Gender Stereotyping in Children's Literature:

An analysis of Anne Fine's *Bill's New Frock* (2010) with Grade 4 learners'.

By

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Abstract

This purpose of this study is to determine the effect, if any, that gender stereotyping in children's literature, has on learners'. The study looks at the analysis of a novel by Anne Fine entitled "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) in a grade 4 classroom. The study uses a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative data to yield results. The study takes on a 3 stage structure i.e. pre-test (questionnaires) to determine existing gender stereotypes, during- test (reading of the novel) and post-test (focus group interviews). The results of the study found that learners' have a pre-constructed understanding of gender stereotypes influenced by the society, community and population they originate. This is embedded into their conscious as a norm. However exposure to "*Bill's New Frock"* (2010) challenged these gender understandings and not only sensitised learners' to gender equality but also facilitated a change in their gender construct.

Declaration:

I Pralini Munthree, declare that

- The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, and is my original work.
- This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university
- This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers.
- The thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the reference sections.

Signed:

_____

Pralini Munthree

6 December 2013

As the candidate's Supervisor I agree to the submission of this thesis

Signed:

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Prof. Ayub Sheik

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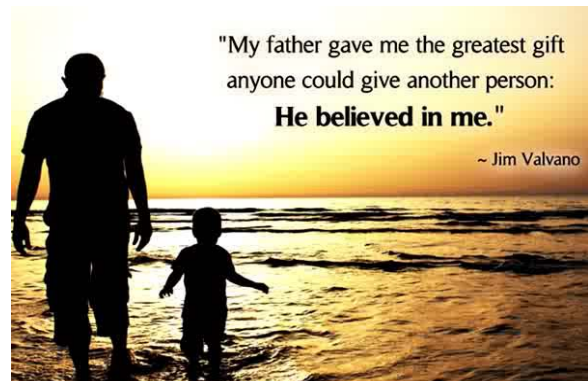

"My father gave me the greatest gift anyone could give another person: **He believed in me.**"

~ Jim Valvano

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Chapter One

Introduction

Background

The Problem:

Fairclough (2003) points out that every kind of text carries its own ideological effect, in which a perspective, about the world is transferred. The texts that we expose learners' to influence the perspectives they generate about the world. Tepper and Cassidy (1999) state that the norms associated with masculine and feminine characterisation have for many years been defined by books. Many social- learning theorists note that books are important socializing agents, the pictures; text and depiction of characters in texts (books) reinforce socialization behaviours in children. "Books are windows to the outside world, showing children how other boys and girls think, act and feel. Children also find role models in books which represent what children should be in their adult lives." (Creany, 1995, p.289). "Literature and storytelling are key ways through which children learn societal values" (Tepper and Cassidy, 1999, p.265). Research has shown that it is by these same societal values that gender roles are developed and reinforced. Literature thus proves to be a powerful influence on children's gender expectations.

The Intervention:

The Project title of this research is: Gender Stereotyping in Children's Literature: An analysis of Anne Fine's "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) with grade 4 learners'. This study sets out to determine what effect, if any, that exposure to a gender stereotypical text will have on learners' existing understandings of gender roles and gender stereotypes. The study revolves around the reading of a novel: "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) by Anne Fine.

The novel is about a young boy named Bill Simpson who awakes one morning to find he has turned into a girl. The book documents his "horrible" day as he sets out for school in a new pink frock that his mother had decided he would wear. The novel covers numerous incidents where Bill is treated differently as a result of his new gender; exposing him to the ways in which girls are treated and expected to behave in contrast to what he already knows (i.e. how a boy is treated and expected to behave). All of these scenes lead up to the final chapter, when once the dress is removed by his mother he turns back into a boy. He is grateful to return back to normality and wiser to the effect his gender had on how he was treated and expected to behave.

This study will utilize the mixed methods data collection approach. In order to gauge the learners' current gender roles and stereotype understanding a 'pre-test' activity is used. This activity consists of a questionnaire and employs a quantitative research methods approach. This is followed by the 'during- test' activity (the reading and discussion of the novel) and the 'post-test' activity which involves focus group interviews (qualitative research methodology).

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The study examines the way in which the grade 4 learners' interpret the novel and how this interpretation will ameliorate their understandings of gender roles. It will show how the use of a selected text can have the ability to either construct or deconstruct a learners' gender role or gender stereotyping ideology.

Rationale:

In acknowledgement of the strong influence that books have on children, many researchers' have delved into studies surrounding gender stereotyping. Their studies have revolved around topics such as gender stereotyping in relation to linguistics, gender representation or under representation in books, character roles in novels, social behaviour, emotional language, even gender in colouring books. However there have been very few studies which examine how these gender stereotypical books affect learners' present understandings and expectations of gender roles.

The intention of this study is to examine, through an analysis of the novel "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) by Anne Fine, in what way, if at all, are learners' perceptions of gender roles influenced. Do they change/stay the same? This study will work to reinforce previous research that suggests that books' are powerful in influencing gender roles and add to academic research on whether this powerful factor (the narratives in books) can possibly change/alter the very stereotypes it creates.

Prior Studies:

Hamilton et al. (2006) and Creany (1995) both undertook research examining the appearance of gender in award winning books (Caldecott Award). Both studies looked at a number of books in this category; Hamilton et al (2006) based their research across a seven year period and Creany (1995) over a decade. They deduce that the novel clearly display an unequal representation of male – female representation. The results indicated that the selected books proved twice as likely to allow the reader to experience a male lead character as opposed to a female. Creany (1995) notes that "male characters were depicted more often than female characters and both genders were shown in traditional, stereotyped roles."

Sari (2011) through her research; which involved a critical discourse analysis of English text books for primary school agrees with Creany (1995) and Hamilton et al (2006). In her findings, she concluded that male characters, more often appear as the main protagonists and are viewed as 'visible' as opposed to the female characters who take on less significant roles in the books. Tepper and Cassidy's (1999) study yielded results contrary to their expectations regarding gender stereotyping, in relation to emotional language. Their study concluded that both males' and females' where equally represented with regards to emotional language in children's picture books. Tepper and Cassidy (1999), prove that in gender based studies the outcomes of the research are not always sided, towards either males only or females only.

Fitzpatrick and McPherson (2009) tackled an issue in gender research that had last been investigated in 1974; a systematic analysis of colouring books, the study; an analysis using the gender schema theory; proved that coding for prevalence of each gender was present. Wing (1997) and Butler (2009) both used the same book "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) by Anne Fine, however their research focus differs as each seeks to investigate different issues. Wing (2007) focuses on how children can be taught to read differently. Her research focuses on the observation of a classroom of learners' and their response to the reading of the novel. Butler (2009) however uses the same novel and an additional novel "*Marvin Redpost: Is he a she?*" (1993) to generate a new study. His study focused on the new Queer theory which emerged from feminist and gay rights movements.

Gender and identity are critical issues in pedagogy. Although gender equity has made significant progress, it can be argued that we still live in a patriarchal society. Speaking as a feminist it would be desirable to strive towards equity and conscious raising with respect to female oppression. A study of Anne Fine's "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) is a suitable medium through which gender stereotyping in society can be examined.

Setting and target population:

This study will be conducted at a Primary School in the Montford, Chatsworth area. The population demographic of the area consists of predominantly Indian and African citizens. The School is situated near the Welbedacht informal settlement and a large number of learners' who attend this school come from this settlement. The age group that this study will target is between 9-10 years of age.

Contribution of this study:

It is through this study that as a researcher I hope to tackle the issue of gender stereotyping in society through texts. Many researchers' have concluded that gender role identity and gender stereotyping are socially constructed. From the age of 3 children are already able to differentiate between male and female and by the tender age of five already have strong gender stereotypes. (Tepper and Cassidy, 1999)

Through the medium of novels, it is hoped that learners' will either further embrace their understanding of gender roles as equal or learn via the novels about the stereotypes they have constructed for themselves via their society.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the review of literature, beginning with a brief introduction which highlights the theoretical considerations that support this study. My study is orientated towards the field of Feminism and as such this chapter outlines the concept of feminism, its history in relation to education and the many educational theorists' definitions of feminism. The chapter will go on to define gender stereotypes and the role these gender stereotypes play in the social constructs of children's gender identity through the medium of education.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Chapter three outlines the research methodology that I have employed within this study. The chapter clearly defines the hypothesis statement, research title, objectives, key research questions and location of the study. This is followed by the introduction of the research instruments that have been used to conduct this study. The use of these research instruments is then supported by evidence of its effectiveness in other similar studies and how they would be most beneficial in enabling the researcher (myself) to gain valuable and reliable data. This is followed by a break down of the research design and methods. Which is then; further broken down into the following sub-headings unit of analysis, data collection process, data verification, data analysis and limitation and gaps in the data

Chapter Four: Finding and analysis

Chapter four details the findings' and analysis of the results pertaining to this study. It documents the actual progression of the study, analyses of the main trends and patterns that emerged as the study progressed and a conclusion which sums up the results of the research depicting the final outcome of the study.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The concluding chapter discusses how the main issues highlighted in the literature review (chapter 2) tie up with the findings in chapter four. The chapter will go on to discuss any contradictions that may have emerged within the research, possible gaps, limitations and findings in the results. A brief summary is made of the main argument this study sought to resolve and how the results have yielded an adequate or inadequate response. The chapter will conclude with a brief look at how this study has contributed to the academic debate surrounding, gender stereotyping and gender roles in the school under study.

Bibliography: References

This chapter will indicate all references used within this study.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

Introduction

The focus of my research involves gender roles and gender stereotyping using the novel "*Bill's New Frock*", (2010) by Anne Fine's. This type of research falls within the theoretical framework of Feminism. Watkins et al. (1992, p.3) describes feminism as "Women demanding their full human rights, challenging the relationships between men (as a group) and women (as another) and rebelling against all power structures, laws and conventions that keep women servile; subordinate and second best" Butler (2009, p. 3). Swann and Graddol (1994,p. 151) and Maybin (1994,p. 132) point out that within the classroom context, the literature, language and communication devices (educators') that children are exposed to; inform their most initial gender identifications and influence their perception of gender roles in society. "As children grow older their awareness of "appropriate" sex role behaviour increases and becomes more restricted and stereotyped" (Butler, 2009, p. 3)

"As prime sites for socialization, schools are key institutions for the construction of gender" Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003, p. 45) highlight the education systems conscious attempts to foster gender equality in education through verbal communication. A qualitative data collection strategy is very popular in relation to literature surrounding this type of research. This is evident in works by Messner (2000) and Peterson (2000), with a significant portion of data analysis being derived from interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and observation. A large amount of research has been conducted within the field of gender construction and gender roles in children.

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The major trend that has emanated from these studies have been; the analysis of verbal communication tools (speaking, the teacher) as a contributor to the formation of, or awareness of gender stereotyping.

There are a limited number of such studies which tackle the intermediate age group, as most studies prove gender identity is constructed by ages 3-5 (Messner, 2000, p.765). My study will look at the in-between (middle) process of establishing these gender roles, and how influences such as literature, can influence the learners' perceptions about gender roles and gender stereotyping. "Children's literature studies have in the last fifteen years paid a great deal of attention to the representation and construction of gender" (Butler, 2009, p.3). This type of research is typical of feminism; its focus is on the socialization of children in aspects related to issues of stereotyping and gender identity. "Any discussion of texts in which the protagonist changes sex necessarily involves the distinction between gender and sex, which assumed such importance within second-wave feminism in the 1970s" (Butler, 2009, p.4)

Feminism marks the starting point in my research. In order to fully grasp the concept of feminism, I have compiled a brief history of feminism and it origins' followed by the theory of feminism itself. Within this review I will also be looking at what gender stereotypes are, and how these stereotypes are constructed, the social constructs of gender and identity in children and gender and education.

Feminism

"Feminist theory is one of the major contemporary sociological theories, which analyses the status of women and men in society with the purpose of using that knowledge to better women's lives. Feminist theorists have started to question the differences between women, including how race, class, ethnicity, and age intersect with gender. Feminist theory is most concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways women have contributed to society" (Crossman, retrieved 1/07/2013). The theory of my research can be found in the works of many theorists of feminism. Researchers' such as Simone De Beauvior and Betty Friedan are some the key feminist researchers' which I will by using throughout my research.

The theory of feminism is fuelled by texts' surrounding the debates about gender roles. One of the most influential feminist writers was Simone de Beauvoir. Her writings delved into the realities of women's experiences. Her book 'The Second Sex' in 1949 was an acclaimed novel that brought forth a plethora of woman finding themselves through the experiences of women in her book.

> "All through history, Beauvoir argues, woman has been denied full humanity, denied the human right to create, to invent, and to go beyond mere living to find a meaning for life in projects of ever-widening scope. Man remodel's the face of the earth, he creates new instruments, he invents, he shapes the future, woman, on the other hand, is always the archetypal other. She is seen by men, always the object and never the subject" (Walter, 2005, p. 98)

De Beauvoir, a feminist theorist, expressed within her novel, the notion of women as being "the other" in relation to men. "She emphasized that the roles and characteristics assigned to women were socially constructed. In a famous passage she concluded that "one is not born, but rather becomes a women", since a women's destiny is imposed upon her by her teachers and her society. (De Beauvior, 1953:315)" (Hannam, 2007, p.136)

Marion Reid in 1843 published "A plea for women". Within this book she drew attention to the fact that women were educated in terms of domesticity, to be good mothers, tend to their husbands' and make domestic arrangements. "The education that most women are given merely' cramps and confines them, she claims: "any symptom of independent thought is quickly repressed… the majority of girls are subdued into mere automatons" (Walter 2005.p.42). She further delves into the difficulties women face by stating that "obtaining the means of a good sustainable education. Most girls are brought up to a mechanical performance of duty… their own minds all the while barren and unfruitful" (Walter 2005.p.42).

Offen (1988, p.152) identifies the challenges of feminism as being essentially humanistic in nature. It raises concerns about issues such as individual freedom, responsibilities and collective freedoms' and responsibilities to others in society. "Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and Betty Friedan, speaking many decades later, express their deep feelings of exclusion from the dominant avenues of knowledge building, seeing their own experiences, concerns, and worth diminished and invalidated by the dominant powers of their society" (Hesse-Biber, p. 3).

Rebecca West a journalist and novelist in the early eighteenth century, was also a socialist and a suffragist who firmly believed that there was still plenty to be achieved in terms of gender equality. She is well acclaimed for her writing and for every so often being deliberately provocative. "I am an old fashioned feminist … when those of our army whose voices are inclined to coolly tell us that the day of sex-antagonism are over and henceforth we are only to advance hand in hand with the male. I do not believe it" (Walter, 2005, p.86).

Betty Friedan another influential feminist writer destroyed the myths and perceptions of housewives with her book "*The feminine Mystique"* (1963). Friedan was a prominent figure within the political world. Friedan's earlier writings paid particular attention to the social inequalities faced by women. After the 1970's in the thick of the Women's Liberation movement in England, issues of gender inequality and feminism spiked. Feminist writers began penning news and magazine articles, books and journals in an attempt to publicise the demand for gender equality. Twentieth century feminists have placed their demands in both the political and civil arena. Current feminism writers' such as Robert Frisk (as cited in Crossman, retrieved 1/07/2010) state that feminism is simply being spoon fed to the younger generation of feminist researcher. He notes that if we are to ever make any significant progress in this field we will have to re-invent not only new issues within feminism but the entire language of feminism.

Some of the other key researchers' in the field of gender and education whom I will also be using to guide my research within this study are, Tim Heaton and Tony Lawson (1996). They argue that there is a "hidden curriculum" that operates as a major source of gender socialization.

Sociologists' such as Lawson and Heaton believe that through texts, and the education curriculum, social gender roles are formulated. It is through the prism of researchers' and sociologists' such as Lawson and Heaton, De Beauvior and Friedan's research that I will structure my own study.

Feminist Definitions

The table below is a brief summary of the various definitions of feminism by key theorists between the 1800's to the early 2000's. The table indicates the year/writer, the definition that this writer has identified as means of defining feminism and in the last column of the table I have pointed out the links between these definition (how across the years, writers have re-evaluated and improved on prior concepts. My aim in using this table is to trace and clarify the history surrounding the definition of feminism as recorded by various feminism writers.

Table 1: Trace of feminist definitions through the works of feminist writers

Year/ writer	Definition	Links
(1987) Simone de Beauvoir	" one does not become a woman, but rather is born a woman" (de Beauvior, 1987, p. 203)	
(1992) Reinharz Shulamit	"Reinharz makes ten claims: 1. Feminism is a perspective, not a research method 2. Feminists' use a multiplicity of research methods 3. Feminist research involves an ongoing criticism of non feminist scholarship 4. Feminist research is guided by feminist theory 5. Feminist research may be trans-disciplinary	Reinharz (1992,p.1)makes the claim that feminist research is defined by its key tenets, i.e. patriarchy and the "othering" of women this is closely linked to de Beauvoir's theory of women being considered as the "other" sex. Both researchers' focus on the role of women as being the other sex, and the othering of

	6. Feminist research aims to create social change. 7. Feminist research strives to represent human diversity. 8. Feminist research frequently includes the researcher as a person, 9. Feminist research frequently attempts to develop special relations with the people studied(in interactive research) 10. Feminist research frequently defines a special relationship with the reader" (Reinharz, 1992, p.1).	women.
Offen Karen(1988)	"Feminism emerges as concepts that can encompass both an ideology and a movement for socio-political change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society. As the starting point for the elaboration of ideology, of course, feminism posits gender, or the differential social construction of the behaviour of the sexes" (Offen, 1988, p.151)	Offen Karen(1988), (2000) Punch, Stanley and Wise (1983) Neilson (1990) and Hariet Jacob's(1987)all commonly conclude that feminist research revolves largely around the social constructs of the society people live in.
(2000) Punch	"Feminist research is based on the assumption that the world is socially constructed, displays a relative aversion to empirical positivistic methodology, and rejects the value-free nature of research" (Punch, 2000,p.125)	

Stanley and Wise (1983)	"Feminist research studies the social conditions of women in a sexist, 'malestream' and patriarchal society, and enlightens people about taken-for-granted sexist practices and the gender-blindness of government and community practices (including publications') that displaced, ignored and silenced women, led to an unequal and discriminating social order, and held them captive for millennia." (Stanley and Wise, 1983: 12).	
Neilson (1990)	"Is contextual, inclusive, experiential, involved, socially relevant, complete but not necessarily replicable, open to the environment and inclusive of emotions and events as experienced." (Nielsen, 1990, p.6)	
Farber(2001) & Pfeifer(2000)	Identified some of the commonalities which they found defined feminist theory "Women have been marginalised. That male superiority is perpetuated despite policies, assurances and political promises. That males and females are considered physically and emotionally different, with men being considered superior. That there is still a long way to go to establish gender equality. That the relationship between researcher and	Farber(2001) & Pfeifer(2000) and Offen agree that feminist research are strongly linked to the political arena and strongly defends the role of women in politics

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	researched requires serious reconsideration." (Farber, 2001) & (Pfeifer, 2000).	
Ellen Key	"A woman who stays independent of organizations and doctrines, extols private virtues, and sees love, an unlegislatable emotion, as the crux of liberation"? Such a woman, she added "looks suspiciously anti-feminist, unless we broaden our view of what feminism encompasses" (Key,1909,p.125).	
Ernest Legouvé (1848)	"A "male-feminist" who spoke out in 1848 for dramatic reforms in women's legal status in marriage and in their education. He embraced the notion of "equal but different" spheres for woman and men" (Legouve, 1848, p.17).	Identified as one of the very few male feminists of the time
Stanton (1869) (as cited in Offen,1988)	Stanton argued that "because man and woman are the complement of one another, we need women's thought in national affairs to make a safe and stable government" (Offen, 1988, p.152).	
Temma Kaplan(1982)	"Viewed the women's collective situation as unjust, she attributed it to social and political institutions established by men, and believed that it could be changed by	Temma Kaplan(1982) shares her views on feminist theory between the likes of Offen Karen(1988), (2000) Punch,

	protest and political action. She insisted that women had a special role, a role distinct from that of men." (Kapalan , 1982, p.545-566)	Stanley and Wise (1983), Hariet Jacobs(1987)and Neilson (1990) who are link feminism and constructs and social Farber(2001) & Pfeifer(2000) and Offen who link themselves to the political arena of woman rights
Hariet Jacobs(1987) p.1-2)	"The concrete lived experience is a key place from which to build knowledge and foment social change" (1987,p.1-2).	

Gender, gender stereotypes and gender identity

The origins of the word stereotype can be traced back to the technology of the earliest presses. "A stereotype is a poured metal plate, and once the metal is poured the plate can't be changed" Kirby et al. (2005, p.140). This technological explanation formed the basis for the definition used by social researchers' in their terminology of stereotypes, with reference to people. A stereotype being something that is fixed and non-changing used to create multiples of the same things. When used as a visual metaphor it applies itself by cutting down the numerous differences between thing and finds group commonalities i.e. Gender (male/female).

Stereotypes allow people to recognize and classify people using as few characteristics' as possible, only processing a few simple visual clues in terms of zoning in on similarities or differences. Hall (1996, p. 256) describes this process as a strategy of splitting. He states that stereotyping doesn't just use visual clues to determine difference and similarities; it also serves to divide the normal from the abnormal and the acceptable from the unacceptable. "Stereotypes exclude or reject everything which falls out of its definitions, everything which is different. It sets up symbolic boundaries and then provides the mechanism of cultural production for people to police these boundaries. People use stereotypes to determine who should naturally belong to one group or another." Kirby et al. (2005, p. 141).

Stereotypes are often seen as a means to exacerbate inequalities and enhance individual power. There are numerous examples of stereotypes ranging from race to cultural belief systems. However the focus of my study looks specifically at gender stereotypes. Deux (1985) as cited in

Guimond et al. states that the concept of gender stereotypes refers to beliefs about gender

differences between men and women. Women are viewed as being naturally nurturing, sensitive

and emotional. The fact that a women possess a womb creates the perception that they posses all

the characteristics of motherly individuals and will therefore have a natural predisposition

towards children. Such gender bias stereotypes were challenged in the periods surrounding

World War II. The work place saw an influx of women now working to earn a salary and put

food on the table, while the men were away in the war. This demobilized the stereotypes

surrounding women in the work place. Male stereotyping on the opposite end of the spectrum

portrays men in accordance with masculinity, strength; men are viewed as all powerful,

emotionless and authoritarian in nature. Men are also expected to conform to the stereotypical

characteristics' assigned to their gender. Those that do not are labelled as 'abnormal' or 'wimps'.

Martinez, Nicolás and Salas (2013) in their study involving gender stereotyping using girls toys

indicated that "the use of beauty as a value linked exclusively to the female gender could be

construed as a social message that inseparably connects beauty and women. Likewise the use of

power and strength value in commercials aimed at boys contributes to a social discourse that

promotes the differences between ability and qualitative associated to each gender." Martinez,

Nicolás and Salas (2013, p.192). The selection of classroom texts that similarly incorporated this

gender stereotyping trend, create in learners' a social message that reinforces gender stereotypes.

Kirby et al, Guimond et al and Meyer use Freudian- derived theories and identifications to

determine how identity is formed. The Freudian psychoanalysis uses a framework for thinking to

establish how a person integrates images to create an individuals' identity. Betty Freudian is one

of the main theorists around whom I will be basing my own study. Her psychoanalysis framework will be used to determine how the learner use the visual image of Bill, a boy being treated as a girl affect their ability to create gender identity and relate to the stereotypes they already have surrounding gender roles. Martinez, Nicolás and Salas (2013) using Erikson stages of development link the theoretical developmental stage of a child and their social roles. "Erikson provides another classic approach from the psychoanalysis perspective in which he reflects' on the theoretical development of the stages of youth, and concludes that between the ages of four and five the child is rehearsing future social roles through, games, dressing up, stories and toys." Martinez, Nicolás and Salas (2013, p.188).

Stereotyping or stereotypes are typically associated with the unfair and the unjust. They tend to focus on the negative aspect of a particular social group, just as stereotypes have the ability to convey messages on unjust action, they can also be used to create positive representations for example; to bring to the fore a recognition of the 'other' gender, the role that they play in society and acknowledge their strengths and achievements.

Researchers' have identified numerous difference in the speech of adult males and females, however "some researchers' believe that these differences do not come about overnight and after a certain age, rather they are the result of years –long education that has started from the early years of life (Gooden &Gooden, 2001) as cited in Parham (2013, p. 1648). Parham (2013) from this statement goes on to conclude that we can therefore hold education and socialisation responsible for the unfair attitudes to gender speech.

Gender and Identity as social constructs

The school environment is not exempt from the social world that social theorists claim develop a learners' gender code. The school environment is in fact viewed as the prime site for socialization Connell (1987) as cited in Kirby et al (2005, p. 154). In his research on gender regimes, goes on to explain how this takes place in schools. "He shows how there are various practices that construct different kinds of femininity and masculinity: sport, dancing, choice of subject, classroom discipline, administration and others. He outlines the sexual division of labour between staff, where certain kinds of work were done by women teachers' and other kinds by male teachers'. But this gendering begins at the door of the kindergarten."(Kirby et. al. 2005, p. 183).

In Askeer, Lao and Bosaki's article entitled "*Children's gendered drawings of play behaviour*" (2012); they explore gendered representations of play behaviours in both boys and girls. In their analysis of past gender research they conclude that; compared to girls, boys are more likely to engage in aggressive games and girls on the other hand have been found to participate in more co-operative games. Within the novel *"Bill's New Frock"* (2010) a key scene revolves around the play ground and a game of soccer.

"Environments that encourage strict adherence to traditional gender roles, including gender segregation and endorsement of stereotypic beliefs are likely to produce dysfunctional outcomes." Lamb, Bigler & Liben (2009, p. 362). Environment's that encourage such

segregation can actively contribute to the social development of stereotypic behaviour in learners'.

Meyer (2011) and Tutchell (1992) note that the issue of gender and traditional sex roles has always been present within our school. Gender roles such as boys' taking wood shop and girls' home economics, boys' play soccer and girls' net ball, teachers' were unmarried women and principals' and superintendents' were all males. Although we now live in the twenty first century, and these traditional sex roles are recognized as inequalities of the past. The ramifications of such practices are still unfortunately present in today's education system. "Schools play a key role in teaching and reinforcing the dominant values of culture and this holds especially true in areas of gender and sexuality. From the first day they enter pre-school or kindergarten, children are identified by their sex on registration forms, referred to as boys and girls. And their gender is a consistently practiced and reinforced through stories, free play, and interactions with their teachers' and their peers." (Meyer, 2011 p.3)

"Decades of research within the fields of anthropology, sociology, and psychology indicate that children themselves play an important role in constructing gender beliefs and determining gender behaviour.... Furthermore, the literature indicates that children overwhelmingly pressure peers to adopt traditional (rather egalitarian) gender role attitudes and behaviours." Lamb, Bigler & Liben (2009, p. 361).

Gender construction is a product of the individual's perceptions and self representations. Meyer (2011, p.33) concludes that gender though related is different from sex, and how an individual identifies ones self is directly determined on the relationships and interactions we have with the world.

De Lauretis is quoted as stating that:

> "The construction of gender goes on through the various technologies of gender (e.g. cinema) and institutional discourse (e.g. theory) with power to control the field of social meaning and thus produce, promote and 'implant' representations of gender. But the terms of a different construction of gender also exists, in the margins of hegemonic discourses. Posed from outside the heterosexual social contract, and inscribed in micro political practices, these terms can also have a part in the construction of gender, and their effects are at the 'local' level of resistances, in subjectivity and self-representation "(De Lauretis, 1987, p. 18)"

Kirby et al defines texts as a "combination of signs which are activated by a reader or viewer to produce or generate meaning". Within my frame of research I would concur with this definition of texts. The study that I will be carrying out will focus on the interpretation of texts by learners. The study will analyse the readers' (learners') construct of gender roles within the novel "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010).

Meyer (2011) identifies what she believes are four common myths and misconceptions about sex and gender.

> "1. Sex and gender are two words that can be use interchangeably.
>
> 2. There are only two sexes and two genders
>
> 3. The sex assigned at birth always predicts a person's gender identity.
>
> 4. The way children are raised is the strongest influence on their gender identity."
>
> (Meyer, 2011 p. 27).

Within her research she concludes that sex and gender though used interchangeably in everyday conversations are in fact two different but related concepts. She notes that people have been conditioned to view the world as two halves. One being male and the other female. As a result of this division this gendered view is embedded into a child's life from the moment of its conception. Meyer states that gender is as a result of a collective of social and relational characteristics' that place us into groups of social belonging i.e. boy/man, girl/woman.

Gender identity is thought to be a learned process. Sandra Ben, a leading sociologist within her own research into gender identity had concluded that the role of a child's cognitive abilities to process information illuminates the theory of gender being a learned process through social phenomenon and that gender is learned in different ways in accordance to their different social experiences. "Each individual has an inherent predisposition (orientation that influences their expression and performance of gender (behaviour) and helps shape how they name themselves and understand who they are in the social world. (Identity)." (Meyer, 2011, p. 43)

Parham (2013) uses the works of feminist researchers' Kendal (2007), Osch (1992) and Bloor &Bloor (2007) to structure an explanation of how gender and language are linked

"Butler explains that gender is something people bring into being through their practices (Kendall, 2007, p.126). Similarly, gendered self is accomplished through different ways of talking or behaving that are conventionally associated with gender(Kendall, 2007, p. 126) Osch (1992) believes that there is an indirect relationship with gender and language: linguistic features directly communicate acts and constitute stances and the performance of these acts and stances may help constitute the users gendered identity by being socioculturally associated with expectations and beliefs about women and men (Kendall, 2007p. 127). These social expectations of the relative roles of women and men hamper the progress towards more egalitarian structures (Bloor &Bloor, 2007, p. 95)." Parham (2013, p. 1674)

"Gender bias in children's books have been historically wide spread. Past and more recent examinations of print media aimed at children reveal both unequal gender representation and common gender stereotypes." Parham (2013, p.1674)

Hamilton et al (2006) and Fitzpatrick and McPherson (2010) both yielded similar results in their research. They identified that women in children's books were drastically under-represented and males alternatively were represented as being the more active of the two. In the books that they reviewed the results indicated that gender stereotyping was common. Creany (1995), who has conducted research along similar lines, analysed the appearance of gender in Caldecott Award winning children's books, only to conclude with findings very similar to Hamilton et al (2006)

and Fitzpatrick and McPherson (2010). The results showed that, male character's featured more strongly in the novel as opposed to female character. They were also depicted in typical gender stereotypical roles.

As cited by Gooden &Gooden (2001) in Parham (2013, p. 1679) "Children are not passive observers and as they develop, they look for structure in their lives and are driven by an internal need to fit this structure. The stereotyped portrayals of the sexes and under-representation of female characters contribute negatively to children's development, limit their career aspirations and frame their attitudes about future roles." Parham (2013) and Reuterana (2012) conclude that it is essential, that young children are presented with non-sexist, gender-fair and non-gender stereotypic characterisation in reading materials so that they are able to construct a realistic and true balance of their own gender identity allowing them to strive for equal opportunities and to reach their full potential as human beings.

(Hunt 1990; Sutherland 1997) as cited in Reuterana (2012) state " Literary critics acknowledge that children's literature belongs to the literary socio-educational systems at the same time as it is read for literary experience, entertainment and recreation, as well as education and socialisation. Reuterana (2012, p. 87). Reuterana (2012, p. 88) goes on to state that the importance of children's literature lies in its role in the development of a child's moral, intellect and linguistic abilities.

Gender and education

Teachers' are placed under constant pressure in the classroom to 'deliver' in terms of educating our children. As a result there is little attention being paid to any other aspect of our children's learning process. Issues surrounding gender is very prevalent within our schools and the influences that affect our children's perception of gender roles is at the fore of such studies. Researchers' often begin this type of research with a common underlying question "Where does this polarization between boys and girls start?" (Tutchell, 1992, p. 27)

(Fairclough, 1995) as cited in Parham (2013) states that "Educational institutions are heavily involved in the ideological developments that affect language in its relation to power. This is mainly because educational practices themselves constitute the core domain of linguistic and discursive power and much training in education is orientated towards the use of particular discursive practices in educational organisation; moreover, many other domains are mediated by educational institutions" Parham (2013, p. 1674)

Meyer (2011) concurs with Heaton and Lawson (1996) beliefs that there is this 'hidden curriculum' at play. It operates within our children's education sphere, influencing and teaching them lessons about sex and gender. This hidden curriculum is defined by the social interactions our children encounter in their developmental stages; such as jokes shared between friends, relationships, school social gatherings (Valentine's Day, leap year proposal etc)

Researchers such as Kirby et al. and Meyer recognize that approaches to teaching play an important role in gender studies. By creating environments within the classroom that are conducive to learning teachers' ensure an atmosphere of democracy thereby encouraging debates and allowing students' to examine their own identities.

Meyer reinforces Eckert and McConnell-Ginet claim that gender roles are formulated within the school environments. From as early as preschool children are orientated into gender codes. They are told 'this is what girls do' and 'this is what boys do'. Meyer goes on to say that the tendencies for boys to be interested in what girls do and for girls to find interest in boy activities is one of the most natural and normal aspects of the growing up process. These normal processes however are often disrupted by parents'/teachers'/media influences all imparting their own stereotypical values onto children, doing so on the belief that they are protecting their children from social ridicule. By engaging in this they aren't actually protecting; but rather inhibiting the child's growth process. "The problem with this approach is that it reinforces existing gender stereotypes that can deprive children of the opportunities to read books, engage in play activities, and pursue friendships that they truly enjoy." (Meyer, 2011, p. 65). As a result these influential adults mould and shape gender stereotypical children who will in turn, upon being parents, pass on these same values to their children.

Tutchell (1992) acknowledges that the polarization between boys and girls cannot be exclusively pinned on the home and media influences. She goes on to claim that the role of the teacher in a child's gender identity process should not be underestimated. Tutchells research examines the role teachers' play in children's constructs of gender stereotypes, stating that the choices that

teachers' make can sometimes exacerbate the problems that learners' face when dealing with gendered perceptions of characters in texts. Tutchell claims that the careful selection of texts can assist in breaking the challenges teachers' face with gender stereotyping in texts.

In the novel "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010), Bill's nightmare day begins when he wakes up one morning to find that he is a girl. Before he even has a second to try and grasp the reality of what is happening his mother swoops into his bedroom and throws over his head a 'pretty pink dress' with shell buttons. She then tells him to do up the buttons because of how 'wiggly they are'. Gender stereotyping does not only find its constructs in the social worlds of the home, school environment and physical appearance. Fashion and clothing and are also stereotypically constructed according to the social expectations of a gender. Boys wear trouser, shirt and sneakers; girls wear dresses, skirts and alice bands.

Within my own study I will be looking at how the learners' preconceived knowledge of gender roles influence their understandings of a gender stereotypical text. In this study my aim is not to determine the learners' views on gender roles but to rather analyse what happens to their existing understandings of gender roles when faced with a text rich in gender stereotyping and gender role reversal.

A number of writers' including feminist theorists such as Gilbert and Taylor (1991), Acker (1994) and Davies (1999) in their analysis of texts have come to the common conclusion that narrative structures are of the utmost importance when analysing how men and women are depicted as characters within certain texts. The way in which a character behaves within a novel

will inform the reader as the stance that the character takes with regards to the issues that are being addressed within the novel.

Patterson (1990) as cited in Singh (2004, p.13) looks at how meaning is developed within the English classrooms. Her claim is that an individual has access to the way in which ones identity is constructed and this can be achieved by showing how texts can allow for the meanings interpreted to take the foreground. The teacher as the dominant in the classroom has the power to allow challenges to occur, learners' as agents in the classroom to have the ability to resist such dominant interpretations. "Schools should not only be viewed as sites for the reinforcement of gender in equality they too can be sites for 'intervention and change' " (Gilbert and Taylor, 1991, p.5)

Taylor (1996, p. 1555) in her research points out that the debate surrounding weather children's conceptions of the social world, develops dependently or independently of external influences is ongoing. Springer (as cited in Taylor, 1996) for example states that 4-5 year olds do not expect or construct social relationships based on biological appearance (gender lines), and Carg (as cited in Taylor, 1996) in contrast found that children do initially think of gender as a social construct. It is intended that that this study will contribute towards this debate.

Gaps in the research

A large percentage of the research within the field of feminism and gender stereotyping is situated around infants; preschool/kindergarten and secondary learners' there are limited studies which tackle the intermediate age gap (grades 4-6). Peterson (2000, p. 81-82) uses a written approach in her research when tackling issues of gender. Her participants engage in a written piece, each writing their own story, a few selected are read out to a class as pieces written by an unknown author. Then gender markers are identified within these stories in order to try and determine the gender of these anonymous writers. Stereotypical responses such as boys-violence and girls-romance is the result of the participants' discussions.

Lake (1988) similarly to Peterson (2000) also engages in a study surrounding gender markers and gender identity however her approach is different in that she looks at already prescribed text within the English curriculum. Her approach is to analyse these texts and determine if they encourage gender stereotyping and reinforce gender roles in students'. Research such as this is very common with many researchers' (Kolbe and La Voie, 1981; Lake, 1988; Swann and Graddol, 1994) choosing to engage in studies along these lines. However a common trend among such research is to engage in such studies with learners' in the secondary schools.

Based on studies by (Kolbe and La Voie, 1981; Lake, 1988; Swann and Graddol, 1994; Taylor, 1996) it is my assumption that by school going age children have established a basic construct of gender and their social experience from birth onwards shape and mould these constructs. I have also determined that studies that research these constructs within the school environment target

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the use of texts and school social sporting activities to either challenge or reinforce these gender roles. Within my own research I will combine both of these research strategies; to be used with children at an age where little research is conducted to determine gender stereotyping. My research will acknowledge a child's already existing gender construct via a qualitative questionnaire and then engage in the reading of a text (*Bill's New Frock*, 2010).

My study aims not at determining if the novel constructs gender stereotypes but rather how does it affect the learners' existing stereotype, assuming they possessed a gender stereotype, constructed one as a result of the text or changed their opinions on there existing stereotyping construct.

Researchers' within this field commonly employ a qualitative research approach to this type of research, often relying on the opinions, discussions and interviews for their data analysis. Very few studies move into the quantitative arena with this type of social research and understandably so since it has been fairly established through research that gender construction is a social construct that is developed via human interaction and intervention. However the quantitative research approach is well acclaimed for its ability to add a sense of statistical proof to research. There are very few researchers' within the social research field who delve into quantitative research in their work. I will be using the mixed methods approach to research in the hopes to achieve a more balanced result.

Chapter Three

Research Methods

Qualitative question and hypothesis

How will the introduction of a stereotypical text (*Bill's New Frock* (2010) by Anne Fine's) influence Grade 4 learners' perceptions and understandings of gender roles and gender stereotypes?

I hypothesize that this intervention will raise consciousness about gender roles and stereotypes in the research population.

The focus of my research will revolve around how this text changes, enhances existing or creates stereotypes in learners' as well as to measure the statistical significance of the intervention.

Research Title

Gender Stereotyping in Children's Literature: An analysis of Anne Fine's "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) with grade 4 learners'.

Objectives of this study

1. To systematically review the literature on feminism relevant to socialization and pedagogy in the primary grades.

2. To ascertain grade 4 learners' understanding of gender stereotyping.

3. To establish the influence, if any, "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) by Anne Fine's has on learners' understanding of gender roles.

Key Research Questions

1. What are grade 4 learners' understandings of gender stereotypes?

2. Why do they view gender stereotypes the way they do?

3. To what extent, if any, are gender stereotyping and roles influenced by the novel "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) by Anne Fine?

Location of the Study

The study will be carried out at a local primary school. The school is situated in the Montford area in Unit 7, Chatsworth. The school is located near the Welbdacht informal settlement. A large percentage of the people living in this area are unemployed. The school consists of approximately 380 learners and has a staff compliment of 15 educators, 4 of whom are employed by the schools governing body. Despite the poverty surrounding the school, it strives to achieve excellent academic results. Its 2011-2012 ANA scores ranked the school in the category "School of excellence".

Research Instruments

The evidence gathering strategy will involve questionnaires, semi-structured group interviews with the learners', participant observations, and transcripts of these interviews and discussions I will begin with a questionnaire that will be handed out to learners' as a pre-test measure. The pre-test is a set of questions given to participants' before the intervention begins in order to determine their knowledge level of the issues under investigation. After the completion of the

intervention, participants' are then engaged in the post-test activity. They are given same set of questions, or a set of questions of comparable difficulty. Comparing participants' post-test scores to their pre-test scores enables you to see whether the intervention was successful in increasing participant knowledge of the issues under investigation.

The questionnaire will employ the rating scale of questioning using the Likert scale response, in order to determine, what learners' present understandings of gender roles are. "Likert (1932) developed the principle of measuring attitudes by asking people to respond to a series of statements about a topic, In terms of the extent to which they agree with them, and so tapping into the cognitive and affective components of attitudes" (McLeod, 2008, retrieved 30/11/2013). "Questionnaires can generate a lot of information very quickly and easily and can be structured to provide comparable information in an easily collectable form." (Burton, Brundrett &Jones, 2008, p.75)

This information will be analysed and tabled in the form of a bar graph. "Rating scales – enables the respondent to indicate a level of 'feeling', 'intensity' or 'confidence' (preferable to yes/no)" (Burton, Brundrett &Jones, 2008, p.91). This will establish the grounding for the novel that will be read to the learners'. "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) by Anne Fine's is a book that follows a day in the life of a young boy named Bill who wakes up one morning to find that he is a girl. The novel depicts many incidents of gender stereotypical behaviour. During 2 one hour sessions, the book will be read to the students', while a critical observation of the learners' responses to the reading is documented. This will be achieved through a recording of the session and a scribe who will record emotional and physical responses from the learners'.

A diary will be kept to document the entire process. Burton, Brundrett &Jones (2008, p.75) state that diaries provide detailed, insightful information over a period of time and may provide comparative information within the semi-structured interview approach. These recordings and notes will be transcribed and used to determine the responses and change, if any, in attitudes of learners' to gender roles as the novel is being read.

The learners' will then be split into three smaller groups of 8-10 learners'. They will be thereafter placed in groups via a random selection process. This process of analysis; using a smaller representative group from a larger group will ensure that all learners will have the same likelihood of being selected into a group. The learners'; as they are seated in the classroom; will be randomly allocated a number between one - three. All learners' with the number one will be assigned to focus group one, all learners' with the number two will be assigned to focus group two and all learners' with the number three will be assigned to focus group three. Each group will be interviewed after the reading; learners' will be asked a series of questions based on random incidents of gender stereotyping which occur within the novel. This will be the post test activity.

The questionnaire (post-test) will consist of open-ended questions which will focus around how the learner felt about the reversal of gender roles within the novel, is there any truth to the stereotyping of boys and girls?, do they agree/disagree with the incident being discussed? etc. "Open –ended questions- These questions are phrased in such a way as to allow the respondent to answer in their own words" (Burton, Brundrett &Jones, 2008, p.93). Questions will be open ended allowing for the learners' to formulate their own responses and opinions.

The interviews will be recorded and a scribe will again be present to document the learners', emotional, verbal and physical responses. The results of the two interview sessions will be tabled and a comparison will be done between these findings and the results achieved from the initial questionnaire (pre-test). Based on the response to the pre-test activity which occurred prior to the learners' being exposed to gender stereotypical literature and the post test interviews I will be able to determine whether the literature learners' are exposed to affect or do not affect their understandings of gender roles.

Cohen and Manion(2005) note that "there is a simple rule of thumb that the larger the size of the sample, the more structured, closed and numerical the questionnaire may have to be, and the smaller the size of the sample, the less structured, more open and word based the questionnaire may be" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005, p.254) The sample size is small and thus lends itself to a semi structured, open ended type of questioning process. Cohen and Manion (2005, p. 248) recognize that questionnaires can be developed using several types of question and response modes.

The Likert scale which I will be using within this study "A Likert scale (named after its deviser Renis Likert, 1932) provides a range of responses to a given question or statement" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005, p.253). The use of a Likert scale shifts the focus of a questionnaire from the norm of dichotomous questioning by allowing the researcher to generate a numerical graph/value chart, while still being able to build up a degree of sensitivity and differentiation.

Despite the problem of interpretation which arises from the use of such varied response choices, rating scales are still popular among researchers. "Rating scales are widely used in research, and rightly so, for they combine the opportunity for a flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies, correlations and other forms of quantitative analysis. They afford the researcher the freedom to fuse measurement with opinion, quantity and quality." (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005, p.253).

A limitation to using this kind of rating scale includes experiencing difficulty in the interpretation of sensitivity and subtly in the data. There is no clearly definite interval between categories. Researchers' find it difficult to interpret the intensity of feeling between respondents 'strongly agree' with another's 'agree'. The researcher also has no way of telling whether the respondent is telling the truth. The respondents aren't given the opportunity to explain or add to their responses. Rating Scales such as the Likert scale as stated by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005, p253) earlier are more sensitive than dichotomous. The benefits to researchers' are limited due to the focus of the responses being restricted to only the interviewers' answer options.

There are four main kinds of interviews. For the purpose of my research I will be using the semi-structured interview approach. A key feature of this type of research is its ability to utilize open situations, thereby allowing for greater plasticity and freedom in questioning. Though the questions are focused around the content and purpose of the study being carried out, the order

and phrasing of the interview questions are flexible to the researcher. Cohen, Manion &Morrison identify group interviews as a useful way of interviews.

The use of semi-structure group interviews in this study will afford the participants' the opportunity to discuss their opinions and view points. The advantages of using group interviews are that they encourage discussions. This will assist in providing a variety of responses. Group interviews assist the researcher in establishing what aspect he/she should focus on at a later stage; if they should wish to engage in additional individual interviews. It creates an atmosphere of openness and allows for the participants' to express their views more freely, there is no pressure for an individual response. Group interviews allow for people with different opinion on matters to come together. Some of the more practical and organisational advantages to group interviews are that they are relatively quick, less time consuming in comparison to individual interviews and they provide the researcher with varied responses.

By including this research instrument, it would tackle the most predominant limitation of the Likert scale questionnaire, thereby allowing for the expression of opinions. "Interviews enable participants'- be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In this sense the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable." (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005, p.267).

Other limitations; more specifically; when interviewing children, which are identified by Simons (1982) and Lewis (1992) as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005, p. 287). They identify

some of the challenges that researchers' will possibly face when interviewing children, such as children become easily distracted, difficulty with keeping the interview relevant as children lose focus, some participants' are not able to articulate their responses, are hesitant and nervous around the researcher, children can be destructive and mocking of other learners' responses, dominant children will silence the opinions of other children within the group. These limitations are not exclusive to children. However conducting group interviews requires skilful setup, attention to the layout of the groups and strict control during the interview process.

Participant observation is often combined with other forms of data collection that, together, elicit the participants' definitions of the situation and their organizing constructs in accounting for situations and behaviour. By staying in a situation over a long period the researcher is also able to see how events evolve over time, catching the dynamics of situations, the people, personalities, contexts, resources, roles etc. (Cohen, Manion &Morrison, 2005, p. 311) the use of participant observation within my study will aim to analyse the learners' responses to the text. By observing their reactions to incidents within the novel I will be able to gauge the effect against the pre-test activity (questionnaire) that the novel has had on there perceptions of gender roles and gender stereotypes.

The diary that will be compiled will document a personal account of the entire research process. It will focus specifically on the interactions between the learners' and the researcher and will document from the researchers' perspective the process of the text being read out to the learners' and the group interviews. The diary will be used to document my (researcher) own visual findings based on learners' facial expressions, body movements and (all physical, non verbal

responses) to the text and questioning, in the aim to determine the learners' perception of that specific situation. An advantage of keeping a diary is that it allows the researcher the opportunity to reflect on and think critically about situations that arose during the research process, allowing for valuable data to be exposed.

The diary that I will be compiling will be biased to the researchers' (my), own perceptions' and interpretation of the research process. The validity of its content is open to debate, and individual perception of events is entirely dependant on the individual and there understandings of situation, at the time of the observation. This is a possible limitation to the strength of the content within the diary.

Research Design and Methods Used

The research design that I will be using to conduct this study is the mixed methods approach. Mixed methods research is defined as "a type of research in which qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in types of questions, research methods, data collection and analysis procedures and /or inferences." (Taskakkori and Teddlie, 2009, p. 7). Onwuegbuzi (2004, p.20) describes the characteristic of mixed methods design as research which is skilfully designed and created to answer the researchers' questions, it is in stark contrast to traditional qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Another definition very similar to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2009, p.7) defines mixed method research as "research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in a single study or programme. (Taskakkori and Crestwell, 2007, p. 4).

For the purposes of my study I agree with both definitions. I do however favour the second description of mixed methods research. I will be using the information I gather in the quantitative approach (questionnaires) to assist with establishing the foreground for the qualitative approach, and then use both to draw a conclusion.

The mixed methods research design carries both advantages and disadvantages. Single approach designs usually tend to focus on either the experiment only (quantitative type design) or the observation only (qualitative type design) in order to determine the cause and effect on a specific issue. The mixed methods approach effectively uses the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research designs to produce a broader perspective on the issue. More data is made available via this research design; as it offers both the opportunity to engage in statistical analysis and observation which provides for a more comprehensive research.

A limitation to mixed methods research is the possibility that the researcher may be biased to a single research design, this may impact on the design, favouring the results and data collected focusing on this favoured research design as opposed to analysing the research as a whole.

The research methodology that I will be using to conduct my research is the Case study methodology. "Case study is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case. It provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case. It blends a description of events with the analysis of them. It focuses on individual actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events." (Cohen and Manion, 2011, p.289).

Cohen and Manion identify three approaches to the feminism study of behaviour i.e. Normative, Interpretive and Critical. Within my research I will be using the interpretive research approach, more specifically an interpretive case study method. "Case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis. Case studies can establish cause and effect, indeed one of their strengths is that they observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects." (Cohen, Manion &Morrison, 2005, p.181.)

Sturman (1999, 103) as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2005, p.181) argues that the most distinguishing feature of a case study is that "Human systems have a wholeness or integrity to them rather than being a loose connection of traits, necessitating in-depth investigation." (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2005, p.181).

Yin (1984) identifies 3 types of case study research:

a.) Descriptive

b.)Interpretive

c.) Evaluative

The use of Case study research and Interpretivist methodologies work together form a culmination that provides a sound research method.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p.322) identify several valuable characteristics' of case study. Its main focus being the accurate and precise documentation of all events relevant to the case, a chronological narrative of events, allows for the blending of a description of events with its analysis. Case study focuses on the individual or group in order to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of its respondents'. The research forms a large part of any case study research and every effort is made to ensure that the richness of the case is portrayed in the report.

Aldeman et. al. (1980) concurs with Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) about the advantages of case study research and adds that, case study research is 'strong in reality' and difficult to organize whereas other forms are research are 'weak in reality' and easy to organize. Aldemans states that this strength in reality is because case studies are down to earth; they focus on the participants' own experiences and as a result create a 'natural bias' for generalization.

The reliability and validity of case study research, is of the utmost importance. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005) note that ascertaining a distinct point of validity in case study research is difficult since every cases study is unique to its situation. Case studies do not rely on the ability to create a positivist's view of reliability; instead it focuses on key issues such as the selection of information. A key trait to case study research is that "Case studies, in not having to seek frequencies of occurrences, can replace quantity with quality and intensity, separating the significant few from the insignificant many instances of behaviour. Significance rather than frequency is a hallmark of case studies, offering the researcher an insight into the real dynamics of situations and people." (Cohen, Manion &Morrison, 2005, p. 185).

Case study research is different from other experimenter types of research, where the focus is on standardized questioning and representative samples from individuals, instead case study observes characteristics' of an individual e.g. a child, a class, a school. etc. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005, p. 185).

Bailey (1987) as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005, p. 185) identifies some of the advantages to participant observation. Observations are considered to be a more valuable form of data when the analysis is focused on non verbal forms of information. It is most useful when investigation behavioural, changes as it is a useful means to document events as they occur. I will be recording all observations both using a recorder and using hand written notes. Lofland (1971) as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005) suggest that all notes be recorded as soon as possible after the observation and though dictation is acceptable, writing allows for the advantage of more stimulating thought.

Unit of Analysis

The sample that will be conducted in this study will involve ±25-30 grade 4 learners'. Cohen, Manion and Morrison highlight that sample size can be determined to some extent by the style of research being conducted and that specifically in ethnographic and qualitative styles of research it is more likely that the sample sizes will be small. I will be using the random sampling method in the selection of my sample group. Krejcie and Morgan (as cited in Cohen, Manion &Morrison) "suggest that if the researcher were devising a sample from a wider population of thirty or fewer (e.g. a class of students or a group of young children in a class) then he or/she

would be well advised to include the whole of the wider population as the sample." The observations and semi-structured group interviews will be conducted during 3-4 one hour sessions (this includes the reading and interview times) over the course of a week.

The questionnaires used in the interviews will be divided into two sections so as to accommodate each interview session. Should the process require any additional time this will be negotiated with the participants', parents', educators' and any other relevant structures (principal, district officers etc).This type of research is practioner research, which involves the teacher working with the students. Cohen and Manion (2011, p. 436) explain that focus groups are a form of interview, whereby the reliance is on the interaction within the group, the group discusses a topic supplied by the researcher. The researcher is thereby able to get a collective view rather than an individual view. Focus groups may be useful to generate hypothesis that derives data from the insides of the group. Focus group allows for the gathering of quality data and is good for gathering data on attitudes and opinions.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process comprises of 3 main parts

1. The questionnaire (Pre-test)

2. Reading of the novel (During- test)

3. Group interviews (Post - test)

The Questionnaire comprised the quantitative aspect of my research study; the results will be used in a statistical manner. The questionnaire was handed out to learners' as a means of measure, to gauge the current gender perceptions of the learners', prior to being exposed to a text which contains gender stereotypical content. The results of the questionnaire were analysed and plotted on a graph. Some difficulties were experienced with the answering of the questionnaire by learners'. Due to the age and reading ability of many learners' they found it difficult to read the questionnaire. In order to prevent influencing the results of the questionnaire the educator simple read out each question and allowed the learners' time to select their response on the questionnaire sheet. This was a time consuming process and as result instead of the anticipated 30 minute lesson that was to be used for the questionnaire, the time extended to 50 minutes. This however did not impact on the time I was allocated with this class as the school was extremely accommodating and understanding this difficulty allowed for an additional 30minute lesson to be incorporated in to the time allocated to me for this study.

The reading of the book (During – test) involved the reading of the novel over a period of two one hour lessons on two consecutive days. The educator read the novel aloud to the learners' while I observed, recorded and took down notes. The reading process was very insightful and provided a lot of rich data that was used in the study. The learners' were allowed to express their feelings, opinions and comment openly during the reading of the novel. Their posture and facial expressions provided a key insight into their feelings and reactions to specific gender stereotypical scenes during the reading process.

Once the novel was read learners' were randomly placed into 3 groups for the focus group interviews. The groups consisted of 2 groups with 7 learners' in each group and one group with 8 learners'. The focus group interviews were held in an empty classroom. The interviews were conducted with one group at a time, while the remaining learners' were engaged in revision as the research fell in line with the schools final exam revision programme. The interviews were recorded and a scribe was present to record all data gathered from these group interview sessions.

The last data collection tool that I used was a personal diary to document the entire research process. The diary was used as a support to the observation of learners' during the reading and the focus group interview periods. The diary documented how I interpreted the views given by the learners', my own personal perception and understanding of their comments and expression during the entire research process. While the diary is entirely a personal account of events and bias to my own opinions and conclusions; it is not to be used solely in determining any conclusions in relation to this study. It is used in conjunction with the questionnaire, interview and participant observations as a support to the conclusions that have been drawn as a result of this study.

The use of these data collection methods and techniques were employed to ensure an accurate understanding of how the novel impacted or didn't impact on the learners' gender perceptions.

Data Verification – Reliability and Validity of Research (empirical research)

In order to conduct my research within this framework I will employ both a qualitative and quantitative research approach (mixed methods). I will be using the Interpretivist framework when analysing data. The Interpretivist framework is of the view that cultures can be understood by studying what people think about their ideas and meanings that are important to them. In my research I aim to discover if exposure to gender stereotypical literature does/does not influence a learners' understanding of gender roles. The interpretive framework assumes that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know. The learners' home language being what they know and the educators' teaching strategy being what they know.

 Interpretivism relies heavily on naturalistic methods (interviewing, observation, analysis of existing texts). I will be engaging in observations of the learners' and conducting semi-structured interviews. Within the qualitative approach research is associated with more of an explorative form. Within this field of research the focus and priority tends to fall on validity. Qualitative studies are very difficult to replicate. A down side to the qualitative approach is that with the use of mostly open ended questions, it allows for the participants' (learners') to have a greater voice, this can lead to a possible intrusion into the participants' privacy or could possible expose them to some form of danger or harm. In order to ensure the credibility of my research I will ensure that there is a clear exposition of all data collected, the methods of data collection and analysis will be carefully handled and documented in detail.

Quantitative data collection is far more statistical, information gathered is mostly numerical and plotted on graphs and pie charts. "Quantitative evidence will provide an indication of the scale or relative importance of an issue (or problem), whilst qualitative evidence will attempt to offer an interpretation or explanation." (Burton, Brundrett &Jones, 2008, p.145). Burton, Brundrett &Jones (2008, p. 143) note that research reports that use both qualitative and quantitative research data often begin there research with quantitative data so as to provide an immediate point of impact and then proceed to follow this with qualitative data so as to enrich the interpretation and analysis.

All ethical considerations will be taken into account, informed consent and all relevant permissions from departmental structures will be obtained before any research is conducted. Some of the possible limitations I could face during the course of this study are; when working with children, parental consent is essential, should a parent change their mind about allowing their child to part take in this research, they should feel free to leave/ excuse themselves. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. The dangers of conducting a group based semi-structured interview is that minority perspectives can be silenced by the majority, possible valuable data could then be lost.

The researcher will gather information from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and a journal log, pre-test, post-test, during test and observation. In this way I will corroborate data by triangulation.

Data analysis: Data coding and data editing

The data analysis process will involve the plotting of graphs in relation to the questionnaire. This will be used to assign a numerical value to the percentage of students' who prior to the reading of the novel have gender stereotypical perceptions and those who don't. This will be used as a scale against which to gauge how influential gender stereotypical texts are on learners' gender perceptions and if they do/ do not influence their pre- conceived notions of gender. The questionnaire result should indicate the students' honest opinions regarding gender roles and the focus group interviews will indicate how these have changed or remained the same.

During the reading and focus group interviews there was a tendency for some learners' to lose focus of what is being discussed. They would deter from the questions being asked and respond in a random, confused manner unsure of their own opinions. In such cases a repeat of the interview question placed the learners back on track. Careful editing is required in such cases as the possibility of losing valuable data is possible.

Limitations and gaps in the data

The conclusions cannot be generalized and will only be valid within the context of the research. The researcher may have an inherent bias that may colour his/her interpretation of the findings. There is the possibility that the researcher may misinterpret what is being observed. It is impossible to record everything.

During interviews some learners' would forget the question asked and instead rather want to delve into a banter of boys are better than girls or vice versa, this impacts on all further responses from such students as they lose focus of what the questions are and want to instead respond in a manner to upset the learner that opposes their views. Another limitation is the silencing of other learners' opinions, should there be a learner within the focus group who is very domineering in their responses they tend to silence out the opinions of others. The focus group interview that was conducted with the 2nd focus group yielded such a response with a single learner opting to remain quiet and limit his/her responses due to their being two other very dominate learners within the group who wished to express their views strongly.

Chapter Four

Research Findings and Analysis

Introduction

In the following chapter I will present the findings of this study. The chapter will begin with a brief description of the lessons' and its progression, the analysis of the results in relation to the research tools outlined in Chapter 2, a discussion of the main trends, patterns, similarities and differences that have emerged through this study and to conclude, a brief summary of the main results outlining the positives and negatives of the research findings.

Sample size and characteristics

The sample group consisted of 22 participants'. The participants' ranged in age from 9-10 years old. A total of 10 male participants' and 12 female participants' engaged in this study. The students' reside in the Montford suburb in Chatsworth. The population demographic of the area is predominantly Indian and African. The school in which the research was conducted is situated near the Welbedacht informal settlement. As a result the economic standards in the area are very poor. The learners' who participated in this study were extremely enthusiastic and jovial throughout the research process.

Description of the lesson's progression.

Prior to any research being carried out I met briefly with the class I would be undertaking this research with to introduce myself, explain the reason for my visit and hand out the consent forms for the learners' and their parents'. Once consent was ascertained from all relevant structures, I began the first step in my research process. The pre- test: I handed out the questionnaire to students'. Due to the age and reading capabilities of many of the learners' I began by explaining the process and how to answer such a questionnaire. Thereafter the form educator proceeded to read aloud each question allowing the learners' time to answer each question. This process utilised an entire 45 minute lesson. The results from this questionnaire where then analyzed and plotted onto a bar graph. From these findings I drew conclusions as to the learners' current perception of gender roles.

The purpose of the questionnaire as previously stated is to determine the learners' understandings of gender roles. The questionnaire is divided up into 7 questions: each question has a selected number of responses from which the learner will choose from. The learner will select (tick/cross) the most appropriate box in relation to their favoured response to each question. These questions were selected in order to holistically determine the learners' gender stereotypical and gender role expectations. All aspects of life and living were taken into account when planning these questions (i.e. household activities, sporting activities, clothing preferences, colour preferences and career choices)

Question 1: age of learner

Question 2: gender of the learner

Question 3: Whose responsibility is it to conduct the following activities? (Housework, gardening, washing dishes, washing clothes, ironing, cooking, washing the car, changing the light bulb)

Question 4: Who can part take in the following activities? (Soccer, netball, volleyball, tennis, cricket, chess, dancing classes, modelling, scouts)

Question 5: Who can wear this type of clothing? (Dresses, T-shirts, shorts, jeans, hats, jewellery, formal pants, blouses, skirts, sandals, sneakers)

Question 6: Which colours do you prefer? (Tick all the colours that you would use in your everyday dressing.

Question 7: Which jobs are most suitable for Males, Females or Both males and females?

The 7 questions are designed so as to determine the learners' perception and understanding of gender roles in each of the follow aspects of life and living i.e. daily chores, sports, clothing, colour preferences and the work place. This will therefore give the researcher a better understanding of the learners' gender role understandings. This will allow the researcher to have a base on which to begin the determination of whether the novel does or does not affect the learners' understanding of gender.

The results of each question has been plotted onto a bar graph, below each, a brief description of the learners' overall gender perception with regards to each question is explained and the conclusions that have been drawn from the question.

This activity was followed by the reading of the novel "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) by Anne Fine. The novel was read to the learners' over the course of two days by the educator, while I (the researcher) observed, the sessions were voice recorded and I (the researcher) made/took notes during the actual reading process. After each chapter the educator allowed for the learners' to express how they felt, about the events of the novel as it unfolded, this provided me with some valuable insight into the effects that this novel had on the learners'.

These notes formed an integral part of the personal diary that I kept as many of the reflections where of the lesson's; during these reading sessions and the changes in learners' responses regarding gender roles. The result of the transcriptions and personal diary entries were combined to formulate the "effects of the reading of the novel on the learners" results which document the learners' verbal and physical responses after each chapter/ scene in the novel.

Once the reading of the novel was complete the learners' were randomly placed into three focus groups. Two focus groups containing 7 learners' and one with 8 learners'. The focus groups where then interviewed one group at a time in a separate empty class room. The learners' were seated in a circle all facing each other. Each learner was given a copy of the open ended questions they would be asked and given time to read through the questions before hand.

I began the interview by reinforcing the fact that every learner's opinion is important, should be respected and that learners' should not feel in any way intimidated or scared to respond to the questions. I encouraged the learners' to be free, open and honest with their responses assuring them that their responses will be handled with the utmost anonymity. Each question was read

out and the learners' responses were recorded and later transcribed. The results of the 3 focus

group interviews were then analysed and the main trends and patterns determined.
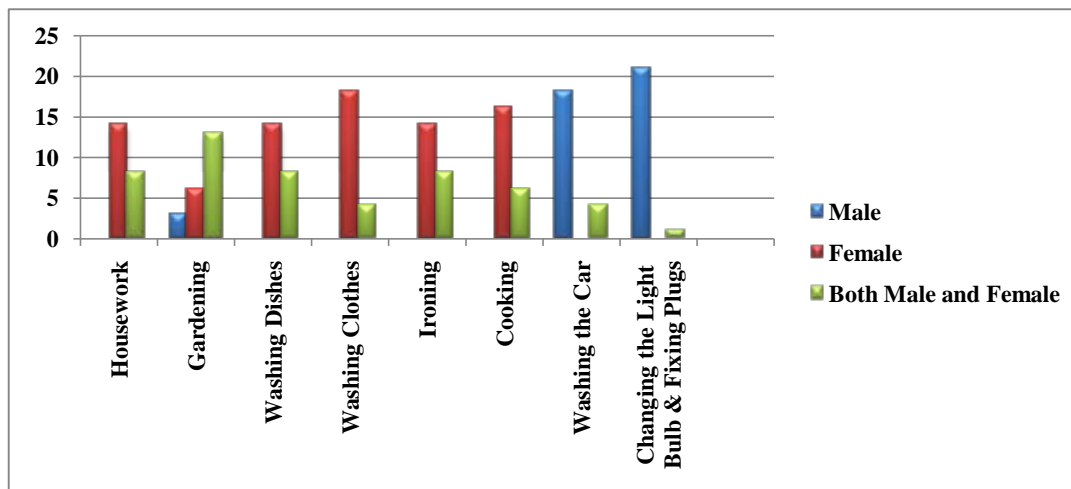
Results of the Questionnaire

**Question One: Males: 10**

                Female: 12

Question Two: between the age 9-10 years old

Question Three: Whose responsibility is it to conduct the following activities?

Question Three concluded that a large percentage of learners' believed that house hold choirs such as housework, washing dishes and clothes, ironing and cooking are roles assigned to females whereas choirs such as washing the car and changing light bulbs and fixing plugs are typical male activities. It is interesting to note that learners' felt that a chore such as gardening is both a male and female responsibility. From this graph I have come to the conclusion that the learners understanding of house hold chores are that, it is a female gender specific activity

Question Four: Who can part take in the following activities?
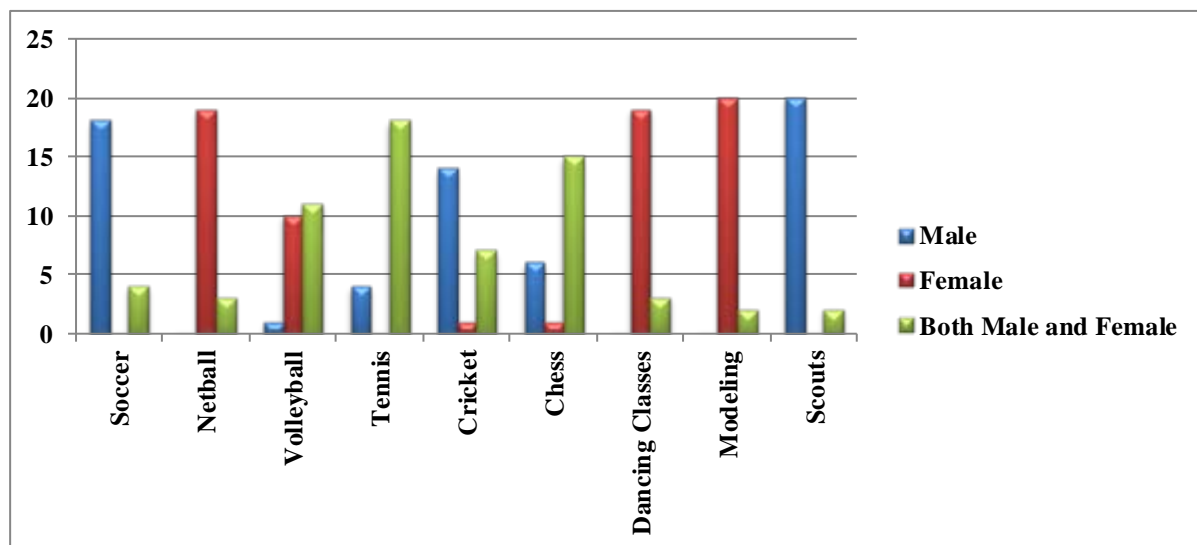
Question four is designed to determine the learners' perception of gender roles in relation to sporting activities. It concludes that sporting activities such as soccer and cricket are predominately male activities while netball, dancing and modelling are predominately female activities. This indicates that sporting activities are gendered along feminine and masculine lines with the more contact sports such as soccer, scouts and cricket being male orientated and the lesser contact sports such as fashion and modelling being female orientated.

Question Five: Who can wear this type of clothing?
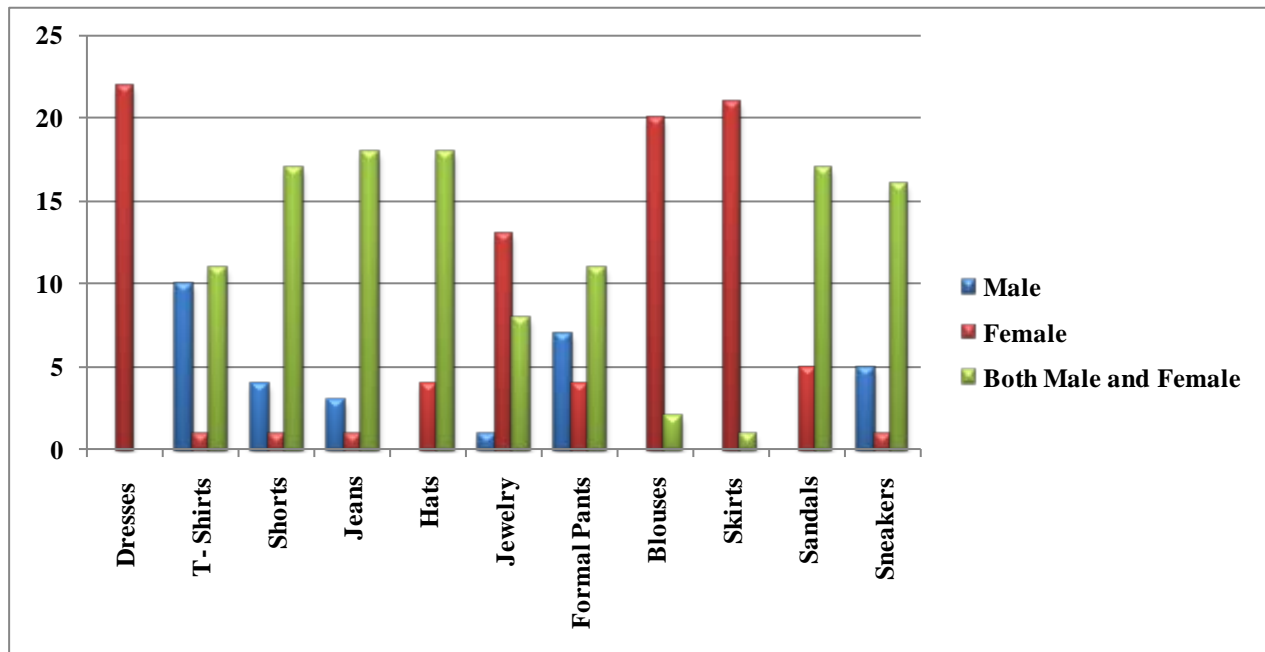
Question Five is designed to determine how learners' view the dressing of an individual in relation to their gender. This is an important question as during the during-test (reading of the novel) and post-test (group interview) activities the learners' response to the main protagonists dressing in the novel is a key feature of the study. The result indicates that the use of dresses, skirts, blouses and jewellery are key features of female wardrobes. Apart from those items of clothing that learners' indicated were gender specific, all remaining forms of clothing are to the learners' acceptable to be worn by both males and females.

Question Six: Which colours do you prefer? (Tick all the colours that you would use in your everyday dressing.
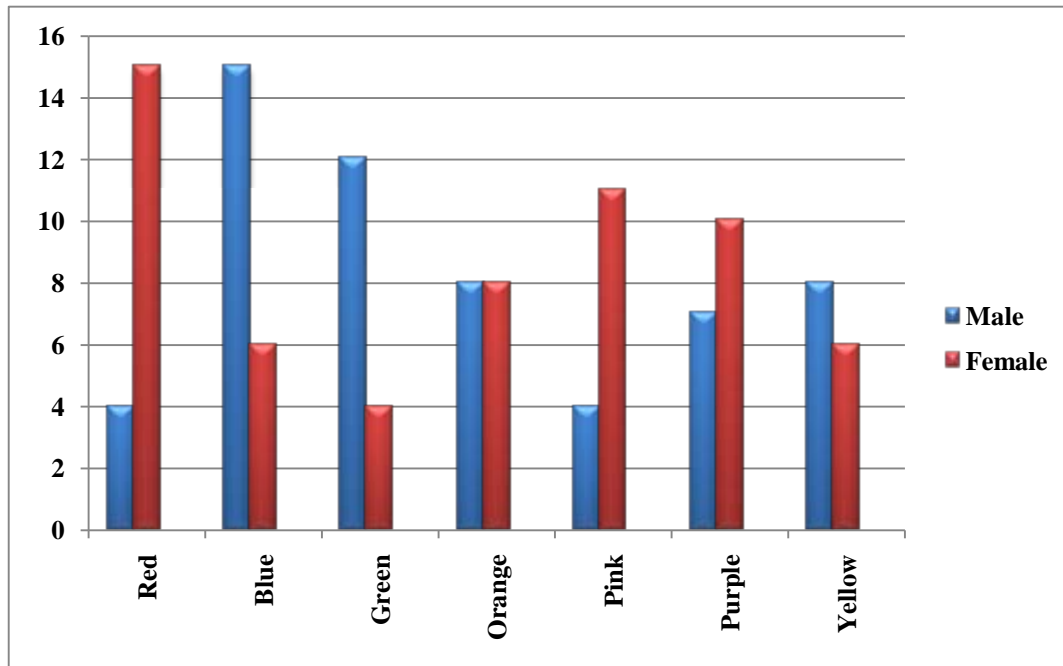
The learners' responses to question six indicate that the male learners' tend to favour colours such as blue, green, yellow and orange whereas the female learners' tend to favour the colours pink, purple, red and orange as well. Based on these results I determine that the learners' associate these colours with gender dressing.

Question Seven: Which jobs are most suitable for Males, Females or Both males and females?
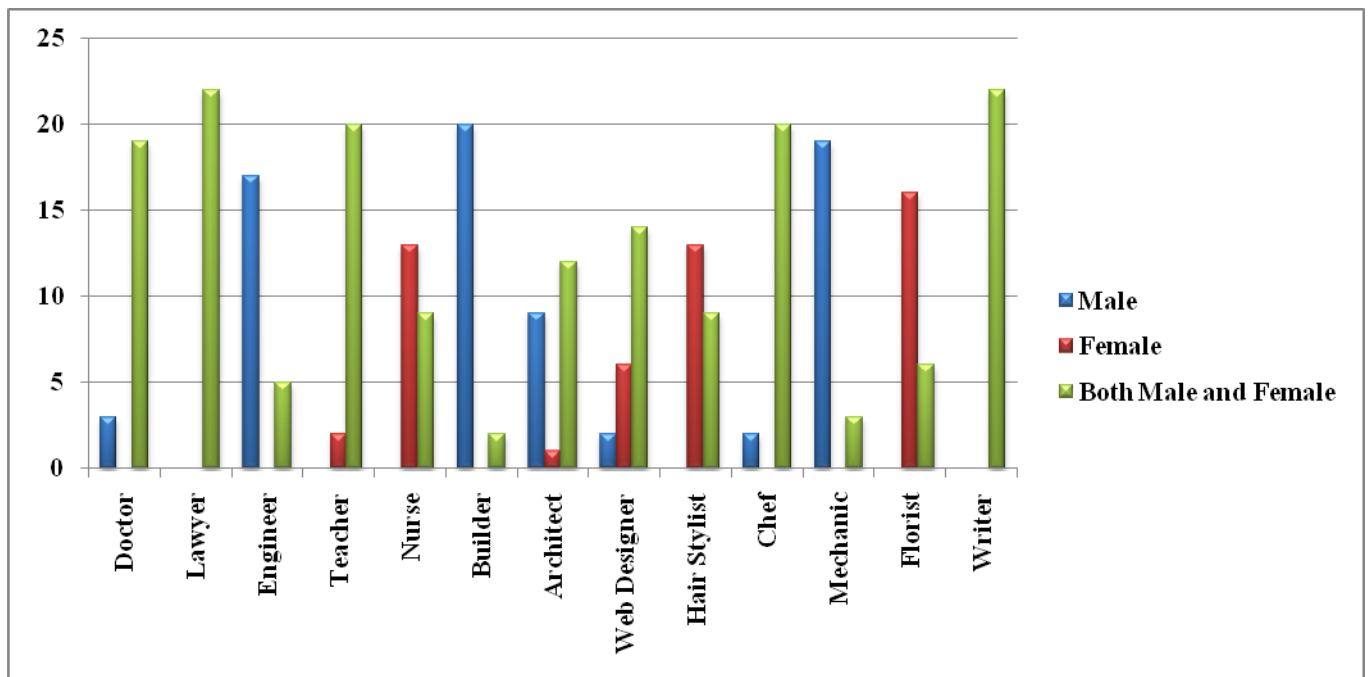
Question seven was designed to determine the learners' perception of gender in employment. The learners' felt that females tend to seek employment in the nursing, hair stylist and florist arena. Males alternatively seek employment as engineers, mechanics and builders. The learners' indicated that the other professions (doctor, lawyer architect, wed designer, chef and writer) are possible for both male and female.

Conclusions drawn from questionnaire

The results that the questionnaire yielded produced the following results in terms of it purpose to define the learners' current understanding of gender roles prior to exposure to the text.

- Learners' believe that household chores and tasks are female activities.

- Mechanical and electrical chores however are preformed by males.

- The more physical and contact sporting activities are male dominated sports.

- Female sports revolve around activities such as modelling, dancing and netball. Indicated as non-contact sports.

- Dresses, skirts and blouses were effectively determined as female items of clothing.

- Colour association indicates blues, greens, yellows and oranges being the male proffered dressing colours.

- And pink, purple, red and orange being the proffered female dressing colours.

- Results conclude that nursing, being a hair stylist and a florist are female professions.

- And that engineering, building, architecture and being a mechanic are male professions.

Based on these findings I will assume that the learners' engaging in this study have a predetermined understanding of gender stereotypes. And in relation to the research outline in the literature review these results depict that their understanding are inline with typical gender stereotyped perceptions of male and female roles in society.

<u>**Results of the Reading:** *"Bill's New Frock"* **by Anne Fine (2010)**</u>

In order to effectively disseminate the results, they will be explained using the various chapters of the novel. Selected transcriptions of the reading, conversations between the teacher and the learners' and a summary of the main trends and patterns that emerged during analysis of the voice recording, diary and researcher observation notes will be documented under each chapter heading.

<u>**Chapter One: A really awful start**</u>

Teacher: "When Bill Simpson woke up on Monday morning, he found he was a girl. He was still standing staring at himself in the mirror, quite baffled, when his mother swept in. 'Why don't you wear this pretty pink dress? She said……. And to his astonishment, before he could even begin to argue, she dropped the dress over his head and zipped up the back. 'I'll leave you to do up the shell buttons she said. 'They are a bit fiddly…." (Fine, 2010, p. 1-3)

Researcher observation: Giggles and laughter from the learners' at Bill being made to wear a pink dress.

Teacher: "…Things, though odd, were just going on in their own way, as in a dream. Or it could be a nightmare! For hanging about on the corner was the gang of boys from the other school. Bill recognised the one they called Mean Malcolm in his purple studded jacket…… Then Bill heard the most piercing whistle. He looked around to see where the noise was coming from, then

realised Mean Malcolm was whistling at him! Bill Simpson blushed so pink that all his freckles disappeared…. Mean Malcolm sprawled against the railings, whistling at Bill as he went by wearing his pretty pink frock with shell buttons." (Fine, 2010, p. 4-5)

Researcher Observation: Learners' burst into laughter at Bill being whistled at by Mean Malcolm.

Learner response (boy): "Mean Malcolm thought Bill looked so pretty in his dress."
Learner response (girl): "That's so horrible poor Bill."

Teacher: "…When he reached the main road, there was an elderly woman with curly grey hair already standing at the kerb. To feel safe from the gang, he stood at her side. 'Give me your hand little girl', she said. 'I'll see us both safely across the road…. On the far side, she looked down approvingly as she released him. 'That's a pretty pink frock! She said. 'You mind you keep it nice and clean…." (Fines, 2010, p5-6)

Researcher Observation: Every time the teacher reads the words pretty pink frock; most learners softly giggle and cover their faces imitating a look of embarrassment. The girls tend to look at each other, cover their faces and giggle.

Learners' response (boy): "I would have knock him in the face if he whistled at me"

Teacher: "The head teacher was standing at the school gates, holding his watch in the palm of his hand, watching the last few stragglers arrive. ' Get your skates on, Stephen Irwin! He yelled. And: '*Move,* Tom Warren!' Another boy charged round the corner and cut in front of Bill. 'Late Andrew!' the head teacher called out fiercely 'Late. Late. Late!' Then it was Bills turn to go past. 'That's right' the head teacher called encouragingly. 'Hurry along dear. We don't want to miss assembly, do we? …" (Fine, 2010, p. 6-7)

Learner response (boy): "that's so unfair, all the boys got scolding but Bill didn't because he was a girl"

Learner response (boy): "Lucky Bill was a girl he didn't get scolded"

Teacher: … 'Now I need four strong volunteers to carry a table across to the nursery' announced the head teacher. 'Who wants to go?'….. The head teacher gazed around him. Then he picked four boys.

Learner response (girl): "That is so true, the boys are always picked to carry things, and they never get the girls to carry stuff"

Learner response (girl): "That is so unfair; Astrid said she was just as strong"

Researcher observation: The boys didn't seem to be bothered by this scene, the girls in the class however openly voiced their agreement with the argument that Bill and Astrid were trying to make to Mrs Collin's.

Teacher: He wrote more than he usually did. He wrote it more neatly than usual too….. 'Look at this', she scolded stabbing her finger down on the page. This isn't very neat, is it? Look at this dirty smudge…..she turned to Philip to inspect his book next. It was far messier than Bill's, it was more smudgy….. Not bad at all, Phillip, she said 'Keep up the good work' Bill could scarcely believe his ears. He was outraged……… Philip just shrugged and said: 'Well girls are neater' Bill felt so cross he had to sit on his hands to stop him from thumping Philip." (Fine, 2010, p, 11-13)

Researcher observation: Learners' mumbling that's unfair, the girls agreed that boys' writing is very untidy. The boys refuted strongly stating that that just not true. The girls expressed the feeling that there was a certain expectation placed on them to have neat hand writing.

Teacher: I don't see why Rapunzel just has to sit and wait for the Prince to come along and rescue her, Bill explained. Why couldn't she plan her own escape? Why didn't she cut of all her lovely long hair herself, and braid it into a rope, and knot the rope to something, and then slide own it? Why did she have to just sit there and waste fifteen years waiting for a prince?" (Fine, 2010. P, 16-17)

Learner response (boy): "I would have done that and escaped from the witch"
Learner response (boy): "Bill's right that would have made the story so much better."
Learner response (girl): "She was scared of the witch that's why she didn't escape herself"

Researcher observation: The boys seem to think along similar lines as Bill. They felt it was obvious that Rapunzel could have escaped herself; the girls however enjoyed the romanticism of the story and like the Prince and the happily ever after ending.

Chapter Two: The wumpy choo

Teacher: "Outside in the play ground a few boys were already kicking a football about. Bill Simpson was just about to charge in and join them when he remembered what he was wearing…. What did the girls do? Some perched along the nursery wall, chatting to one another. Others' stood in the cloak room porch, sharing secrets and giggling." (Fine, 2010, p. 19-20)

Learner response (Girl): "The boys took up the whole playground and only gave the girls' so little space to play."
Learner response (Boy): "The girls only like to stand around and gossip, they didn't need much space"
Learner response (Boy): "Bill must have felt really bad not being allowed to play with the boys"

Teacher: "What do you get if you do it? Bill asked them. 'A wumpy choo' 'A wumpy choo?' Bill Simpson was mystified.

Researcher observation: The learners appeared puzzled as to what this wumpy choo was.

Teacher: "Right then thought Bill. No reason to hang about. It was a simple enough shot. All he needed was a football. He walked towards the footballers in order to borrow theirs for a moment. Just as he did so, the game happened to swing his way and several boys charged past- knocking Bill flat on his back on the tarmac. 'Get out of the way!' 'We're playing here!' Bill picked himself up. He was astonished. Usually if anyone walked into the football game, the player's just thought they'd decided to join. 'Come in on our side!' they'd yell. 'Be our goalie! Take over!' This time it was as if they weren't so much playing football around him as through him. "Get off the pitch!" Stop getting in our way! Go round!' It was the frock again! He knew it." (Fine, 2010, p. 24-26)

Learner response (girl): "The boys were so mean, just because Bill was a girl, that's why they treated him like that."

Learner response (girl): "The boys took up the whole play ground and they were so mean to Bill when he went to ask he could borrow the football. I think it really unfair that they wouldn't let him play football too."

Learner response (boy): "Girls can't play football, they are too soft; we have to keep worrying about whether we are going to hurt them and then the game isn't fun any more."

Learner response (girl): "Boys do play very rough and wildly, I like playing soccer though"

Researcher observation: The girls in class note that the playground area is unfairly distributed the boys' are very dominating and take up most of the field with their game of football. They also

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expressed their opinions that it was unfair that the boys wouldn't allow any girl to play soccer. One learner felt that boys played too roughly and that's why playing together wasn't a good idea, another learner felt that boys and girls' perceptions on how to play the game differed and that is why boys and girls do not play such games together. A learner reluctantly admitted that although she didn't want to admit it, boys do play football better and are stronger physically that girls.

Teacher: "Bill Simpson looked down. 'What's this?' he asked. 'It's what you wanted,' Martin said. 'My very last 1p chew.' In silence, Bill Simpson handed over the football. Where he'd been clutching it tightly against his chest, there was now an enormous brown smudge. In silence, Bill Simpson turned and walked away. If all the girls had not been standing around the edges of the playground watching him, he would have cried." (Fine, 2010, p.30)

Research Observation: The learners' appeared disappointed, with what a wumpy choo turned out to be. A learner stated that Bill didn't get much out of his actions; he just ended up making his dress dirty. Another learner very insightfully noted that she felt sorry for Bill, because he wanted to cry but couldn't because everyone was watching him and he didn't want anyone to see him cry. This sparked a discussion on the issue of boys and girls crying. With the boys admitting that at times they do want to cry but that they would never cry in front of anyone.

Chapter Three: Pink, pink , nothing but pink.

Teacher: "After break, it was art. Everyone helped to unfold the large plastic sheets and lay them over the table tops, and spread old newspapers over them…so Leila dragged the heavy cardboard box full of paint tubs out of the cupboard and everyone crowded around to choose their colours. 'Here's a pink' 'What's that one?' 'Pink.' 'More pink' 'Pink…… 'There's some pink here.' 'And this one's pink.' 'Pink, pink, nothing but pink…..'" (Fine, 2010, p.38)

Researcher observation: The learners' seemed amused by the predicament the children found themselves in. The constant repetition of the word pink brought on some giggles. And a response from a boy learner stating "They only had girls' paint."

Chapter Four: No pockets

Teacher: Perhaps Mrs Collin's noticed how fed up he looked. Perhaps she was grateful to him for sitting so still for so long, and being so pink. Or maybe it was just Bill's eye that she happened to catch first. But, whatever the reason, it was Bill Simpson she chose to take her spare key to the office." (Fine, 2010, p. 41)

Learner response (girl): "Bill must have been so relieved, that he didn't have to sit in the chair all pink while the other children painted him"

Learner response (boy): "Mrs Collin's felt bad about making Bill sit while the other's painted him, that's why she sent him to give her key to the office."

Teacher: "… But just as he turned the corner, who should he see backing out of a cupboard but the head teacher! ... 'You look very sensible and responsible, the head teacher said. 'Not dawdling along peering at all the paintings, taking your time. Are you going to the office on an errand for your teacher? Would you do me a favour? And take these coloured inks to Mrs Bandaraina? And he held out a handful of tiny glass bottles… Bill went on. He hardly reached the short flight of stairs when the school nurse came up them the other way carrying a pile of yellow forms in her arms, and walking faster than most people run. 'Ah!' she said, spotting Bill 'Just what I need! Someone who can take these medical forms to the office for me… 'And they're in perfect alphabetical order,' she called back over her shoulder. 'So, whatever you do, don't drop them!" (Fine, 2010, p. 44-46)

Learner response (girl): "Bill was asked to carry so many things."

Learner response (boy): "Bill looked like a responsible child because he was wearing the dress and he was a girl. All the teachers' always think that girls are more responsible. That's why they always send them to the office and make the boys only carry heavy things."

Researcher observation: The learners' seemed very amused at Bill's initially dawdling down the corridor and then being told by the head teacher how responsible he was not dawdling down the corridor looking at pictures. A learner responded the teacher didn't believe he was dawdling

because the head teacher likes girls' better. He was nice to Bill even in the morning when he was late for assembly.

Teacher: "Then he felt all round the pretty pink frock for a pocket. He pushed and shoved at frilly places here and there, wherever he thought one might be hidden. But though he heard the material rip once or twice, and felt his hands go through the hole he'd accidentally torn, there were no pockets there. No. not one pocket. Acres of material. Masses of it. Pleats, frill, bows, scallops, fancy loops. But not one pocket." (Fine, 2010, p. 46-47)

Researcher Observation: The learners' both boys' and girls' agreed with Bill regarding the impracticality of dresses. The boys' seemed to sympathise with the girls' opinions that dresses thought pretty and a favourite didn't meet with the practical needs of children. i.e. having pockets.

Teacher: "Each step seemed to take forever. Everything in his pile seemed to be wobbling dangerously. Everything in his pile seemed to be sliding closer to the edge. 'My!' Mrs Bandaraina said, watching his snail-slow progress. 'Aren't you the careful one, taking such care not to spill coloured ink on your sweet little frock!' It wasn't Bill's fault. It was because she said the words 'sweet little frock'. A shudder of pure fury rose through his body and made his hands shake." (Fine, 2010, p. 51-52)

Learner response (boy): "I knew he was going to drop everything, he was holding too many things."

Learner response (girl): "The teachers' only gave him so many things to carry because they thought he would mange carrying it because he is a girl"

Learner response (boy): "Bill doesn't like it when everyone keeps telling him about his pretty dress. The dress is the cause of all the trouble he is getting into."

Learner response (girl): "But the dress also helped him get out of trouble too."

Chapter Five: The Big Fight

Teacher: It rained all through the lunch hour….He settled himself alone, leaning his chair back against the wall, and waited for Mrs Collin's to hand round the comics…'I'll have a Thunder, please. Or a Hornet.' 'No more Hornets' she said leafing through the last three or four comics left in her hand. 'No Thunders, either…. She thrust a Bunty towards him. 'There you are.' she said. 'You'll enjoy this.' 'There are almost no pages missing at all.'…Bill blamed Mrs Collin's, frankly. Though he couldn't prove it, and wouldn't dare ask, he firmly suspected that, if he had not been wearing the pretty pink frock, he would never have ended up with the Bunty… He read the Bunty. And it wasn't that bad. (Fine, 2010, p. 54-62)

Learner response (boy): "Bill got the Bunty comic because he looked like a girl and the Bunty comic book was for girls'."

Learner response (girl): Bill tried swapping the book but no one wanted to exchange comics with him because they all thought the Bunty was a boring comic book.

Learner response (girl): "When Bill couldn't get anyone to swap with him he started reading the book and he liked it. Bill just judged the book by what it looked like on the outside only. Because it was a girls' book he didn't want to read it, but he now realises it's an interesting comic book."

Teacher: "The Dandy began to tear. Let go repeated Bill Simpson. Rohan pulled harder. Bill Simpson hit him. He clenched his fist and punched Rohan on the shoulder as hard as he could. Rohan yelped in pain, and dropped his half of the comic. Though his heart was thumping so fiercely his eyes couldn't settle on the picture, let alone read the print, Bill Simpson pretended he had calmly gone back to his Dandy. Until Rohan kicked out at him. In fact his foot didn't touch Bill at all. It tangled instead in the folds of the pretty pink dress. But it did leave a criss-cross footprint… within seconds they were having a fight….It was Mrs Collins who put a stop to it. Striding across the room in a fury she grasped both of them by the shoulder and hauled them apart. Both were scarlet with rage. 'How dare you?' shouted Mrs Collin's 'How dare you?'

'…What's going on? Who started this fight?' 'It wasn't my fault' snarled Rohan. 'I didn't start it.' 'You did.' Snarled Bill clenching his fists again. 'You kicked me!' He showed the footprint on his pretty pink frock. 'You punched me first,' insisted Rohan…But Mrs Collin's, for one wasn't impressed. She didn't even appear to have heard what he said she was busy leaning over to look at the footprint on Bill's dress. (Fine, 2010, p. 65-69)

Learner response (girl): "The fight was started by Rohan, but Bill did hit him first. The teacher didn't believe Rohan, because Bill was wearing a dress and she didn't believe that a girl would start a fight or hit Rohan so hard that he should retaliate and cause that big footprint on Bill's dress.

Learner response (boy): Bill got out of getting scolding because he had the dress on, so Mrs Collin's believed him and was more interested in looking at his dress with the shoe mark instead of listening to Rohan about who actually hit first.

Researcher observation: The fight scene engaged the learners' in a lengthy discussion about how Bill, did hit first but because he was viewed as a girl the punch that he gave Rohan was treated as if it was a small nudge and not painful. The learners' responded by saying that because girls' are viewed as gentle and weaker the punch could not possible have hurt as much as Rohan claimed. The boys' in the class were in strong disagreement with some stating that they personally experienced being hit by a girl and that it truly hurt. They also felt it was extremely unfair that Rohan wasn't even allowed to express his version of events. However they felt the punishment they both received was fair.

Chapter Six: Let Paul Win

Teacher: As soon as the bell rang for the end of the lunch break the sun began to shine again…

'Races!' said Mrs Collin's. 'We'll have a few races. We haven't had races for such a long time.'

… 'Races aren't nearly as much fun' said Talilah, 'when you know exactly who's going to win.' 'It must be much worse, 'whispered Kirsty, 'if you're someone like Paul and know you're going to lose.' 'Paul can't have won a race in his whole life!'… Beside him, the girls were in one of their huddles, still whispering away. 'What if Paul did win, though?' … Bill barely listened…. The whispering at his side went on and on. Then: 'Right,' Kirsty said. 'That's settled." She turned to Bill. 'Now don't forget', she whispered sternly. 'Just as you're reaching the finish line, you get a really bad attack of stitch. You can't go on. You let Paul go past you. You let Paul win, is that understood?" (Fine, 2010, p. 72-80)

Learner response (girl): "The plan that the girls' made up to allow to Paul to win, was a good idea, it showed how they wanted him to also feel happy and make his mum proud of him."
Learner response (boy): "The girls' were being very nice and wanted Paul to win so that he would be able to experience winning a race."
Learner response (boy): "The girls' are always hatching up plans and gossiping, first on the play ground and again now with the races. I think girls really do like gossiping.

Teacher: "Bill tried to slow his pace down. He couldn't do it…. He couldn't let Paul win. And it wasn't as if who won the race was important. He knew that… he was supposed to pretend to have a stitch. Right, then. But he couldn't do that either…. He wanted to win himself…A smile of triumph spread across his face. He'd won. He'd won! ... The victorious smile from Bill's face faded. He felt small and selfish and ungenerous. He felt ashamed… Paul was still bravely pressing round the last bit of the circuit in his funny loping way. And he looked happy enough. He had a huge smile on his face in fact he looked positively radiant." (Fine, 2010, p, 83-89)

Learner response (girl): "That was so mean of Bill; he should have let Paul win."

Learner response (girl): "Bill is a boy, and all boys' are very competitive they always want to win and they don't care about the other person's feelings."

Learner response (girl): "While Bill was running the race his instincts as a boy took over and he just wanted to win, but when he did, he couldn't enjoy that feeling of being a winner because he didn't do what the girls wanted him to do, he let them down and he let Paul down."

Researcher observation: The learners' initially felt angry and upset with Bill for not following through on his plan; however they did see a change in Bill when he displayed regret at not allowing Paul to win. The learners' also expressed an approval of Bill when he cheered happily for Paul coming in second. One learner remarked that he gave up his time for praise at coming out first to allow Paul the opportunity to enjoy his win.

<u>Chapter Seven: Happy ending</u>

Teacher: "Bill looked a sight. He knew it. The frock was a rumpled mess, with grubby fingerprints all around the hem, a huge brown football-shaped smudge in the front, paint smears down the folds, rips in each side where he hunted in vain for pockets, a great criss-cross footprint where Rohan kicked him, and a grass stain down the back- the sort of grass stain that would never come out. The frock was a disaster. And that is probably why; when Mean Malcolm whistled at Bill Simpson again he took it very badly" (Fine, 2010. P, 94-95)

Learner response (girl): "I feel so sorry for Bill; he had such a horrible day."

Learner response (girl): "He ruined his dress"

Learner response (boy):"Good! , Mean Malcolm deserved to be pushed into the dustbin; it is so rude to cat call at girls."

Teacher: "When Bill Simpson walked in the front door of his house, his mother was just coming through the back door. They met in the hall. Mrs Simpson stopped dead in her tracks. She stared at Bill in absolute horror… 'You'd better take that of at once', she said, unzipping the back and starting to undo the fiddly shell buttons. 'This is the last time I ever send you to school in a frock! 'She peeled the offending dress up over his shoulders and gave him a little push towards the stairs. Bill needed no prompting he ran up to his bedroom and pulled on a pair of jeans and a shirt. Then he took the tiniest sideways peep in his mirror. And then another slightly longer peep. And then a good long stare. He was a boy!" (Fine, 2010, p.97-98)

Learner response (boy): "Finally he is a boy again."

Researcher observation: The learners' all seemed pleased and happy that Bill was back to being a boy again.

<u>**Results of Focus Group Interviews**</u>

The results of each of the focus group interviews were analysed and conclusions drawn based on the main trends and patterns that emerged during these interviews. The focus group interviews consisted of a series of 11 open ended questions which were posed to the learners' in each group. The responses were recorded and then transcribed. A summary of the transcriptions is indicated below followed by selected transcriptions of actual quotes from the focus groups.

Question One and Two: Did you enjoy the book? and What did you like about it?

All students' responded with "Yes". They stated that they enjoyed listening to the reading of the book; they felt it was very funny and entertaining it opened up their eyes to how boys' and girls' are treated.

Focus Group 2 Learner response: "Yes, I really enjoyed the book. It was very interesting and also very humorous and insightful. I felt like I could sometimes understand what Bill was experiencing as a girl and I also learnt some things about boys too."

Question Three: What were your favourite scenes in the book? Elaborate.

The learners' responses covered various scenes across the book, the most common response being "Mean Malcolm"- the learners' enjoyed the scene in the beginning of the novel when Malcolm whistled at Bill and then again in the end when he charged at Malcolm for whistling at

him again. They felt that Malcolm had deserved that because no one should be whistled at like a dog and that it was very rude.

Focus Group 1 learner response: "My favourite part of the book was when the teacher scolded Rohan and Bill for fighting- the way her face got all screwed up was very amusing, I also liked the part where Bill was agreeing with Astrid that girls' can also carry the tables."

Focus Group 2 learner response: "I really enjoyed the painting scene, I thought it was very funny how every one wanted to paint Bill because he had a pink dress on and because he was blushing so much his skin turned pink and they said he was pink all over. It was so funny because Bill didn't want to get painted but because he had the dress on every one even the teacher said to paint him."

Focus Group 2 learner response: "My favourite part was when Bill took the ball away from the boys' while they were playing soccer; it was so unfair how they treated him, like he didn't even exist. I was happy when he got the last wumpy choo, but also a little disappointed that it was just gum and a penny"

Question Four: Do you think Bill had a good time being a girl for a day? Why?

Focus group 3 learner response: "No he didn't enjoy being a girl. He didn't like wearing the dress and he didn't like how people, like the old lady who helped him cross the road treated him. He felt like they treated him as if he couldn't do anything by himself."

Focus group 3 learner response: "Yes and no, he did enjoy being a girl; like when he didn't get scolding for coming late to school or dropping all of the things the teachers' gave him to carry to the office. He enjoyed being given special treatment and being thought to be gentle and innocent. But he didn't like how he was dressed in the pink frock and how everyone kept telling him how pretty he looked in his frock. He also didn't like it when the boys did, not allow the girls into the soccer game."

Focus group 1 learner response: "Yes and No, when Mrs Collins didn't listen to Rohan's version of the fight Bill felt like she was being nicer to him because he was a girl and Rohan had messed his dress with a footprint. He also felt that because he was wearing a dress he was treated differently like when the comics were passed out and when they were looking for something to paint."

Question Five: How do you feel about the way Bill was treated as a girl?

Focus group 1 learner response: "I felt he was treated differently because he was a girl."

Focus group 2 learner response: "He wasn't treated the same as when he was a boy."

Focus group 1 learner response: "They treated him like a girl now."

Focus group 3 learner response: "Even his parents treated him differently."

Question Six: How was he treated differently?

Focus group 1 learner response: "Bill was now a girl and as a girl he was treated better, he was told that he looked very responsible, he was also told many times how pretty he looked."

Focus group 2 learner response: "Bill was spoken to in a more gentle voice by the head teacher, his dad called him dear and was very loving towards him; he patted him on the head."

Focus group 1 learner response: "Bill was expected to behave in a certain way now because he was a girl. Girls' are supposed to be sweet, and gentle and timid."

Focus group 1 learner response: "Girls' are treated with much more respect and kindness, because they are believed to be softer and gentler while boys' are taught that they have to be a man and have to be tough."

Question Seven: Is what Bill describes about his experience of being a girl true or false?

Focus group 2 learner responses: "Yes it is true; girls' are sometimes expected to behave in a certain way, if we play rough or if we dress up untidily the adults will scold us and say we mustn't behave like a tomboy. But boys' can behave anyway the want and they don't get any scolding because it's normal for them."

Focus group 2 learner response: "Yes it is true, I am a boy and I do see that sometime girls' are treated differently, I didn't know how it affected them."

Focus group 3 learner responses: "Yes it's true because you always see the girls' standing around gossiping that's all they do the whole day."

Focus group 3 learner responses: "No it's not true, I think it's false. Girls' do want to play with the boys' and they want to be seen as strong as well. Girls' also don't chat, gossip and make up plans all the time. We just like talking to our friends."

Question Eight: Do you think boys and girls are treated differently? How?

Focus group 1 learner responses: "Boys' and girls' are treated differently for example, girls' are expected to be in the home, they need to learn how to bake and clean and help their mums, while boys' when they get home, just go outside and play games with their friends."

Focus group 3 learner responses: "We are treated differently; boys' get less attention compared to girls' "

Focus group 2 learner responses: "Yes, when people speak to boys' they do speak a lot rougher and in a more angry voice compared to girls'. In mosque our teacher is always scolding the boys because they behave badly, but she never scolds us."

Question Nine: Why do you think Bill was relieved when he turned back into a boy?

Focus group 2 learner responses: "He was relieved because now he could go back to being himself. He didn't like being treated like a girl. He felt he had to be responsible and that he couldn't have fun playing with the boys."

Focus group 3 learner responses: "He was happy to be a boy again he didn't enjoy being a girl."

Question Ten: Would you like to experience being a boy or a girl for a day?

Focus group 3 learner responses: "Yes I would, I would like to experience what Bill felt. I think it would be fun."

Focus group 1 learner responses: "No, I don't like the way boys behave."

Focus group 1 learner responses: "No, I don't want everyone to call me a girl"

Focus group 2 learner responses: "I think it would be a very eye opening experience. I would then be able to know how it feel to be treated differently to being a girl and then I could better understand what boys go through and was is expected of them."

Question Eleven: As a boy/girl are you expected to behave in a certain way?

Focus group 2 learner responses: "Yes, girls are expected to be neat and tidy all the time, we have to have good manners and always be respectful to our elders."

Focus group 3 learner responses: "Boys are also expected to behave in a certain way; you can't be a wimp and cry. I felt really bad for Bill; after he got his wumpy choo he said he would have cried if all the girls weren't standing around the field watching him. I feel like as a boy you aren't allowed to cry. I will be honest sometime when people hurt my feelings I do want to cry but I hold it inside and then when I go home I tell my mum and she says it's ok if I cry by her. But I won't ever cry by my dad he will tease me and call me a girl."

Focus group 2 learner responses: "Yes, boys' are expected to be responsible and grow up to be young men who take care of their families and girls' must be young ladies and be respectful always."

Question Twelve: How do you feel about the way society expects boys' and girls' to behave?

Focus group 2 learner responses: "Society expects you to have certain interests because you are a girl (like shopping, make-up and fashion) and the same goes for boys' also they have to be interested in boy things (play-station, soccer, rugby and skateboards)."

Focus group 1 learner responses: "Yes they do expect us to behave differently, like when we go to my aunts' home all the girls have to sit inside with all the adults while they talk and my brother and my cousins get to play ball outside. I think it's very unfair."

Focus group 1 learner responses: "As a boy I will admit that sometimes we do get more freedom to do what we want compared to girls. It isn't fair we should all be treated the same."

Question Thirteen: What did you learn from Bill's experience as a girl? And has it in anyway changed your perception or views on the way boys and girls are treated?

Focus group 3 learner responses: "I learnt a lot from Bill's experience. I was able to understand how Bill felt because as a girl you do sometimes feel like there is a lot of pressure on you to behave in a certain way. It was nice knowing that feeling like that is normal."

Focus group 1 learner responses: "I learnt a lot about the way girls are treated and how we as boys think they are. I think that the book has made me see that everyone should be allowed to be treated equally and that we mustn't say; she can't do that because she is a girl we must give everyone a chance."

Focus group 2 learner responses: "I think after this experience Bill will be nicer to the girls and he will now maybe let them play with the boys and have more space on the ground. I also think he now learnt that life is not all roses and hearts for girls that we do have a hard time."

Focus group 3 learner responses: "It has opened up my views I don't think that boys and girls should be told what they can and can't do. I think if what happened to Bill happened to me I would have learnt that it's not nice to judge someone and just think you know something about them just because they are a boy or a girl."

Final conclusions drawn from the pre-test, during-test and post-test activities.

The conclusions drawn will attempt to answer the key research questions that this study sought

to address.

Research Question 1:

What are grade 4 learners' understandings of gender stereotypes?

Research Question 2:

Why do they view gender stereotypes the way they do?

Research Question 3:

To what extent, if any, is gender Stereotyping influenced by the novel *"Bill's New Frock"*

(2010) by Anne Fine?

From my analysis of the results above I have arrived at the following conclusions.

- Learners' are predisposed to gender stereotyping. They are exposed to it on a daily basis
  in their everyday lives and as a result view it as a societal norm.

- When a book that challenges these stereotypes is introduced to learners' it opens up their
  minds allowing them to say out loud what they think in respect to gender roles. The
  responses to the reading of the text, indicate that learners' found the way in which boys
  and girls are treated as a result of there gender to be true and an acceptable feature.

- As the novel progressed and the learners' began looking deeper into the novel they
  looked beyond the humour and noticed the challenges these stereotypes caused in the
  main protagonist, Bill.

- The focus group interviews allowed the learners' the time to process their new views on gender roles. This allowed them the opportunity in a safe environment to vent what they felt was fair and unfair about gender stereotyping.

- At the end of the interviewing process the learners' acknowledged that gender roles do influence how we behave, how we treat others and what expectations we build up of the people around us. A particular learner who initially was very anti girls concluded that "maybe we are all treated and treat each other the same we wouldn't have such a thing as gender stereotypes"

- I have come to the conclusion that exposure to a book such as "*Bill's New Frock*" (2010) by Anne Fine's has the ability to change and improve a learners' understanding of gender roles and gender stereotypes.

- It affords the learner an opportunity to view how stereotypical behaviour is experienced by the opposite gender and as a result the learners' concluded that stereotypical roles were unfair, bias generated inequality.

<center>**Chapter Five**</center>

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect that exposure to gender stereotypical texts have on learners already preconceived understandings of gender stereotypes and gender roles. The actual research process spanned a period of 4 days in a grade 4 English classroom and yielded results beyond expectations. I anticipated based on previous studies that the text would alter and sensitize the learners to gender roles, but this study was able to accomplish a change in attitude as well. Based on the responses from some of the learner participants I have concluded that not only where they now more knowledgeable regarding gender –equality they inturn also wished to reinforce the new knowledge by taking action in their own lives and actively being more gender equal individuals.

Link between the main issues addressed in the literature review and the key findings in the results and analysis chapter.

"A stereotype is a poured metal plate, and once the metal is poured the plate can't be changed" Kirby et al (p.140) the statement being one of the earliest definition of gender stereotypes. It is early definitions such as these by Kirby et al that encouraged researchers to challenge the definition of gender stereotypes. The results of my study clearly demonstrate that gender stereotypes are far from unchanging metal plates. Instead they can be easily bent and manoeuvred by the addition of a catalyst. Just as heat (catalyst) can bend and alter the shape of metal to suit any purpose so to can texts be used to restructure the ideas of gender stereotypes.

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" Indeed, in and authors of Children's Literature argue that the manner in which gender is represented in children's literature impacts children's attitudes and perceptions of gender appropriate behaviour in society. In this respect, contents with gender stereotypes can offer children a privileged opportunity, given appropriate educational intervention to re-examine their gender belief and assumptions leading them to adopt more egalitarian attitudes." Ruterana (2012, p. 85). The results of the Focus group interview yield a very interesting response from some learners. They concluded that since reading the novel and being exposed to via the main protagonist, Bill, how stereotyping affects the social expectations of genders, the learners are now much more open to equal treatment and expectations of both genders.

Literature by Walter (2005) and Reid (1843) highlight that early feminism educated women in terms of domesticity, to tend to the home and look after the families. It was unfortunate to discover that many decades later though this is no longer taught in school it is still a means of social development among our young girls of today. The learner responses indicated that they as young girls are expected to learn and preform household choirs and tend to the cooking and baking in the home.

Hall (1996) indicates that visual clues are used to determine the similarities and differences in gender stereotypes. Within the novel these key visual tools were used to determine the way in which Bill was treated. The use of the pink frock with fiddly shell buttons are strong visual tools used to associate him with the female gender. It was ultimately the putting on and removal of the dress that defined Bills gender within the text.

"Stereotypes exclude or reject everything which falls out of its definitions, everything which is different. It sets up symbolic boundaries and then provides the mechanism of cultural production for people to police these boundaries. People use stereotypes to determine who should naturally belong to one group or another." Kirby et al. (2003, p. 141). The results of my study clearly challenge this statement. A key feature of the findings indicates that once the learners through the main protagonist Bill's experience of being on the opposite side of the gender boundary. They were more understanding of the effects of gender stereotyping and open to fair and equal treatment of individual irrespective of their gender, indicating that stereotypes don t inform or define a gender rather they confine and restrict genders.

(Meyer, 2011 p.3) highlights the key roles that schools play in teaching and reinforcing the dominant values of gender and sexuality. From the very first day a child enters school they are identified by their sex. Their gender is a consistently reinforced through stories, free play, and social interactions with their educators and friends. The findings determine that these very stories also have the ability to create gender equality and educate learner about gender stereotypes.

"Each individual has an inherent predisposition (orientation that influences their expression and performance) of gender (behaviour) and helps shape how they name themselves and understand who they are in the social world (Identity)." (Meyer, 2011, p. 43) this links up closely with the results of the questionnaire conclusion that the learner does posses an 'inherent predisposition of gender'.

There is an ongoing debate as stated by Taylor (1996, p. 1555) about whether children's conceptions of the social world, develops dependently or independently of external influences is ongoing. Work by Springer (as cited in Taylor, 1996) for example states that 4-5 year olds do not expect or construct social relationships based on biological appearance (gender lines), and Carg (as cited in Taylor, 1996) in contrast found that children do initially think of gender as a social construct. My hope is that my study will contribute towards this debate.

<u>The larger significance of the results</u>

In spite of this research being a relatively small study it yielded two very important conclusions. The first being, that learners are able to actively construct their own gender roles and gender stereotypes in relation to texts. With the learners both male and female strongly contradicting and challenging dominant gender definitions to determine a more logical, equatorial gender definition.

The second is the immense power that a teacher possesses as an agent for shaping gender equality. The teacher is responsible for the selection of texts and reading materials in classrooms. They are offcourse guided by the curriculum and policy documents however they need to be aware of the impacts that their selections of texts could have on learners' gender equality eduction. Teachers have the abilty to take on the roles of being change-agents, and moving towards a curriculum which encompasses gender- sensitive education.

Issues for further studies

Some possible new research that can emerge from this study could be:

- The power of teachers' in the selection of gender-equal texts.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003, p. 45) identify the classroom as the key site of learner socialisation. Further to this within the classroom environment the most influential factor is the teacher. Maybin (1994, p. 132) within his research points out that communication tools (educators') have the ability to influence children's most initial gender constructs. Therefore the selection of texts made by educators could possibly influence the socialisation of the children within those classrooms.

It is evident from this study; texts have the ability to encourage children to question their predisposed gender stereotypes, initiating a change in perception and understandings about gender roles. The power that teachers yield in generating gender equal classrooms is immense, through further study, and research, theorists could be able to determine how this powerful role teachers play could be used to inculcate gender equality in schools.

- Can teachers assist learners to reflect critically on their own lives and understandings of gender stereotyping?

The teacher is the most effective tool in the classroom. They are facilitators' of education, gender perception and social discourse in children's lives. It would be of interest to engage in a study of how they can use the roles they occupy in the classroom; to encourage the

learners' to critically evaluate their own lives in relation to their gender beliefs. Such a study could pave the way for new knowledge on how critical self-reflection can possibly alter an individuals' gender understanding.

Limitations of study

Case studies are ideographic and have limited generalizability. A case study only represents itself. It is limited to the circumstances and events surrounding its case. However they may be part of a growing pool of data that may show growing generalizability. This study has aimed at analytic rather than statistical generalizability.

The research area within this study has been limited to the local of a small area in the large Chatsworth community. The beliefs, upbringings and morals of individuals differ greatly across the world. The study may have been able to yield results in line with the researchers' expectations in this specific setting; however if set in a different location; there is a possibility that the results could have differed.

The learners', who participated in this study, did so voluntarily. They were also given the opportunity to leave the study at any point should they so wish. This study involved an entire class of 9-10 year olds, who are easily distracted and influenced by each other. In order not to be perceived as being "uncool" learners' may censor or restrain their opinions; causing the data collected to be accurate according to the majority and not minority opinions. Working with a smaller number of learners also poses a limitation in the study as the smaller small may not

necessarily encompass the views of the larger number of age specific youth living in the setting selected.

The researcher diary and observation data is entirely based on the researchers' perceptions and opinions of events as they unfold. Through different eyes (another research) it is possible for contrasting opinions to develop. Thus relying heavily on the researcher to remain non-bias during the entire research process.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire
1. Age: _____

Tick or cross the appropriate box

2. Gender: M ☐   F ☐

3. Whose responsibility is it to conduct the following activities?

	Male	Female	Both
Housework (sweeping, dusting, cleaning)			
Gardening			
Washing dishes			
Washing clothes			
Ironing			
Cooking			
Washing the car			
Changing light bulbs and fixing plugs			

4. Who can part take in the following activities?

	Male	Female	Both
Soccer			
Netball			
Volleyball			
Tennis			
Cricket			
Chess			
Dancing classes			
Modeling			
Scouts			

5. Who can wear this type of clothing?

	Male	Female	Both
Dresses			
T- Shirts			
Shorts			
Jeans			
Hats			
Jewelry			
Formal Pants			
Blouses			
Skirts			
Sandals			
Sneakers			

6. Which colours do you prefer?
(Tick all the colours you would use in your everyday dressing)

Red ☐

Blue ☐

Green ☐

Orange ☐

Pink ☐

Purple ☐

Yellow ☐

7. Which jobs are most suitable for Males, females or both

	Male	Female	Both
Doctor			
Lawyer			
Engineer			
Teacher			
Nurse			
Builder			
Architect			
Web Designer			
Hair stylist			
Chef			
Mechanic			
Florist			
Writer			

Appendix 2

Interview and discussion questions

Open ended Questions.

1. Did you enjoy the book?
2. What did you like about it?
3. What were your favorite scenes in the book? Elaborate?
4. Do you think Bill had a good time being a girl for a day? Why?
5. How do you feel about the way Bill was treated as a girl?
6. How was he treated differently?
7. Is what Bill describes about being a girl true or false?
8. Do you think boys and girls are treated differently? How so?
9. Why do you think he was relieved when he turned back into a boy?
10. Would you like to experience being a boy/ girl for a day?
11. As a boy/girl are you expected to behave in a certain way?
12. How do you feel about the way society expects boys and girls to behave?
13. What did you learn from Bills' experience as a girl? And has it in anyway changed your perception or views on the way boys and girls are treated?

Appendix 3

Letter of informed consent

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am currently an educator at Montford Primary School and a part time student at the University of Kwazulu Natal (Edgewood Campus) completing my masters in education. My supervisor is Prof. A. Sheik, a senior lecturer in the Department of languages and media studies. Should you wish to contact him at any stage concerning this project his details are as follows: email – sheika@ukzn.ac.za telephone no: 031 260 31 38

The research that I will be conducting in school involves randomly selecting learners from the grade 4 class to answer a questionnaire and be interviewed. The focus of my study surrounds the effect of literature on a learners understanding of gender roles and gender stereotyping. Through this study I am hoping to understand the influence that literature which contains strong gender stereotypical themes has on the learners.

Your child/wards participation will not in any way disrupt their academic curriculum or disadvantage him/her as the questionnaires and interviews will be conducted during lesson times. Your child/ wards responses will be treated confidentially and his/her autonomy will be maintained at all times.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and please note, that you are free to withdraw your child/ward from the study at any stage without any negative or undesirable consequences. Your cooperation in allowing your child/ward to participate in this research project will be greatly appreciated.

Please submit the signed declaration slip below to acknowledge that you have read and understood the implications of your child/wards participation in this project.

Kind Regards,

Ms. P. Munthree

****

Declaration

I _____ (full name of parent) hereby grant/do not grant permission for my child/ward to part take in the above research project. I understand the contents of this document and the nature of my child/wards participation in this research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw him/her from the project at any time should I so desire.

_____   _____
Signature of parent   Date

Appendix 4

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant

I am very grateful that you have agreed to participate in this study which is being conducted for my Masters in Education Programme. I am registered at the University of KwaZulu Natal and my supervisor is Prof. A. Sheik, a senior lecturer in the Department of languages and media studies. Should you wish to contact him at any stage concerning this project his details are as follows: email – sheika@ukzn.ac.za telephone no: 031 260 31 38

The research that I will be conducting in school involves randomly selecting learners from the grade 4 class to answer a questionnaire and be interviewed. The focus of my study surrounds the effect of literature on a learners understanding of gender roles and gender stereotyping. Through this study I am hoping to understand the influence that literature which contains strong gender stereotypical themes has on the learners.

Your participation in this research will not in any ways disrupt your academic curriculum or disadvantage you in any manner as the questionnaires and interviews will be conducted during lesson times. Your responses will be treated confidentially and autonomy will be maintained at all times. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and please note that you are free to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative or undesirable consequences. Your cooperation in participating in this research project will be greatly appreciated.

Please submit the signed declaration slip below to acknowledge that you have read and understood the implications of your child/wards participation in this project.

Kind Regards,

Ms. P. Munthree

****

Declaration

I _____ (participant) hereby confirm I understand the contents of this document and the nature of my participation in this research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw myself from the project at any time should I so desire.

_____   _____

Signature of participant   Date

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Appendix 5

For Att: Principal and Governing Body of Montford Primary School

I Pralini Munthree, student no: 205520345 am currently a part-time student at the University of KwaZulu Natal: Edgewood Campus pursuing a Masters in Education Degree: Languages and Media Studies. In fulfillment of the above degree I am required to complete a Research Dissertation module, a part of the modules requirement is a research project.

I kindly request permission from all relevant school structure to conduct my research within your institution. My area of research focus is Feminism, more specifically gender roles and gender stereotyping. The research I will be conducting is to ascertain the role texts have on learners constructs of gender roles. The research process will involve the use of one grade 4 class (approx 25-30 learners). Indemnity forms will be issued to learners and their participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I will require 3-4 one hour sessions with the learners over a period of 1- 2 weeks.

****

I _____ Principal of Montford Primary school grant/do not grant permission to Pralini Munthree, student no: 205520345 to conduct her research at Montford Primary. I have consulted with the Governing Body, Heads of Department and all other relevant structure in this regard. They have been made aware and understand the scope of Ms. Munthree's research.

Ms. Munthree will/will not be allowed access to a grade 4 class of learner for the requested period of time. Parental consent and learner discretion must be taken into consideration.

_____   _____

Mrs. L. Moodley (Principal)   Date

School Stamp:

5 December 2013

Ms Pralini Munthree   205520345
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Munthree

Protocol reference number: HSS/0833/013M
Project title: Under Stereotyping in Children's Literature: An Analysis of Anne Fines "Bills New Frock" (2010) with grade 4 learners
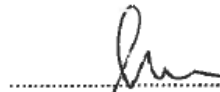
                                                                    Full Approval – Expedited
This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted **Full Approval**

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project; Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation.   Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Prof R Sheik
cc Academic Leader: Dr MN Davids
cc School Admin: Mr Thabo Mthembu

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education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

| Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar | Tel: 033 341 8610 | Ref.:2/4/8/2 |

Pralini Munthree
11 Sialkot Crescent
MEREBANK
DURBAN
4052

Dear Pralini

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **GENDER STEREOTYPING IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: AN ANALYSIS OF ANNE FINES "BILLS NEW FROCK (2010) WITH GRADE 4 LEARNERS,** in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1.   The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2.   The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3.   Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4.   Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5.   A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions   where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6.   The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 August 2013 to 31 March 2014.
7.   Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8.   Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9.   Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (Umlazi District)

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 27 November 2013

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 3921053 Fax : 033 392 11216

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty

EMAIL ADDRESS: Slindile.hadebe@kzndoe.gov.za; CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363;

WEBSITE: WWW.kzneducation.gov.za