adverse effects on the 'self-esteem' of African-American youth. Moreover, recent studies by Steiner, Nash and Chase, (2008) and Brown and Brown (2010) support the need to build self-esteem in minority children through multicultural literature and multicultural education.

1.3 Multicultural Children's Literature in Iceland

Developments in Iceland's legislation, regarding the integration of immigrants policy of 2007, has positive implications for the argument advocating the merits of multicultural literature and the necessity for its inclusion in children's early reading books. Multicultural education initiatives are achieved through teaching strategies that incorporates multicultural literature. Multicultural children's literature in the broadest sense is evident in Icelandic children's early reading books, in compulsory schools and public libraries. Whilst evident, this literature is hardly visible, due to the small number of books with images that represent culturally diverse groups in Iceland.

One category of multicultural children's literature includes translations from English to Icelandic of classic books from the children's canon. Whilst the majority of classic children's books translated serves to educate and entertain, controversial children's books translated into Icelandic and currently in circulation are likely to cause offence to the increasing immigrant populations due to the derogatory racial connotations of the content, specific to minority groups depicted in such stories. Controversial children's books translated to Icelandic include: *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) by Mark Twain translated as *Stikilsberja-Finnur* (1945)*; The Story of Little Black Sambo (1899)* by Helen Bannerman translated as *Litli svarti Sambó* (1979/1985); *Peter Pan and Wendy* (1911) by J.M.Barrie translated as *Pétur Pan og Vanda* (1947) and *Ten Little Niggers* (1939) by Agatha Christie translated respectively as *Tíu litlir negrastrákar/Negrastrákarnir* (1922/2007). The Icelandic publishers, Skudda, of *Negrastrákarnir* had considered the controversial content of this children's book but had not anticipated the intense debate that followed its re-publication. Irrespective of the debate generated, due to loss of the severity of the

meaning 'nigger' in translation, the book raised a level of consciousness and awareness of the sensitivity to immigrants in Iceland which had not been topical previously.

Námsgagnastofnun publishes a number of multicultural books for schools, and one of their first books translated to Icelandic containing a foreign name was *Mokako* (1993) by Lykkenborg. The multicultural material published from the 1990s began with images of blacks or Asian characters with Icelandic names. The Icelandic naming laws (Lög um mannanöfn, 1925) was a possible influence, which stated those with foreign names would not be granted citizenship until they obtain an Icelandic name. The law later became obsolete (Lög um mannanöfn, 1996). The issue of foreign names in children's books may also be linked to the linguistic features of the Icelandic language with the declension of names. Characters in Icelandic children's books with foreign names occasionally appear but remain a rarity. *Í Asíu (In Asia)* 2005; *Drekadansinn (The Dragon Dance)* 2009; *Fötin (The Clothes)* 2010 are titles published by Námsgagnastofnun which have a multicultural theme. The content of such books presents images of cultures outside the authors' own culture from a narrow perspective. The books are by Icelandic authors who may have limited experiences of the cultures they are writing about. This is discussed below in relation to Rosenblatt's transactional theory that recognises the readers' cultural background when interpreting the text.

2. Antecedents of Multicultural Literature

In this chapter I discuss events that precede multicultural literature. An historical overview of multicultural education in the United States and the Nordic region, represented by Sweden, are considered. Multicultural education and multicultural literature are implicitly linked. In so far as understanding this relationship, multicultural education must be considered within an historical context. The discourse commences with historical perspectives of multicultural education as a reform movement rooted in the United States, which also emerged later in Western Europe. The approach taken by Sweden provides an example of the emergence of multicultural education as a reform movement in a Nordic state. The purpose of multicultural education as a reform movement was to influence changes in mainstream Anglo-centric education in schools and other educational institutions, in order that students from all social-class, gender, racial, language, and cultural groups would have an equal opportunity to learn (Banks, 2005). Historical perspectives presented ensure an understanding of the biased treatment of minority groups and immigrant populations. The shifts in migration patterns in the Nordic region were triggered by policies of host countries. In recent decades legislation has progressed with educational reforms in the United States and Nordic region that accommodate multicultural education, and enable students' opportunities to access multicultural literature.

2.1 Multicultural Education: A United States Historical Perspective

Banks (2004), an established scholar in the field of multicultural education, argues an historical perspective "is necessary to provide a context for understanding the contemporary developments and discourse in multicultural education" (p. 7). This historical perspective Bank refers to, began with the 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movement. According to Bennett (2001) multicultural education emerged as an idealistic response to redress educational injustices in the United States. In reality, the full extent of the Civil Rights Movement extended beyond discriminatory laws in education. The emphasis here is on educational discrimination during and subsequent to the 1950s and 1960s period that sparked the development of multicultural education. The Civil Rights Movement intended to outlaw race discriminatory laws

enacted at that time, specifically the Jim Crow Laws[1] of school segregation. Williamson (1968) states Jim Crowism and disfranchisement of minority blacks enabled the principles of segregation to become "... almost universal practice in the public schools of the U.S. South during the Reconstruction" (p. 2). Existence of the Jim Crow segregation laws, meant majority white students at that time had first class schools and the minority blacks made do with substandard economy class schools. The Jim Crow laws of segregation of public schools were to begin its finale, with the victory of the Brown v. Board of Education case (1954). Brown's victory proved a significant judicial turning point when the US Supreme Court decision in favour of Brown, ruled that the segregation of schools was unconstitutional, declaring "separate but equal" as "inherently unequal". The Brown ruling overturned the 1896 Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson that upheld state laws requiring racial segregation of schools (Bennett, 2001). The Brown's case accomplished a victory against segregation but findings by Orfield (1997) of the Harvard Project on School Desegregation and The Civil Rights Project of Harvard found new patterns of re-segregation in US public schools, which indicate racial discriminatory practices in reverse. The 1954 ruling could have been purely a formality, had it not been for the academic Carter G. Woodson and others, who illustrated the level of commitment necessary to improve multicultural education.

Woodson, an African-American historian and author who published *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (as cited in Banks, 2004), contributed significantly to early ethnic studies. Woodson's rationale for his book embodies a belief that educators who focus a school's curriculum predominantly on the majority homogeneous group are to deny minority students a voice, by ignoring other cultures' contributions in history and literature. Woodson spent approximately thirty years promoting the study of African-American histories through his books, journals and his legacy as the founder of Black History Month, celebrated annually in the USA, Canada and the UK. Majority and minority students ought to be educated in the others' cultural heritage and contributions as a means to dispelling myths and perpetuating the danger of a single story. Contemporary America has no doubt benefited from Woodson's life-long work, that argued ignoring African-American histories and cultures contributed to harmful effects on the self-esteem of African-American youth. A contemporary

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[1] Jim Crow Laws of segregation in the U.S. South enacted from 1876 to 1965, (see *The New Enclyclopedia Britannica*, (1985) Vol. 6, 15th Ed. p. 552).

approach to building self-esteem, through culturally responsive teaching is proposed by Gay (2002) and will be discussed further in chapter eight.

As the concept of multicultural education progressed through the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, demands borne of frustration for separate courses and programs of Black histories in the US schools' curriculum became the focus. Other minority groups' increased awareness resulted in demands for similar programmes for Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians and Asian-Americans. In the 1980s and 1990s, advocates of multicultural education shifted their scope to one of inclusion of cultural and ethnic content into schools' curriculum. Multicultural education from the early twentieth century through to the present twenty-first century has developed into an intricate multidisciplinary concept in need of a model which adds coherence to its characteristically complex nature.

Banks' (2004) four-phase model of multicultural education provides an historical frame of reference as the concept continually evolves from a US perspective. Early ethnic studies formed the first phase by addressing the lack of African-American historical content in the curriculum. Implementation of ethnic studies content into the schools' curriculum and teacher education was the challenging second phase, as a necessity to creating education equity. The third phase expanded the repertoire of multicultural education to include, for instance, women and the disabled, who perceived themselves as marginalised. Banks' fourth phase describes the current evolving status of multicultural education that has been transformed from its original historical focus on desegregation to a complex multi-disciplinary field incorporating simultaneously developing theories, research, policies and curriculum strategies that advocate the inclusion of multicultural literature. Developments in Western European countries have more than a tenuous link to established US multicultural educational principles, an over simplification maybe, but the historical picture is complex. The cultural milieu of Western European countries differs in composition but issues concerning multicultural education are not dissimilar in comparison to those of the US.

2.2 Multicultural Education: A Nordic Historical Perspective
In this section, Sweden provides an instance of a Nordic state which has a relatively long history of immigrants, in comparison to Iceland with a recent history of immigrants. Sweden's pragmatic social solutions to multicultural education have been

legitimized, forming part of Sweden's constitution that ensures all children have access to their cultural and ethnic histories. Sweden's' approach is not a perfect solution but there may be lessons to be learnt across Nordic states.

The contributory factors of the US discord of educational practices, leading to landmark legislations that have impacted multicultural education developments, were discussed above. Across the Atlantic the discord was extensively due to post-war economic growth in Europe. New immigrant groups entering Western Europe experienced similar discrimination, comparable to experiences of minority groups in the US. Gundara (2000) argues that post-war economic expansion from 1950s through to 1970s in Western Europe has involved the movement of over thirty million people, of whom about 10 million have stayed in Europe, leading to animosity against people of culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds. Animosity naturally impacts minority groups' social equality but equally damaging is the lack of awareness that leads to neglect in the education of generations of immigrant children of their own histories and cultures. The importance of this missing educational input has implications, for "…all children have a right to know their own personal 'story' ...Young people need not only access to their stories, but to be able to read them critically" (Gundara, 2000, p. 135). A discussion on Sweden's practical social solutions to multicultural education follows.

In 1975 Sweden formally declared itself a 'multicultural society', a declaration grounded in principle of equality between Swedish citizens and immigrants, which acknowledges freedom of choice for immigrants and members of minority groups (Brömssen and Olgac, 2010). Sweden's legislation on multiculturalism is an important means of integrating new immigrants and establishing minority groups. The distinction drawn in the declaration (Ministry of Employment, SOU. 1975:26) distinguishes between 'linguistic immigrants', for instance labour immigrants with linguistic barriers, and the 'national minorities' discussed below. Sweden's declaration is significant amongst Nordic countries that have not made similar declarations but are known to have substantial immigrant populations, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Stock of Foreign Population of Selected Nordic Countries					
		Percent of total population			
		Foreign Population			
		1995	2000	2007	2008	
	Denmark	4,3	4,8	5,5	5,8	
	Finland	1,3	1,8	2,5	2,7	
	Norway	3,7	4,7	5,7	6,4	
	Sweden	6,0	5,4	5,4	6,0	
	Source:	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development.				
		OECD 2010. Population and Migration - International				

Sweden's current multicultural education policies are better understood in relation to its historical influences. Distinctive patterns noted during and post-WW II immigration to Sweden show substantial chronological increases in the period 1944 to 1970, as shown in Table 3. It is equally of importance to place the excessive numbers of immigrants in context. Runblom (1994) proposes several phases, characterised by specific trends of diverse migration groups. The first phase is characterised by war-related asylum seekers. The second phase is quite significant, as post-war intra-European migrants were the next group that began to constitute the majority of Sweden's labour migration, circa 1948 – 1964. Sweden being one of a few countries that opened immediately for labour migration following WW II, recruitment initiatives contributed to the influx of immigrants, as the Swedish government and the Swedish Labour Market Board entered into formal agreements with Central and Southern European countries such as Turkey, Italy and Yugoslavia. Phase three, circa 1965 – 1972, involved a continuation and intensified period of labour and guest-worker immigration. Phase four occurred between 1973 and 1988 and in spite of restrictions immigration increased towards the tail end of the period. Phase five to the present, has seen a phenomenal increase of immigrants into Sweden. One assumption for the latter growth is based on the idea that Western Europe was, and remains a strong population magnet according to Runblom (1994).

Table 3. Sweden: Immigrants by period	(1000s)
1940	6,784
1950	27,940
1960	26,143
1970	77,326
1980	39,426
1990	60,048
2000	58,659
2009	102,280
Source. Statics Sweden. (www.scb.ce 20.09.2010)	

Sweden has two distinct groups of populations that are culturally and ethnically diverse in addition to the homogeneous groups. One group is the multiple immigrant populations, and the other group is the national minorities. Sweden's equality multicultural model based on accommodating cultural and ethnic diversity is not without controversy, when considering Sweden's own national minorities. Sweden's minority groups have for centuries been relatively alienated until recent European legislation that now protects national minorities throughout Europe. Sweden's Ministry of Education Act (SFS. 1985:1100 Amendments 2000:445) promotes equality of education for all children and actively counteracts prejudices, when historically Sweden has had an indifferent approach to the country's responsibilities of educating its minority groups.

A recent study that deconstructs the notion of Sweden's historical homogeneity, examines the long history of the Swedish national minorities that includes the Samis, Tornedalers, Swedish Finns, Roma and Jews. Historically, unfavourable treatment of the national minorities had a marked effect on their education. The Samis, an indigenous population of Sweden, lost the right to their land and were forced to relocate in the seventeenth century due to colonization. Further social injustice meant "In 1685, the Swedish state decreed all Samis should be christened by force if necessary … sacred drums were burned and their religious places desecrated" (Brömssen & Olgac, 2010, p. 123). The Samis' cultural heritage and history was erased by the majority. Education strategies at the onset of the 20th century, based on Swedish legislation at that time, divided the Samis population in two groups. One traditional reindeer herding group whose children experienced a strict monoculture was limited to poorly resourced segregated schools that taught only in Samis, as of 1925 they were also taught Swedish. The other Sami group was left

unconnected, educated in the public school and learnt only Swedish. Brömssen found the dichotomizing process has implications for the Samis in terms of ethnic identity. Sweden and wider European legislations has led to educational reforms that now form policies of inclusion that benefit all immigrants and, extensively, the national migrants. The ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Ministry of Enterprise, SOU. 1997: 193) is a measure to recognize all national minorities of Western Europe member states and to ensure education equity. Section 2, Article 12 states:

> The Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority. In this context the Parties shall inter alia provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities. The Parties undertake to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Ministry of Justice, SOU. 1997: 192) also extends the rights of mother-tongue education. This legislation means Swedish schools are responsible for ensuring all pupils at the compulsory school level have adequate knowledge of the national minorities' cultures, languages, religion and history (Brömssen & Olgac, 2010).

3. What is Multicultural Literature?

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of several approaches that define multicultural literature. Each theoretical approach is distinctively different from one another, and is supported by compatible literary theories. The chapter begins with a summary of the origin of the concept.

3.1. Multicultural Literature Defined

According to Cai and Bishop (1994) the origin of the concept multicultural literature came after the multicultural education movement in the 1960s. Defining the concept of multicultural literature is ambiguous by virtue of its construct for it embodies layers of interpretations. One observer suggests multicultural literature has taken on a life of its own, meaning different things to different people. To some, it's all inclusive and to others it's all exclusive, yet to others its simply means confusion (Levy, 1995). While the discourse surrounding a definition continues, distinctive branches of studies have begun the conceptualisation of multicultural literature based on the meaning and interpretation of distinctive groups the concept represents. Cai (2002) argues that the focal point of the ongoing debate concerns the number of social groups who should be included in the definition of multicultural literature. Contributing factors that interfere in defining multicultural literature are attributed to the pre-fix "multi" referring to diverse racial, ethnic and social groups. The debate becomes increasingly intricate throughout the decades when conceptually agreeing the parameters for defining the prefix "multi" are ever shifting due to influential sociopolitical climates and changing immigration patterns that have an effect on local demographics. Academics agree to disagree where to draw the demarcation line, but strands of definitions have emerged.

Cai (2002) proposes three approaches for defining multicultural literature, each of which is discussed. First, advocates of an all inclusive approach are Shannon (1994), Schwartz (1995) and Fisherman, (1995). A Second approach defines the concept as 'multiple + culture = multiculturalism' that include studies by Rochman (1993), Corliss (1998) and Collins (2010). A third approach, which advocates an all exclusive approach, includes Lindgren (1991); Harris (1992, 1994, 1996, 1997), Sims Bishop (1994, 1997); Cai and Sims Bishop (1994); Cai (1998, 2002); Botelho and Rudman (2009) of which the latter directions since 1998 are supported by this study.

3.2 Approach I: The All Inclusive

Academics that support the all inclusive approach argue that all literature is multicultural literature. The article *I am The Canon: Finding Ourselves in Multiculturalism* by Shannon (1994), who advocates an all inclusive approach, suggests that all people have multiple social memberships, such as class and religion, essentially common identities that should link people across social lines. Shannon addresses the tendency of academics who define multicultural children's literature that is exclusively by and for 'people of colour'. The argument is that this exclusive definition reduces multiculturalism to issues of racial essentialism. An effect of the exclusivity of multicultural children's literature, based on Shannon's theoretical position and his experiences with pre-service and in-service teachers, leads him to insist on the need for an inclusive approach, as opposed to exclusive multicultural children's literature. The reason being, Shannon's cohort of largely middle-class white teachers do not recognise themselves in this exclusive multiculturalism and hence at times are openly hostile to multicultural children's literature which they see as an imposition. This treatment allows teachers to stand apart from multiculturalism, "as if it were only about the Other and not about themselves" (Shannon, 1994, p. 2).

In exploring multiculturalism in children's books, based on the premise that all books demonstrate the complexities of multiculturalism, Shannon (1994) implies that a separate category for multicultural literature is unnecessary, as separation would make established literature the typical and multicultural literature atypical. Another concern of the inclusive approach is the demarcation line should extend beyond people of colour, minorities and marginalized groups to include all groups.

Cai (2002) makes a valid point in response to Shannon's all inclusive approach, in that we should read all literature multiculturally, as a way of understanding the cultural issues and complexities they contain. However, to make a concentrated study of the underrepresented cultures, we need books directly dealing with them. Multicultural literature is still a much needed, distinctive category of literature that represents people of colour, minorities and marginalised groups. Its very existence may also be regarded as a challenge to the mainstream dominant literature in its early stages of evolving.

Another advocate of the all inclusive approach, Schwartz (1995) regards Shannon's arguments as a struggle against the canon, and as a struggle to foster an all inclusive multiculturalism based on the social analysis of the relationship between

language, culture and power. Schwartz considers the ongoing "creation and recreation of cultures, generate power relations that contribute to and directly represent the social constructions of differences" (p. 3). Therefore, it is the critical examination of difference that is essential to the argument of multiculturalism and children's literature. To reduce the definition of multiculturalism to "people of colour" demonstrates a disregard for the interrelationship of culture, language and power that is essential in the creation of differences. This critical examination of differences is echoed in Cai's (2002) findings that all literature should be read multiculturally as a means to understanding the complexities they contain.

Fisherman (1995) advocates an all inclusive approach much like Shannon (1994), by explicitly stating "No single piece of literature effectively represents any single cultural group" and "that all literature is multicultural" (p. 79). Fisherman implies definitions of multicultural literature should reflect the multiple attributes that construct the individual. In this view, creating literature that reflects specific cultures are unnecessary, irrespective of whether the literature represents the dominant or the dominated. To illustrate the complexity, Fisherman uses an anecdote of the African-American U.S. Poet Laureate (1993-95) Rita Dove who suggested, "there are times when I am a black woman who happens to be a poet and times when I am a poet who happens to be black" (p. 75). Fisherman's adds, "…there are times I am a white, middle class divorced Jewish woman who happens to be a teacher and times when I am a teacher who happens to have all those attributes" (p. 75). And herein lies the complexity, as the many attributes individuals assigns themselves are multi-dimensional and apply to all of us. In Fisherman's (1995) defence of an all inclusive approach, the discrepancies in establishing parameters for the pre-fix "multi" are reiterated in the argument that exposes the multi-dimensional attributes that apply to all readers and writers. Thus, academic support of an inclusive approach argue a demarcation line is futile, irrespective of the categorising by publishers, politicians or educators, for individuals are unlikely to belong to one neatly packaged identifiable culture. Fisherman's arguments above are valid, but concern arises with the assertion that, "…we know from our own experiences that there is no such thing as monoculturalism. There is only multiculturalism for each of us, for all of us" (p. 75). To disagree would be an understatement as Fisherman's claim that every human being is multicultural is highly subjective. To state that monoculture does not exist is dependent on one's geographic location and personal experiences. Iceland is a society

dominated by the homogeneous population in language, culture and religion but is gradually becoming a multicultural society. Contemporary Icelanders will find their ancestors originate from Norway, Ireland, Italy and France which theoretically qualifies Iceland as multicultural, as argued by those that espouse an all inclusive approach to multicultural literature. Currently, in Iceland there are no hyphenated cultural markers for immigrants as those found in the United States or the United Kingdom such as African-American or Black-British. There are Icelanders and foreigners, which suggests a strong case for a monocultural society. The demographics of Iceland is in a process of noticeable change but is far removed from Fisherman's notion that everyone is multicultural and that monoculturalism does not exist.

3.3 Approach II: The Multiple + Culture

The second approach to defining multicultural literature is not so dissimilar from the all inclusive approach above. This view holds that multiple + culture = multiculturalism and implies multicultural literature should include as many cultures as possible, omitting any distinction between the dominant or dominated. For instance, mainstream or under-represented children's stories from Iceland, from Poland, from Thailand or from Germany represent the literature of multiple cultures and are therefore multicultural based on this viewpoint.

Rochman (1993), Corlis (1998) and Collins (2010) are proponents of this multiple + culture = multiculturalism approach to defining multicultural literature. Rochman's (1993) *Against Borders: Promoting Books for a Multicultural World* explores the issue of multiculturalism in relation to children's literature and is vehement about two views that:

- multiculturalism means across cultures, against borders
- multiculturalism doesn't mean only people of colour

Rochman grew up under an apartheid regime in South Africa with experiences of total segregation based on legislation at that time. Borders, barriers and barbed wire enforced separation around homes and were the norm. Black schools were separate and grossly unequal. Book and press censorship was fierce, and black writers were banned, banished, imprisoned. Rochman (1993) believes books matter and the best break down borders for they alter the readers' view of themselves, as readers begin to

appreciate the familiarity of what was once foreign and strange. While reading is an individual, solitary activity, the process has the power to break down cultural barriers. Rochman's perspective is influenced by her experiences of the South African apartheid system, and rightly advocates the views that young people should be allowed to read freely across multiple cultures and borders. Rochman (1993) found that "reading makes immigrants of us all – it takes us away from home, but most important, it finds homes for us everywhere" (p. 15). Corlis (1998) *Crossing Borders with Literature of Diversity* also supports this viewpoint. Recently, Collins (2010) found through the world of story students can journey through unfamiliar cultures, expanding their knowledge and understanding their peers on a global scale. Teachers facilitate in broadening students' choice and develop new understandings of cultural differences. Facilitating students' access to multicultural literature based on cultures other than that of the mainstream dominant culture is commended but equally of importance is the accurate representation in children's literature of the marginalised dominated minorities.

The multiple + culture = multiculturalism approach supports authors who write about cultures outside of their own. Rochman (1995) argues against proscribing a writer's freedom to construct stories about people in any culture, as this denunciation would be literary apartheid. Seto's (1995) counter argument suggests it is altogether another matter to steal from other cultures without fully comprehending the essence of that culture, for in such writing there is a noticeable lack of integrity, however well the author knows his craft or how developed the plot or characters appear. Perhaps through preparation, authors are able to write outside their own cultures, if they prepare extensively by living and experiencing the values, beliefs and knowing the cultures they choose to write about. To write casually about other cultures may have adverse effects on early readers of multicultural children's literature, through mis-representation and half truths.

3.4 Approach III: The Exclusive Approach

The exclusive approach is the third to be discussed in defining multicultural literature. The exclusivity of multicultural literature was initially founded on the premise of academics who argue for a focus on the populations who have experienced exclusion and marginalization. Lindgren (1991); (Harris 1992, 1994, 1997); Sims Bishop (1994, 1997); Cai and Sims Bishop (1994), Cai (1998, 2002) have all contributed to the

discourse in defining multicultural literature in terms of the exclusivity of the concept. Although there is agreement among some academics to focus on people of colour, recent consideration has been given to the sociopolitical implications in defining the concept and the wider influences previous suppositions have omitted (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). In spite of the stream of writers who support this exclusive approach, while adamant that children's multicultural literature does not fit an all inclusive definition, they often present their own specific exclusive approach to defining the concept.

In *The Multicultural Mirror* by Lindgren (1991)*,* of the Co-operative Children's Book Centre (CCBC), the working definition of multicultural children's literature is defined as a literature by and / or about people of colour. Lindgren astutely adds to this working definition, the realization that this language will continue to evolve over time. Evolution of this definition is inevitable, as we experience a sea change of social, political and economical globalization which affects the swells of migration and immigration. The concept multicultural literature must then retain a certain level of fluidity in its definitions.

Harris (as cited in Cai, 2002) also believes that a definition of multicultural literature should concentrate on those who are most excluded and marginalized, people of colour (p.xvi). Harris's (1994, 1996) response to Shannon's (1994) inclusive approach makes explicitly clear the reasons for focusing on race/ethnicity. One reason is that numerous texts exist on literature by and about Jews, gays, lesbians, and the disabled and religious groups. While members of the aforementioned groups are allowed a voice, the people of colour deserve the same opportunities. Furthermore, Harris firmly acknowledges that multiculturalism incorporates several aspects of difference in race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, language, geographic location and that disparity exists to varying degree of oppression people experience.

Sims Bishop (1994, 1997) also argues for a focus on people of colour in defining multicultural literature. The reader is reassured it is not an attempt to exclude any other groups from the body of multicultural literature. In this context, the exclusive approach "calls attention to the voices that have been traditionally omitted from the canon … the part of the picture that needs most to be filled in" (Sims Bishop 1994, p. 7). Sims Bishop suggests that while limiting multicultural literature to issues of race, it should be noted that America has been for centuries a racialised society.

The point Sims Bishop makes is accurately highlighted in Takaki (1993) *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* which succinctly charts the nation's history through the many culturally and racially different people who together compose the United States of America.

Hence the reason why the children's canon is what it is. The very reason why images of African-American in mainstream literature, including children's literature, has for centuries depicted negative stereotypical images. Negative themes, images or portrayal of people of colour in classic children's literature, once published, become established and are seemingly irreversible. Examples of classic children's books translated from English to Icelandic that conveys unfavourable racial images of people of colour are by respectable American and British authors. Classic fairy tales for instance are often loaded with black/white symbolism. Aspects of these books will be critically examined through reader-response criticism and subsequent discussion in relation to the merits of multicultural children's literature.

The concept of multicultural literature is still forming and reforming and the language that defines this concept is evolving. Cai and Bishop (1994) suggest multicultural literature, while exclusive, should not focus solely on people of colour, but assert that multicultural literature is a concept in need of a concise definition. In recent years the exclusive approach to defining multicultural children's literature has continued to evolve, suggesting that to concentrate on people of colour reduces multiculturalism to racial essentialism that excludes many cultures from the concept by focusing on race (Cai, 1998, 2002). Still, recent directions of the exclusive approach appear to widen the scope beyond people of colour. Botelho and Rudman (2009) believe that conceptualizations that focus on people of colour are often divisive and limiting, presenting instead explanations grounded in the historical silence of the underrepresented groups that critically analyse the complexities of power relations. A concern with definitions that focus solely on people of colour is the general assumption of a one-directional power base, identified by the oppressed and the oppressors, in which power is owned but culture is static and bounded. Another concern is that such definitions separate race from power relations of class and gender, both of which are influential in racism. A broader definition considers social identities which are multiple, capricious and ever shifting. This sociopolitical definition examines the complex web of power, along with the interrelation of race, class and gender. Critical multicultural analysis focuses on the process of analysis,

and values diversity including and beyond portrayal of people of colour in children's literature (Botelho and Rudman, 2009).

The three approaches discussed present convincing arguments in defining multicultural children's literature, each endorsed by a number of academic writers. This study supports recent developments of the exclusive approach by Cai (1998, 2002), Botelho and Rudman (2009) in defining multicultural children's literature. However, the exclusive approach of the early 1990s cannot be dismissed, as multicultural children's literature that is written by and about people of colour, addresses skewed perspectives and mis-representation in mainstream literature. Takaki (1993) summaries the point as, "What happens …when someone with the authority of a teacher describes our society and you are not in it. Such an experience can be disorienting …as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing" (p. 16). Multicultural children's literature and its definition are evolving as a concept to be recognized as a necessary representation of minority ethnic groups, who differ culturally from the homogenous population and whose differences must be respected, celebrated and available to all early readers.

Current explanations ought to be regarded as 'working definitions' in light of sociopolitical and economic globalization which influence migration and immigration. Statistics provided earlier in relation to the Nordic countries, in particular Iceland, illustrates a steady increase of immigrants from East Europe and Asia. Thus, minority groups in Iceland since the early 1990s are unlikely to experience multicultural children's literature that reflects or represent their images, cultures or histories, until a level of awareness of the importance in using this literature becomes apparent.

4. Multicultural Literature and Reader-Response Theory

The purpose of this section is to explore a number of different positions developed by reader-response theorists. Theoretical positions discussed are intended to facilitate an understanding of the reading process and the interaction between text and reader.

4.1. Reader-Response Theories

Reader-response theories draw no distinction between early readers or competent adult readers. However, the foundation of reader-response criticism is what the reader brings to the reading process, which will affect the way early readers process texts. Examples of adult literary text within this discourse that demonstrate a particular reader-response theoretical position are equally applicable to early readers of multicultural children's literature. This branch of literary criticism enables the study to gain an insight into the multiplicity of the reader, from established literary theories steeped for instance in social, psychological and philosophical influences, all of which shape the readers' perspectives when interacting and interpreting the text. Similarly, the author's role in his/her intended objective when constructing the text, contribute to the dynamics of the text and reader. The rhyme below is controversial for many reasons. In the first stanza of the Icelandic translation, one little black boy dies of poison. In the second stanza another little black boy explodes with fear. The English version of the rhyme is equally negative. Reader-response theories are used to explain early readers' potential interaction and interpretation of the text in later chapters.

> Ten little nigger boys went out to dine;
> One choked his little self, and then there were nine.
>
> ---
>
> One little nigger boy left all alone;
> He went out and hanged himself
>
> And then there were none.
> <div align="right">(Christie, 1939)</div>

> Negrastrákar fóru á rall og þá voru þeir tíu
>
> Einn drakk flösku af ólyfjan og svo voru eftir níu
>
> ---
>
> Þrír lítlir negrastrákar þorðu nú ekki meir,
>
> Einn þeirra sprakk af hræðslu og þá voru eftir tveir.
> <div align="right">(Thorsteinsson, 2007)</div>

Agatha Christie's nursery rhyme *Ten Little Niggers* (1939), originally a song by the 19th century songwriter Septimus Winner, adapted as a rhyme by Frank Green (1869) who included the word 'nigger'. Where the word 'nigger' appeared, the original version had the word 'Injuns' for Indians. The Icelandic translation of the rhyme was first a direct translation of *Ten Little Niggers* to *Tíu litlir negrastrákar,* with a new title appearing later, *Negrastrákarnir (1922/2007).* Historically, the rhyme was and still is associated with negative images of black people, and the graphic illustration is visually shocking. The publisher, Skudda, explained they were aware of potential risk of offending readers before publishing the book in 2007.

Reader-response theories facilitate an understanding of early readers' interaction with the text, which may be influenced by their cultural knowledge, personal experiences among other attributes, essentially what they bring to the reading process. Reader-response theories are applicable to literature translated to Icelandic and equally applicable to multicultural children's books written and published for instance by local writers or Námsgagnastofnun, a school resource publisher in Reykjavik. Reader-response theories are a means of defending the merits of multicultural children's literature. There is an assumption that when two people interact it results in a natural interpretative activity, which contains an unavoidable image of ourselves and a view of others, biased or otherwise. When the reader interacts with the text, then it is inevitable a process of interpretation will occur.

The core group of reader-response theorists includes: Lousie Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration* (1938) and *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1978)*;* David Bleich's *Subjective Criticism* (1978)*;* Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1976/78), Stanley Fish's *Is there a Text in This Class* (1980) *and* Norman Holland's *The Nature of Literary Response: Five Readers Reading* (1975/2011). A major influence in reader-response theory is Richards' *Practical Criticism* (1929), who whilst recognized as a founding influence of New Criticism, his work on students' responses to the literary text contributed to reader-response criticism. Rosenblatt, another major influence in reader-response theory, elaborated on the readers' interpretation of the text, influenced by individuals' cultural background and socialization. While not exhaustive, the works noted have all contributed in developing reader-response theories concerning the collaboration

between the reader and the text. It is not the intention of the study to explore each named theorist, but to provide a concise sample of theories considered most appropriate in contributing to the arguments of the merits of multicultural children's literature. For this purpose, I will focus on the works of Bleich (1978); Iser (1978) and Rosenblatt (1978).

Reader-response theory is concerned with the relationship between the reader and the text. Such theories recognise the role of the reader in the reading process with an emphasis on the different ways in which readers participate during the process of reading a text. It is in contrast to text-oriented theories such as New Criticism which has tended to underestimate the reader's role, with the exception of Richards' works. Reader-response theory is primarily concerned with the reader's interpretation of a text, as the arguments imply the text has no real meaning, no existence until it is read. Traditionally the reader was thought to play a passive role, but on the contrary, this literary theory regards the reader as an active agent in the creation of meaning. Through strategies applied, the reader is able to extract meaning by decoding the text and creating their own interpretation (Cuddon, 1999). Reader-response theory is indispensible in exploring the inherent value of multicultural children's literature, in the context of assessing early readers' interaction with the text. Cai (2002) suggests positions of the relationship of the reader and the text might be divided into three distinct categories: the uniaction, interaction and transaction. The uniactional position accepts the action of one of two elements intrinsic in the literature that is either the reader or text. In comparison to the uniactional theories, the interactional and transactional theories incorporate both the reader and text, as important contributors in the reading process.

Bleich's (1978) *Subjective Criticism* belongs to the uniactional category of reading which focuses on the readers interpretation of the text. Subjective criticism implies a means of attaining knowledge of the literary text and owning responsibility for it. A subjective mode of understanding literature is built on the argument that a conscious shift of perception and logical reasoning are indisputable experiences of the mind, whilst all significant features of a text which are presumed to exist outside the mind are devalued. A subjective means of attaining knowledge is valued over objective knowledge, as the latter lacks commitment, "…because the individual bears

no responsibility since he is only affirming true things …When the subjective authorization of knowledge is allowed, the pretence of truth is replaced by intersubjective negotiation" (Bleich, 1978, p. 295). Furthermore, Bleich's reader oriented approach suggests the individual's attainment of certain common knowledge inevitably incur obligation to communities of like-minded individuals. To read a literary text like Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and form one's own subjective criticism of the character Shylock the Jew, indicates acquisition of this knowledge and assigns a part of the reader to a group of others who claim to know and interpret the text from similar perspectives. A reader's-response to Shylock's character on one hand may interpret the character as vengeful, while another reader's interpretation of the same text finds the portrayal of the character as misrepresented. Similarly, subjective critical views held by native readers in compulsory schools in Iceland, exposed to controversial literature such as *Ten Little Niggers* (1939), translated as *Negrastrákarnir* (1922/2007), which is likely to be built on biased perception and skewed logical reasoning for the simple reason that such children have had limited contact with people of colour, or other racial/ethnic groups. Their skewed perceptions are further reinforced as, according to Bleich's theory, the knowledge we attain incurs attachment to other like-minded individuals. Therefore, early readers' exposure to appropriate multicultural children's literature both within and outside of the school environment is essential, as the recently published Icelandic edition of *Negrastrákarnir (*1922/2007) runs the risk of perpetuating derogatory images of people of colour at a time when the immigrant population is increasing and a greater level of awareness and sensitivity is required by publishers, schools, teachers and educational policy makers in Iceland.

Iser's phenomenological approach belongs to the interactional category of reader-response criticism. In contrast to the uniactional category, the interactional approach considers both the reader and text as significant contributors in the reading experience. In *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1978) Iser's explication in considering the meaning of the literary work, suggests account must be taken of the actual text and equally of the readers' actions involved in the process of responding to a text. The essence of this theory, for Iser means, "… the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic pole is the author's text and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader" (p. 21).

Essentially this polarity implies the literary work comes into existence at the point of convergence of these poles but its existence cannot be simply reduced to either the reality of the text or the subjectivity of the reader, as this convergence is unstable and virtual. The virtuality of the work is influenced by the various schematas, the incomplete patterns or structures the text offers the reader. From this virtuality the reading process derives its dynamic nature because individual readers are likely to have different experiences with the same text. The schematized aspects, means the reader must fill in the 'blanks' as a means of relating patterns within the text to one another, based on personal experiences, but with constraints of instructions the selected text imposes. The emphasis then of Iser's theory is on the "interaction between the textual signals and the reader's acts of comprehension" (Iser, p. 9). The readers' interaction initiates the interpretive process of the work, setting in motion and awakening the readers own responses, causing the literary work to reveal its potential meaning, although complete potential, what is intended, cannot be realised in the reading process alone.

Iser's *The Reading Process: The Phenomenological Approach* (as cited in Tompkins, 1980) suggests the author has to consistently engage the reader, by leaving something to the imagination. The literary text in this context is regarded as an arena in which the reader and the author participate in games of the imagination. The reader must be presented opportunities to engage with the literary text, and so the 'blanks' offer a way of ensuring active participation with the text. The degree to which the 'blanks' or unwritten part of the literary text activates the reader's imaginative and creative participation is foregrounded in Virginia Woolf's study of *Jane Austen* (1984) which suggests, "She stimulates us to supply what is not there. What she offers is apparently a trifle, yet is composed of something that expands in the readers mind ..." (Iser, 1978, p. 138).

In the real world individuals perceive events through their senses, but in the world of literature the text can only be perceived through imagination. How we interpret the words on the page corresponds to the ways individual make sense of personal experiences and events. One's interpretations are therefore determined by events we are exposed to, and within the literary text by the words we read. The 'blanks' that separate the textual elements on the page and between our daily experiences in the real world are filled in a similar manner, hence meaning making is experiential. In this sense meaning is not simply an object that one defines but more

an effect that the reader experiences. Iserian theory also contemplates experiences of cultural knowledge, as a necessary requisite in grasping the instructions implied by the literary text. Built on the premise that cultural objects are to an extent subjective and we experience them from subjective activities, that become useful in appropriate circumstances, which are influenced by the readers own life experiences.

Aspects of Iser's theory are very relevant to the argument of the merits of multicultural children's literature. One aspect is the blanks or gaps in the text for which the reader is required to fill in during the reading process. Another is the implied cultural influence and third, the experiential aspect. If we considered early readers' interaction with the limited number of books that might be categorised as multicultural children's literature in compulsory schools in Iceland, then educators ought to be concerned. Early readers within this context are likely to lack experiences of other ethnic and culturally different people. Such readers bring to the reading event their own monocultural views and so literary interpretation of those 'blanks' is likely to be perceived in a narrow way that perpetuates stereotypical images and stories of the minority groups. The categories of potential multicultural children's books translated from English to Icelandic, along with children's books written and published in Iceland, run the risk of conveying detrimental imagery and the danger of a single story of minorities. Imagine *Negrastrákarnir* (1922/2007) colourfully illustrated early readers' book that serves as a definitive example of books with questionable inherent values. A reading of the text based on Iser´s theory may question how early readers fill in the blanks, how would their own cultural experiences facilitate their experiential interaction with this text. The stanzas of Christie's rhyme generally result in the little nigger boys' grisly demise as, one choked his little self, one chopped himself in half and the last one hanged himself. The Icelandic translation is similarly appalling, as one dies of poison, one is gored by a bull, one explodes and so on.

Rosenblatt's transactional theory has comparable features in common with the interactional theories, as the reader and text elements contribute to the reading process in both theoretical assumptions. In Rosenblatt's *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of The Literary Work (1978),* the transaction does not simply concern the subject's (reader's) response to the stimuli of the object (text) but instead involves an continuous process of selection and organisation. Every 'transaction' in

the act of reading is a unique experience and one in which the two elements, reader and text, are acted upon by one another. This theory advocates a reciprocal construction, as both elements contribute equally in an ongoing reading process in which the reader and text are aspects of a complete situation that creates a unique event. Each element within this unique event has the ability to be conditioned by, or conditions the other. Another aspect of Rosenblatt's theory are the literary symbols the reader selects, organises and interprets that are often pre-determined based on prior established habits, assumptions and expectations which influence how individuals respond to the text. Rosenblatt's reading of William Blake's poem "*The Sick Rose*" validates the assumptions made:

> *O Rose thou art sick.*
> *The invisible worm,*
> *That flies in the night*
> *In the howling storm:*
>
> *Has found out thy bed*
> *Of crimson joy:*
> *And his dark secret love*
> *Does thy life destroy.*

(Blake 1794, as cited in Rosenblatt 1978)

The individual becomes a productive reader by virtue of his activity in the relationship with the text, which the reader organises as a set of verbal symbols. In reading a poem, a novel or play, the text presents many cues but the reader cannot confine his responses within the scope of ideas and images that are directly evoked from the words on the page, but what the work symbolises for respective individuals. For some readers their experiences re-creates Blake's poem as symbolic of a beautiful natural object that a worm has destroyed. For other readers the poem symbolises a literary rose as an account of beauty destroyed by evil or perverted joy. Rosenblatt (1938) also emphasized the relevance of readers' cultural backgrounds, as a significant factor within transactional theory. How people are socialized encourages socially conditioned or standard responses that often restrict more creative and original responses, an assumption that applies across time periods that are centuries apart, as well as within the same decade. Specifically, Rosenblatt´s theory implies a

story is likely to have multiple interpretations based on different readers' cultural backgrounds. A reading of Elizabethan or Victorian literature at a particular time, within a particular culture and by particular personalities will influence the crystallisation of certain verbal patterns at the time of interaction with the text. The readers' evocation of a poem, play or novel from the text, the meaning generated from the text, is specific to cultural periods and readers' backgrounds. Modern-day readers of Elizabethan and Victorian literature interactions with the text will differ from contemporary readers of the same text at the time of its original publication. And so Rosenblatt´s complex theory means the same theoretical explanations would apply to different readers from culturally diverse backgrounds, when reading a text from another culture within the same period of time, for readers bring different experiences, values, knowledge, beliefs, not omitting personalities and perspectives, to the transactional process. Therefore, a transactional reading of Christie's nursery rhyme, at the time if the original publication may have been humorous as seen through the lens of readers in 1939. While contemporary readers of *Negrastrákarnir* (1922/2007) in Iceland on the one hand read the word "negri" (nigger/negro) as acceptable, other readers recognise the word's offensive tone and English usage as disparaging and offensive toward people of colour. Rosenblatt's transactional theory does not offer a right or wrong way of interpreting a text, as individual readers are unpredictable, but the literary critic can turn to the text to judge whether the readers' interpretation has validity, and whether the interpretation is substantiated by evidence within the text.

5. Inherent Values of Multicultural Children's Literature

The discourse of this chapter is intended to highlight several intrinsic values of multicultural literature. Cultural awareness and self-esteem building are cognitive states we experience when exposed to reading multicultural literature. Stereotyping in books on the other hand is a literary device; moreover, the term is often derogatory, which requires explanation to address culturally sensitive issues.

5.1 Exploring the Values of this Literary Genre

> Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person... and what I like to call the danger of a single story. The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete...[2]
>
> (Adichie, 2009)

The acclaimed Nigerian author Adichie's sentiment serves as a pivotal point of this discourse, for Adichie's beliefs embody the reasons for supporting the inclusion of multicultural literature in children's books. A salient point of Adichie's belief is that our lives and our cultures are composed of numerous overlapping stories. In contrast stories that generalise inadvertently contribute to the stereotyping of minority and marginalised others. If we only hear one story of a people and their culture, we perpetuate the myths and increase the risk of a critical misunderstanding. Multicultural literature is a means of redressing the single story.

This section aims to examine the inherent value of multicultural children's literature. Inherent values espoused here are those permanent qualities and inseparable attributes of the literary work that enhances the readers' knowledge. Stoodt-Hill and Amspaugh-Corson (2009) found in general the value of good children books stimulate imagination, enhance language skills and encourage children to read which broaden their world knowledge. An earlier observation by Peterson and Swartz (2008) also found valuable literature enhances children's views of the world by introducing readers to different perspectives they may not have encountered, but some books go further, for they give voice to the perspectives of the silent minorities. Representation

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[2]Chimananda Ngozi Adichie, prize winning author of *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of A Yellow Sun* (2006) presentation recorded by TED.com (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conference July 2009. (see http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html)

of minority cultures is necessary in multicultural children's literature to prevent feelings of marginalization which may cause even early readers to question their place and purpose in society. The arguments advocating the inherent values and discussed here include cultural conscious awareness, building self-esteem, stereotyping and representation.

Perini (2002) suggests multicultural children's books have the potential to inform children by raising consciousness about cultural issues, for they impart knowledge, which schools have largely omitted. Specifically, cultural consciousness involves developing awareness of and sensitivity to the diversity of minority and marginalised groups. This awareness may also be the beginning of developing respect for individuals who are different from ourselves. Academic Sims Bishop's (as cited in Lindgren, 1991) proposed a culturally conscious category of children's books, in a study that evaluated African-American literature for accuracy and authenticity. The books within this category told stories of black characters within the context of black families and neighbours, from their life experiences and perspectives. They are children's books that indicated an awareness of black culture. Culturally conscious books might similarly be adapted to create an awareness of Polish culture, the culture of Thailand, or cultures of other minority groups in Iceland.

In raising consciousness about culturally sensitive issues, educators play a vital role, when considering Bleich's (1978) *Subject Criticism* approach to reading literature. Bleich argued the subjective mode of understanding a text is built on a conscious shift of perception and logical reasoning. Sharing multicultural books with children can facilitate this shift in perception, in the direction of accommodating cultural differences. Multicultural literature can provide alternative ways to experience a diversity of ways of being different. As more early readers are exposed to appropriate multicultural children's literature, perceptions are altered to become common knowledge which incurs affiliation with like minded peers according to Bleich's (1978) theory. Ensuring children's access to this form of literature can provide opportunities to question the traditional prevailing beliefs and views individuals have of themselves and of other groups. Access to multicultural children's literature creates opportunities that assure cultural differences seem less of an impossible void. Youth cultural preference in music is a classic example that easily transcends borders, as shared music preference incurs affiliation to groups of like-minded individuals. Multicultural literature by contrast is complex, as Perini (2002)

found the social, cultural and political values of culturally conscious books are not only appealing but potentially controversial.

The idea of developing self-esteem in minority children is comparable to raising cultural consciousness in all readers through exposure to the values of multicultural children's literature. There is also a general assumption in the discourse that self-esteem in minority children requires improvement. Similarly, the discourse relating to self-esteem suggests there is a close association between the dominated cultural status and low self-esteem. And since minority children are most likely to be found within dominated cultural groups, an assumption can be made that they are probably likely to experience low self-esteem. Botelho and Rudman (2009) found this perspective sets a benchmark that privileges the dominant culture which is defined as the norm, based on standards of high self-esteem, to which the underrepresented minorities should aspire.

Self-esteem is a term that reflects an individual's feelings of their own worthiness and competence. It involves a person's evaluation of their own self-system that relates to their perception of an ideal self, encompassing belief, emotional states including both positive and negative appraisal of the self. The development of self-esteem is important as during its formation, from childhood through to adolescence, it is at its most capricious and vulnerable. Evaluation of the self that reveals low discrepancy between the ideal and the perceived real self will experience levels of high self-esteem, like Paris Hilton maybe. Evaluations that lead to greater discrepancy will result in lower self-esteem, like an unhappy teenager. Schaffer (1996) reported that self-esteem evaluation is more complex, as external influences contribute to the self evaluation process. Parental behaviour and teacher support are two significant influences on children in the process of developing self-esteem. A study by Henderson (as cited in Lindgren, 1991) on the development of self-esteem in children of colour, critically examines why it's important to have multicultural literature in the classroom and home environment. Although the emphasis is on children of colour, perhaps the findings are applicable to any minority group of children living outside the mainstream culture. Henderson believes self-esteem in children of colour is about perception and more importantly freedom. By freedom, the implications are that children of colour have a need to feel valued, that their racial, cultural and ethnic heritage are accepted and authentically represented in the wider society. One example

from the results of this present study in a Reykjavik compulsory school illustrates the point concerning self-esteem and freedom to be oneself. A participant in this study reported a number of Asian children who used two names; one Icelandic name was used in school but their real ethnic name was used at home, and was maybe the children's way of fitting in and managing the perception of themselves and also of their peers. Hence, the role of schools, like the family, is critical in developing self-esteem in all children and in particular minority children who are inclined to feelings of low self-esteem. Schools are in a position to provide developmental experiences and appropriate support that fosters high self-esteem, through the use of multicultural literature.

Access to authentic multicultural literature is important because the literature enables the reader to gain an aesthetic appreciation, in addition to increasing their knowledge, of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The literary heritage of other people of diverse backgrounds may seem less strange, through careful selection and openly sharing the content. Children may begin to appreciate literary techniques and devices used by writers from different cultural backgrounds. A critical point concerning the personal gains to students, are when they experience representations of themselves in the literature, or read literary works from their own cultural background. Norton (as cited in Lindgren, 1991) found that readers of multicultural literature can develop social sensitivity to others when they realise people have similarities and differences. When authentic multicultural literature becomes available in schools, is shared, and discussed in a culturally conscious way, then the self perception of minority Asian children discussed previously may adjust to the point when they feel confident to use their real ethnic names and not their pseudo Icelandic names in school. Schools have a greater responsibility than they realise in developing self-esteem through adjustment of the curriculum.

Steiner et.al (2008) found books that represent a variety of characters from multiple cultures and ethnicity benefit students of all cultures and foster development of positive self-esteem. Banks (2010) *Multicultural Education, Issues and Perspectives* present their views on self-esteem in relation to multicultural literature and multicultural education. They regard mainstreamcentric curriculum as detrimental to racial and ethnic students, as schools and society in general serves the purpose of reinforcing and perpetuating racism and ethnocentrism. This type of curriculum has the effect of reinforcing certain beliefs in mainstream dominant students, who hold a

false of perception of their own superiority. A further consequence is that mainstream student relationships with other racial and cultural groups are compromised because they are denied the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge and perspectives gained from experiencing other cultural groups. The implications are that when people observe their own culture from the perspective of another, they are able to assimilate their own culture more fully in terms of its unique and distinct characteristics. One solution is the call for a balanced curriculum, in which authentic multicultural literature within the framework of multicultural education appears across all school's subject area and throughout the school year. The implications are that a mainstreamcentric curriculum has the ability to damage children of colour, or other minority children, by marginalizing their experiences and culture (Banks, 2010). Children of colour and other minority students need to feel valued in the classroom and society at large in order to nurture their perception and self-esteem that too often are so easily eroded, and in this sense the value of multicultural literature cannot be denied.

Stereotyping is one of the most sensitive and controversial issues in multicultural literature. Sharing controversial multicultural children's books requires knowledge and understanding of particular sensitive issues and people not of the mainstream culture or even the places represented in the books. Stereotyping cannot be directly seen as having any inherent value *per se* but it exists in past and present children's literature. By sharing and explaining controversial content in culturally conscious ways, it enables an opportunity to assist early readers in developing different perspectives, new ways of understanding. Heated debates can and do occur, in particular when old stereotypes re-appear in a new edition of the *Ten Little Niggers* (1939), translated as *Negrastrákarnir* (1922/2007). Its recent re-publication in Iceland caused an unusual uproar of debate in social, political and academic arenas. Perhaps for people of colour living in Iceland at the time *Negrastrákarnir (*2007) was republished, the very mention of the word nigger (negri) would have been an affront. The books front cover gross caricature of ten little nigger boys, fixes derogatory images, like a metaphor for the images in our heads of specific social groups. The stereotypical images, such as the blackness of the skin, portrayed in *Negrastrákarnir,* are beyond exaggeration, with distorted features and are unlike any little black boys I

know exist. Not only are the ten boys grossly portrayed, they all die one by one, or disappear.

The term stereotype (Cai, 2002) suggests when applied in literary criticism it is a "...pejorative term that denotes an oversimplified generalisation that trivializes individual differences and complexities ...for it is like a mask that covers individual characteristics and makes everyone appear the same" (p. 69). Since the beginning the term has had derogatory connotations and mechanical usage. As a literary technique, stereotyping appears neutral when used as a literary device of characterisation, of type, archetype and prototype. In critical multiculturalism, stereotyping has a tendency to label others in a one dimensional way that perpetuates the danger of a single story.

The controversy with stereotyping in general as the definitions imply, is not that they are untrue, but they are incomplete like an unfinished work of art. If we apply Iser's (1978) phenomenological approach to reading a text involving stereotyping in children's books, then by sharing and talking about the controversial stereotypical content of a story, teachers can facilitate in filling in the 'blanks' in culturally conscious ways. Early readers' experiences and perspectives may be altered to better understand negative or positive representations in the text. Through a critical understanding of stereotyping, readers may alter their perception of other minorities and equally perceptions of themselves. For a discussion on multicultural education in the context of a Nordic historical perspective, I refer to Gundara's (2000) findings that states "…all children have a right to know their own personal 'story' ...Young people need not only access to their stories, but to be able to read them critically" (p. 135).

Controversies surrounding stereotyping will not disappear altogether and will always have a presence in literature and will depend on how we manage such controversies when selecting and sharing multicultural books with early readers. An example that made national news was an incident of a white school teacher in Brooklyn who introduced the story of *Nappy Hair* by Herron (as cited in Cai, 2002) to her third grade class. The children's book is about a black child's natural Afro-textured hair. A protest was stage in the neighbourhood, as black parents objected to the teacher raising such a culturally sensitive subject. Cai (2002) states that "nappy hair is historically part of the stereotypical description of African American's physical appearance and symbol of discrimination and humiliation ..." (p.68). On one hand the Brooklyn teacher appeared to lack historical insight of this highly sensitive and

controversial subject. On the other hand, it may be argued that representation of racial and ethnic minority groups is not purely a literary issue, but is a serious social and political issue. Literary works are constructed by aesthetic and social constructs, and are representations that reflect the beliefs, values and attitudes of writers who produce the literature. Stereotypical representation in literature is constructed by the dominant group, which fosters ignorance and prejudice in children of the homogenous mainstream culture. Stereotypical images created historically of American Indians as noble savages, hunting and living in tepees, was a sociopolitical means used to displace Native American Indians, but images are still accessible in children's books, games, comics, toys, movies and television. Therefore, children are likely to recall their exposure to such stereotypical images, which permeates their consciousness to create skewed perceptions when interpreting literary text containing images of American Indians.

Arguments that defend stereotyping in children's books, question why all the fuss when images and characters portrayed in literature may very well exist in reality. Authors like Cai (2002) and Adichie (2009) would be the first to acknowledge that stereotypes are partially true, but that they are incomplete. Stereotyping presents limited, partial truths as if they were the whole truth and can distort reality through repetition. When partial truths are imposed on reality, it occurs simply because people, who impose incomplete truths, hold the power over representation through control and manipulation of the media. The danger of a single story through mis-representation and repetition, too often becomes reality in the minds of those not affected by stereotyping, as in the case of representation of Native American Indians or African Americans. But rarely are images of these culturally diverse groups represented in literature or even the media as serious professionals. It would seem the social political nature of stereotyping, that benefits the dominant cultural groups, has become deeply entrenched and near irremovable. For stereotyping in multicultural literature is not purely a literary issue but is constructed from wider social political issues that do not have a legitimate place in children's literature. In using multicultural children's literature, the challenge is to detect and dissect the stereotypical content creating awareness, tolerance and understanding of others.

The inherent values of multicultural literature are multiple and involve educational issues, and maybe instigated by sociopolitical issues. Botelho and Rudman (2009) view the discourse as intricately tied to the dominant ideologies of

class, race, gender and individualism which subtly erodes the individual's self worth. Therefore, self-oriented approaches are likely to fail students, but before positive intervention opportunities are dismissed, they are worth implementing.

6. Methodology of Study

In this chapter I discuss the methods of the investigation, which were used to examine compulsory school teachers' awareness of multicultural children's literature, in light of increasingly culturally diverse classrooms. The inquiry also examines the extent to which teachers have participated in multicultural education training.

6.1 Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of compulsory school teachers' awareness of multicultural children's literature. Therefore, the inquiry relied on the views of in-service teachers, their experiences and exposure to increasingly culturally diverse classrooms. Research techniques involved the use of a semi-structured interview guide, a common method of social research in education, for qualitative data collection and analysis (Kvale, 2009). Moreover, the inquiry examined and reported how teachers' multiple perspectives of this literature are indicative of their levels of awareness. Teachers' multicultural training experiences and knowledge they brought to the classroom was also examined. In researching these issues, the following questions were addressed:

- What does multicultural literature mean for compulsory school teachers?
- What multicultural education training experiences do teachers bring to the classroom?

6.2 Participants

Creswell's (2008) purposive sampling method was used in this survey, to fulfil the conditions of the study, for both schools and participants. The first condition was the geographic location of compulsory schools within the city of Reykjavik with potential populations of immigrant students. Once school locations were determined, obtaining access involved drafting a letter of introduction (see Appendix 1.) that included objectives of the study. School principals or assistant principals were consulted as a means of securing a minimum number of teachers to act as participants. Permission to access schools in general presented some challenges, based on teacher availability and concerns over confidentiality. Ten schools were initially approached, and five schools granted permission. A second condition required schools identified as primary or junior. The majority of schools accommodated students commencing

aged six years and terminating at sixteen years, while a smaller number of schools accommodated students aged six to twelve years. A third condition allowed state maintained and independent schools to participate, as both had compulsory school status. Identifying the schools, consulting the schools' personnel to arrange interview schedules, exceeded a period of three months when all interviews were completed.

Nine teachers acted as participants and agreed to be interviewed based on specific requirements communicated to respective schools' principals, who made the final selection. A requirement for the selection of participants was the number of years they had practiced as professionals, a minimum of six years teaching with no upper limit was necessary. The number of years teaching would correspond to a distinct period of increasing immigrants to Iceland, circa 1996 to 2008. Statistics Iceland (Hagstofa, 2009) figures show the number of immigrants to Iceland positively correlated in each successive year from 1996 to 2008. Therefore, the years in teaching was essential, as a means of reflecting on the changes participants had experienced across whole, or part of the twelve year period. Moreover, teachers' experience of teaching immigrants would contribute to the findings of the inquiry in developing a greater understanding of key issues here. The demographic shown (see Table 4.) provides a summary of schools and teachers.

Table 4. Demographic summary

Teachers	State or independent	Schools	Years teaching	Experience of teaching immigrants	Grade taught
Participant *d*	State School	RVK. School 1.	25+ yrs	Yes	3rd grade
Participant *f*	State School	RVK. School 1.	11-15 yrs	Yes	2nd grade
Participant *g*	State School	RVK. School 1.	6-10 yrs	Yes	4th grade
Participant *h*	State School	RVK. School 2.	25+ yrs	Yes	3rd - 6th grade
Participant *j*	State School	RVK. School 2.	15-20 yrs	Yes	5th grade
Participant k	State School	RVK. School 2.	15-20 yrs	Yes	3rd grade
Participant *l*	State School	RVK. School 3.	15-20 yrs	Yes	4th grade
Participant *m*	Independent School	RVK. School 4.	6-10 yrs	Yes	3rd - 6th grade
Participant *n*	State School	RVK. School 5.	25+ yrs	Yes	Principal*

*One principal participated as a substitute for another class teacher.

Adapted from, Educational Research, Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research, 2008, by John Creswell

6.3 Interviews

Prior to commencing the survey, a request was submitted to the schools' principals, seeking the use of a private office in which to conduct one-to-one interviews. Privacy was necessary to assure confidentiality, and that the interview situation was amicable

for participants. Confidentiality was also reiterated verbally, at the onset of the interviews, assuring participants' private data identifying the cohort would not be disclosed. By ensuring a degree of rapport participants soon felt at ease, evident in a number of lengthy interview recordings, exceeding the allocated thirty to forty minutes timeslot per interview. Interviews commenced by informing participants of the purpose of the study, expanding on the details contained in the letter of introduction, which all participants had prior sight of. The participants also had the opportunity to ask questions relating to the procedures, content of the study, research objectives and other relevant matter. Schools participating in the study were coded to protect their identity. Likewise, all participants' anonymity was assured in protecting the participants professional voices in the study and the digital recording were equally discretely coded for the process of transcription and analysis.

A semi-structured interview guide contained the main topics to be covered. The guide provided greater flexibility in the sequencing of questioning (Kvale, 2009) and permitted a more natural response, based on teachers' perception of reality according to Burns (2000). The interview guide was presented to each participant at the start of the interview, and a few minutes were allowed to read through the guide (see Appendix 2). A limited time, approximately five minutes was thought sufficient, as the interview guide was presented in English, and the participants' first language was Icelandic. Allowing participants further time to become familiar with the interview guide may have compromised their responses which should have been naturally reflective responses. All participants had sufficient English proficiency level to participate in the interview, a point made during the consultation process with the schools' principals. During the interviews, it was occasionally necessary to re-phrase certain questions, which participants did not fully understand and required further clarification. Each participant was allowed the opportunity to give their definition of the concept of multicultural literature. The interviewer then, provided a summarised explanation of the inconsistent and wide ranging definition of multicultural literature, at the beginning of each interview.

The interview guide consisted of a number of sections: The first section dealt with the demographics, namely the age of participants, professional status, and number of years teaching and experience of teaching individuals or groups of immigrants. Continued professional development as ongoing teacher training in the context of multicultural education also featured under demographics. It was necessary

to establish the profile and teaching experiences in increasingly culturally diverse settings, which as a consequence may have influenced an awareness of the value of multicultural literature within their own teaching and wider school curriculum. As a result of Icelandic schools becoming culturally diverse during the period 1996 through to 2008 (Hagstofa, 2009), the study intended to establish if multicultural literature had become more accessible. The second section, focused on teachers' awareness, through usage and promotion of multicultural resources. In generating questions about actual multicultural books used in classrooms, participants would be required to reflect on the resources currently in use, as part of their regular teaching resources. A third section of the interview guide required responses about teachers knowledge of the National Curriculum.

6.4 Transcriptions analysed

The form of transcription used in this study was a standard orthography, based on the norms and accepted usage of the written language (Kowal and O'Connell, 2004). This made the process easier of transcribing participants' responses, who at times struggled to find appropriate English words or expressions, which may have compromised aspects of the participants' responses. Individual interviews were digitally recorded using a personal laptop with a built in sound recorder that captured all audible responses. Once interviews were completed, each recording was then transcribed into text data that represented the conversational behaviour of participants, and then typed onto respective interview guide in a question/answer format.

7. Thematic Results of the Study

The process of establishing themes is in line with the methods outlined. Creswell (2008) found through initial data analysis many themes will emerge and subsequent analysis will reduce these to several major or minor themes. The data analysed in this study revealed several participants had mentioned the same theme, from multiple perspectives. Both reoccurring themes and individual viewpoints provided a rich but complex data that contributed to the findings. Kvale (2009) proposed resulting themes may be developed according to the "what" of an interview, the key concepts of the research topic and subsequent analysis. The interview guide (see Appendix 2) contains the "what" of interviews, in relation to the key concepts in this qualitative inquiry. Four themes were established following data analysis of the transcriptions. Themes I, II and III contributed to the major findings and subsequent discussion. Theme IV is considered minor, but contributed to the overall results.

7.1 Theme I: Teachers' Awareness of Multicultural Literature

In posing the question below, the aim was to determine if teachers had thought about this key concept and if they were able to define it from their own perspective. Extracts of the teachers' multiple perspectives follows:

Interviewer: "What does the concept of multicultural literature mean to you?"

Participant *d:* ...to be able to understand where they come from and their experiences. Respect their background and culture. ...help them understand the culture here, which can be shocking when they first arrive.

Participant *f:* The concept of multicultural literature must refer to the right perspective of the immigrant children.

Participants *d* and *f* both presented their own unique perspectives of multicultural literature as a type of literature to engage minority students. In contrast participants *h* had considered the concept in terms the importance of authentic literature. The response from *m* provided almost a text book definition, and participant *j* had a similar viewpoint as *m.*

Participant *h:* It means a lot. Personally, I always try to read authentic authors. You want to trust the point of view. A Polish journalist wrote a lot about Africa and Asia, his writing was authentic as he wrote about what he saw.

Participant *j*: It means you should try to see things many ways. You need to have an open mind. Like in maths, there are many journeys to the solution.

Participant *m:* It means looking through the lens of others. It concerns issues related to immigrants but it is very hard to define. It is not just immigrants but everyone.

The interview guide enabled further opportunity to probe participants' awareness of multicultural literature. This meant participants had to think of circumstances in which they would actively promote this type of literature. The question was deliberately positioned to appear some time into the interview schedule, and at this point of the interviews, I felt the participants had to some extent altered their thinking.

Interviewer: Why would you promote or encourage multicultural literature awareness in your school?

Participant *d:* …not specifically promoting it but bearing in mind the diversity of the students.

Participant *f*: Books from Poland and other countries would be helpful… Iceland is a small community which is a little isolated, but it is changing to become more international.

Participant *g:* To prevent prejudice, create a better environment for everybody. To help the immigrants to adjust better in the society, we should also learn about their culture even though they are adjusting to Icelandic society.

Participant *h*: If the teacher has an interest in multiculturalism in general. It stands for peace in the world**.**

Participant *j:* When I first started teaching none of the pupils had been abroad. But now perhaps 2/3rd of the pupils have been or lived abroad. Now I have to connect the text and relate it to say a child's experience of Denmark or Latvia.

Participant *k:* It is important, not only for immigrants but for all children, the whole group.

Participant *l:* To avoid prejudice, and live in harmony but also for mutual understanding.

The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis but the multiple perspectives in responses all really fit a similar category. At this stage of the interviews all participants appeared to have settled themselves sufficiently to think under what conditions they would consider promoting multicultural literature in their schools.

7.2 Theme II: Independent Multicultural Teacher Training
The question posed was intended to determine the training opportunities available to participants, specifically in multicultural literature or multicultural education. Five of the nine participants reported having independently completed multicultural education courses or seminars, in which participants took the initiative in sourcing training opportunities themselves.

Interviewer: What professional development have you participated in, within the context of multicultural literature or education?

Participants *d:* Several courses in multicultural education. All courses completed abroad. The courses were actually based on teaching ESL.

Participant *h*: I went to Sweden, Stockholm 1996, to study multicultural teaching. The course was one winter and was purely an individual option.

Participant *j:* One course advocating a child centred approach, which could be used for all children, taken many years ago. The starting point of the teaching addresses the individual child, so every child should benefit, whether immigrant or native should benefit.

Participant *k:* I attended several seminars in multicultural education, and I am
very dedicated to understanding this better. These were short courses at the
time.

Participant *l*: ...some *e*xperience of language teaching in Sweden, teaching
Icelandic to Icelandic children in several schools.

The eclectic mix of training courses participants had completed and their numerous
perspectives of what constituted multicultural training courses was revealing and
complex. Results indicate the independent routes to multicultural training is
inconsistent, often with a tenuous link to actual multicultural literature or even
multicultural education. Participants reported courses completed years before, but
training in recent years was not evident from the responses.

7.3 Theme III: Whole School Multicultural Training

The Co-operative Learning in Multicultural Groups (CLIM[3]) programme was a whole
school initiative administered by two of the five schools, *R1* and *R4*. In both schools
participants revealed a group culture through their shared knowledge, behaviour and
enthusiasm toward the CLIM programme and were keen to inform the interviewer
about the programme. The same interview question in 7.2 was applied to 7.3 and
resulted in a more consistent category of responses.

Interviewer: What professional development have you participated in, within
the context of multicultural literature or education?

Participant *f:* It is a multicultural school and a professor from Belgium was
invited to the school to present the concept (CLIM) on multiculturalism in
2001. They are using the concept within the teaching curriculum. Some
teachers are attending lectures abroad to observe multicultural education, in
America, Spain, France and Belgium. In each country and school the
programme is adapted according to the needs and culture.

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[3]CLIM is an acronym for Co-operative Learning in Multicultural groups (see http://www.steunpuntico.be)

Participant *g:* …training at the school in CLIM that was completed in the fall of 2008. CLIM Samvinnunám (translated as co-operative learning) is used in group work. Everybody is good in something but nobody is good at everything. The stronger ones will help the less confident ones.

Participant *m:* …completed a course in CLIM at the University of Iceland.

In addition to their own multicultural training, participants' *f, g* and *m* when asked about their peers training, were very clear about the percentage and exact numbers who had participated in CLIM training. The whole school approach to multicultural training may have been influential in contributing to the group culture that became apparent during the course of the interviews.

Interviewer: How many teachers, within your school, are you aware of that may have attended training courses in multiculturalism or intercultural training?

Participant *f:* Most teachers have attended course, 90% of teachers have attended training in multiculturalism. Many teachers have been at the school for a long time.

Participant *g:* All teachers participated in this course in 2008. But not everyone is working within the CLIM pedagogy.

Participant *m:* Three teachers at some time have had training in multicultural education.

7.4 Theme IV: Students Access to Multicultural Literature
The contribution of this minor theme, in this inquiry, is relevant in the examination of participants' awareness of the availability and access students have to multicultural literature.

Interviewer: Do you know what Multicultural Literature is available for the early readers?

Participant *d:* No, not off hand, the teacher knows when she sees it but it's not accessible.

Participant *g:* No, cannot think of anything at the moment. Of course in history lessons they are learning about many other cultures. They are learning about Greece and Rome.

Participant *h:* No, but Borgarbokasafn (the city library) has a section. Immigrant students must read in their own language.

Participant *j:* No, there is a lack of material for this age group.

Participant *k:* A reading book for beginners Rámi Tími

Participant *l:* Yes, Námsgagnastofnun (publishes school resources) sends the list of available multicultural books, but its finding the time.

Participant *m:* There is one book from an Icelandic author that she recalls about a little girl from Africa...

The findings indicate participant *k* and *m* both recall knowledge of one multicultural book, produced locally by an Icelandic author and school publisher, Námsgagnastofnun. Participants responses reveal an acute lack of multicultural books for early readers, as responses to this question, were simply a *"no"*, *"nothing"* or *"cannot think"*. The findings documented are further developed in the subsequent discussion chapter.

8. Discussion

An objective of this chapter is to discuss reader-response theories and multicultural literature, in light of new developments in recent years that explain the degree to which the text is a product of culture. Traditional reader-response theorist Rosenblatt (1978) argued readers' cultural background influences interpretation of texts. A study by Smagorinsky (2001) develops the notion that textual meaning is 'culturally mediated'. While, Botelho and Rudman (2009) propose critical multicultural analysis is undoubtedly linked to culture and power. Pragmatic approaches to reader-response in the classroom, using text interrogation of culturally enriched literature (Klein, 2003), and mainstream readers' cultural interpretations of texts (Taylor, 2002) are discussed. Raising cultural consciousness in all students and building self-esteem in minority students and the important role of schools and teachers are revisited.

Another objective of this chapter is the discussion relating to results generated by this inquiry, which are developed in terms of recent international studies involving pre-service teachers. International studies (Pino & Pino, 2009; Lin & Lucey, 2010; Premier & Miller, 2010) demonstrate the globalisation of the key concepts of this research, and the need to develop teachers' cultural awareness of the use of multicultural children's literature. Perhaps an appropriate starting point would be to begin with the problem of the traditional reader-response approach, in light of recent developments.

8.1 Reader-Response Approaches Affirm Multicultural Literature

In Bleich's (1978) *Subjective Criticism* the reader's construction of meaning is the centre of this approach. This posits subjectivity as the only basis for extracting meaning, and external influences are devalued. Pure subjective reading of texts poses problems on several counts. Chapter four of this study noted concerns of mainstream and minority students' subjective interpretation of texts. A problem of subjective literary criticism is that it omits a critical factor, the reader's cultural influences. Those external cultural factors that form the core of our being, for children in Iceland, England or some other land, are omitted. Constructing meaning that is 'culturally mediated' perhaps is better understood if we bear in mind this approach focuses on

mainstream students, then limitations in reading multicultural literature become more apparent where traditional school practices dominate the curriculum.

Smagorinsky (2001) rejected Bleich's subjective approach, for an exclusively personal view of reading can disregard social inequalities that can occur in mainstream texts that have greater status than other texts. In contrast to a subjective approach in reading texts, readers may construct meaning that is 'culturally mediated', as they reflect on past experiences prior to constructing new meaning. Smagorinsky's (2001) notion of 'culture' represents the mutual values and beliefs systems of the communities to which we belong, as well as recurring social practices that enable and constrain individuals, through the use of tools, tools that include the literary texts, which create societies that consist of people with dissimilar and often conflicting values. The idea of 'mediation' as a tool has a cultural root, that is often subtle, which Cole (as cited in Smagorinsky, 2001) refers to as the process of prolepsis. The idea of 'mediation' grounded in the process of prolepsis refers to assumptions of future culturally appropriate behaviour and expectations that is the glue that binds communities, consider religion as an example. This subtle act of prolepsis functions in traditional schools' culture through the use of canonical texts that restrict students' exposure to other rich textual forms. To be clear, cultural mediation is restrictive, as readers can only reflect and draw on a limited pool of cultural practices. To overcome the limitations of the reader in constructing meaning that is culturally mediated, is not an easy task and schools need to provide "opportunities for imaginative responses to reading to enable the richest transactions possible for the broadest range of students" (Smagorinsky, 2001, p. 162). To develop rich transactions between reader and text, educators need to set the context and attend to entrenched social practices, to overcome cultural barriers in engaging all students in a broad range of culturally rich literature. New tools, new goals and new notions of what counts as appropriate texts are the basis from which to proceed. Proceeding from the theoretical to the practical, subsequent studies illustrates classroom approaches to introducing a range of multicultural literature.

Klein's (2003) pragmatic approach to reader-response in the classroom proposes text interrogation of culturally enriched personal narratives, to engage early readers. Textual interrogation as an instructional approach, compliments what Smagorinsky (2001) refers to as opportunities for imaginative reader response, in the transactional process for creating meaning. Klein's (2003) approach employs a new

tool, a new approach when introducing a transcultural/multicultural text for instance, as the process uses focused questions that require students to engage in multiple reading of the same text, which deliberately develop levels of proximity to the text. Klein's (2003) transcultural texts used to illustrate textual interrogation is a collection based on personal narratives of child protagonists, who are themselves authors of their own tragic histories, in diverse global settings. What makes this collection of narratives a good candidate for the richest transaction possible to extract meaning, is the context, and the preparatory pre-reading that seem to engage and motivate students to want to learn about the histories and bond with the narratives. As an agent of change that shares values, "transcultural texts portray the culture, language, geography, life-style ...political systems of the country", according to Klein (2003, p.25). Another, pragmatic approach to reader-response examines the cultural interpretation of texts in a study of mainstream students.

There are echoes of Smagorinsky's (2001) argument that constructing meaning is culturally mediated, in the following study that examined readers' interpretations of cultural texts. Taylor (2002) found, mainstream students appear to develop common tendencies, possibly based on ingrained social practices, of misrepresentation of other cultures, which include combative responses and exoticising responses toward cultural texts. Combative responses stake a claim of a privileged status for one's own cultural beliefs that regard other cultures as inferior. Exoticising responses devalues meaning of other cultural encounters by reducing such experiences to feelings that such cultural texts are inferior. A transformational multicultural approach is one way to help mainstream students acknowledge other cultures through in-depth understanding of the cultural construction of knowledge. Taylor (2002) argues a primary source of understanding another culture is through creative literature studies, which is a fundamental source of recorded cultural knowledge. But first it is necessary to get mainstream students to ask the right questions that reveal their own underlying cultural assumptions. There is a need to, "break students out of their cultural perspectives long enough to take an honest and awesome view of other cultures" (Taylor, 2002, p. 5).

Interestingly, while the traditional subjective approach argues readers' construction of meaning takes the exclusive personal path, the recent culturally mediated approach highlights the readers' limitations by their own cultural histories. The implications are in both approaches that mainstream cultural practices, social

values and beliefs need to be addressed when introducing readers to multicultural literature. Readers, it seems, need to develop knowledge of their own culture, alongside knowledge of other cultures, to construct unbiased, non-judgemental interpretations of multicultural literature.

A subjective critical reading suggests that a stereotypical portrayal of minorities with their half truths, has the potential to become the whole truth for early readers. Similarly, Smagoringsky (2001) argued construction of meaning based on readers' cultural histories can "…potentially do violence to others, both afield and in the classroom" (p. 163). We only need to look to *The Satanic Verses* (1988) as an example of cultural historical influences, and children's literature, while generally not condoning violence, can be potentially harmful in other ways. *Negrastrákarnir* has the potential to damage the perception of self in children of colour, even my own dual heritage children were repulsed by the book's images and content. Alternative options to *Negrastrákarnir* are authentic multicultural books with realistic images that raise awareness of ethnically and culturally diverse people, which is normal. Perini (2002) advocates sharing multicultural children's books in culturally conscious ways to inform and raise consciousness about cultural issues.

In transactional theories, readers' cultural backgrounds play a significant role, a role which may limit readers' reaction to standard responses with little imagination. Karolides' (1997) review of research in culture and reader-response found in general, readers of a similarly age and of the same culture tend to interpret the text using a similar screen of linguistics and cultural conventions. The implications are that children of the homogenous group in Iceland would potentially interpret a reading of *Negrastrákarnir* in a similar way, for their construction of meaning is "culturally mediated", to use Smagorinsky's (2001) term. If our cultural histories are so entrenched, then strategies of exposure to authentic literature of other cultures are necessary. Again my own dual nationality children were raised with fourteen Santa Claus's having experienced Icelandic books on the thirteen Yule Lads and English books on Father Christmas, perfectly normal. The experience of other cultures in childhood can mean learning to accept differences of others without prejudice. Karolides (1997) argues developing cultural awareness involves reading multicultural literature, to enlarge the perspectives of readers who may be limited by their own cultural restrictions, as potentially the reader will become more accepting of differences, in addition to recognising similarities.

Besides the traditional reader-response theories, contemporary critical multicultural analysis considers the sociopolitical influences that are inextricably tied to culture and power. The 'critical' means focusing on the power relations of class, race, and gender as central in the examination of children's literature, that reveal sociopolitical influences, and 'multicultural' implies the historically diverse and cultural experiences within these power relations (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). In chapter one of this study, the historical perspectives of multicultural education in the United States and Nordic countries illustrate power relations of the past that explain the present, and the necessity of multicultural children's literature. Banks (2004) argues that an historical perspective is necessary for understanding the present, as this benefits mainstream and minority cultural groups. Botelho and Rudman (2009) found race, class, gender are the social arrangements that work together to construct hierarchical arrangement that signal social power. They believe that readers who take a passive approach, accepting the author's images and words without question, are not neutral but are subconsciously maintaining the status quo by accepting the covert or overt message of the author.

The value of reading multicultural literature critically is that the readers learn to view the world through a different lens, to develop new perspectives, a new outlook. Gundara (2000) argues that young people in accessing their own stories should read them critically, not from one perspective. When Adiche (2009) spoke of increasing the risk of a critical understanding by exposing readers to the dangers of a single story, the sociopolitical implications became evident. Children's books that consistently include stereotypical images of dominated cultural groups, just as American Indians are often portrayed in films, books and television, as living in tepees, dancing around fires, fighting and wearing feathers, mis-represent a whole nation. The fantasy children's book *Indian in the Cupboard* (as cited in Cai, 2002) is a classic example that has been criticised for stereotyping. Images of American Indians in cowboy films I experienced as a child remain powerfully vivid, even as an adult. There has to be a balance and fair representation in children's literature of minorities and marginalised others. As Rochman (1993) suggests, we need books that break down barriers, dispel prejudice and stereotyping and allow us to imagine the lives of others, because good stories allow us to know people as individuals, and once we experience someone as a person, then we have reached beyond stereotyping. Exposure to good stories should begin with early readers to diminish adverse

reactions to people that are ethnically and racially different. The merits of authentic multicultural children's literature is evident in the use of literature to minimise some of the biased perceptions children have already formed from an early age (Lindgren, 1991).

8.2 Inherent Values of Multicultural Literature Confirmed

The discussion below is about expanding both cultural consciousness and self-esteem. Stereotyping was shown to be a sensitive and prominent issue that is ever present in children's literature and the media, but I have laboured on the point sufficiently above. In exploring cultural consciousness and self-esteem, the literature reviewed explicitly maintains views of the importance of multicultural literature, the value it adds to the learning process in developing readers' perspectives and its inclusion in children's multicultural books.

The role of schools and teachers cannot be underestimated in raising the cultural consciousness of all students. Stoodt-Hill and Amspaugh-Corson (2009) states categorically that multicultural literature is important in the classroom, for we live in a multicultural world, and discussion of the meaning found in the text is vital in developing a critical lens when examining the cultural values and beliefs in personal and collective lives. Based on a United Nations' demographic report in 1999, the report suggests if the earth's population was proportionally reduced to only 100 people, "there would be 61 Asians, 12 Europeans, 14 North and South Americans and 13 Africans ...70 people would be non-white and 30 would be white" (Stoodt-Hill and Amspaugh-Corson, 2009, p. 209). This analogy reiterates the fact that we occupy a multicultural society, in which multicultural children's literature has a role. Culturally conscious books are a prominent topic of academic discussions. This category of books (see Lindgren, 1991; Cai, 2002; Botelho and Rudman, 2009) usually portrays African Americans as the main character and maybe a means to compensate for the lack of, or mis-representation of, people of colour in mainstream literature.

Self-esteem, like otherness, is yet another complex and intricate thread woven into multicultural children's literature. Banks and Banks (2010) challenge the mainstreamcentric curriculum that reinforces the false perception of superiority and high self-esteem mainstream students hold of themselves, to the detriment of children of colour. Steiner et.al (2008) found that multicultural literature has many applications essential in fostering and building self-esteem but more importantly, this literature has

the ability to bring people of different cultures together. Developing the self-esteem of minority children poses challenges to the established children's cannon, for we only need consider the socially constructed fairy tale images. Hurley (2005) found children of colour are internalising images found in classic fairy tales and how they see themselves, based on their exposure to images found in written texts, illustrations and films. The black, white symbolism is ever present in fairy tales, where whiteness represents good and black is a symbol of evil. Hurley (2005) states that if children are to develop a positive, self-image, and therefore self-esteem, they need to see themselves or images of themselves in books.

8.3 Multicultural Literature and Levels of Awareness

What does multicultural literature mean for compulsory school teachers? The objective of this research question was to determine teachers' awareness of multicultural literature. The findings of this study evidently identified levels of awareness among teachers. I found teachers' multiple perspectives in defining multicultural literature were insightful in understanding how this genre of literature was perceived. First, I would like to clarify, what I mean by *awareness.*

Awareness is a perception or cognitive state in humans that enables individuals to detect and interpret environmental information. Due to individual cognitive states, attending skills may cause the individual to ignore irrelevant information but pay attention to relevant information in their environment. Simply, perception awareness refers to the acquisition of information from our environment. Levels of awareness are ways in which individuals assemble life experiences and construct meaning from the environment. At the highest level of awareness individuals consciously express themselves, but at the lowest levels of awareness, they lack the ability of expression (Fransella, 2003). In the context of this study, higher levels of awareness means participants can easily and consciously define multicultural literature. In contrast, participants with lower levels of awareness struggle to give meaning to the concept. Another explanation suggests awareness is a cultural construction, as the brain "sets the sensitivity of sense organs, the opportunity arises in human experience for culture to shape perception by shaping cognition" (Konner, 2007, p.96). The theoretical explanations of awareness, as a cognitive state, provide a reasonable argument that explains the findings of this study. There is a

cross-section of multicultural studies[4] on raising teachers' awareness which forms part of this discussion. However, I shall begin with a close examine of responses that indicate varying levels of teachers' awareness of this genre of literature.

While the teachers did not completely lack an awareness of multicultural literature, the findings suggest there are some discrepancies in their definitions, indicating varying levels of awareness. Participants *d* and *f* initially defined multicultural literature as specifically for their foreign students. However, *d,* using language such as 'they' 'their' 'them' continued the definition by explaining it would help 'them understand the culture here'. Participant's *f* definition implied the literature should contain the right perspectives of immigrant children, which may suggest fair representation. While I agree students need to experience multicultural literature that represents their ethnicity and cultural background, I would argue that this literature should be shared by all students in the classroom, to facilitate cross cultural awareness. Participants *d* and *f* levels of awareness suggest that, immigrant children and multicultural literature belong to one package, separate from the homogenous students. The perceptual awareness of both *d* and *f* located in school *R1* are strikingly similar and I believe there are several explanations. One explanation is based on the idea that perception is a cultural construct (Konner, 2007), and the Icelandic culture has shaped the perception of teachers *d* and *f,* to separate mentally immigrants and homogenous students. This may explain why multicultural books are seen as resource for the others. The second explanation is the schools' practice, based on established policies, to separate immigrant children for the purpose of teaching Icelandic language skills, causing a domino effect on participants' awareness. The immigrant students are separate and multicultural literature belongs to 'them' and the two are associated, so participants keep them separated from the homogenous students. A third explanation is the low level of awareness proposed by Konner (2007), as experience of this literature and its meaningfulness was remote. Developing participants' levels of awareness of multicultural literature is one strategy for addressing the issue, and is discussed subsequently.

The findings of participants *h, j* and *m*'s reveal heightened levels of awareness of multicultural literature, in contrast to those of *d* and *f.* Two teachers are located in *R2* and one teacher in *R4.* The three teachers *h, j* and *m* responses indicated they had

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[4] (see studies by Cai, 2002; Gay, 2002; Colby & Lyon, 2004; Peterson & Swartz, 2008; Stooodt-Hill & Amspaugh-Corson, 2009)

thought about this genre of literature, and its use in their professions. Participant *h*'s reference to authentic multicultural literature is a concept encountered many times in the literature (Cai, 2002; Peterson & Swartz, 2008; Stoodt-Hill and Amspaugh-Corson, 2009).

The general discourse surrounding cultural authenticity is based on who has the authority, who can produce valid children's books that fairly represent a particular culture. This has generated the insider - outsider debate. The insider debate suggests only a member of a cultural group, say an Icelander, can write an authentic book that represents the Icelandic culture, but the outsider defines an author as someone who does not belong to the ethnic, cultural group about which he/she writes (Cai, 2002). The argument goes further, calling for artistic freedom, and rejects attempts to stifle creativity. In the case of participant *h,* who mentions authenticity, and cites a Polish journalist who wrote about Africa and Asia, based on his experience and what he saw. There are many criteria for selecting authentic multicultural literature, of which schools need to be aware. Peterson and Swartz's (2008) criteria for selecting multicultural literature focuses on sociopolitical issues, the need to be critical of stereotyping of characters, moreover, the authority of the author. Stoodt-Hill and Amspaugh-Corson (2009) lists several guidelines for choosing multicultural literature for instance; avoiding stereotypes, helping readers connect with the themes, checking illustrations are accurate representations, is the book up-to-date, making sure cultural values and cultural groups are accurately portrayed.

The results of participants *h*, *j* and *m* suggested all three had high levels of awareness of the use of multicultural literature; when asked to define the concept, there was no hesitation, for they could genuinely attach meaning to the idea. Colby and Lyon's (2004) study on *Heightening Awareness about the Importance of Using Multicultural Literature* spoke of the opportunities to teachers and students to broadening their understanding of world cultures, but emphasised the challenges of securing quality literature and cultivating an awareness among teachers of the values of this literature. Their findings were thought-provoking as pre-service teachers, who were initially with low levels of awareness, develop an heightened sense of awareness when exposed to the need for multicultural literature, as a stimulus in creating a classroom in which all students were valued, and were able to celebrate their own and the culture of others. Colby and Lyon (2004) believe educators need courage in accepting the challenges of integrating multicultural literature in the classroom.

Teachers who develop a higher sense of awareness of their own beliefs, values, attitudes and practices in relation to diversity, benefit the students they teach. The extracts from pre-service teachers are striking:

 "...as a white child I never really thought about it because I had books that I could relate to." "...I never realised there were children that felt like they had nothing to read and relate to (Colby & Lyon, 2004, p.25).

According to Gay (2002), culturally responsive teaching means developing an awareness beyond the fact that ethnic groups have different values, or express similar values in various ways. Culturally responsive teaching means acquiring accurate information about cultural groups, that helps in creating an interesting, stimulating environment, and is representative of ethnic diversity. Teachers need a greater awareness of student groups to build self-esteem and awareness of subject content, such as multicultural literature.

8.4 Multicultural Education Training

What multicultural education training experiences do teachers bring to the classroom? The objective of this research question was to establish teachers' experiences of multicultural education training which affects the knowledge they bring to the classroom. Influential demographic factors, sociopolitical and professional attributes surrounding this question must also be considered. Demographic factors refer to an increase in foreign nationals from 1.7% of the total population in 1994, rising to 9% in December 2009 (Hagstofa, 2009). Another influential factor is the Icelandic Government integration of immigrants' policy (Þingsályktun um framkvæmdaáætlun í málefnum innflytjenda, 2008). The integration policy has immigrant education as a primary objective. Professional factors refer to the number of years teaching, and the experience of teaching immigrants (see Table 4). These influential factors should work to awaken teaching professionals of the need for multicultural education training.

The transcriptions revealed two distinct themes of multicultural education training that teachers had experienced: independent teacher training and whole school training. Independent multicultural training reported, meant teachers had some interest and sort courses themselves, often indirectly related to multicultural training,

in the context of this study. Whole school multicultural training involved the entire school, teaching as well as administrative, library and others. Both independent and whole school training are discussed as one component, as multicultural education training. Distinctions are drawn between independent and whole school multicultural education training but focus will remain on the outcome of teachers' independent training. The dimensions model of multicultural education discussed subsequently facilitates interpretation of participants' results.

Banks and Banks' (2010) conceptual five dimensions model of multicultural education consist of content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy and empowering school cultures. Conceptually, as multicultural education is often seen as content related to ethnic and cultural groups, not the mainstream students, this often leads to teachers' resistance. An objective of the five dimension model is to reduce resistance, and one way to achieve this is through teacher training in multicultural education. The model is important as a "...guide to school reform when trying to implement multicultural education" (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 20). The five dimension model incorporates possibilities for individual teacher training, as well as whole school multicultural training. Based on the five dimensions model, the findings of this inquiry would suggest teachers' reported experiences of multicultural education training should in theory mean they are putting into practice some of the five dimensions. I shall compare and contrast what was reported by some teachers, I refer to as participants below, against a number of scales of the dimension model.

Participant *h* reported studying multicultural teaching in Stockholm, Sweden in 1996, over one term. Participant *l* had a similar experience as participant *h* in multicultural teaching in Sweden, when *l* taught Icelandic to Icelandic children, across several schools. The answer to the research question confirms both *h* and *l* have undoubtedly experiences of multicultural education training. However, there are a number of immediate discrepancies. The multicultural training reported by participant *h* was completed in 1996, and by this inquiry in 2010, fourteen years had past. While participant *l* did not state the exact date teaching in Sweden, we might draw some conclusion this was some years previous (see Table 4). Teacher training like technology changes, education pedagogy changes and concepts evolve. Outdated multicultural training dilutes the possibilities of effective teaching. The effectiveness

of training reported by *h* and *l* could be measured against the five dimensions model to test for instance, knowledge construction or equity pedagogy. Knowledge construction occurs when teachers help students to understand, by exploring how through implied cultural assumptions, certain biases and perspectives, knowledge is constructed. Equity pedagogy occurs when teachers modify their teaching practices to accommodate students of diverse cultural, racial, gender and social-class groups (Banks & Banks, 2010). Further studies would be required to establish if knowledge construction or equity pedagogy formed part of the general teaching practices of *h* and *l*, as the focus of this inquiry concerned multicultural education training. Other cases of independent training were reported as multicultural training, including English as a second language (ESL) and a child-centred course.

Participant's *d*'s perception of second language (L2) learning, as synonymous with multicultural education attainment is plausible, but only if the (L2) learner is exposed to cultural knowledge of the target language along with grammar instructions. It is well known that traditional ESL teaching and learning are frequently via sterile lab-based courses, with purely grammar based language material (Brown, 2002). Participant *d* did not state a date of the ESL training course, but had taught for over 25 years (see Table 4). If an assumption is made that *d*'s ESL training was completed a decade previously, the teaching may fit traditional ESL practices, with little planning for cultural input. A modern approach to ESL training incorporating cultural knowledge of the target language would complement the content integration scale of the five dimensions model. Content integration is a teaching approach that deliberately uses a variety of examples and content from a variety of cultures in the teaching. It was not evident from *d*'s response in this inquiry if content integration formed part of the teaching practices. ESL teaching is an effective vehicle for content integration, as some subjects present more opportunities for integration than others, including languages, according to Banks and Banks (2010).

The last dimension I wanted to examine is prejudice reduction, as participant *j* reported the completion of a course that advocated a child-centred approach, which could be used for all children. Prejudice reduction involves lessons and activities that teachers use to assist students to become more culturally aware, by fostering positive attitudes towards other ethnic and cultural groups. Participant *j* explains, "...the starting point of the teaching addresses the individual child, so every child should benefit, whether immigrant or native. Although the class will proceed in one

direction, each student will follow and progress at their respective pace". Participant *j*'s adaption of the child-centred approach is an admirable way of attempting to connect the individual child's progress with respect to a child's educational attainment. This child-centred approach presents an opportunity to integrate prejudice reduction into *j*'s teaching practices. The findings did not reveal any mention of multicultural education in participant's *j*'s child-centred teaching and with further training such opportunities may be realised.

The five dimensions of multicultural education are very much about teaching opportunities, as shown in comparing findings of this research, against various scales of the dimension model. The five dimensions model also concerns the idea of accommodating. Teachers need to accommodate their students by helping them to understand how knowledge construction is influenced by implicit cultural assumptions. In equity pedagogy, the teacher needs to accommodate students by modifying their teaching to student needs. In prejudice reduction, teachers need to accommodate their students by fostering positive attitudes towards other cultural groups. Nieto's (1999) earlier work on who does the accommodating, called for an alternative perspective. The prevailing assumption had been that students of marginalised groups had to conform as the only option to succeed in school. The "alternative perspective: that in order to advance student learning, teachers and schools also need to change in substantial and significant ways" (Nieto, 1999, p.72). Such changes may only occur in appropriate multicultural education training. Participants discussed have provided evidence that suggests compulsory school teachers are proactively participating in independent training, which they believe incorporates multicultural education. Guidance in the selection of independent multicultural education is essential for consistency and new knowledge. In contrast, participants' involvement in whole-school multicultural teacher training appears generally to have received appropriate guidance, and they are informed and prepared to teach multicultural literature, as the results below confirms.

Thus far themes discussed relate to participants independently sourcing teacher training courses, often resulting in vague ideas of multicultural education training. A summary follows of the whole school multicultural education training. The whole school initiatives administered by two schools in the study invested in a multicultural education programme, Co-operative Learning in Multicultural Groups

(CLIM) [5]. The programme is a supplementary teacher programme in intercultural education developed by the Centre for Diversity and Learning (CDL) in partnership with University of Ghent, Belgium. The role of CDL is primarily concerned with social and cultural diversities in contemporary societies which affect education. Paelman (2005) states CLIM has evolved from the Complex Instruction programme, a teaching method originally developed at Stanford University California by Dr. Elizabeth Cohen with the intention to ensure access and success to all students. Therefore, the objectives of CLIM are primarily intended to develop social students' social skills within the context of multicultural education. Development of specific social skills includes working together, being able to listen to others and learning to see things from a different perspective (Paelman, 2005). A number of these social skills were reported by participants interviewed and are discussed subsequently.

The CLIM initiative was reported by four participants within two different schools, *R1* and *R4*. Both schools have significant numbers of minority students in comparison to other schools in this study. One factor influencing a head teacher's decisions in whole school involvement may relate to the higher percentage of immigrant student population, but this is unconfirmed. The introduction of CLIM as a whole school initiative, in school *R1*, has meant financial investments in a wide-range of multicultural literature on-site in the schools' library. This pro-active stance as reported by participants in school *R1* has created substantial school-wide teacher awareness, as all three participants interviewed in *R1* had knowledge of the CLIM programme. Participant *f* states "...teachers are applying the concept of CLIM within the school's curriculum ...in each country and school the CLIM programme is adapted according to the needs and culture". While participant's *f*'s statement validates the use of CLIM by other teachers, one striking observation made, across all three participants in school *R1,* is the optional ways in which CLIM is been used in the school, supported by the CLIM manual as a guide. Participant *g* in school *R1* reports of student's group work using the CLIM approach, "The stronger ones will help the less confident ones" is a core belief of the CLIM approach based on co-operative learning. Another feature of CLIM is the blanket coverage of multicultural instructions the programme provides, for teachers working in culturally diverse schools. Banks and Banks (2010) five dimensions model, is a comparable approach to

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[5] CLIM is an acronym for Co-operative Learning in Multicultural Groups (see http://www.steunpuntico.be)

the CLIM programme, as both provide a framework for teachers or act as guide post multicultural training. In ending this chapter I wanted to briefly return to the topic of teacher training for culturally diverse schools by reviewing the outcome of recent international field inquiries involving pre-service teachers in multicultural training.

Recent multicultural education studies (Pino & Pino, 2009; Lin & Lucey, 2010; Premier& Miller, 2010) all speak of cross-cultural levels of awareness and cultural diversity in schools. It is argued cross-cultural competence is essential for teachers practising in schools today. Pino and Pino (2009) found by testing pre-service Spanish language teachers for cross-cultural awareness, results indicated these teachers held mainstream US worldviews, with low levels of multicultural awareness. Yet findings by Lin and Lucey (2010) on cultural awareness indicate individual and collective collaborative reflections was found to help pre-service teachers better understand themselves, and equally their students. Premier and Miller (2010) found in their study that pre-service teacher education courses failed to effectively prepare teachers in meeting the educational and emotional needs of students from war-torn countries they encounter in their diverse classrooms. If we refer back to chapter one, the data on refugees to Iceland, including the year 2010, indicates compulsory school teachers might also be exposed to refugee students with comparable education and emotional needs. Multicultural education training presents numerous opportunities for improving the effectiveness of teachers through appropriate training, which in turn benefits in mainstream and students of ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds, whose needs may differ. Educators in the first instance need to prioritise and develop a heightened sense of cross-cultural awareness to minimise issues of difference.

9. Conclusion

The key concepts of this study relate to the inherent values of multicultural literature. The components for exploring the merits of multicultural literature and the need for its inclusion in children's early reading books are not inclusive. Nor are the elements that examine teachers' awareness of multicultural literature inclusive. Secondly, the issues that concern multicultural education training can impact teaching practices in culturally diverse classrooms and schools' environment.

What the study does is to present selected components that, when examined, make significant contributions in affirming the merits of multicultural literature. Components such as traditional literary theories to contemporary critical multicultural analysis of children's literature provide the theoretical underpinning necessary to build a case for the merits of multicultural literature. Other components include specific intrinsic values in building self-esteem and to developing cultural conscious awareness in students.

Results of the qualitative inquiry based on field work have generated more questions than answers. The findings did provide insights into teachers multiple perspectives and low levels of awareness of the concept and use of multicultural literature in the classroom. A further study is proposed to test levels of awareness of multicultural literature in pre-service teachers, which I discuss below.

I noted two important findings of this research that support the key concepts. First and foremost is the need for teachers to develop higher levels of awareness of the use of multicultural literature, as they occupy a key role in shaping students' perspectives of other cultures. Second, is the need for students of ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds to be represented in children's books in Iceland. It should not be special for children with different cultural characteristics, or who belong to groups outside the homogenous group, to see images or accurate representation of themselves in books, but rather a normal and a regular occurrence. The results based on teachers' responses indicate an acute lack of multicultural reading books. Changing perceptions of multicultural literature takes time, and patience is required. Through training that exposes pre-service and in-service teachers to multicultural education, there is hope of raising awareness of the benefits of using multicultural literature in diverse classrooms. The findings of this study affirm the

merits of multicultural literature from multiple perspectives but future studies are necessary.

A future study I propose would create a hypothesis that argued pre-service teachers would express higher levels of awareness following exposure to the benefits of using multicultural literature. The study might consider using two groups of pre-service teachers over one semester. One group of pre-service teachers would learn the benefits of this literature much like the study discussed by Colby and Lyon (2004). The second group of pre-service teachers forms the comparison group and would not be instructed of the merits of multicultural literature in relation to early readers. Comparisons would then be made across the two groups, to support the hypothesis that pre-service teachers' exposure to multicultural literature increases levels of awareness of the use of multicultural literature in the classroom. Findings may be used to influence school practices, future teacher training and educational policies to promote and develop an awareness of the merits of multicultural literature.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Letter addressed to Schools' Principals

Kæri viðtakandi!

Ég undirrituð, Letetia B. Jónsson, meistaranemi í ensku við Háskóla Íslands, hyggst ljúka meistaraprófsritgerð minni sumarið 2010. Rannsóknarvinna vegna ritgerðarinnar mun hefjast snemma árs 2010. Magnús Fjalldal prófessor hefur þegar samþykkt rannsóknina. Aðrir umsjónarmenn eru Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, menntavísindasviði, og Rúnar Helgi Vignisson, hugvísindasviði. Vinnutitill rannsóknarinnar er *The Importance of Multicultural Literature in Icelandic Children's Narratives* eða *Vægi fjölmenningarbókmennta fyrir börn á Íslandi.*

Í rannsókninni hyggst ég kanna framboð og notkun á fjölmenningarlegum bókmenntum í grunnskólum hér á landi. Ísland er smám saman að verða að fjölmenningarlegu samfélagi og með þessari rannsókn vonast ég til að fanga þær breytingar sem gætu orðið í bókmenntaþróun hér á landi með tilliti til fjölmenningarbókmennta. Ungir nemendur á aldrinum 8-11 ára vekja sérstakan áhuga og rannsóknin mun beinast sérstaklega að þeim. Kennurum í skólum og við ýmis samfélagsverkefni um allt land verður boðið að segja skoðun sína á fjölmenningarbókmenntum sem ætlaðar eru börnum, samhenginu sem þær eru settar í, hvernig þær eru valdar og hvaða tilgangi valið þjónar. Aðferðafræði rannsókninnar verður eigindleg, hún byggir á viðtölum þar sem leitast verður við að svara fyrirfram gefnum spurningum. Fyllsta trúnaðar verður gætt og munu þátttakendur geta séð afrit af viðtölunum.

Okkur langar til að bjóða nokkrum skólum, sem valdir verða af handahófi, að taka þátt í þessari rannsókn á tímabilinu mars til maí 2010. Aðstoð ykkar og þátttaka verður mikils metin. Eftir útsendingu þessa kynningarbréfs mun ég hafa samband við skrifstofu ykkar til að koma á viðtali. Frekari spurningar um rannsóknina má senda til lbj2@hi.is eða með því að hringja í gsm. 616-6017.

Með bestu kveðju,

Letetia B. Jonsson

Appendix 2. Interview Guide Sample

- What does multicultural literature mean for compulsory school teachers
- What multicultural education training experiences do teachers bring to the classroom

Demographics of Participant:

Approximate Age	21 – 30 31 – 40 41 – 50 51 – 60 61 +
Teacher status – Art Teacher • Qualified Teacher • Classroom teacher • Other Teacher	 Yes/No Yes/No Yes/No
Number of years teaching	1- 5 6-10 11-15 15-20 25 +
Number of years teaching in <u>this school</u>	1 – 5 6 – 10 10 +
Experience of teaching immigrant groups / or individual students	
Experience of teaching abroad ? If Yes, in which countries have you taught ?	
What professional development have you participated in, within the context of Multicultural literature / or education? • In-house (school-base) • External (Country based) ➢ Short courses or programmes (for example, the masters programme in multicultural education at UI) • Abroad (Outside the country)	
How many teachers, within your school, are you aware of that may have attended training courses in Multiculturalism or Intercultural Training?	

How do you / would you like to develop your knowledge to address multiculturalism in your teaching practices ?	
What does the concept of Multicultural Literature mean to you?	

Multicultural Narratives

What Multicultural Literature have you personally used in your teaching programme? • Icelandic narratives – containing multicultural literature. E.g. Text, images, subject with any multicultural influence • Other languages than Icelandic	
Do you think there is sufficient choice of Multicultural Literature for early readers?	
Do you know what Multicultural Literature is available for the early readers in Icelandic Schools? Specifically to age 8 years to 11 years.	
Do you think teachers are generally well prepared to teach multicultural literature?	
Why would you promote or encourage Multicultural literature awareness in your school. • Example 1 • Example 2 • Example 3	
In developing multicultural literature awareness, what would the focus be: teaching practices or school reforms?	

Based on awareness of the National Curriculum Guide

How aware are you of the National Curriculum Guide?	
How would teachers in this school or you personally strengthen students' self-image?	.
How do teachers endeavour to counteract prejudice in the school or strengthen the ties between the homogeneous groups and Other groups?	

What school activities, monthly or annually are there that instil respect of other cultures?	

School policies on Multiculturalism

What are the policies (formal or informal) of the school to integrate students of different cultural backgrounds a. b. c.	

Statement of Confidentiality:

The content of this interview guide will be for the sole use of the assigned student's research. No participants' names or establishment will appear in the final document. We would like to thank you for your participation in this study.

Letetia B. Jónsson   .... Date ....

Participant   .... Date ....