How Does Exposure to Multicultural Literature Benefit Children's Thought Processes about Race?

Timothy Coon
St. John Fisher College

Follow this and additional works at: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters

Part of the Education Commons

How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?

Recommended Citation

Please note that the Recommended Citation provides general citation information and may not be appropriate for your discipline. To receive help in creating a citation based on your discipline, please visit http://libguides.sjfc.edu/citations.

This document is posted at https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/223 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.
How Does Exposure to Multicultural Literature Benefit Children's Thought Processes about Race?

Abstract
This action research paper asked the question, “How does exposure to multicultural literature benefit children’s thought processes about race?” The students’ exposure to multicultural literature showed mixed results based on their thought processes about race. Data was collected through teacher field notes, interviews, questionnaires, student work samples, and study questions. The findings section presents tables with the data that was collected. The data showed three recurring themes during the study: consistent prejudice toward African Americans, multicultural literature’s effect on children’s thoughts, and developing empathy while making personal connections to other cultures. The results from the tables indicated that it is crucial that students are exposed to multicultural literature at a young age in hopes to diminish prejudicial thoughts about race. Students need exposure and guidance from educated adults to support the children’s needs.

Document Type
Thesis

Degree Name
MS in Literacy Education

Department
Education

Subject Categories
Education

This thesis is available at Fisher Digital Publications: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/223
How Does Exposure to Multicultural Literature Benefit Children’s Thought Processes about Race?

By

Timothy Coon

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

M.S. Literacy Education

Supervised by

Dr. Joellen Maples

School of Arts and Sciences

St. John Fisher College

August 2012
Abstract

This action research paper asked the question, “How does exposure to multicultural literature benefit children’s thought processes about race?” The students’ exposure to multicultural literature showed mixed results based on their thought processes about race. Data was collected through teacher field notes, interviews, questionnaires, student work samples, and study questions. The findings section presents tables with the data that was collected. The data showed three recurring themes during the study: consistent prejudice toward African Americans, multicultural literature’s effect on children’s thoughts, and developing empathy while making personal connections to other cultures. The results from the tables indicated that it is crucial that students are exposed to multicultural literature at a young age in hopes to diminish prejudicial thoughts about race. Students need exposure and guidance from educated adults to support the children’s needs.
How Does Exposure to Multicultural Literature Benefit Children’s Thought Processes about Race?

When children are at a young age they start to form their own views of themselves and others. They begin to understand what their identity is, who to associate with, and who is different in their eyes. I chose this topic because I have seen prejudice in my classroom, as well as studying this topic in my diversity class at St. John Fisher College. Studies have shown that children tend to show bias behavior from ages three months to six years old (Aboud, 1988; Persson, 2003; Augoustinos & Rosewarne, 2001). In the past, studies have been conducted to show children who had prejudicial thoughts (Bigler and Liben, 2007; Augoustinos and Rosewarne, 2001). In the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in the Brown vs. Board of Education, the decision to segregate schools was based upon a study that showed black and white dolls (Clark, 1963). In this case, children were interviewed to see what doll they would like to play with and why. The results showed how dominant the white doll was compared to the black doll. Roughly 90% of the children selected the white doll compared to the black doll. Black children even picked the white doll and said the black doll was “ugly” and “dirty” which caused an emotional response by some of the students (Clark, 1963). Young children showed signs of prejudice and fear when they answered that the black dolls “look bad” (Dweck, 2009; Wilkinson, 1974). If that was happening in 1954 and we have supposedly made much growth with race and prejudice, why is being black still considered “bad” at a young age? Research has shown the children under the age of seven show higher levels of prejudice due to their lack of ability to understand differences at such a young age (Aboud, 1988; Bigler and Liben, 2007; Augoustinos and Rosewarne, 2001). How can we help children understand that being a different color is not a negative thing? Sometimes when children are not exposed to different cultures they tend to identify themselves with their own social group. Dweck (2009) states, “infants as young as three
months of age can show preference for faces that are the same race as theirs” (p. 372). Exposing children to a multicultural environment while incorporating multicultural literature will benefit children to see the world and how differences can be celebrated and not neglected. Multicultural literature has been shown to benefit children at a young age. It allows them the opportunity to construct their own meaning about a different culture and they start to understand their own identity role within society. Hefflin and Barkdale-Ladd (2001) state that… “Literature is a powerful medium. Through it, children construct messages about their culture and roles in society” (p.810). When people are exposed to multicultural literature, they start to see how diverse the world truly is. Multicultural literature can benefit children by opening up their mind which leads to mutual respect and tolerance for different cultures.

With the opportunity to engage in action research, it allowed me the chance to research how exposure to multicultural literature benefits children’s thought processes about race. Multicultural literature has the power to serve as a catalyst for social action, for helping students to appreciate their similarities and their differences, and for increasing students’ cultural awareness and sensitivity (Ford et al., 2000). With my work experience and experience in previous coursework, I know how important it is to expose children to diversity. If children are not exposed to diverse situations and multicultural literature, they can be sheltered to their monocultural environment without ever knowing what else exists in the world. Researching multicultural literature allowed me to see how children develop prejudicial thoughts and how exposure to literature can benefit their thought process.

The main question of this study is how does exposure to multicultural literature benefit children’s thought processes about race? To help me research this question, I conducted a series of assessments using teacher questionnaires, interviews, student work samples, and pre and post
picture assessments based on race. My findings showed children’s consistent prejudice toward African Americans, multicultural literature does have an effect on children’s thoughts, and children developed empathy while making personal connections to other cultures through the use of multicultural literature. My implications are exposing children to multicultural literature in the classroom, as well as at home, by educated adults to support specific strategies that will help assist the children. Some of these strategies are discussions, role playing, exposure to other cultures, and professional development training for educators.

**Theoretical Framework**

Before I discuss the importance of multicultural literature and the impact it may have on children’s prejudicial thoughts, I will give a definition of literacy to help individuals understand what literacy entails. Literacy essentially allows children to experiment with language in a social environment. Without these literacy skills and exposure to other social environments, children may develop prejudicial thoughts. Barton and Hamilton define literacy as something people do; it is an activity, located in the space between thought and text. It is essentially social, and it is located in the interaction between people (2005). Similarly, as Gee (2001) states, “literacy is control of secondary discourses where discourses are socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or “social network”” (p.18). Literacy is something we all need to acquire; we act like scientists when trying to acquire this knowledge. Kucer (2009) states that “knowledge is the product of active trial and the management of error” (p.269). Children experience language within a communicative context and use trial and error in order to develop new meaningful knowledge. Children are actively involved in trying to build and understand
language. They are constructing meaning, understanding how language operates, and learning language itself. Literacy is an essential tool and everyone should have the opportunity to acquire knowledge through new experiences. This tool is crucial at a young age because the brain is still developing; it soaks up new information like a sponge. Literacy is an instrument that children need to acquire in order to communicate with people from all different cultures.

The sociocultural theory strongly pertains to multicultural literature and prejudice. According to Larson and Marsh (2005), learning occurs through participation in social, cultural and historic contexts that are mediated by interaction. Thus, children learn by participating in sociocultural activity in both formal and informal contexts of culturally relevant situations. Literacy knowledge is constructed through tools teachers and students use in everyday life in and out of school such as traditional texts, and multimodal texts such as blogs, instant messaging, and computers. The sociocultural theory connects directly with how multicultural literature benefits children’s prejudicial thoughts. Culture and contact with others gives people the opportunity to develop prejudicial thoughts. Multicultural literature exposes people to new cultures and experiences which helps children’s prejudicial thoughts because they learn about differences and how to be tolerant. The difficult thing for children to understand is that different children have difficult discourses based on their culture and their environment. At a young age, children cannot comprehend why other children are different from them; whether it is from their language, gender, or race. During this time, children are starting to imitate others and are trying to make meaning of what they are saying and doing. Children pick up new thoughts, opinions, and language based on the people that surround their social community including their family members, friends, and in their school setting. Korat (2011) explains that children’s literacy knowledge, which is an important aspect of this development, is acquired within a socio-cultural
EXPOSURE TO MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

context that includes knowledge, attributions and behavior in the family and school settings. If children are then placed into a different environment, they are confused when they hear and see other literacies being used. Children need to be immersed in a well structured, diverse community with direct contact to other literacies so children can start to develop more positive attitudes and tolerance toward other cultures. Contact is a major factor that can increase a child’s ability to learn and understand diverse literacies. Dweck (2009) discussed how increased contact between groups can lead to more positive attitudes (p.374). When children are given the opportunity to communicate and come together with other races, they start to develop a bond that allows them to see that being different is not a bad thing.

The culture as a disability theory connects directly to multicultural literature and prejudice. McDermott (1995) defines culture as a disability by explain that… “every culture, as an historically evolved pattern of institutions, teaches people what to aspire to and hope for and marks off those who are to be noticed, handled, mistreated, and remediated as falling short” (p.336). The major dilemma is that people tend to perceive and judge others when they are different from the “normal” person. Sometimes specific cultures are ignored in the classroom because some schools only have one specific ethnic culture in their environment. When they do this, they are basically disabling their students from seeing the outside world and experiencing the different cultures that they will eventually be communicating with in the near future. Morgan (2009) states that…“Schools in predominately white districts often ignore the importance of multicultural education believing that it is only beneficial for minority students” (p.4). If educators hide young children from multicultural literature they have a good chance of creating a hazardous society in the future. Children that are not exposed to multicultural literature lack the experiences and discussions that can open up children’s eyes to new cultures. When students are
ignorant and don’t know any different and they automatically think “different” is bad. They don’t even realize how many things in common they may have. Barta and Grindler (1996) believe that… “If children learn of our similarities, this awareness may overshadow the fear of differences” (p.269). When children are given the opportunity to learn, read, or discuss about new cultures they start to develop a clear understanding of differences. Researchers believe that in the near future, people of color will be the dominant group in our nation. Morgan (2009) says that by 2020, almost 50% of students in United States classrooms will be minorities. Banks (1991) similarly states that … “by the year 2020, approximately 47% of students in the United States will be members of a minority group” (p.50). Times are changing and people need to be aware and ready to change their views; “different” does not mean disability. These thoughts are disabling children from opening up and forming new relationships with others.

Research Question

Children’s social environment and culture play a role in why children have prejudicial thoughts and multicultural literature can provide opportunities to diminish these thoughts. Given that multicultural literature is extremely important and beneficial to young children’s prejudicial thoughts about race, this action research project asks, how does exposure to multicultural literature benefit children’s thought processes about race?

Literature Review

The following literature review explores the research examining multicultural literature and the benefits it may have on children’s thought process on race. In the first section there will be an explanation of the history of prejudice and how young children develop and respond to
prejudicial thoughts. Secondly, an examination of how cognitive development increases or decreases prejudicial thoughts is examined. Next, there will be an examination of how multicultural literature affects children. Finally, there will be an examination of the reputation of people of color in literature. The research indicates that prejudice has been a recurring theme for several decades. Research has shown prejudicial thoughts are formed at a very young age. If multicultural education is not taught, children can mature with these negative, destructive thoughts (Colby & Lyon, 2004; Araujo & Strasser, 2003; Carter & Rice, 1997). Research indicates that children who are exposed to multicultural literature show growth in respect and tolerance.

**History of Prejudice**

It is important to explain how prejudice is formed and why young children develop prejudicial thoughts. Prejudice has been defined as a judgment or an opinion formed beforehand or without knowing the facts (Dweck, 2009). Similarly, Aboud (1988) defines racial prejudice as an unfavorable or negative reaction to people from a racial group because of their group affiliation. Racism and prejudice have been longstanding problems that have plagued the United States for countless generations (Cristol & Gimbert, 2008). Segregation and “separate but equal” are terms that make people think of prejudice and race. Segregation is defined as “the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group by enforced or voluntary residence in a restricted area, by barriers to social intercourse, by separate educational facilities, or by other discriminatory means” (Segregation, 2012). “Separate but equal” is a term that is defined as “a racial policy by which blacks may be segregated if granted equal opportunities and facilities, as for education, transportation, or jobs” (Separate but equal, 2012, p.1). This segregation creates
hostile feelings between children which does not always diminish with time. Children can feel the tension and they understand who is different. Dweck (2009) states that “the segregation of children on the basis of race creates feelings of inferiority that are unlikely to be overcome” (p.371). In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled on the issue of “separate but equal” in schools. Even though the ruling passed and people of color were considered “equal,” they still felt tension and felt like they were hated. Over the next few years, researchers began to look into how people of color really felt (Dweck, 2009; Clark, 1963). Clark (1963) began to look in depth at how race affected children’s feelings. Clark examined how and when children learn to identify with themselves, acquires racial attitudes, and what other environmental factors could play role in racial prejudice. He conducted a study using black dolls to show how black children felt about themselves due to their race. Clark presented young children with two dolls: one white and one black. He allowed the children to select a doll and then asked them questions about their choice. One girl was interviewed by Clark and this is what he found,

One little girl who had shown a clear preference for the white doll and who described brown doll as “ugly” and “dirty” broke into a torrent of tears when she was asked to identify herself with one of the dolls. When confronted with this personal conflict, some children looked at the investigator with terror and hostility. (p.45).

This little girl’s statement was the ugly truth that black children experienced in the past. Years later, children of color are still feeling the effects of prejudice and inferiority. In the sixties, a children’s book titled *Little Black Sambo*, which was loved by generations became the focus of a protest campaign. Suddenly, it was gone from libraries, book stores, and classrooms (Bader, 1996). The story depicts a little black boy begging for his life while several tigers chase him. Even though it was humorous to some, times were changing and it was seen as a symbol of
prejudice and racism. Racist text was a thriving business, but it was not until the end of segregation that it was deemed unfit. People were afraid that when children got older they would continue the prejudicial bias they were exposed to as children. It was believed that those types of books would arouse self-consciousness in older children (Bader, 1996). Until the 1930s, small black children appeared in picture books almost invariably as buffoons and were encompassed by violence (Bader, 1996; Turner, 1978). Today, texts are race conscious but still appear to be different, aggressive, and threatening to “different” cultures (Bader, 1996). If text was biased, children and adults were being exposed to that negative text day after day (Turner, 1978). *Little Black Sambo* was a text that affected people of color in a negative way, but other texts that taught diversity could help children understand and celebrate differences. Persson and Eizeman (2003) conducted a second study that involved children watching an anti-racist video and had repeated exposure to diverse television shows. In this study, children ages five and six watched a television show with racially diverse characters to see if children’s preference for white stimuli would change. The results showed that children still picked the white stimuli but started to develop an understanding of what it meant to be prejudiced. Even though this study was ineffective, children verbally explained that they now understood the meaning of prejudice and its negative effects (Persson & Eizeman, 2003). Repeated exposures did seem to help children develop a new understanding of diversity. *Little Black Sambo* was one of the first texts that caused people look at literature with a critical lens to see if it was politically correct. People started to realize that whites were the dominant group and blacks were being judged. In the past, whites had always typically been the dominant race and seemed to feel that they had the power to say what they wanted about people of color (Bader, 1996). Bader (1996) explained how “whiteness” is a term that was used to describe white privilege. Individuals that are white are
privileged without doing anything to earn it. They never have to worry about being judged or mistreated due to the color of their skin; these thoughts are something white people seem to take for granted. Howard (2006) explains that white privileges flow to whites without awareness or intent, and they continue even if they are not desired. Howard believes that when people see themselves through a different lens, they can see the perspectives of others. Then, there is a possibility for change. Researchers believe that prejudice is a particular entity that is held by whites. It is not always specifically aimed toward or against people of color, but that it typically the case. This bias continues to grow if people are not educated about how it affects others; people don’t understand or see perspectives other than their own. This bias can lead to prejudice and discrimination which is extremely prevalent in some societies. At times, individuals are nearly blind to the existence of prejudice (Rogers & Christian, 2007; Barta & Grindler, 1996). In today’s society, bias and prejudice is so prevalent that people tend to overlook this sensitive issue with race. Researchers continue to conduct studies to determine if children are blind to the issue of race; these studies give the researchers the statistics they need to promote racial awareness. Augustinos and Rosewarne (2001) conducted a study with children ages five to six and eight and nine to see exactly what positive and negative adjectives were used to describe different cultures in pictures. They found that children were significantly more likely to endorse positive words to pictures with white people in them. The most common words that were used were clean, nice, good-looking, and smart. The eight and nine year old children also had a significant increase in positive words toward the white people. The younger children showed more prejudice but the older children also showed high percentages as well. All children scored 96% or higher on the ability to differentiate between black and white stimuli which showed that even at a young age, they are able to establish racial awareness (Augustinos & Rosewarne, 2001).
Katz (2003), also conducted a study similar to Augoustinos and Rosewarne (2001) using two and three year old children who had to self-label pictures and dolls by race. Katz also found that white children were the more positive choice. Katz found that 86% of white children chose a white doll while only 32% of black children chose a black doll. Katz concluded that parents and environmental factors both contributed to children’s prejudice and thoughts. Children that grew up in a white, suburban community were more likely to pick a doll that most represents what they have been exposed to as a child. Wilkinson (1974) was another researcher who looked at prejudice but used toys in his study instead of pictures. Wilkinson discovered that parents who bought racist toys introduced prejudice into their child’s thinking. When children grow up with a “Jolly Nigger” bank and a “glazed nigger baby” for a doll, it’s easy to see where the children get their thoughts (Wilkinson, 1974). If parents claim not to be racist, then they should talk about race with their children and expose them to the harm prejudice can cause (Katz, 2003; Wilkinson, 1974). Teachers and parents who denounce racial prejudice to young children can help prevent the transfer of racially based attitudes into adulthood. Parents and teachers need to initiate the issue of race and discuss how prejudicial thoughts can harm and negatively impact a child’s life. Parents that are not involved with their children and do not discuss prejudicial differences are more likely to pass along those negative feelings to their family members. Parents need to reach out to their schools and learn about racial prejudice to keep a consistent balance of exposure in and out of the classroom (Katz, 2003; Carter & Rice, 1997; Wilkinson, 1974; D’Angelo and Dixey, 2001). It is imperative to begin exposing children early to curriculum and other programs designed to reduce racial prejudice. Most curricula are not focused on multicultural education due to the fact that schools feel pressured to score high on standardized tests and regent exams. This curriculum reality of multicultural awareness is an
issue that tends to be overlooked by the white, suburban schools because it is not something that is a major issue within their community. Researchers study the effects of prejudice to see what ethnic groups children are drawn to (Katz, 2003). Some children are drawn to their own ethnic group due to their self-identity. Persson and Eizeman (2003) are two researchers that did conduct a study to see the effects of prejudice on children while viewing black, white, and Asian pictures and dolls. Their results showed that white dolls were chosen the most, Asian dolls came in second, and black dolls were picked the least. A staggering statistic was that 45 out of 60 children chose a picture with a white person in it compared to a picture with a black person in it. Another important detail to note is that Asian dolls were chosen more often than the black doll. Young children have preexisting prejudicial thoughts, and if children do not learn to be more tolerant, they will continue to develop negative stereotypes that they will pass down to their children (Persson & Eizeman, 2003). Research has shown that young children make distinctions and evaluations based on skin color or racial cues (Aboud, 1988; Bigler & Liben, 1997; Aboud & Doyle, 1996). Children will evaluate others based on their skin color. They tend to identify with their own group when they are young and they assimilate cues from their friends and families (Lesane-Brown, 2005; Turner, Hewstone & Voci, 2007). As children grow up, they get more and more exposure to the outside world. Children experience positive and negative exposure in their lifetime from a variety of sources: the community, friends and family, the media, and even in the classroom. While experiencing this exposure, children collect data which can impact their thoughts in the future (Turner, Hewstone & Voci, 2007). Whether it’s from real life experiences or from multicultural literature, children need that exposure to truly understand and empathize with other cultures. Cultural awareness is something that should be taught in every classroom and every home to reinforce that being “different” is okay. Children learn the
consensual stereotypes of salient groups in their community quite early in life. A child’s environment and exposure to the community and school can contribute to how children think and view other “different” members of that community. The more exposure and contact a child has with outside cultures, the better the chances are of that child forming a well thought out, intelligent opinion of others (D’Angelo & Dixey, 2001; Augoustinos & Rosewarne, 2001).

College students are an excellent group to examine because they have a good amount of exposure to the outside world due to their time in a diverse, independent, school setting. One researcher, Lesane-Brown (2005) used college students in a study to see what type of socialization responses she could collect from black adolescent and college students. She knew that the college students would have much more exposure to the world than the adolescent students. The results showed that 56.3% of adolescents said that “Race doesn’t matter,” while 7.7% of college students said that “Race doesn’t matter” (p.163). Lesane-Brown discussed how the amount of exposure and experiences children have can impact how they look at race. People that come in contact with you can alter your thoughts and perceptions based on your experiences, good or bad. The college students had more exposure and experiences to diversity which gave them a clear understanding of the race socialization process. The more contact the college students had, the more opportunities they had to develop positive or negative attitudes without generalizing a specific ethnic group. Similarly, several other researchers agree that increased contact between groups could lead to more positive attitudes when certain conditions are present in different contact situations. Some of those conditions include support, common goals, cooperation and interdependence. The more contact that was had, the more open children became and the less prejudicial they became. Children who interact with individuals from another culture have been shown to have less prejudicial thoughts than others who stay with their
own ethnic groups. Cross-group friendships are a way to increase contact with other cultures which in return can reduce prejudice (Allport, 1954; Carter & Rice, 1997; Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2007). Aboud (2003) has similar views about contact to a certain degree. Aboud stated that “although contact by itself does not necessarily reduce bias, it provides opportunities for personal experience to influence out-group evaluations” (p.54). Aboud noted that there are several ways to reduce bias, but contact is just creating new opportunities for people to meet individuals of another race or culture. In contrast, Augoustinos and Rosewarne (2001) believed that “direct contact with ethnic groups has little to do with the formation of these knowledge structures” (p.145). Children are exposed to many elements of stereotyping, and contact does not affect the way children conduct their thought process about prejudice and bias. Researchers are continuing their studies to determine what exactly reduces prejudice.

**Cognitive Development and Prejudicial Thoughts**

Much research has been conducted concerning the relevance of cognitive development in relation to the onset of prejudicial thoughts. Research has shown that many believe cognitive development is a main reason why children have prejudicial thoughts at such a young age (Aboud, 1988; Bigler and Liben, 2007; Augoustinos and Rosewarne, 2001). The cognitive-developmental theory states that the prejudiced behavior children display in childhood, as well as the change that occurs during this period, can be explained by the cognitive capacities pertinent to each child’s developmental stages (Aboud, 1988; Bigler & Liben, 2007). Bigler and Liben (2007) suggest that evolution led to a flexible cognitive system that motivates and equips children to infer based on their environmental data. Even though environmental factors can influence a child, Bigler and Liben (2007) believe that evolution and cognitive development are
intermixed. They believe environmental factors play a small role in prejudice but cognitive development is an ongoing process that allows children, over time, to develop prejudicial thoughts.

At a young age, children are experiencing the world and are beginning to notice differences among people. When children reach the ages of three or four, they are trying to classify people and understand why they look different. The cognitive development theory states that children’s minds at this age are limited, distorted, and inconsistent. Children are trying to wrap their mind around everything, but they cannot express what they are thinking (Clark, 1963). Dweck (2009) conducted a study that showed children have an abundance of prejudicial thoughts beginning as early as three months and up to age six largely due to their cognitive development. He stated, “even before self-identification takes place, infants as young as three months of age can show a preference for faces that are the same race as theirs” (p.372). Explicit race bias can emerge in children as young as three or four years of age. Children as young as three or four have the ability to discriminate between black and white stimuli, assign racial beliefs, and identify which picture looks most like them. Children begin to demonstrate prejudicial attitudes at this age and start to form their own judgments (Aboud, 1988; Persson, 2003; Augoustinos and Rosewarne, 2001; Dweck, 2009). As cognitive skills develop, children are able to make judgments about other children and form a relationship with the ones that most resemble them. Bigler and Liben (2007) believe that standardized measures have revealed high levels of pro-white/anti-black bias in white children as young as three years. These high levels are shown in Aboud’s (2003) study when he used racial cue picture cards to assess children on bias with a score range of zero to 12. The results showed that over 65% of the four-year-olds scored in the biased range of nine and above, whereas 80% of the six-year-olds showed bias. The percentages
showed a major difference in how older children tend to be more biased. Aboud believes that these percentages show why cognition development plays a role in determining why children have prejudicial views. Aboud’s findings indicate that in-group favoritism was significantly related to out-group prejudice (Aboud, 2003). Children form in-group bonds at a young age which creates a sense of prejudice to any other group that is different than theirs. Dweck (2009) found that children act in accordance with social identity theory in that they are motivated to see their in-groups as positive and as distinct from out-groups. Younger children are more biased because of their thought process. They are still developing while the older children’s prejudice is declining because they are started to establish relationships with out-group children. The socio-cognitive theory suggested that children may develop the capacity to evaluate, question, and challenge dominant representations as they get older and their brains develop (Aboud, 2003; Dweck, 2009). Augoustinos and Rosewarne (2001) found a similar developmental trend in their study that showed a significant decline in prejudice with age. They believed that cognitive development could play a role in this decline. The decline could be attributed to the amount of exposure children were receiving from different cultures as they got older. With age (especially after age seven) children start to develop the capacity to understand diverse cultures and people (Aboud, 2003; Dweck, 2009; Augoustinos & Rosewarne, 2001). This development is a major stage for children because they are starting to feel vulnerable and open to the differences in the world.

When children start to mature and reach the ages of seven and eight, they begin to develop racial constancy. They begin to learn that skin color does not “go away” and people belong to ethnic groups other than their own. At this age, children are developing relationships with other groups and may feel shame or pride in their own culture. Children begin to empathize
with others and try to understand that even though their friends are different, they are still their friends (Augoustinos & Rosewarne, 2001; Aboud, 2003). At this point, children begin to notice that dolls, action figures, and toys may favor one culture that is not consistent with their culture (Aboud, 1988). These thoughts confuse children because they are desperately trying to form their own identity, yet they experience conflicting representations of race in their environment. Maturing with age can cause a child’s prejudice to increase or decrease due to their growth for feelings and cross-cultural friendships. Consistent with Aboud (1988), Augoustinos and Rosewarne (2001) found that a child’s prejudice declines at the age of seven due to the growth of cognitive flexibility and skill. Children’s cognitive development allows them to see differences in people which then gives them the ability to develop negative feelings. They explained how cognitive limitations of very young children predispose them to evaluate racial differences in a negative way. These prejudicial thoughts may be due to cognition because children seem to acquire these attitudes after three years of age, but they show moderation of their biases after age seven. They believe that after the age of seven, children have the mental capacity to begin to understand who is the same and who is different from them. They begin to form in-groups and out-groups that specifically place individuals where they belong based on the given criteria. In-group and out-group favoritism is a factor that is consistent throughout the study. Children do not like differences, and they tend to stick with their own group of people whether this is because of race or gender (Augoustinos & Rosewarne, 2001; Aboud, 2003). Bigler and Liben (2007) agree with other researchers stating that “when groups are labeled, treated, or sorted differently, children come to conceptualize groups as different in meaningful ways to show preferential bias toward their own in-group” (p.166). Once children start to develop the cognitive ability to label
groups, they start to show prejudice and tend to bond with their own group because it is more comfortable for them.

Other researchers have gathered information to present an opposing view; cognitive development does not impact children’s prejudice (Allport, 1954; McGlothlin, Killen, and Edmonds, 2005; Monteiro, Xavier de Franca, and Rodriques, 2009). Allport (1954) stated that “children acquire their racial attitudes from parents” (p.372). The opposing cognitive developmental theory states that although social agents may identify the targets of prejudice, the child’s immature cognitive processes are responsible for translating social information into bias attitudes. Research also shows that friendships among peers rather than cognitive development can reduce prejudice in children. Friendships require an emotional bond. Having a friend of a different race can raise a child’s awareness and sympathy for the experiences associated with prejudice (Aboud & Doyle, 1996; McGlothlin et al., 2005). McGlothlin et al. proved friendships can raise awareness by conducting a study that viewed identical scenes with differences only in the shading of the character’s skin. After the study, McGlothlin discovered a significant factor that continued to revolve around race. Even though the participants connected to characters with the same interests, the racial make-up of the character made a difference in what character they would pick to play with. They found that children who lived in an ethnically diverse community displayed few racial biases when involved in this study. The more exposure time children had with friends from a different culture, the less bias they had toward them. Monteiro et al. (2009), like Louie (2006) also believes cognition is not a main factor in developing racial prejudice because even beyond ages six and seven, children show prejudicial intergroup bias. They conducted survey questions on first graders (aged six-seven) and fourth graders (aged nine-ten). They wanted to examine what children thought about others and determine if they were
prejudicial while making their assumptions. The results displayed that more bias was displayed by the younger group. Both groups showed blatant racism and answered questions such as “because he/she deserved it more” or “because he/she looks like me” (p.33). Monteiro et al. (2009) found that age was not a significant factor and children of all ages still showed bias towards other. They did conclude, however, that older children have the ability to monitor what is said, while younger children do not have the cognitive capabilities to censor what they are thinking. The older children understand how to monitor and know what to say and what not to say. Bigler (1999) discusses how several interventions have failed to reduce racial attitudes and she believes that cognitive development is one of the many factors. At a young age, children’s memory is still developing and Bigler believes that children’s lack of memory may cause them to distort or entirely forget things that they learned about racial biases. Bigler believes there needs to be a balance between curricula and cognitive abilities in order to decrease prejudice. She is convinced that effective intervention programs need to be present across all of levels of schooling, and they must be designed around the students’ cognitive skill level. This research has shown that cognitive development may be a piece of the puzzle when it comes to prejudice in children, but it is not the sole factor. Young children are still developing, and that is why they need real life experiences, exposure to new and diverse texts, and opportunities to interact with children who are different from them.

**Multicultural Literature’s Impact on Prejudice**

Multicultural literature is defined as literature that is representative of the perspectives of people of color and as literature that reflects the lifestyles and viewpoints of marginalized cultural or social groups (Bishop, 1982). Multicultural literature aims to enhance students’
understanding and enjoyment of stories about diverse cultural groups (Louie, 2006; Singer and Smith, 2003; and Cifuentes & Murphy, 2000). Ford et al. (2000) states that multicultural literature has the power to serve as a catalyst for social action, for helping students to appreciate their similarities and their differences, and for increasing students’ cultural awareness and sensitivity. D’Angelo and Dixey (2001) explain that “exposure to multicultural literature provides both a mirror into one’s own world and a door into the culture and lives of others” (p.85). Several researchers have claimed that multicultural literature is a tool that educators need to use to expose children to the outside world (Colby & Lyon, 2004; Araujo & Strasser, 2003; Carter & Rice, 1997; Rogers & Christian, 2007). Multicultural literature can help children identify with their own culture, expose children to other cultures, and open dialogue on issues regarding diversity. Not only does multicultural literature teach children about diversity, it creates an opportunity to discuss differences and facilitate real dialogue (Colby & Lyon, 2004; D’Angelo & Dixey, 2001). Open discussions allow children the opportunity to experience other ideas and perspectives from several diverse cultures. When children engage in literature from a diversity of perspectives, they are provided with proximity to unfamiliar worlds and perspectives. When educators use multicultural literature in classrooms, it helps students experience themselves and others as citizens of a diverse world (Thein, Beach & Parks, 2007; Singer & Smith, 2003). Young children try to make meaning of the world, but they do not have enough experiences on which to base their thoughts. These thoughts help explain why multicultural literature is so crucial; it helps children find their identity, affirm new ideas, and learn about new cultures that they have never been exposed to. One of the most obvious, and arguably the most effective place to introduce multicultural literature is in the classroom. Using multicultural literature and promoting mutual respect and empathy is a great way to create an
open-minded, diverse classroom (Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006; Singer & Smith, 2003; Suh & Samuel, 2011). The richness of different cultures is exposed through these texts, and children start to appreciate and respect the differences both within and beyond their classroom. Children are with their friends who may look or sound different, and it gives them an opportunity to discuss and celebrate those differences instead of judging them. Louie (2006) stated that students who grew up in different, diverse cultural communities were affected positively in their readiness to understand multicultural texts because they were used to that in their community. Age was not a determining factor. All that mattered was that the child was surrounded by a diverse, open community. Araujo and Strasser (2003) state that we should “use multicultural children’s literature and the implementation of an antibias classroom environment to enable children to confront their prejudices and to celebrate diversity” (p.179). Books have the potential and the power to help children learn about themselves and others. They allow children to make connections and find similarities between themselves and others. When children see that different cultures are celebrated and not judged, they can change their thoughts and realize that it is okay to be different (Morgan, 2009). There are several benefits of using multicultural literature in the classroom. One way is using instructional programs and texts that can be implemented to include multicultural education. These programs and texts foster the appreciation and understanding of others (Carter & Rice, 1997; Araujo & Strasser, 2003; Morgan, 2009). Multicultural texts are a valuable resource because they teach tolerance in a society that is steadily becoming more diverse. Multicultural books help students build self-esteem and create a more harmonious society for the future, in addition to promoting social justice (Carter & Rice, 1997; Suh and Samuel, 2011). In a study by Wilkinson and Kido (1997), children were to read and respond to multicultural text. Wilkinson and Kido kept notes while the
children responded to a variety of diverse texts. They observed facial expressions and took notes on how their body language was while they communicated during the study. By the end of the study, children began to see how racism and prejudice impacted the lives of African Americans in the South. Through text, students experienced how to experience, confront, and overcome racism. Children learn about events through text, but until they put themselves in other people’s shoes and truly experience it, they will never understand how it feels (Wilkinson & Kido, 1996). Wilkinson and Kido (1996) discuss how students are emotionally engaged while experiencing a novel that connects to their own life. Children are able to identify with the characters and develop a respectful relationship that is based upon respect, tolerance, and understanding. Students begin to identify themselves with other characters in text; they make connections. Students discover themselves experiencing empathy for a character (Singer & Smith, 2003; Wilkinson & Kido, 1996). This discovery has the potential to expand their sense of identity by understanding the perspectives of others. Louie (2006) conducted a similar study to Wilkinson and Kido (1996) that had students empathize with characters in a story. Louie used a Venn diagram in the classroom to examine and compare the student’s perspectives and the characters’ perspectives. Using the Venn diagram helped the students understand different views and opinions within the classroom. They developed cultural awareness and began to visualize perspectives other than their own. When children feel emotion from a character and truly understand how that person is feeling, they start to form a bond and empathize with what obstacles and events the character had to struggle through in order to survive. Another study by Cifuentes and Murphy (2000) showed how collaborative learning with different schools and cultures could benefit children by exposing them to new experiences and different perspectives. They used virtual field trips and videoconferences to do read alouds with other classes around
the world. Cifuentes and Murphy (2000) explained that “through cultural connections, distance technologies and multimedia software are used to expand learning communities” (p.72). Their study showed children’s growth and empowerment which led to the development of new relationships. The students increased their multicultural understanding and this was indicated by their comments regarding themselves. Some of the comments were as follows: “I am learning that all people have different kinds of taste and different goals”, “I am learning that they have trust to show us their personal things”, and “I am learning more ideas, new ideas, and old ideas” (Cifuentes & Murphy, 2000, p.78). These comments showed that students’ multicultural understanding increased, and students developed a more positive self-concept. One study by Bigler (1999) disagreed that multicultural literature helped children decrease their prejudicial thoughts. Bigler used multicultural literature to teach about diverse hero figures in the United States. Nine of the fifteen students still had bias after using the text. Bigler thought perhaps cognitively they were not ready to understand prejudice yet, or maybe they grew up in an area that had conflicts with ethnic groups which gave them a preconceived prejudice against that group. Teachers and adults need to use the text that is ready and available for them. Parents, as a child’s first teacher, need to have appropriate multicultural text available for their child to read. Exposing children to multicultural literature is an experience in itself, and parents and teachers can take advantage of these texts to prepare children for life in a multicultural society. It’s not the children’s fault if adults do not expose the literature to the younger generation. Stallworth et al. (2006) conducted a study to see why educators were or were not using multicultural literature in their classroom. In this study, 87% of educators were white and the majority of them were female. The results showed that the classic books were still being used, the issue of censorship in the classroom produced fear among teachers, and the obstacles of facing administration and
parents that did not like the book selections that were daunting. One teacher who did use multicultural literature was quoted saying, “I teach multicultural literature because I want my students to be exposed to all kinds of perspectives” (Stallworth et al., 2006, p. 484). Introducing new literature in a class can be challenging and change takes time. Wilkinson and Kido (1997) state that

in a multicultural society, teachers must be able to help students achieve cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. Teachers must be willing to seek and use materials which present linguistic and artistic achievements from a variety of ethnic and cultural perspectives. In such diverse cultural contexts, students explore their own perceptions and values. (Wilkinson & Kido, 1997, p.255).

Teachers need to revisit the curricula and become more comfortable with the diverse literature that is available so their students can use it. Multicultural literature is for all students; it is a literature of liberation from the tyranny of the attitudes and expectations that the world thrusts upon us (Thein et al. 2007; Ford et al. 2000). When teachers make an effort to explore diverse cultures, they begin to lead by example and spark children’s interests.

Offering children varied experiences and discussing stereotypes and prejudice in the home and community can positively affect children’s feelings (Araujo & Strasser, 2003). Suh and Samuel (2011) claim that students have to be exposed to other cultures and the world around them; a monocultural education can stunt their potential growth. Children need to be open to other cultures, and multicultural education can promote this tolerance. Teachers are not the only adults that can get involved. Parents can play a major role. Parents and teachers can and should support one another through a collaborative relationship. This relationship will influence change, decrease prejudice, and support multicultural education for years to come. Educators
should invite families into the classroom and ask them to share their traditions, family histories, and day to day lives so it can become a rich component of classroom life. Parents need to be selective when choosing multicultural texts. They need to plan their discussions and explain what is happening; multicultural literature can have very sensitive topics to teach (D’Angelo & Dixey, 2001; Araujo & Strasser, 2003). Some of these negative themes are still found in books today and stereotypical children’s books are still being published (Morgan, 2009; Lowery & Sabis-Burns, 2007). Parents need to be cognizant that not all multicultural texts are “created equal”. Parents need to examine texts carefully and make sure they are age appropriate. Morgan (2009) states that “multicultural authentic children’s book are about difficult subjects that might be best explained through the guidance of an adult” (p.4). Children can develop misconceptions about what they are reading and have questions that need answers. Adults play an important role in making children feel comfortable reading or listening to multicultural literature. Louie (2006) similarly states that “simply exposing children to multicultural literature may lead to indifference, lack of understanding, and even resistance” (p.438). People need to educate themselves about multicultural literature before they try to teach anyone else. Once they are educated on the issue, they have a variety of good multicultural texts that they can use to teach their children different perspectives and meanings. Rogers and Christian (2007) agree by saying that text does not contain just meaning, it opens up opportunities and experiences to other possible meanings. Multicultural literature provides students with vicarious experiences of others’ sociocultural attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. When children experience new text for the first time they have a clean slate; they are open to new thoughts and opinions (Macphee, 1997).
Some students are unaware of their cultural environment and come into class not knowing important, historical, diverse people. Even the typical inner city children come into class with a void in diversity (Wilkinson & Kido, 1997). This statement is alarming and demonstrates how little multicultural literature is being used. Most white students do not learn a lot about diversity because they are the majority and are not exposed to other cultures (Colby and Lyon, 2004). In a study conducted by Colby and Lyon (2004), 100 students gave responses to what they thought about multicultural literature. Some of the responses consisted of the following: “I do not recall reading much literature geared toward African Americans… as a white child I never really thought about it,” - “African Americans need role models,” - “It never dawned on me to think about what my African American friends were reading,” - and finally, “Sometimes it would feel like I was out of place” (p.25). Without the exposure to multicultural literature students may feel like outsiders and never start to develop empathy for someone outside of their own culture.

The multicultural experience can go beyond just literature to include other forms of media expression. Ramasubramanian (2007) states that “research of depictions of African Americans in the media reveals that portrayals of this group as criminal, aggressive, and unintelligent help reinforce and maintain hostile anti-black prejudice” (p.249). Ramasubramanian (2007) discusses how media can impact a child’s views on the world, positive or negative. He states “exposure to counter-stereotypical media exemplars of admirable members of stigmatized groups, participants express increased sympathy toward the stigmatized group” (p.253). The more children experience, the more opportunities they have to sympathize with group members that are being stigmatized. Some children do not have the opportunities to experience meeting or exploring diverse cultures but multicultural literature can bridge that gap.
Ramasubramanian conducted a study having participants watch a video that showed diverse characters. This study had two groups; a control group and an experimental group. The control group watched the video and focused on the message and style of the video. In the experimental group, participants were introduced to viewing the video using critical media literacy skills. They discussed how harmful effects in media can generalize specific groups of people. After the groups were prepared, they watched a short video and then were asked questions after the video. What Ramasubramanian found is that racial stereotypes decrease when people receive instruction on critical media literacy skills. When people gain new exposure to diverse cultures, they have the ability to create new, positive thoughts and perspectives. When people are prompted to examine media they begin to see what is positive and should be embraced and celebrated, and they also begin to see what is biased and judgmental. Educators need to offer children opportunities to celebrate who they are while learning about other people’s unique cultures. Text and media allows people to see that others are different in the way they appear, but these differences are not always bad; they can be celebrated. Television programs are another type of media that can influence the attitudes of young children in areas such as behavior and beliefs about gender roles (Persson & Eizenman, 2003; Wilkinson, 1974; Morgan, 2009; Sabis-Burns, 2007). Minority groups shown on television have been, on occasion, given a bad reputation. This exposure to television means that even preschool children that have watched television have been exposed to some type of stereotyped prejudice. Years ago, casts for children’s television were primarily white, but recent shows are typically mixed and diverse. The country’s demographics are changing, and television producers realize this so they make an effort to be more encompassing of diverse cultures. “Barney” is one show that incorporates this thinking; the cast is composed of young children of all races and ethnicities, and their cultures
are celebrated on the show (Persson & Eizenman, 2003). Drama and performance activities are another great way to extend a diversity literature lesson. Just like in the television show “Barney”, performances and songs are used to create harmonious, diverse lessons. These activities allow students the opportunities to see the world through someone else’s eyes.

**Representation of People of Color in Literature**

Over the years, the representation of African Americans in literature (especially picture books) has been relatively non-existent. Pescosolido, Grauerholz, and Milkie (1997) conducted a study to determine the extent to which black people appeared in text from the late 1930’s to the early 90’s. Pescosolido et al. found that only 15% of books depicted one or more black characters in the story. Children begin to notice when their ethnic group is absent from the books they read day after day. This lack of exposure to black characters can contribute to feelings of inferiority. Back in the 1950’s, African Americans were regarded negatively and these views were reflected in literature. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was then established which fought for respect and pushed for racial text to be banned from book selves around the country (Bader, 1996). When a specific race is under-represented in a text, readers may come away with a skewed view of that race. Children learn, at least in part, to make generalizations and form opinions based on how they see the world. One generalization that is formed around African Americans addresses the issue of slavery. People tend to connect all African Americans in the past with slavery, suggesting that all blacks experienced slavery to some degree (Smith-D’Arezzo & Musgrove, 2011). Smith-D’Arezzo & Musgrove (2011) conducted a study that reviewed 23 multicultural, African American books. They found that a staggering 36% of the books all focused on the topic of slavery. They were
fearful that slavery would be generalized if children only read those types of books when discussing African Americans. Hollingworth (2009) conducted a study and used multicultural literature to show children how other groups of people are generalized. Hollingworth realized that teachers were staying away from prejudicial texts on purpose, but she wanted to use those prejudicial texts to show her own class the true stereotypes that are present in literature. Hollingworth explained to her class that everyone is the same color underneath (2009). She read, discussed, and examined books to see what hidden messages or views were in the books. Researchers also found that there were hidden messages in books that represented cultures in a negative way. It wasn’t until the late 1960’s that black characters began to reappear in children’s books, due mainly because of the Civil Rights Movement and the fact that some black literature began to receive recognition through the Caldecott Awards (Smith-D’Arezzo & Musgrove, 2011). Teachers adopted these award winning books in their classrooms because they portrayed authentic and culturally sensitive perspectives. Bishop (1982) states that “the more effort teachers have made to learn about other people and their cultures and their literatures… the more likely they are to make reasonable assessments of individual books” (p.16). When teachers are aware of what is culturally acceptable, they can make an informed decision on what books are good to use. If teachers pick the right books to use with their class, they have a very good opportunity of exposing their students to the idea that differences should be celebrated. Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, and Johnson (2007) found that “picture books in which issues of race and power are highlighted, can teach adults how children are considering and experiencing issues of race and diversity” (p.235). Picture books help a child examine and understand differences. Children start to see other perspectives and their views can change. Copenhaver-Johnson et al. conducted research on texts with Santa as the main character and studied how
children viewed the Santa character. The teacher then read several books where Santa was portrayed as an African American. The children were not accepting of this. They kept stating that “Santa isn’t black! That must be Santa’s helper” (Copenhaver-Johnson et al. p.237). The class then participated in a discussion about how Santa could be black or white; it all depends on each person’s interpretation of Santa. Some children changed their opinions about Santa, but later that day, the majority of the children still drew pictures of Santa as a white male.

Throughout this study, they found that open discussion, reading meaningful text, and having nonjudgmental assumptions can empower children to change perspectives. Sands-O’Connor (2001) believes that multiracial picture books have the potential to achieve great gains for all children.

**Conclusion**

The use of multicultural literature is one approach in addressing the formation of prejudicial views of young children. Research has shown that even young children can be judgmental and stereotypical. Children under the age of seven displayed more prejudicial thoughts than children over the age of seven. Cognitive development did play a role in how those thoughts were developed. Other factors such as environment, exposure, and family also had an impact on how prejudiced a child might become.

It is crucial for people to understand how important multicultural literature truly is. This literature invites students to become empathetic. They can appreciate how views and opinions different from their own can open their mind to a new world that they have never experienced. Macphee (1997) stated that the hope for multicultural literature is that it will be used as a catalyst to continue to encourage student dialogue about important social issues and making others’ voices loud and vital to others (1997). Young children do not typically initiate discussions about
race and prejudice. Parents and teachers need to feel comfortable bringing these issues to the children’s attention. Educators and parents know how beneficial multicultural literature can be for their children, but the adoption of this literature is still not commonplace. Children need realistic exposure to the world. Through this exposure, children can learn to be tolerant and appreciative of other cultures. Without this interaction, a child’s view of the world could be distorted. Early intervention on the part of both parents and educators is paramount to ensuring that children develop into contributing members of a global society.

Method

Context

The school that I conducted my research at is the New York School (NY) which is located in upstate New York. The school is located in an open field which is surrounding by the elementary, middle, and high school. The school is in a rural area that has several trailer park homes in the nearby area. There is a library, fire station, and small village with stores on the main road down the street from the school. This school is a K-2 building that has a staff of 40 educators. 94% of the staff at NY is female. The average class size is 17 students and there are roughly seven classes per grade level. The school has two gymnasiums, one cafeteria, and a computer lab with roughly 30 computers. NY is a small, friendly, tight knit school with kind, respectful adults working there. NY has a mission statement that reads as follows: Based on the belief that all students can learn, the staff of NY accepts the responsibility to teach all students, regardless of differences, the fundamental skills. We further accept the responsibility to challenge all students to attain higher levels of achievement. NY will provide the opportunity, environment, and encouragement to meet this goal while developing the whole child physically,
emotionally, and culturally. NY takes pride in offering equal opportunities for all and accepts responsibility to challenge each individual student.

NY has an estimated 345 students that attend the school. There is a 51% to 49% ratio of female to male students. The ethnic make-up of the school is predominately White. 98% of the students are White, 1% Black, 0.5% Asian, and 0.5% are Hispanic. There are several students that receive free or reduced lunch due to their families’ poverty level. 18% of students are eligible for free lunch and 9% of students are eligible for reduced lunch. NY also has a Special Education population of 10% with three Special Education teachers on staff.

The classroom involved in the study consists of 17 general education students, eight female and nine male. 14 of the students are white, two females are half black and half white, and one male is Indian. The students range in age from six years old to seven years old. The class is very high academically but two of the students are very low in reading and writing. The class is culturally aware of the different colors and cultures that are in the classroom. They seem to be very accepting and nonjudgmental of them.

**Participants**

**Students**

There were 17 students in the first grade classroom, only four participated in this study due to time and size of the study. These four students are all in the same reading group in class and are all average to above academically. All four of the students in the study are very energetic and occasionally have behavioral problems in the classroom. I have given the students in my study a pseudonym to protect their identity.
Al is a seven year old bi-racial (African American & Caucasian) female. Al is fun, sassy, young girl who likes to speak her mind. Al was adopted when she was a baby; her biological parent’s information is unknown. Al was adopted by two females who are now separated. Al’s first mom is a 36 year old Caucasian mental health counselor. Al’s second mom is a 50 year old Caucasian who is a practicing lawyer. Al has a lot of emotional needs that stem from her past. During the study Al seemed very biased toward African Americans and seemed unsure how she should answer the questions. She was nervous at first but then began to open up.

Dom is a six year old Caucasian male. Dom a sweet, caring, sensitive, young boy who loves to ride his bike. Dom’s mom is a 41 year old Caucasian who works at an assisted living facility. Dom’s father is a 39 year old Caucasian who is a machinist/foreman. Dom is a sweet boy and during the open study he was very open. He seemed to believe that any of a different color would be sad because they would be left out and treated differently. He was kind to keep saying that he would play with them to make them feel better.

Cael is a seven year old Caucasian male. Cael is a kind, energetic young boy who loves to draw to play with his friends. Cael’s mom is a 43 year old Caucasian elementary teacher. Cael’s father is a 45 year old Caucasian High School teacher. His two parents are very supportive of Cael’s academics due to their education backgrounds. During the study, Cael continued to pick the Caucasian male for his answers. He seemed to be comfortable with that answer and did not want to venture off with his decisions.

Will is a seven year old Caucasian male. Will is a very active, energetic young boy. He loves Star Wars and loves to build things with his hands. Will’s mom is a 31 year old Caucasian homemaker who takes cares of Will’s two younger sisters. Will’s 34 year old Caucasian father is a career and training team leader. During the study, Will seemed uneasy and trying to make
decisions based on what I wanted to hear. Throughout the study, he became more comfortable and started giving me reasons on why he was picking specific pictures.

Throughout the study with the children, I looked to see how the children judged people. I looked to see if race was brought up and what reasons they had for picking on child over another. The post assessment was a good way to see any growth with their opinions and why they had changed their minds.

**Adults**

There are seven adults in my study. These seven adults were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. These adults were used to obtain interviews and questionnaires based on their past with children and prejudicial thoughts/experiences. I used these veteran teachers because they are more likely to have more experiences with race due to their years working in a classroom.

Dawny is a 43 year old Caucasian woman that has been teaching for 13 years. She has taught in the City and is currently teaching a multiage class (grades one/two) at the NY school. Dawny is a strict but fair teacher that loves to run and read.

Cin is a 51 year old Caucasian woman that has been teaching for 14 years. She has been the first grade team leader for the past three years. Cin loves to travel and read when she is not teaching first grade.

Ash is a 26 year old Caucasian woman that has been teaching for four years. She has taught all four years at the NY School in upstate New York. She is a first grade teacher and the women’s High School Volleyball coach.
Carrie is a 33 year old Caucasian woman that has been teaching for five years. She is a first grade teacher who loves to spend time with her three children. Carrie has also taught second and third grade.

Sara is a 32 year old Caucasian woman who has been teaching ten years at the NY School in upstate New York. She has taught first and second grade and loves to hike with her family. She has two children under the age of four.

Joany is a 48 year old Caucasian woman who has been working as a school counselor for the past 23 years. She has spent the last 22 years at the High School level and has recently transferred over to the NY School. Joany enjoys working with children of all ages and loves to swim while she is not working.

Jenny is a 51 year old Caucasian woman who has been working as a school psychologist for the past 25 years. Jenny works at the NY School and pushes into classrooms that emotional support. Jenny loves animals and travels over the summers.

Researcher Stance

I am an active participant in this study. Mills (2011) defines an active participant as “a genuine participant in the activity being studied” (p.74). I am an active participant because I am also looking at myself when I am looking into prejudicial thoughts. I am 25 years old Caucasian male. I have been a substitute/long term sub teacher for the past three years. I graduated from St. John Fisher College with my Bachelor’s Degree in Childhood/Special Education with a minor in History and will have my Master’s Degree in Literacy in August 2012.

Being a Caucasian, male, teacher at a primary level is not what you would consider the “norm.” Children act differently toward me because they are used to the female teachers.
Sometimes being a male is good, sometimes it’s not. Some children respond positively to me because there is not a male figure at home. They learn to interact with a safe, comforting, male. Sometimes it is just the opposite. Some children respond in a negative way due to a bad prior experience with a male figure. I believe that I am a safe, positive role model to these children and I do my best to teach them knowing that they are all unique, diverse individuals.

As I look at my own prejudice I notice certain things occurring in my classroom that never crossed my mind before. I realize that I think African American students can be a lot louder than other students. I also tend to think that children coming from a different culture have fewer experiences than the Caucasian students. I sometimes try to target these students to make up for what I think is a cultural difference. As an educator, I have learned to leave my prejudicial thoughts at the door and treat every student as an equal. I believe I done this and I have created a safe, comfortable, diverse classroom that is open to differences.

**Method**

The pre-assessment for this study was done on Tuesday morning. This pre-assessment was conducted in my classroom at the guided reading table. I called my focus group (Al, Cael, Will and Dom) over to the guiding reading table. There were six pictures on the table that were labeled as: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, and #6 (Appendix E). Number one was a picture of an African American girl, number two was a picture of an African American boy, number three was a picture of a Caucasian boy, number four was a picture of a Caucasian girl, number five was a picture of an Asian girl, and number six was a picture of an Asian boy. I had all four children at the table at once and I told the children that I am going to ask some questions about the children in these pictures. I went over each picture and explained what ethnicity each child was (white,
black, or Asian). I asked one question at a time and then went down the row asking each child the same question. There were five questions and they were as follows: Which child looks like you? Why? Which child would you pick to play with? Why? Who do you think would get in trouble the most? Who do you think has more money? And finally, who do you think could be a bully? During the questioning I would ask follow-up questions if the children made statements that needed to be explained. For example, when a child said “they look cool”, I would respond “what does cool mean?” If was very difficult for the children to answer these follow-up questions considering they are six and seven years old. Also during questioning, I would sometimes confront a child and ask them why they picked a certain number and not another number. Confronting the child during questioning put them on the spot and that is when I got my best responses because they did not have time to think they just said what came to their mind.

For the next three days, my focus group came to the guided reading table like they do every day but each day I read a different multicultural book to expose the children to new experiences and different cultures. After the pre-assessment was complete, I read three multicultural books to my focus group of four. On Wednesday, I read the book called *Lion Dancer* by Kate Waters and Medeline Slovenz-Low and illustrated by Martha Cooper. The story is about a six-year-old named Ernie that is performing his first Lion Dance. This book looks at a Chinese household as the family shares a proud moment with Ernie. It looks at the Chinese culture and shows sympathy toward the Chinese families. After reading, I had each student answer a prompt. The question was: Would you like to play with someone that is Chinese or Asian? Why?

On Thursday, I read the book *Masai and I* by Virginia Kroll and illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. The story is about a young girl who learns about proud African people called the Masai. She discovers a new relationship and imagines herself living in Africa. She compares
her life to how it would be in Africa. This story celebrates the similarities and differences of two unique cultures. After reading, I had an informal discussion with the group about they learned and liked about the story.

On Friday, I read the book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles and illustrated by George Ford. The story is about a six-year-old named Ruby Bridges who recently moved from Mississippi to New Orleans in search of a better life. When a judge orders Ruby to attend first grade at a new all-white school, Ruby must face angry mobs of parents who refuse to send their children to school with her. The book is a powerful narrative that shows Ruby’s courage, faith, and hope. After reading, the group discussed the similarities and differences of the black and white children. We also discussed how each ethnic group probably felt. After the discussion the group wrote a response to the question “How do you feel after reading this book?”

Throughout the entire study, I kept field notes that I took during the assessments. I kept track of who said what and how the children’s facial expressions looked when I asked a question. I could see who looked scared or nervous to answer and I could tell who was trying to pick an answer that they knew I would like.

On Monday, I conducted my post assessment on my focus group. I again assessed child to answer the questions in the pre-assessment. I wanted to see if the children’s views or picks had changed. After Monday’s post assessment I informed the children that the study was over and I thanked them for helping me.

**Quality and Credibility of Research**

Mills (2011) defines credibility as “the researcher’s ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily
explained” (p.104). In order to make this study have credibility I will take into account that students may be saying what I want them to say in the study. So I will look at the students’ prolonged participation from the school year. I will use field notes to document any prejudicial or racial attitudes toward others to help guide me in this study. I also understand that the pictures I use in this study are all different and their clothes and hair styles may influence my participant’s views and opinions toward them.

Transferability is another issue that needs to be looked at in this study. Mills (2011) defines transferability as “the researchers’ beliefs that everything they study is context bound and that the goal of their work is not to develop “truth” statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people” (p.104). I understand that the results in this study are not statements that can be generalized to all. The data I collect only represents my participants and not others. This data will not transfer onto a specific ethnic group due to the fact that it only pertains to my four participants.

Mills (2011) refers to dependability as the stability of the data that is collected. In order to make this study dependable I will use my interviews as not only interviews but also as observable notes as to how children’s reactions and facial expressions look during questioning. I will ask every child the same question but I will switch the order of who answers first to make sure the children and not copying the response they heard previously.

Finally, I will need to look at the confirmability of this study. Mills (2011) states that confirmability is “the data, or the neutrality or objectivity of that data that has been collected” (p.105). The data collected in this study will be looked at to make sure the researcher (me) is in no way revealing underlying assumptions or bias to the child participants. I will keep a journal that reflects my bias each day so I do carry those thoughts into my study. I will use a straight
face while asking questions and will not modify my tone of voice while speaking. I will be neutral in this study to ensure that my participants are being objective and answering what they believe is the truth.

**Informed Consent and Protecting the Rights of the Participants**

This study required consent and assent from the participants in the study (Appendix A). I asked adults at the NY School to help me with my study by filling out a questionnaire sheet or conducting a short, videotaped interview. After they agreed, they filled out the required consent form and a questionnaire. After I received completed forms from all my adult participants, I began to look at my classroom to see which students I would like to use in my study. I picked a group of four students that are all in my average reading group. There were three males that are very talkative, and one female that is bi-racial who does not have a father figure but has two mothers. I thought this group of students would be a good group to research. I sent the parent consent form home with the four children and the following day all the consent papers came back signed. Then, I attached a letter with the consent form explaining that all names and information would be protected. I informed the parents that names would be changed and all data would be kept confidential. I also had assent with the children in my study. I spoke with the four children separately explaining my study and I asked them to agree to be in my study. All four agreed.

**Data Collection**

For this study, I used four different types of data. The data I used for this study was field notes, interviews, questioned teachers using a questionnaire, and used video recordings. I used
several different ways to collect my data to get a wide perspective on the thoughts, opinions, and interactions of others.

The field notes that were collected were notes throughout the 2011-2012 school year. I recorded notes every time I saw or heard prejudice. I took several notes in February when it was Black History Month. I had a situation arise during my Frederick Douglass lesson when we were discussing slaves. The children then started to use the word slave and said they liked to tell others what to do. I also had a situation when Al spoke up about how she liked that she was tan and not black. I also wrote more notes while conducting this study. I recorded facial reactions and how the children responded to my questioning. The children seemed nervous to discuss people of color knowing that one of their friends in class was African American.

Two face to face interviews were also conducted in this study. I interviewed a school counselor and psychologist to see what their experiences were with the issue of prejudice and multicultural literature. In the interview, we discussed how long they had been working with children and what age groups have they dealt with. We discussed if they had ever run into any situations regarding race or prejudice and how did they deal with them as a professional in a primary school building. These two interviews were conducted in my classroom in the morning before school had begun. The interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Seven questionnaires (Appendix C) were also filled out after I received consent forms from the teachers at the NY School. The whole first grade team and the school counselor and psychologist filled out a questionnaire. They filled out every question to the best of their ability. The questionnaires consisted of questions that asked if they had seen instances of prejudice in their classroom and if so what ethnicity was involved. Another question asked if they believed cognitive development was a sole factor in why children develop prejudicial thoughts. The last
question asked them what factors they believed could influence a child’s thoughts. All questionnaires were anonymous and the teachers were only to list the grade they teach.

I also collected student work samples (Appendix D) that pertained to the pre and post assessments. These consisted of notes and writing samples based on the multicultural text that was read for the day’s lesson. On the first and third day I had the children write a prompt pertaining to the book we just read. The prompts involved how did they feel about the book and asking them if they would play with that child? During the second day we had an informal discussion about the book and how the African American children have different experiences that do not seem to be “normal” to us, yet they still seem happy and content in their own environment; just like us.

Lastly, I conducted two video recordings. First, I recorded the focus group of students that were in my study. I used my cell phone to video record our conversation so I transcribe it after. The children seemed excited to see that I was recording their thoughts; they seemed to feel important. Then, I recorded Joany and Jenny during their interviews. I again used my cell phone to record these interviews. Jenny seemed a little hesitant when I started to record because she wasn’t sure who was going to see the video. I explained that these recordings are just to help me transcribe the conversations that took place and nothing more.

**Data Analysis**

As I collected my findings, several steps were taken to analyze the data throughout my research. First, to analyze my questionnaires I carefully read each of them. I then created a table and wrote down each participant’s answers so I could visually see who picked what answer. After that, I formed another table and listed the percentages of all the participants’ responses.
When I analyzed the questionnaires, I began to look for similarities and differences throughout the answers. To code this information I highlighted all the “yes” responses in yellow and all the “no” responses in pink. By highlighting, I was able to analyze each educator’s answer and group them together in a table that I then created. The table allowed me to see the similarities and differences of each answer and I was then able to understand who had similar views and opinions.

The next pieces of data that I analyzed were my two interviews. To analyze the interviews, I first transcribed each conversation that I had recorded previously. I analyzed the interviews by looking for consistent answers. When I found consistent answers between the two interviews, I would highlight the findings using a specific color to help keep my findings organized. After highlighting the consistent findings between the two interviews, I tried to determine what each participant’s opinion was and then connected it back to what I have been learning about multicultural literature.

The other main pieces of data that I analyzed were my pre and post picture assessments. First, I began to search for consistent answers between the participants by creating tables and labeling all of the participants’ responses. I used different colored highlighters to highlight consistent findings for each participant. The highlighter also helped me see who changed his/her responses during the post-assessment which was very beneficial to my findings. By coding these assessments, I discovered some interesting patterns that appeared consistently with all four participants.

To analyze all the data, I looked for similarities and differences. I looked for information that consistently came up while I was conducting the research. By examining the data, I was able to code it and develop three different themes.
Findings and Discussions

Throughout this research paper, I used a mixed method to collect my data. My quantitative data consists of several tables that display my pre and post picture assessment questions, as well as my questionnaire questions. My qualitative data is represented throughout this research paper and is based off of three recurring themes that involve multicultural literature and prejudicial thoughts. Because the themes are embedded within multiple tables and for organizational issues, I will discuss the themes as they occur in the tables presented below. These themes included the following: children’s consistent prejudice toward African Americans, multicultural literature’s effect on children’s thoughts, and children developing empathy while making personal connections to other cultures. These themes became apparent while analyzing my field notes, teacher questionnaires, interviews, student work samples, and the participant’s answers during the picture pre and post assessment. Each method of gathering data in my research provided me with a different perspective in regard to children having prejudicial thoughts and whether or not exposure to multicultural literature would benefit them.

The tables below (Table 1-4) represent the data that was collected during the pre-assessment that involved numbered pictures representing children of different ethnicities. During the assessments, the subjects were asked a question and they had to point to the picture that best fit the answer. The reason I chose to conduct this pre-assessment was to see if children had prejudicial thoughts about people from other cultures. Conducting my pre and post picture assessments with the children is what really showed me how prejudicial the children were, specifically to African Americans. Prejudice has been defined as a judgment or an opinion formed beforehand or without knowing the facts (Dweck, 2009). Dweck (2009) states that prejudice has been around for years and it has been shown that African Americans are typically
the ethnic group that is targeted. Bader (1996) agrees when he explains how African Americans are normally targeted by white people. White people felt that they had always typically been the dominant race and seemed to feel that they had the power to say what they wanted about people of color (Bader, 1996). These strong statements led me to research why children still show prejudice toward African Americans.

I began the pre-assessment by calling my four participants over to my guided reading table in my classroom. To introduce the assessment to the children, I said, “Hi guys, we are going to look at some pictures, and I am going to ask you a few questions. We are going to be discussing children’s skin color and how you feel about these pictures. I want you to tell me the truth and no one will get in trouble for what is said.” All four students responded by saying “Okay.” I asked each child a question and had them point to a numbered picture that they believed best answered the question. These are my findings:

Below, Table 1 shows the percentages of who selected what ethnic picture when the question “which child would you pick to play with?” was asked. At the guided reading table, I discussed “if you were on the playground at the NY school, which child would you like to play with” (Pre-assessment, 2012). These are the selections the children made:

Table 1

Percentage Scores of Children’s Racial Picture Selections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Assessment:</th>
<th>Black Female</th>
<th>Black Male</th>
<th>White Female</th>
<th>White Male</th>
<th>Asian Female</th>
<th>Asian Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 2:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which child would you pick to play with?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the table above, each participant selected the picture of the child that is the same sex as they. Al selected a female, while Cael, Will and Dom all selected a male. They may have selected that way because the participants feel most comfortable playing with someone who they can identify with. Dom and Will may have selected the Asian male because of their passion for karate (Field Notes, 2012). This selection may be because Dom and Will have a lot of prior knowledge due to their karate background. Al and Cael’s selections seemed to be based on their own racial and gender characteristics. They both selected pictures that fit within their own ethnicity. Katz (2003), agrees by explaining that some children are drawn to their own ethnic group due to their self-identity; they feel most comfortable with people they view as the same as themselves.

Below, Table 2 shows the percentages of who selected what ethnic picture when the question “who do you think would get in trouble more?” was asked. I explained to the group that “when I say “trouble,” I mean who may be breaking the rules and school and at home” (Pre-assessment, 2012). These are the selections the children made:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Assessment:</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: Who do you think would get in trouble more?</td>
<td>Black Female 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the table above, you can see that all four participants selected a male as the person who would get into the most trouble. The children’s selection may be because the children view male figures as trouble makers or they have had negative prior experiences with males. While experiencing this exposure, children collect data which can impact their thoughts...
in the future (Turner, Hewstone & Voci, 2007). Seventy-five percent of the participants selected the black male as the child who would cause more trouble. They may have selected the black male because of their past experiences with a black individual. Al, who is bi-racial, chose the black male when responding to this question. Al has previously shown her bias toward African Americans and made it clear that being black is “different” and “bad” (Pre-assessment, 2012). Throughout the data, Al displayed prejudicial thoughts toward African Americans that I documented in my field notes taken throughout the 2011-2012 school year. In February, during a lesson that discussed Frederick Douglass, Al thought the word “African American” was funny. As I read a passage from a book, Al began to laugh out loud when I read the word “African American.” While I turned this situation into a teachable moment, I saw that Al did not laugh when I said the word “black” (Field Notes, 2012). Al seemed to be lacking vocabulary knowledge and seemed to show by her facial expressions that the word “African American” was bad. This lack of vocabulary knowledge may have been because of Al’s age. At the age of six, Al may only have known the word “black” and not the word “African American”. Throughout the school year, Al made comments about having mixed ethnicities. During the last week in February, Al vocalized to other students know that she was happy to be more light skinned than dark skinned (Field Notes, 2012). Al’s statements were confusing because she did at times show respect and empathy for other ethnicities that were being treated differently. She spoke to the class about an Indian boy in the classroom and stated that “just because he is different does not mean he should be treated differently” (Field Notes, 2012). Al may have prejudicial thoughts towards African Americans due to her past experiences with that ethnic group. It is imperative to begin exposing children early to curriculum, cultures, and other programs designed to reduce
racial prejudice (Katz, 2003). This exposure may lead to less bias and misconceptions towards other cultures.

Below, Table 3 shows the percentages of who selected what ethnic picture when the question “who do you think has more money?” was asked. These are the selections the children made:

Table 3  

Percentage Scores of Children’s Racial Picture Selections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Assessment:</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who do you think</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has more money?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the above table, you can see that the results are mixed. Seventy-five percent of the participants selected an individual that was not black. They may have selected anyone besides a black person because they are used to seeing white people in their own environment. At the NY School, there are no African American staff in the building, so subjects may have attributed money with white people whom they see each and every day. Dom was one participant that had an interesting reason why he did not select a picture with a black or Asian person on it. Dom stated that “the white kids would have more money because they live in the United States” (Pre-assessment, 2012). Dom made a generalization that the black and Asian children did not live in the United States. Children learn, at least in part, to make generalizations and form opinions based on how they see the world (Bader, 1996). Throughout these pre-assessment questions, you can see that the participants are making generalizations.
Below, Table 4 shows the percentages of who selected what ethnic picture when the question “who do you think could be a bully?” was asked. I explained to the group that “when I say “bully”, I mean someone who is treating other people badly. Before you answer, think about our Amigos program and how we talked about bullying” (Pre-assessment, 2012). These are the selections the children made:

Table 4

*Percentage Scores of Children’s Racial Picture Selections*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Assessment:</th>
<th>Black Female</th>
<th>Black Male</th>
<th>White Male</th>
<th>White Female</th>
<th>Asian Female</th>
<th>Asian Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 5: Who do you think could be a bully?</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table above, you can see that the children who did respond to this question answered that a male would be the bully. They may have selected this answer because the children have had prior experiences with males being bullies. Araujo and Strasser (2003) state that children develop misconceptions about others based on their race and gender. Children use their experiences to make judgments based on a person’s gender and the stereotypical view of that gender. Also, 50% of the participants selected a black male as the person who they believe could be a bully. They may have selected the black male because they have associated the word black with “mean”. During the pre-assessment, Al pointed to a child who was black and stated “he is probably a bully because he’s black and looks mean” (Pre-assessment, 2012). Al’s response could be due to her amount of exposure to that ethnic group or their family beliefs at home. Al specifically stated during the pre-assessment that “I have seen bullies on the playground and they were black” (Pre-assessment, 2012). When a certain race is represented in a
specific way, people may come away with a skewed view of that race (Smith-D’Arezzo & Musgrove, 2011). In this case, Al seemed to make a generalization based on black children and bullies.

The following tables (Table 5-8) below represent the data that was collected during the post-assessment that involved numbered pictures that had children of different ethnicities on them (Appendix E). Before the post-assessment was conducted, three multicultural books were read to the participants to see if their views would change. I read a different multicultural book to expose the children to new experiences and different cultures. On Wednesday, I read the book *Lion Dancer* by Kate Waters and Medeline Slovenz-Low, illustrated by Martha Cooper. The story is about a six-year-old named Ernie who is performing his first Lion Dance. This book looks at a Chinese household as the family shares a proud moment with Ernie. It examines the Chinese culture and shows sympathy toward the Chinese families. After reading, I had each student answer a prompt. The question was: Would you like to play with someone that is Chinese or Asian? Why?

On Thursday, I read the book *Masai and I* by Virginia Kroll, illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. The story is about a young girl who learns about proud African people called the Masai. She discovers a new relationship and imagines herself living in Africa. She compares her life to how it would be in Africa. This story celebrates the similarities and differences of two unique cultures. After reading, I had an informal discussion with the group about what they learned and liked about the story.

On Friday, I read the book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles, illustrated by George Ford. The story is about a six-year-old named Ruby Bridges whose family moved from Mississippi to New Orleans in search of a better life. When a judge orders Ruby to attend first
grade at a new all-white school, Ruby must face angry mobs of parents who refuse to send their children to school with her. The book is a powerful narrative that shows Ruby’s courage, faith, and hope.

After the multicultural books were read to the participants, I began to conduct my post-assessments. During the post-assessment, I explained the same directions as I did during the pre-assessment. Throughout these assessments, the children were asked a question and they had to point to the picture that best fit the answer. As you can see, several of the children’s answers were changed during the post-assessment. The answers have been put into a bold font. These are my findings:

Below, Table 5 shows the percentages of who selected what ethnic picture when the question “who do you think would get in trouble more?” was asked during the post-assessment. I explained to the group that “when I say “trouble”, I mean who may be breaking the rules and school and/or at home” (Post-assessment, 2012). These are the selections the children made:

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Assessment: Question 2: Which child would you pick to play with?</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Female</td>
<td>Black Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that 50% of the participants changed their previous answers during the post-assessment. Dom and Cael both switched their answer to a black individual. They may have done this because they developed empathy and connected with them through the multicultural literature that was exposed to them. Cael seemed to be actively engaged in the multicultural reading lessons this may be why his views changed. The post-assessment results
showed that Cael would like to play with the black child because now he looks nice. Cael used the words “now he looks nice,” (Post-assessment, 2012) which makes me believe that the multicultural literature had an impact on his thinking. He seemed to be using his new knowledge and transferring it into his picture selections. Dom was another participant who changed his view during the post-assessment by saying “I would play with the black boy and girl because they probably don’t have any friends” (Post-assessment, 2012). During the post-assessment, Dom was one of the participants that consistently showed prejudice toward African Americans even after incorporating the multicultural literature. Even though Dom was being prejudice and making assumptions, he also had some intense, empathetic statements after reading The Story of Ruby Bridges. Dom seemed to show intense empathy for Ruby. Dom seemed to have a big heart, and he said he would have comforted Ruby if he was in that situation. Dom stated that “I would play and be friends with Ruby; she didn’t even do anything wrong or bad” (Post-assessment, 2012). The children’s answers during the post-assessment gave me evidence that their views had changed due to the exposure of the multicultural literature that I presented to them. Ford et al. (2000) explains that multicultural literature has the power to serve as a catalyst for social action, for helping students to appreciate their similarities and their differences, and for increasing students’ cultural awareness and sensitivity. This awareness allows children to change their opinions and views and develop an appreciation for others.

Below, Table 6 shows the percentages of who selected what ethnic picture when the question “who do you think would get in trouble more?” was asked during the post-assessment. I explained to the group that “when I say “trouble”, I mean who may be breaking the rules and school and at home” (Post-assessment, 2012). These are the selections the children made:
Table 6

*Percentage Scores of Children’s Racial Picture Selections*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 3: Who do you think would get in trouble more?</th>
<th>Post-Assessment:</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Female</td>
<td>Black Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table above, you can see that 100% of the participants switched their initial responses from the pre-assessment. Seventy-five percent of the participants decided to select a female as a person who would get into trouble. They may have selected a female because they connected trouble with the story of Ruby Bridges. This text may have influenced their selection during this question. The participants may have connected Ruby to getting into trouble because they saw how she caused an angry mob to form. The children may have been influenced by the illustrations in the book that showed all the trouble that was caused by Ruby going to school.

The participants also made connections to Ruby during their written work samples. After I read each multicultural book, I passed out a blank piece of paper and a pencil to each participant in the group. I explained to the students that they were going to write an open reflection based on how they felt about the story they just had heard. All of the participants wrote about how they felt bad for Ruby and how the white people were being bullies. Cael wrote “wuht I wold fell to Ruby Bridges is sad for her because she wus being buled” (Post-assessment, 2012). Al wrote “If I was white and she was dark I wolb still be nice still becaus she looks nice” (Post-assessment, 2012). That was a huge statement for Al considering her previous statements about how “black people can be mean” (Pre-assessment, 2012). The children may have connected this book to their classroom lessons about bullying that they had learned throughout the entire school year.
Through literature, the children’s thoughts shifted, and they began to show a progression toward more positive, empathetic feelings.

I also realized that Cael changed his answer when asked about who would get into more trouble. Instead of pointing to the black boy (like he did in the pre-assessment) he chose the Asian boy. He may have picked this answer because he thought the Asian boy could use his taekwondo skills to cause more trouble. Cael’s pick was still prejudicial even after being exposed to the multicultural literature. Cael may have been using his new knowledge of the Asian culture to connect it to his new answer. These misconceptions can be very dangerous.

Louie (2006) discusses how children do develop misconceptions and it is up to adults to make sure children understand and develop open, tolerant minds. I did take responsibility during the multicultural readings by pausing and discussing throughout the book in hopes that the children would not develop any misconceptions. It seemed to me that after I read the book *Lion Dancer*, the boys began to look at the Asian children from a different perspective after learning new information about their culture. The Asian children didn’t seem so “strange” to the participants after reading and discovering the new, interesting activities the Asian culture has to offer.

Morgan (2009) believes that books have the potential and the power to help children learn about themselves and others. Books allow children to make connections and find similarities between themselves and others. When children see that different cultures are celebrated and not judged, they can change their thoughts and realize that it is okay to be different. Stallworth, Gibbons, and Fauber (2006) and Singer and Smith (2003) agree by stating that children acquire more respect and empathy when they are exposed to multicultural literature. When children have an open mind and are in a diverse environment, they can develop relationships that promote positive, personal connections to others.
Below, Table 7 shows the percentages of who selected what ethnic picture when the question “who do you think has more money?” was asked during the post-assessment. These are the selections the children made:

Table 7
Percentage Scores of Children’s Racial Picture Selections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Assessment:</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 4:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who do you think has more money?</td>
<td>Black Female: 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that all four participants changed their response to the question “who do you think has more money?” Seventy-five percent of the participants selected a white person as having more money. During the post-assessment results, Cael changed his views by saying “the white boy has more money because he is white” (Post-assessment, 2012). Not one participant selected a black person. They may not have selected a black person because of the story *Masai and I* that was read to them. The book *Masai and I* by Virginia Kroll and illustrated by Nancy Carpenter is about a young girl who learns about proud African people called the Masai. She compares her life to how it would be in Africa. This story celebrates the similarities and differences of two unique cultures. The children may have connected Masai’s life to being poor and living off the land. They may have been confused and not understood that that book was trying to explain differences and how they should be celebrated rather than denigrated.

Sometimes books that explain African American history can distort a person’s view of that ethnic group in a negative way. Without proper guidance, children can develop generalizations and form opinions based on how they perceive the text (Smith-D’Arezzo & Musgrove, 2011). I specifically choose this book to show the children that even though Masai was living in a poor
area, she still looked happy and content. I explained that “just because Masai’s life looks different than ours, it doesn’t mean that she is poor or bad” (Study, 2012). Even with my guidance and support, the children still had misconceptions and bias toward Masai.

Below, Table 8 shows the percentages of who selected what ethnic picture when the question “who do you think could be a bully?” was asked during the post-assessment. I explained to the group that “when I say “bully”, I mean who is treating other people badly. Before you answer, think about our Amigos program and how we talked about bullying” (Post-assessment, 2012). These are the selections the children made:

Table 8

Percentage Scores of Children’s Racial Picture Selections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Assessment:</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who do you think could be a bully?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the table above, all four participants changed their answers from the pre-assessment. Each student had his/her own biased thoughts that they brought in with them at the beginning of this study. Cael and Al switched their answer to the Asian male, Dom selected the black male, and Will chose the white female. The participants may have changed their answers due to the new knowledge they gained from the multicultural texts. Through reading multicultural literature, discussions, and reflections, children were able to internalize differences and attitudes toward other cultures, and they began to understand empathy and tolerance. These strategies and texts foster the appreciation and understanding of others (Carter & Rice, 1997; Araujo & Strasser, 2003). The children learned about the Asian culture through text and how the characters knew taekwondo, they also learned that the black culture can be celebrated instead of
viewed as poor and bad. Some participants changed their view to a more negative perspective. Dom showed bias during his response by stating “the black kids were probably bullies and nobody would want to play with them” (Post-assessment, 2012). Dom seemed to be presumptuous about the black children when he stated that “they did not fit in and would have no friends” (Pre-assessment, 2012). Dom may have changed his answer due to the amount of empathy he had for the black children in the study. Dom continued to show caring emotions, but he seemed focused and determined to explain that black children are left out and he felt sorry for them (Post-assessment, 2012). Two other participants that changed their answers were Al and Cael. Al and Cael both switched their answer to the Asian male. They may have changed their answers because of their exposure to the text about the Asian culture and the characters taekwondo skills. They may have connected taekwondo with aggression which led them to believe that the Asian child could be a bully and therefore, they would not want to play with him. The children were beginning to generalize the Asian culture based on the text that was read to them even though I guided the children through the story without bias. Morgan (2009) states that “multicultural authentic children’s book are about difficult subjects that might be best explained through the guidance of an adult” (p.4). Children can develop misconceptions about what they are reading and have questions that need answers. Adults play an important role in making children feel comfortable reading or listening to multicultural literature. I believe I made my participants feel comfortable and I tried my best to guide them without showing bias. Even with my help, some participants showed bias and developed even more misconceptions. It is crucial for teachers and parents to work as a team to try and eliminate these misconceptions.

The tables (Table 9-12) below show the results from the seven questionnaires I collected from the first grade teaching team at the NY School. These questionnaires were distributed to
the educators in June, 2012. Teachers were asked to fill out the questionnaires to the best of their ability. I collected these questionnaires to get a teachers perspective on multicultural literature.

Below, Table 9 shows the percentage scores of teachers’ responses when the question “have you ever witnessed or experienced children’s prejudice?” was asked during the questionnaire.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires:</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 3:</td>
<td>YES  NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever witnessed or experienced children’s prejudice?</td>
<td>100%  0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the table above, all seven educators wrote down that prejudice was seen within the classroom. When looking at the data, I observed that all seven educators’ responses showed that when they witnessed prejudice it always involved a Caucasian student showing bias toward an African American student (Questionnaires, 2012). One educator that was questioned about her answer stated that “in a predominant Caucasian class with one African American student, I have seen students hesitate to interact w/ African American student, sit next to student or generally have any contact” (Questionnaires, 2012). These results may have been because there is a low percentage of minority students that attend the NY School. If students are not familiar with a specific race, they may tend to identify with their own race. If they continue to identify with only their own racial group, they may develop prejudice toward others. Children tend to identify with their own group when they are young and they assimilate cues from their friends and families (Lesane-Brown, 2005; Turner, Hewstone & Voci, 2007). As children grow up, they
get more and more exposure to the outside world. Children experience positive and negative exposure in their lifetime from a variety of sources: the community, friends and family, the media, and even in the classroom. While experiencing this exposure, children collect data which can impact their thoughts in the future (Turner, Hewstone & Voci, 2007). Children use this exposure and the people in their environment as a model that establishes a base line for what is okay and what isn’t. Similarly, a teacher noted on her questionnaire that “a Caucasian child said they did not want to read a book because the people had dark skin and their parents told them dark skin people are bad” (Questionnaire, 2012). When parents make generalizations like that in front of their child, they are setting a biased example that will most likely carry over to their children; they are not being a role model. Similar to Smith-D’Arezzo and Musgrove’s (2011) findings, children learn, at least in part, to make generalizations and form opinions based on how they see or how they are taught about the world. These generalizations can have a major impact on a child’s future thoughts.

Below, Table 10 shows the percentage scores of teachers’ responses when the question “do you believe children’s prejudice stems from just cognitive development?” was asked during the questionnaire.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires:</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 4:</td>
<td>YES NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe children’s prejudice stems from just cognitive development?</td>
<td>0% 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table above, you can see that 100% of the educators selected “no” while answering the question “do you believe children’s prejudice stems from just cognitive development?” This
statistic is overwhelming. This may be because the educators have seen first-hand in their classrooms what other factors can play into a child’s views and thoughts. One of the educators stated “cognitive development may have a small part in why children develop prejudice, but there are several other more important factors such as family beliefs and exposure to literature that can affect a child” (Questionnaires, 2012). This statement is consistent with Louie (2006) who also believes cognition is not a main factor in developing racial prejudice. There are several factors that play into a child’s prejudicial thoughts because even beyond ages six and seven, children show prejudicial bias.

Below, Table 11 shows the percentage scores of teachers’ responses when the question “do you believe multicultural literature should be used in a classroom setting?” was asked during the questionnaire.

Table 11

Percentage Scores of Teacher’s Questionnaire Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires:</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 6:</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe multicultural literature should be used in a classroom setting?</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that all of the educators in this questionnaire believe that multicultural literature should be used in a classroom setting. These statistics may be because all of the educators already use multicultural literature in their classrooms. When I verbally asked one educator why she answered “yes”, she stated that, “it is beneficial to the child and it exposes them to a variety of cultures” (Questionnaires, 2012). These teachers would not be using texts
that would negatively affect their students, so it seems that they believe multicultural literature is an important tool they can use in the classroom. Carter and Rice (1997) and Rogers and Christian (2007), also believe that multicultural literature is a tool that educators need to use to expose children to the outside world. Thein, Beach, and Parks (2007) similarly stated that when educators use multicultural literature in classrooms, it helps students experience themselves and others as citizens of a diverse world. More exposure to multicultural text can create an opportunity for children to make genuine, personal, connections to other cultures. These findings are consistent with the interviews I conducted that show how multicultural literature did have an effect on children. One morning I interviewed Jenny, the school psychologist, and Joany, the school counselor from the NY School. The interviews lasted approximately ten minutes. I recorded each conversation so I could transcribe it afterword. In my interview with Jenny, the school psychologist, she explains that she uses a program that is specifically designed around multicultural literature. She explains that… “Amigos is a program that is geared toward respect, tolerance, and acceptance of others. We read multicultural books daily to teach students new strategies and experience real life situations with others who may be different” (Interviews, Thursday 2012). If the school counselor and psychologist created a program that teaches diverse subjects and lessons, it may be because the school wants to promote a positive, respectful, diverse environment. Louie (2006), and Cifuentes and Murphy (2000), believe that multicultural literature aims to enhance students’ understanding and enjoyment of stories about diverse cultural groups. Multicultural literature has shown its benefits by allowing children to develop empathy and see a different, diverse perspective that they have not experienced before.
Below, Table 12 shows the percentage scores of teachers’ responses when the question “do you believe multicultural literature can help reduce children’s prejudice?” was asked during the questionnaire.

Table 12

*Percentage Scores of Teacher’s Questionnaire Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires:</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 7:</td>
<td>YES 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you believe multicultural literature can help reduce children’s prejudice?</td>
<td>86% 14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table above, you can see that all but one educator selected yes when agreeing that multicultural literature can help reduce children’s prejudice. One educator, who answered no, stated that “family/society influence is very strong… maybe over time it can change” (Questionnaires, 2012). This educator seems to believe that there are several factors that come into account when looking at prejudice. By stating that “maybe over time it can change,” it seems that this person does believe people may be able to change if given the right exposure and opportunity. If the majority of educators selected “yes,” it may explain how passionate they are about incorporating texts that benefit their own students. These answers may be why school curricula are beginning to increase the availability to multicultural literature in the classroom (Bader, 1996). Bader’s statement is consistent with my findings. My field notes (Appendix A) show that using a multicultural book called *New Shoes for Silvia* helped my participants develop cultural awareness and they began to make personal connections to a classmate who was from India named Bhavin. This book opened up a discussion about being different and speaking a different language. *New Shoes for Silvia* by Johanna Hurwitz is a book that discusses different
cultures and how each culture had a different language and a different way of life. The book focused on African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. After reading *New Shoes for Silvia* with the class, one child announced “it is strange that people speak different languages” (Field Notes, 2012). I emphasized how it was interesting and cool if you knew more than one language. I explained how being different is not a bad thing. The kids connected the discussion to Bhavin who just returned from India. One child asked “what does it look like in India? Do they speak a different language?” (Field Notes, 2012). Al spoke to the class about Bhavin and stated that “just because he is different does not mean he should be treated differently” (Field Notes, 2012). The kids made good connections and started to understand there is a world outside of NY. This book may have created an opening for a real, in-depth conversation that most likely would not have happened if I didn’t utilize that book in the classroom. Similarly, Colby and Lyon (2004) and D’Angelo and Dixey (2001) state that not only does multicultural literature teach children about diversity, it creates an opportunity to discuss differences and facilitate real dialogue. This dialogue creates an opportunity for children to begin to develop empathy by experiencing different situations involving different cultures. These new experiences may have given the children ability to reduce their own prejudicial thoughts by viewing situations from a new, diverse perspective.

The data that was collected throughout this research paper showed that children do have prejudicial thoughts and multicultural literature can have an effect on their thought process. My findings show that after reading and discussing multicultural texts, children began to show empathy and began to connect with other individuals who were not from the same ethnic group. These personal connections gave the children the opportunity to develop new perspectives about people from different cultures and ethnicities.
Implications

The research of Singer and Smith (2003) and Cifuentes and Murphy (2000), along with my findings, suggest several implications for me as a teacher of students in the primary grades. First, it is essential that students understand that different does not mean bad. Multicultural literature should expose children to the joys of being different. Multicultural literature aims to enhance students’ understanding and enjoyment of stories about diverse cultural groups (Singer and Smith, 2003; and Cifuentes & Murphy, 2000). Teachers and adults need to make children aware of these differences and exposure them to other cultures. In my pre-assessment picture, the children displayed misconceptions and prejudice about other cultures. My participants labeled African Americans as bullies and Asians as aggressive (Pre-assessment, June, 2012). Without exposing the children to other cultures, they are just enabling the children to believe what they believe is true. Schools need to take action and develop a curriculum that is diverse and accepted by all. One way to teach diversity is to incorporate culture fairs into their classroom where each child could research a different culture and present it to the class. Children need that opportunity to observe other cultures in order to develop their own views and opinions. Schools could also reach out to other cultures and schools by being pen pals with them. They could get to know each culture and compare and contrast the differences and similarities they have with a teacher’s guidance. This exposure allows the children to view the world from an interesting yet different perspective (D'Angelo & Dixey, 2001). When children are exposed to new people and ideas, they are given an opportunity to form their own bias of that person instead of what they thought they knew about them. This opportunity can help children become more tolerant, empathic individuals.
A second implication for educators is to conduct periodic professional development training sessions to ensure that the school community is on the same page. During these professional developments, educators will have an opportunity to research literature that is age appropriate for each level. Having several educators in one room will enhance the experience due to the different perspectives of each person. Once a text is selected, educators can then begin to create lessons or discussion questions based on a specific text. During these professional developments, educators will also have time to examine and discuss their own bias and prejudice’s. Educators need to be open to examining their own beliefs if they want to overcome any bias that they might have or pass on to any of their students. Professional developments can be a great time to bond with staff members and engage in authentic dialogue if it is presented in the correct way.

Role playing is another great way to get children up and involved in the lesson. Role playing connects with the sociocultural theory in that literacy learning is a social process and using authentic activities like these can expose children to other social cultures. Hands-on activities are a great way to allow children to actually feel the emotions of prejudice from a character’s viewpoint. Wilkinson and Kido (1996) discuss how children begin to identify themselves with other characters in text; they make connections. Students discover themselves experiencing empathy for a character (Singer & Smith, 2003; Wilkinson & Kido, 1996). This strategy is a great way for children to see different perspectives and experience everyday life from a different culture.

A good strategy for teachers to use in the classroom when reading a multicultural text is to stop and have the students make connections to the text. During a reader response journal entry, teachers can have students develop text-to-self, text-to-text, and/or text-to-world
connections. Doing response journals may help the children discover how the meaning of text comes from prior experiences and a cultural background. Text-to-self connections allow students to develop empathy based on a character, their emotions, and their problems. Text-to-text connections allow students to view different texts while looking at an author’s cultural background to determine how he/she portrays scenes from the book. Finally, text-to-world connections allow students the ability to connect text to the outside world. Several researchers have claimed that multicultural literature is a tool that educators need to use to expose children to the outside world (Colby & Lyon, 2004; Araujo & Strasser, 2003; Carter & Rice, 1997; Rogers & Christian, 2007). These strategies drive students to observe and analyze their surroundings and make connections to a text based on their prior knowledge. Teachers can then read their journals and determine what type of opinions, knowledge, and/or misconceptions they may have about a text or culture.

Another implication for educators and parents is to actually use multicultural literature. It sounds so simple, yet people are still not taking full advantage of what is readily available. Home and school libraries may lack important literature that exposes children to other cultures. Multicultural literature is a great way to get children thinking and exposing them to different cultures. Using multicultural literature and promoting mutual respect and empathy is a great way to create an open-minded, diverse classroom (Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006; Singer & Smith, 2003. In school and at home, adults can use multicultural literature as a way to open up a discussion or reflect on beliefs or misconceptions that a child may have. Through reading multicultural literature, discussions, and reflections, children are able to internalize differences, attitudes toward other cultures, and began to understand empathy and tolerance. These strategies and texts foster the appreciation and understanding of others (Carter & Rice, 1997; Araujo &
Strasser, 2003). If adults do not give their children an opportunity to explore other cultures, they may not develop friendships and relationships with other individuals that they will encounter in their near future. Don’t let your child become a victim to prejudicial thoughts; expose them to multicultural literature.

**Conclusion**

The main question of this study is how does exposure to multicultural literature benefit children’s thought processes about race? Multicultural literature is known to help individuals acquire knowledge about new cultures and embrace their differences without bias or prejudicial thoughts. The theoretical framework of this study focused on the exposure of other cultures through social interaction by incorporating multicultural literacy. My findings and implications show that students need to be exposed to multicultural literature in the classroom, as well as at home, by educated adults to support specific strategies that will help assist the children. Some of these strategies are discussions, role playing, exposure to other cultures, and professional development training for educators. If these strategies are incorporated and exposed to young children, they will have an opportunity to develop the knowledge they need to become tolerant individuals.

If I were to do this study over again, there would be a few things that I would like to do differently. First, I would have liked to have more time. I was limited with the time allowed to assess my participants to see a significant growth. I did see growth, but I am confident that with more time there would have been an even more significant growth in the children’s thought processes about race. If I had more time I could have researched and found more of a variety of multicultural literature to expose the children to. Secondly, I would have liked to have more
questionnaires filled out by teachers and by the children’s parents. It would have been intriguing to see the parents view on using multicultural literature and/or if they already use it at home.

After considering all of the implications that my research brings to mind, I have some questions for myself and for other teachers. First, what else can I do as a teacher to help my students become more tolerant, empathetic individuals? As a teacher, you do not know what is happening at home so it’s hard to see consistent results based on your teaching in the classroom. Secondly, how do you truly know when a text is non-prejudicial and ready to use at home or in the classroom? At times, literature seems okay to use until someone with a different perspective comes along and shows you that it is racially biased. It is hard to always be on the lookout, but it needs to be done in order to create a harmonious, learning environment. Lastly, what can parents do to help their children become open, tolerant, classmates? Will they open their arms to other individuals in the classroom without any bias? Parent involvement and support is a major issue when it comes to children’s thought process based on how they are brought up in this world.

These are some of the questions that arose while conducting my study. Something that I would like to research more in depth is how a child’s family environment affects their processes about race. It would be interesting to examine family beliefs about race and if those beliefs transfer to a child at a young age.

Throughout my research, the theme of multicultural literature affecting a child’s thought process about race was present. My participants consistently showed prejudice toward others based on their race. It is extremely difficult to target what is triggering these children’s thoughts. With guidance and exposure to multicultural literature, I believe we can break the prejudice barrier and develop more tolerant, understanding individuals.
References


*The Reading Teacher, 50*(3), 269-270.


Appendix A
St. John Fisher College
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of study: How does exposure to multicultural literature benefit children's thought process on race?

Name(s) of researcher(s): Timothy Coon

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Joellen Maples, Assistant Professor

Phone for further information: 585-703-9212

Purpose of study: The purpose of this study is to find out why children have prejudicial thoughts and if multicultural literature can help diminish these negative thoughts. I will be using multicultural literature during guided reading to see if children's thoughts and opinions about gender and race change at all. This study will not take away from your child's normal day or routine; I will just be incorporating different types of books into their reading group.

This study has been approved by the John Fisher College Institutional Review Board.

Place of study: Ontario Primary School (during guided reading)
Length of participation: Last two weeks of school (June 11 – June 22)

Risks and benefits: This study presents no risks to you. The benefits are the opportunity for improved teaching.

Your name and the location of the research will be changed in order to protect your anonymity. All data will be kept in a locked location and accessible only to the researcher. The findings from this study will be shared with other professionals at the St. John Fisher College Capstone Presentation conference.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

______________________________  ______________________________  ________________
Print name (Participant)  Signature  Date

______________________________  ______________________________  ________________
Mom's ethnicity:  Dad's ethnicity:

______________________________  ______________________________  ________________
Print name (Investigator)  Signature  Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact the Office of Academic Affairs at 385-8034 or the Wellness Center at 385-8280 for appropriate referrals.
Appendix B
Interview Questions
Appendix B

1. What age groups have you worked with in your career?

2. Have you used or have you seen anyone using multicultural literature in their classroom?

3. Do you believe it is beneficial to use multicultural literature in the classroom?

4. Do you believe cognitive development is the main reason why children may have prejudicial thoughts
Appendix C
Questionnaire

If you could please fill out this questionnaire to the best of your ability and please place them back in Mr. Coon’s mailbox. This will help him with his Thesis paper for Graduate School. Thank you.

1. What is your job title?

2. What grade do you teach?

   Please circle your answer:  K  1  2

3. Have you ever witnessed or experienced children’s prejudice? If yes, what ethnicity was the child who was having prejudicial thoughts/actions?

4. Do you believe children’s prejudice stems from just cognitive development?

   Please circle your answer:  YES  NO

5. What do you believe contributes to children’s prejudice?

6. Do you believe multicultural literature should be used in a classroom setting?

   Please circle your answer:  YES  NO

7. Do you believe multicultural literature can help reduce children’s prejudice?

   Please circle your answer:  YES  NO
Appendix D
I would like to play with a Chinese princess because they have a tiger for their year.
I would like to play with them so they can teach me more tie.

Londgo.
I would say: to the mob stop that is not nice I going I am to say high do you want to de my friend
What I held
fell to Ruby
Rider is sad
for her because
She was being
Kitty
I liked her.
She is nice.
I felt sad for her.
Because of the mob.
If I was white and she was black I would still be nice still because she looks nice.
Appendix E
Study Questions

1. Which child looks like you? Why?

2. Which child would you pick to play with? Why?

3. Who do you think would get in trouble more?

4. Who do you think has more money?

5. Who do you think could be a bully?