

Multicultural Literature and Ethnic Identity Development: An Opportunity for  
Exploration

A Thesis Presented to  
The Faculty of the College of Education  
Ohio University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

by  
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June, 2008

This Thesis Entitled  
Multicultural Literature and Ethnic Identity Development: An Opportunity for  
Exploration

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Background*

Multicultural education is an increasingly important issue in the twenty-first century. Diversity in the United States will become increasingly reflected in our country's schools (Banks & Banks, 2003). According to the US Department of Education the *Condition of Education 2007* reports that 42 percent of public high school students belonged to racial or ethnic minorities in 2005, up from 22 percent in 1972. Moreover, the percentage of school-aged children (ages 5-17) who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 9 to 20 percent between 1972 and 2007. On the other hand while the nation's students are becoming increasingly diverse, most of the nation's teachers are White, middle-class, and female. Specifically, about 87 percent are White, and 72 percent are female (Banks & Banks, 2003).

These demographic trends have important implications for education (Banks & Banks, 2003). According to the National Association for Multicultural Education, multicultural education is an integral component of preserving democratic values and principles. It values cultural and ethnic differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their families, and communities reflect. Multicultural education aids students in developing positive identities by providing knowledge about and exposure to the history, culture, traditions, and perspectives of diverse groups. This is especially crucial for students of color, as ethnic identity is oftentimes directly related to self-concept and self-esteem (Aries, 1989; Banks, 1999; Brubaker & Kahn, 1998; Chandra, 2006; Ford et al, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Maldonado, 1975). Multicultural education serves as the medium through which

students reconcile their perception, or lack there of, about self and others with the various messages and view points they receive from family, peers and their community.

Current curriculum offers numerous opportunities for integration of multicultural education. One such multidisciplinary approach is incorporating multicultural literature in the curriculum. Multicultural literature offers a plethora of opportunities to explore and discuss similarities and differences, values and beliefs, language and dress, etc. (Banks, 1989; Landt, 2006; Singer & Smith, 2003). Moreover, literature provides students with a mirror for themselves, an opportunity to experience cross-cultural variations of their own reality.

Adolescence is a crucial time for exploration, meaning-making, and personal development (French & Seidman, 2006; Grotevant, 1987; Meece, 2002; Phinney, 1990). Education can be transformative in the lives of students as they come to see themselves as citizens of the world. In order for our students to be prepared to live and work in today's global society, it is increasingly important that education in the classroom reflects the growing diversity of our communities.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Little research exists on the effect of exposure to multicultural literature on ethnic identity development. The absence of such research has made it difficult for educators to maximize integration of multicultural literature for student development and achievement. The objective of this study was to assess the relationship between exposure to multicultural literature and adolescent development of ethnic identity. It also explored whether or not ethnic identity development influenced participant perception of and attitudes towards others' ethnicities.

### *Research Questions*

This study focused on several research questions:

- 1) What is the current understanding of ethnicity among adolescents in the process of identity development?
- 2) Is there a difference between ethnic identity development in White individuals and ethnic minorities?
- 3) What are the identifying characteristics in the personal backgrounds of participants whose perception and/or development of ethnic identity has been enhanced by exposure to multicultural literature?

### *Purpose/Significance*

The potential role that teachers and educators can play in the process of students developing a deeper understanding of themselves and those who are different is significant. By utilizing multicultural literature in the classroom, teachers provide self-affirmation for students of traditionally marginalized groups and provide students of non-marginalized groups the opportunity to see the world through the eyes of others (Burton et al, 2005; Chan, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Singer & Smith 2003; Vasquez, 2005).

Examining the effect of exposure to multicultural literature on adolescent ethnic identity development and perception of and attitudes towards other ethnicities has significance in determining integrated language arts curriculum for secondary students and preservice teachers. One of the purposes of this study is to reveal participants' misconceptions about ethnicity and ethnic groupings. Understanding participants' misconceptions may dually provide cause for reassessing how preservice teachers are being

educated with regard to multiculturalism. Thus, the conclusions of this study may be useful in assessing curriculum for both students and preservice teachers.

### *Limitations*

The following factors may have limited the study:

- 1) The population chosen to research in this study was 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in an Appalachian public high school. Given that age is directly correlated to identity status (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980), the study of the effect of multicultural literature on ethnic identity in a younger population may be warranted. Also, socio-cultural context (specifically the region where adolescents live) may play an important role in identity development by shaping the opportunities adolescents are facing. Specifically, adolescents in rural areas may be socialized into more traditional or majority held values or roles.
- 2) The nature of the questionnaire may have been a deterrent to quality responses from students. Participants may have been uncomfortable or disinterested in discussing ethnicity and multiculturalism.
- 3) Although the participants were instructed to complete the questionnaire thoroughly and authentically, not all may have done so.
- 4) Participants' lack of previous exposure to multicultural literature may have affected their willingness to participate and the quality of their responses. Students were assigned readings and were guided in facilitated interactions with multicultural texts during the study.
- 5) Participants are in various stages of ethnic identity development.

### *Definition of Terms*

The following are operational definitions used for this study. Each term is discussed in length in Chapter Two.

1. *Ethnic identity development* is defined as a process of identification with one's cultural, national, geographical, or racial group of origin based on the following components:

- Self identification as a group member refers to the ethnic label that one uses for oneself.
- The feeling of belonging or sense of membership one feels to an ethnic group or in contrast the experience of exclusion or separateness from other group members (Phinney 1990, 1996).
- The presence of positive or negative attitudes toward one's ethnic group. Positive attitude signifying acceptance of an ethnic identity while the absence of positive attitudes or presence of negative attitudes shows a denial of ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990, 1996).
- Ethnic involvement is characterized by social participation in such indicators as cultural practices, language, religion, politics, friendship, and tradition (Phinney, 1990, 1996).

2. *Multicultural literature* is literature that includes a broad variety of perspectives, customs, traditions, histories, and values of groups and peoples that have traditionally been marginalized because of race, culture, ethnicity, religion, language, social class, gender, and/or sexual orientation (Landt, 2006).

3. *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)* is a questionnaire measure of ethnic identity based on several components identified as central to the construct of ethnic identity to various groups. Reflectively, the questionnaire was developed to assess ethnic identity across diverse samples (Phinney, 1992).

4. *Ethnic Salience* is defined as the significance of one's ethnic background in her or her life, and is generally associated with MEIM scores (Alba, 1990; Roberts et al, 1999).

#### *Organization of Study*

Although students live in an ever-increasingly diverse world, this diversity is not necessarily reflected in the teachers and curriculum of their education. Multicultural literature provides both students and educators with developmental support and a multitude of opportunities to gain a greater understanding of themselves and others by initiating conversation on difference, identity, values, and culture (Landt, 2006; Singer & Smith, 2003; Stover, 2000).

After reviewing the literature in Chapter 2, this study's methodology will be reported in Chapter 3. It will include a discussion of the research design, the participants, and the method of data collection and analysis. Finally, Chapter 4 will present the results and findings, while Chapter 5 will discuss the implications for the field of education, and make recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Introduction*

Recent changes in the demographics of the United States, such as increases in the number of immigrants, refugees, and multiracial births, have made it ever important for educators to understand issues of diversity, multiculturalism, and ethnicity (Banks, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Landt, 2006; Phinney, 1990). The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of multicultural literature on the development of ethnic identity in adolescents. This literature review will first examine the two theoretical approaches which divide the research on ethnic identity, including models of ethnic or racial identity development. Next, the literature review looks at the differences in models of ethnic identity development among particular groups. Then the literature review will discuss the importance of ethnicity and ethnic identity in personal development and their implications on education. Finally, this review summarizes the implications of ethnic identity development on education and suggests educational strategies for enhancing development.

#### *Theoretical Approaches*

Two theoretical approaches, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and developmental theory (Erikson, 1968) are present in most research on ethnic identity. Social identity theory states that when individuals are grouped in terms of specific criteria, group members tend to display in-group favoritism and a positive self-concept (Tajfel, 1978). Tajfel and Turner concluded that this process of categorizing oneself as a group member promotes self-esteem in the individual. This group

identity then becomes an integral part of an individual's sense of "who they are" (Tajfel, 1978). As a consequence of this new found group identity, individuals want to see themselves and their groups as different from and better than other groups and hence display in-group favoritism in order to enhance self-esteem. Specifically, ethnic identity is a type of group identity that is crucial to the self-concept of members of ethnic minority groups. If dominant or majority group members disapprove of traits or characteristics of an ethnic group, then ethnic group members may develop a negative social identity resulting in lower self-esteem. Tajfel concluded that members of low-status groups will seek to improve their status and esteem in a multitude of ways.

Unlike social identity theory, developmental theory contends that the human development is influenced both by internal and external factors. Some of the factors which affect development are maturation, active experience, social interaction, and cultural and situational contexts. As environmental factors change, the development of individuals will vary as well.

Developmental theorist Erik Erikson suggests that an individual's identity is strongly influenced by relationships with other people. Identity must be discovered by the individual but also confirmed by others (Erikson, 1968). Erikson saw development in terms of critical periods during which aspects of a person's personality and identity will emerge. He characterized the stages in terms of dichotomies expressing the contrast between most favorable and more negative results which could come from demands of the time periods. Thus, each stage can be seen as a developmental crisis whose resolution will influence a person's view of self

and of society in general. Erikson's fifth stage of development, identity versus role confusion, describes adolescents' search for identity. According to Erikson, adolescence is a critical point in development of identity and self-esteem.

James Marcia (1980) continued Erikson's work on identity and developed a framework for thinking about identity in terms of identity statuses. According to Marcia, the occurrence of an identity crisis and the development of personal commitments can combine into four possible identity statuses. Identity diffusion status is characterized by when an adolescent has not faced an identity crisis nor has he or she made any commitments to group roles or values. As adolescents become willing to commitment to roles and values but have not experienced an identity crisis, they move into identity foreclosure status. Marcia's third status moratorium is distinct in the experience of a crisis and the exploration of various commitments. If an adolescent has gone through an identity crisis and has made a commitment to an identity, he or she is in identity achievement status. Marcia's identity statuses describe states of identity development in terms of the presence or absence of identity crisis and commitments.

A number of researchers have developed models of ethnic identity that correspond to Erikson's theory of identity development, including Cross (1978), Phinney (1989, 1993), Kim (1990), Poston (1990), and Atkinson, Morton, and Sue (1993). Each model begins with an initial stage where the individual has a lack of understanding or awareness of their ethnic identity. This stage transitions into a period of exploration as the individual learns about their group. Ideally, in the final stage the individual commits to an ethnic identity and achieves a confident sense of

group membership. Although these models differ in conception, each proclaims that ethnic identity development occurs in age appropriate, developmental phases.

Jean Phinney (1989) developed a three-stage model of ethnic identity formation to describe the process by which individuals come to understand their ethnicity and make decisions about its role in their lives. The first stage, unexamined ethnic identity, is often marked by a lack of interest in ethnicity, or diffusion, or views of ethnicity that are based on the opinions of others, known as foreclosure. During stage two, moratorium, ethnicity is explored and lastly, stage three, ethnic identity achievement, is characterized by a commitment to and appreciation of one's ethnic group. According to Phinney, ethnic identity achievement often means acknowledgment of "two fundamental problems for ethnic minorities: (a) cultural differences between their own group and the dominant group and (b) the lower or disparaged status of their group in society" (1990).

Phinney (1992) also identified the four components of ethnic identity (self-identification, affirmation and belonging, ethnic behaviors and practices, and ethnic identity achievement) which apply across groups. Self-identification refers to the ethnic label an individual uses to describe his or herself. Positive feelings of kinship and pride in one's group signify affirmation and belonging. The ethnic behaviors and practices component includes social and cultural involvement in one's group, e.g. language, friendship, social organizations, religion, cultural traditions, and politics (Phinney, 1990). Ethnic identity achievement refers to whether an individual has a clear understanding of and commitment to his or her ethnicity. These four components of ethnic identity were present in individuals from various ethnic groups.

Furthermore, Phinney (1992) concluded that affirmation and belonging and ethnic identity achievement are the foundational components of ethnic identity theory and ethnic identity development during adolescence.

Using these four components, Phinney developed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) as a way to measure ethnic identity across diverse samples. The 14-item questionnaire assesses ethnic identity on a four point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree through 4 = strongly agree. With this assessment high scores indicate strong ethnic identity.

#### *Models of Ethnic Identity for Particular Groups*

While identity development is a complex task for all individuals; it is particularly complicated for individuals belonging to marginalized ethnic groups. Due to their membership both in an ethnic group and in the mainstream culture(s), these individuals face an extra problem with identity. Thus, they are caught between their family's ethnic beliefs and values, and that of the mainstream society (Cross, 1978; Evans et al, 1998; Kim, 1981; Quintaina, 2007; Ruiz, 1990; Poston, 1990). This causes extra stress, which adds to the already existing conflict of adolescent self-identity. In order for members of ethnic groups to achieve a stable self-identity, they must integrate the racial or ethnic identities with a personal identity.

Although the majority of ethnic identity models are grounded in Erikson's developmental theory, several researchers felt such theory was too broad and developed models to adequately address the individual needs of particular ethnic groups (Cross, 1978, 1991; Kim, 1981; Ruiz, 1990; Poston, 1990). Cross (1978) developed a four stage model of racial identity development, in which during late

adolescence/early adulthood Blacks progress in discarding an old identity and achieving a new identity. According to Cross (1978), an individual begins in the pre-encounter stage. Individuals in this stage view the world from a White frame of reference, hold positive attitudes disproportionately toward Whites over Blacks, and aspire to White customs and values. Individuals enter stage two, the encounter stage, when they experience shocking events of a personal or social nature (e.g. racism, discrimination, or prejudice) that are inconsistent with their White frame of reference. The individuals come realize that the White frame of reference is inappropriate, and they fluctuate between holding on to their old identity and facing the challenge of developing a new identity. This psychological tug-of-war motivates the individual to begin an active search for a new Black identity. When individuals decide to begin the search for a new identity, they enter the immersion-emersion stage. This stage is characterized by a period of transition during which the person struggles to discard their White frame of reference while at the same time becoming greatly involved in the development of a Black identity. In order to achieve this goal, the person withdraws from interactions with Whites and immerses oneself in various aspects of the Black culture. In the final stage, internalization, individuals achieve an understanding of and self-confidence in their Blackness and accept other groups.

The most widely used developmental stage model for Asian Americans parallels Cross' racial identity development model for African Americans. Developed by Kim (1981), the five stages: ethnic awareness stage, White identified, awakening to social political awareness, redirection to Asian American consciousness, and incorporation, progress from a less-healthy identity to an achieved, healthy ethnic

identity. Kim's model also includes the influence of acculturation, exposure to cultural differences, environmental negativity to cultural/racial differences, personal methods of handling race-related conflicts, and the effects of group or social movements on Asian Americans.

Similarly to both Cross and Kim, Ruiz viewed the general models of racial-ethnic identity development as being too broad and not accounting for the specific cultural differences embraced by the many different Hispanic cultures. In response she developed a Latino American identity development model consisting of five stages. Underlying the model were Ruiz's beliefs that the marginal status of Latinos is highly correlated with maladjustment, that assimilation is detrimental to an individual, and that pride in one's culture and ethnicity are positively correlated to mental health.

Biracial identity development is considered more complex than ethnic identity development among monoracial individuals (Poston, 1990; Sollors, 1996; Spencer et al, 2000; Tatum, 1997). Carlos Poston's five stage model focuses on the unique internal and external factors that shape biracial identity development. During stage one, personal identity, biracial children show identification problems when they internalize outside prejudices. Their personal identity factors (i.e. self-esteem, sense of acceptance) are based primarily on their relationships with family members. Poston's second and third stages, choice of group categorization and enmeshment/denial respectively, mark a difficult time of adjustment and identification. During stage two individuals are forced to choose an identity, usually one ethnic group, or they are forced into one group by society standards. Due to

potential social alienation, some adolescents may make a choice they are uncomfortable with. As a result individuals are plagued by confusion, guilt, and dissatisfaction (Poston, 1990). This becomes particularly apparent during adolescence, when the need to belong is crucial. Stage four, appreciation, is characterized as a time of exploration and curiosity. While individuals still identify with one ethnic group, they begin to expand their understanding of both heritages. In the final stage, integration, individuals value all of their racial and ethnic identities and are now able to recognize and appreciate all of the portions of their race and ethnicity (Poston, 1990).

Although the models by Cross, Kim, Ruiz and Poston vary in their specific ethnic considerations, all models propose a similar progression from an unexamined ethnic identity through a period of exploration to an achieved ethnic identity.

#### *Implications and Strategies*

Ethnic identity is an integral part of adolescent identity development. Studies show a positive correlation between ethnic identity and self-esteem and self-concept (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Phinney, 1989; Roberts et al, 1999; Rosenberg, 1986). The research indicates that self-esteem is determined by an individual's sense of belonging to his or her ethnic group(s). For educators, understanding the process through which early adolescents come to see themselves as belonging to particular ethnic groups is important because it can have a tremendous bearing on their academic achievement (Phinney, 1989).

Educators and administrators are in a prime position to enhance the identity development of their students by fostering opportunities for exploration. Multicultural

literature is a key component of multicultural education. Multicultural literature provides students with a medium for exploration and comparison of groups. Students can experience various cultural perspectives in literature, finding commonalities and cultural connectedness across groups and challenging previously held assumptions and biases (Athanases, 1998; Hinton & Berry, 2004; Jay, 2005; Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005; Landt, 2006; Sleeter, 1995). Most importantly, multicultural literature provides “self-affirmation” for readers, that is it validates their worth by providing representations of their culture (Landt, 2006; Nilsen & Donelson, 2001; Singer & Smith, 2003). Affirmation is particularly significant for members of traditionally marginalized ethnic groups, such as African Americans and Hispanic Americans (Singer & Smith, 2003). Integrating multicultural literature into curriculum provides students with a multitude of opportunities to explore culture, identity, and ethnicity. By being committed to diversity, implementing a multicultural curriculum, and encouraging students to explore their ethnic heritage, educators promote a positive environment for development and learning for all students.

#### *Summary of the Literature*

In summation, the theoretical approaches to ethnic identity development, the stage models of development for particular groups, and educational outcomes and strategies were discussed. The majority of the literature asserted that the key component of ethnic identity was a positive sense of group membership. Moreover, studies showed that ethnic identity development directly correlated with self-esteem, self concept, and academic achievement. Educators can enhance the ethnic identity

development of their students by facilitating opportunities to engage with multiple perspectives.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Research Design*

This research study was based on a survey of southeastern Ohio public high school students. The objective of this study was to assess the relationship between exposure to multicultural literature and adolescent development of ethnic identity. It also explored whether or not ethnic identity development influenced participant perception of and attitudes towards other ethnicities. In order to assess these relationships, the study examined students' perceptions of their own ethnicity as well as the role of ethnicity in their lives. The study also addressed students' attitudes toward and experiences with multicultural literature.

Two different research methods were used to obtain data from participants. The survey consisted of an established instrument, the Multiethnic Identity Measure, and five additional Likert scale questions developed to assess participants' orientation to other ethnic groups. Fifteen Likert scale items evaluated participants' ethnic identity development. This instrument was chosen because it had been validity and reliability tested, and it had been shown to be an effective measure of ethnic identity across groups (Phinney, 1992; Worrell, 2000). Second, additional participant responses were gathered through ten short answer questions in the questionnaire. These questions concerned multicultural literature reading habits and reading experiences and attitudes toward multicultural literature.

The surveys and questionnaires were administered to 25 high school students in rural, Southeastern Ohio. Participants were required to attend an information session and were given parental consent and informed assent forms explaining the purpose of the study.

Returned surveys were numbered to protect participant confidentiality and entered into a database.

### *Participants and Sample*

The population targeted for this study was public high school students at a rural public high school in southeastern Ohio. In order to participate in the study, students had to attend an information session and turn in both a parental consent and an informed student consent form. A sample of 60 potential participants was chosen from a list of all students attending Federal Hocking High in fall of 2007 obtained through the school's Student Information System (SIS). In order to promote an ethnically diverse sample, all 24 of the high school's students of color were invited to participate in the study. The other 36 candidates were randomly selected from SIS. Of the 60 students invited to participate, only 37 attended an information session, for an attendance rate of 61.7%. Out of these 37 potential participants, only 12 students returned consent forms and completed the questionnaire, at a 32.4% completion rate. Of the participants, 25% were students of color, specifically 8.3% were African-American and 16.7% were bi-racial.

### *Instrumentation*

Both a survey and questionnaire were administered to participants. The survey consisted of 15 Likert scale questions developed by Phinney (1992) to assess ethnic identity across diverse samples and five additional Likert scale questions to evaluate participants' orientation to and interaction with other ethnic groups (Appendix A). The Multiethnic Identity Measure assesses ethnic identity using several factors: self-identification; affirmation, belonging, and commitment; and ethnic identity search. Phinney (1992) used two samples (136 college participants, 417 high school participants) to establish reliability

for the MEIM. For the high school sample the overall reliability coefficient was .81, while the college sample's overall reliability was .90. This variance indicated that ethnic identity may become more salient with age.

In addition to the MEIM questions, five additional Likert-scale questions were included in the survey. These questions directly paralleled commitment and search questions numbered 1, 4, 8, and 10 from the MEIM in Appendix A; however these additional questions assessed participants' orientation to other ethnic groups. For example, question 19 states "I think about how the lives of others are affected by their ethnic group membership," while MEIM question 4 reads "I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership".

In addition to the survey, eight additional open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire (Appendix B). These 8 short answer questions were developed to gather further information about participants' sense of belonging, reading habits, attitudes toward multicultural literature, and sense of self-reflection in current school curriculum. It was necessary to leave these questions open-ended for the following reasons: a) there could be many possible answers from the participants; and b) to permit the participants to provide more detailed answers (Best & Kahn, 1998).

Students were asked to elaborate on their feelings of belonging and affirmation in their current school setting. Several questions regarding students' exposure to and experiences with multicultural literature were included. Two questions also pertained to participants' perception of the relevancy of multicultural literature. The first question asked students whether they believed it is important for high school students, specifically in their community, to study multicultural literature. The second question asked students whether

there are potential benefits to reading multicultural literature. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

#### *Data Collection*

The questionnaires were administered to 25 high school students in rural, Southeastern Ohio. Participants were required to attend an information session and were given parental consent and informed assent forms explaining the purpose of the study (Appendix C). Returned forms were collected, sealed in an envelope, and surveys were administered to participants. Returned surveys were numbered to protect participant confidentiality and entered into a database.

#### *Data Analysis*

The goal of this study was to assess the relationship between exposure to multicultural literature and adolescent development of ethnic identity. It also explored whether or not ethnic identity development influenced participant perception of and attitudes towards others' ethnicity. In order to do so, the study posed several research questions:

- 4) What is the current understanding of ethnicity among adolescents in the process of identity development?
- 5) Is there a difference between ethnic identity development in white individuals and ethnic minorities?
- 6) What is the relationship between exposure to multicultural literature and ethnic identity?

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the participants in order to answer the above research questions. Quantitative data, collected using closed-ended questions in the survey, were analyzed using two main types of quantitative methodologies:

mean and descriptive analysis, applying frequency distribution on variables. . Finally, ethnic identity measure and other group orientation were analyzed for correlation. Qualitative data collected using open-ended questions were categorized and interpreted for common themes and patterns

To facilitate data analysis, a score of 1 to 4 was given to each question of the MEIM component (items 1 through 12) and the other-group orientation items of the questionnaire groups (items 16 through 20). The Likert scale used gave the score of 4 for strongly agree, 3 for agree, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree. Answers with the highest level of ethnic identity search, affirmation, belonging, and commitment, or other-group orientation received a score of 4 on a four point scale, and decreased to the score of 1, which indicated low ethnic identity search or affirmation, belonging, and commitment. Questions numbered 1, 2, 4, 8, and 10 assessed ethnic identity search, while items 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12 evaluated affirmation, belonging, and commitment. Items 13, 14, and 15 were used only for purposes of identification and categorization by ethnicity. MEIM scores were determined by calculating the mean of the first 12 items. Thus, participants' overall MEIM scores ranged 1 through 4. Individual scores for both search and commitment were determined by taking the mean of corresponding items. Similarly, participants' orientation to other groups was determined by tabulating the mean of items 16 through 20, also ranging 1 through 4.

Frequency distribution of responses to each question of MEIM helped to summarize the data of the study. For example, if we want to know whether students reflect on the role of ethnicity in their lives, the number of students who responded affirmatively to the corresponding MEIM item provides such a picture in the given context. However, with the MEIM questions utilizing the Likert scale, the frequency distribution for all four possible

answers (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) may not be useful in summarizing the data. Therefore, in order to simplify results for summarization, responses were collapsed into fewer categories for reporting. Categories “strongly agree” and “agree” were combined into the category “agree” and categories “strongly disagree” and “disagree” were combined into the category “disagree.”

Qualitative data collected from open-ended questions on the questionnaire were analyzed through categorization and interpretation. Responses were first grouped question number and then sub-grouped by ethnicity. Finally, responses were assessed using the following techniques: compare/contrast and determine common themes and patterns.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### *Introduction*

In this chapter the results are reported and analyzed as related to adolescents' development and understanding of ethnic identity and ethnicity. First, the findings of the study are presented for each research question. Then, the findings are discussed in relation to the current available literature.

#### *Presentation of the Findings*

Of the 60 students invited to participate in this study, only 37 attended an information session, for an attendance rate of 61.7%. Out of these 37 potential participants, only 12 students returned consent forms and completed the questionnaire, at a 32.4% completion rate. Of the participants, 3 of 12 participants were students of color, specifically 2 were African-American and 1 was bi-racial.

Each of the twelve participants was given a pseudonym to protect his or her identity (See Table 1, p 2).

#### *Research Question #1: Current Understanding of Ethnicity*

The first question in this research study asked what is the current understanding of ethnicity is among adolescents in the process of identity development. The data indicate that for the Multi Ethnic Identity Measure, MEIM, portion of the survey the average ethnic identity measure was 2.69 out of 4.0 ( $N = 12$ ,  $SD = 0.40167$ ) (see Table 1, p. 2). This is an average score of 2.70 for each individual MEIM item, which indicates moderate understanding and development of ethnic identity and ethnicity. Broken down by the

measure's two determining sub-scales, the data indicate that the average ethnic identity search score was 2.33 while the average affirmation, belonging, and commitment sub-score was higher at 2.94. This suggests that on average participants indicated they disagreed with statements about searching for ethnic identity, which is one of three factors of ethnic identity. However, participants reported on average that they agreed with statements affirming feelings of belonging to one's group and positive affect toward participant's own group. In general participants did not average a score of 3, the equivalent of indicating 'agree,' on both major factors of the measure. Thus the participants had not actualized their ethnic identity.

The participants indicated the lowest levels of agreement with Item 8 ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ) which asked them to indicate how much time they spend talking to others in order to learn more about their own group. The findings suggest they do not engage in conversations about what it means to be a member of a particular ethnic group. The findings also suggest a low level of agreement on Item 1 ( $M = 2.17$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ) of the MEIM which asked the participants whether they spend time trying to find out more about their ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs. Thus these findings suggest that participants do not actively seek to know more about their ethnic group.

#### *Research Question #2: Racial Differences in Ethnic Identity Development*

When broken down by race, the data indicate that Caucasian participants had a lower ethnic identity measure. With an average MEIM score of 2.65 on a scale of 1.0- 4.0 ( $N = 9$ ,  $SD = 0.690$ , Caucasian participants had a slightly lower average than their Non-Caucasian counterparts. Non-Caucasian participants also scored moderately with an average MEIM score of 2.80 ( $N = 3$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ). Compared to the average MEIM score of 2.69 for the entire

*Table 1 Participant Multi Ethnic Measure scores*

Participant	SIE	EIS	ABC	EIM
Ken	W	1.6	3	2.42
Robert	W	2	3.14	2.67
Sean	W	2.8	3	2.92
Tim	W	2.8	3.71	3.33
Karen	W	2.2	2.29	2.25
John	W	2.4	2.86	2.67
Elizabeth	W	2.8	2.86	2.83
Stacey	W	2.2	2.43	2.33
Edward	AA	2.4	3.14	2.83
Kristen	W	2.2	2.57	2.42
Heather	AA	3	3.71	3.42
Lisa	W*	1.6	2.57	2.17
Average		2.33	2.94	2.69

Participant scores for the Multi Ethnic Identity Measure, including sub-scores for its 2 major factors: ethnic identity search and affirmation, belonging, and commitment. Participants' self identified ethnicity is also included.

*Key: SIE – self identified ethnicity, W – White Caucasian; AA –African American;*

EIS – ethnic identity search;

ABC – affirmation, belonging, & commitment;

EIM- ethnic identity measure

-- self identified as Caucasian and mixed or bi-racial, specifically Caucasian and African American descent

participant group this finding suggests that ethnic identity development is more salient for individuals of color.

The items that had the lowest levels of acceptance from Caucasian participants were Item 8 ( $M = 1.89$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ) which asked whether they had spent time talking to others to learn about their own ethnic group and Item 1 ( $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ), which asked them about the extent to which they search for information about their ethnic group's traditions,

Table 2 Frequency of response and cumulative frequency rate for MEIM items

Question	Frequency of Response ( <i>F</i> )				Cumulative Frequency % ( <i>CF</i> )				N
	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	
1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.	-	5	4	3	-	41.67	33.33	25	12
2. I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.	1	7	2	2	8.33	58.33	16.67	16.67	12
3. I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.	2	6	4	-	16.67	50	33.33	-	12
4. I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.	1	4	5	2	8.33	33.33	41.67	16.67	12
5. I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.	5	6	1	-	41.67	50	8.33	-	12
6. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	-	11	1	-	-	91.67	8.33	-	12
7. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.	3	5	4	-	25	41.67	33.33	-	12
8. In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked	-	3	6	3	-	25	50	25	12

to other people about my ethnic group.									
9. I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.	3	5	4	-	25	41.67	33.33	-	12
10. I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.	-	8	3	1	-	66.67	25	8.33	12
11. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	2	5	5	-	16.67	41.67	41.67	-	12
12. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.	-	11	1	-	-	91.67	8.33	-	12

Key: SA – Strongly agree; A – Agree; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly disagree; N – Total number of frequencies

customs, and history. The non-Caucasian participants had a mean score for Item 8 ( $M = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) and Item 1 ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ). The non-Caucasian participants also had the lowest level of acceptance for Item 2 ( $M = 1.33$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) which asked about the level of participation in organizations or social groups with mostly members of the same ethnic group. This low score likely reflects the overall racial demographic of the community as it is predominately Caucasian.

Data from the affirmation, belonging, and commitment sub-scale of the measure also differed between Caucasian and Non-Caucasian participants. In general, the participants of color scored higher on these items. On Item 3, which asked to what extent the participants felt they had a clear sense of what their ethnic background meant to them, the Caucasian participants scored lower than participants of color ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ) while on Item 7, which asked whether they understood what their ethnic group membership meant to them,

Caucasian participants also lower ( $M = 2.89, SD = 0.78$ ). In contrast, the non-Caucasian participants had a higher same score on each item ( $M = 3.00, SD = 1.00$ ). Similarly, on Item 5, which asked the participants to what extent they are happy they are a member of their ethnic group, the Caucasian participants scored moderately high ( $M = 3.22, SD = 0.67$ ) and on Item 12, which asked how good participants felt about their ethnic background, Caucasian participants had a lower mean score ( $M = 2.89, SD = 0.33$ ) while the non-Caucasian participants scored 3.67 on Item 5 and 3.00 on Item 12. However, the non-Caucasian participants scored consistently higher on both Item 5 ( $M = 3.67, SD = 0.58$ ) and Item 12 ( $M = 3.00, SD = 0.00$ ). However, the most notable difference in scores occurred for Item 11 which asked participants whether they had a lot of pride in their ethnic group. The Caucasian participants had a mean score of 2.67 while participants of color had higher levels of pride in their ethnic groups with a mean score of 3.67. This finding is similar to findings in the research literature that suggests ethnicity is a more important component of identity for people of color than for Caucasian Americans.

*Research Question #3: Relationships between Ethnic Identity Development and Multicultural Literature*

In addition to the MEIM survey, participants completed a short-answer questionnaire. Each of the eight questions asked participants to report on their sense of belonging, reading habits, attitudes toward multicultural literature, and sense of self-reflection in current school curriculum. Short answer responses were analyzed for emerging themes and were compared to participants' MEIM scores.

Table 3

Mean score and standard deviation for each question of the Multi-ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) for the entire group of participants, Caucasian participants, and non-Caucasian participants.

	Entire Group of Participants ( <i>N</i> = 12)		Caucasian Participants ( <i>N</i> = 9)		Non-Caucasian Participants ( <i>N</i> = 3)	
Item #	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<u>1.</u> I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.	2.17	0.83	2.00	0.87	2.67	0.58
<u>2.</u> I am active in organizational social groups that include members of my own ethnic group.	2.58	0.90	3.00	0.50	1.33	0.58
<u>3.</u> I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.	2.93	0.72	2.78	0.67	3.00	1.00
<u>4.</u> I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.	2.33	0.89	2.22	0.67	2.67	1.52
<u>5.</u> I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.	3.33	0.65	3.22	0.67	3.67	0.58
<u>6.</u> I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.	2.92	0.29	2.89	0.33	3.00	0.00
<u>7.</u> I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.	2.92	0.79	2.89	0.78	3.00	1.00
<u>8.</u> In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.	2.00	0.74	1.89	0.78	2.33	0.58
<u>9.</u> I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.	2.92	0.79	2.67	0.71	3.67	0.58
<u>10.</u> I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.	2.58	0.67	2.56	0.53	2.67	0.58

11. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.	2.75	0.75	2.78	0.67	2.67	1.15
12. I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.	2.92	0.29	2.89	0.33	3.00	0.00
Average	2.69	0.69	2.65	0.63	2.80	0.68

Key: *N* – number; *SD* – Standard Deviation

### *Experiences with Multicultural Literature*

Participants' short answer responses from the questionnaire reported that the majority of participants' experience with multicultural literature came from assigned readings in their school curriculum. For example Lisa cited "I honestly can't think of the names of any multicultural books I've read. I really only read the books assigned to me at school." Similarly Kristen mentioned a class-assigned reading, reporting that "in 8<sup>th</sup> grade she read *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*." Ten out of 12 participants specifically referred to assigned texts such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Sandra Benitez's *A Place Where the Sea Remembers*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and Elie Wiesel's *Night*.

Participants were also asked to write about what they learned about the respective ethnic groups represented in the texts they had read. Participants John, Elizabeth, Stacey, Kristen, and Heather suggested they had learned about cultural differences and customs. Kristen specified "I learned that a lot of people do the same things. Some have different beliefs about their family though. Some think that families should be close, while others think that it's not really important." Moreover, Ken, Robert, Tim, Karen, and Lisa referenced learning about cultural struggles and strife. Karen explained that "some struggle with their ethnic group, while others

don't think about how they don't have anything to worry about." Similarly, Lisa specified that "in History class we ... learned about African Americans and their struggle for freedom. We also learned about Native Americans' and Latinos' fight for freedom."

Lastly, participants were asked to write about major similarities and differences between their own ethnic group and those represented in the texts. Five participants responded that there are few major differences between ethnic groups, specifically citing that "we are all people" and "they are humans and have feelings." Other participants responded religious and language differences, family and kinship bonds, and expressions of cultural belonging and pride as major differences between ethnic groups.

#### *Perceptions of the Relevancy of Multicultural Literature*

Participants' short answer responses suggested a dichotomy in their perception of the relevancy of multicultural literature. When asked if they believed it is important for high school students in general, and specifically students at their own high school, to study multicultural literature, their response suggested two opposing categories: perceptions of demographic exclusion and perceptions of global interconnectivity. There were those who believed that students in their high school had no need to read multicultural literature because of the racial and socioeconomic demographics of the community, whereas there were others who felt that reading multicultural literature provided opportunities to gain global experience.

Sean, Tim, Edward, and Lisa stated they believed that multicultural literature is not relevant to high school students in their community. They cited such reasons as lack of diversity in their community, lack of relevance to future career plans and a general lack of interest and inability to relate. For example, Tim felt it was not important for his peers to read multicultural literature because "it doesn't relate to (their) daily lives." On the other hand, Sean and Lisa,

respectively, felt that reading literature of diversity would be important to students “if they plan on going to college where that kind of reading is expected” or if they plan on having “a job where you have to work with different kinds of people.”

On the other hand, the remaining two-thirds of the participants believed that reading multicultural literature is meaningful for high school students. Several cited that it is important for students to read a variety of texts in order to “learn about different people and places in the world” and to gain insight into “what it is like to walk in someone else’s shoes.” Most notably, Kristen indicated that reading multicultural literature is important because many students lack opportunities to experience and interact with other cultures:

I think it is important for students to read multicultural literature because our school isn’t very diverse. It gives you a chance to read about new places that you might not visit and to get to “know” people from those places ...like when I’ve read books about the Holocaust. I learned about some of the different Jewish customs and what it was like for Jewish families living in Europe at that time.

Overwhelmingly these students reported they believe that reading multicultural literature is a valuable experience.

According to most of the students in this study there are several possible benefits of reading multicultural literature. They suggested there are benefits such as learning about different cultures and groups, being exposed to various worldviews, and, subsequently, developing increased tolerance and acceptance of others. In addition, several students indicated that multicultural literature enables individuals to see the greater commonalities shared by all humans, rather than divide them into groups.

### *Summary*

Several themes emerged from this study regarding each of research questions. As a group, participants showed moderate ethnic identity development and an understanding of ethnicity that corresponds to the literature on ethnic identity development during adolescence. Moreover, ethnic identity is perceived as more salient for people of color. Lastly, there was a dichotomy in the perceptions of the relevance of multicultural literature to high school students. These themes depict factors that contributed to the participants' ethnic identity and exposure to multicultural literature.

The first theme that emerged from the data was that participants had a moderate measure of ethnic identity. Similar to findings in the research literature, the participants did not have an actualized ethnic identity but, based upon data from the Multi Ethnic Identity Measure, were in the process of exploration. In general participants felt a sense of belonging to and affirmation of their self-identified ethnic group, yet did not specifically seek out more information about their group.

A second theme that emerged is that ethnic identity had more salience for the two African American participants. Edward and Heather both had higher MEIM scores while Lisa, who self-identified as Caucasian, but whose parents were Caucasian and African American, had below mean scores on both sub-scales. This supports findings in the literature that claim ethnic identity is more salient for individuals who display physical characteristics outside of the ethnic majority and therefore often creates conflict for bi-racial and multi-racial individuals (Alba, 1990; Fischer & Moradi, 2001; Hall, 1992; Hutnik, 1985; Kich, 1992; Phinney, 1989; Yinger, 1994). For persons of color, and especially when there are racial differences, one's group membership is paramount and thus often a more integral part of that person's identity than for Caucasian

Americans (Rosenthal & Hrynevich, 1985; Rowe et al, 1994). However, this may not be the case for bi-racial and multi-racial individuals, whose physical characteristics may or may not be representative of their ethnicity.

The last theme that emerged from the findings was a dichotomy in the participants' perception of the relevance of multicultural literature. The majority of participants believed it is important for high school students to read multicultural literature in order to develop a more worldly perspective. They supported this notion by reporting such benefits of reading multicultural literature as learning about various people and places and experiencing a different more global perspective. However, one third of the participants felt that multicultural literature was irrelevant for high school students, especially those in their community. This suggests that lack of cultural diversity in the community may be a major factor in shaping perceptions of the importance of multicultural literature.

Chapter Five will present the conclusions and implications of this study. In addition, the chapter will suggest recommendations for future research on ethnic identity development and multicultural education.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### *Introduction*

This chapter will present the conclusions about the influence of multicultural literature on adolescent ethnic identity development. Next, I will present the implications of those conclusions. To conclude this chapter I will present recommendations based upon the findings.

#### *Conclusions*

This case study assessed the relationship between exposure to multicultural literature and adolescent development of ethnic identity. It also explored whether ethnic identity development influenced participant perceptions of and attitudes towards others' ethnicities. Using a convenience sample, the study hypothesized that exposure to multicultural literature had a significant influence on adolescent development of ethnic identity.

The findings in this study suggest there is a relationship between exposure to multicultural literature and ethnic identity development in adolescents. Through their short answer responses to questions about exposure to multicultural literature, the participants indicated they reflect on the role of ethnicity in their lives and the lives of others. This self-reflection through literature is evidence of ethnic identity exploration, which is an integral stage in ethnic identity development. These findings are supported by theoretical research on identity development that suggests exploration of ethnic identity is directly or indirectly affected by contextual factors as: family, school, neighborhood, community, and society (DeVos & Romanucci-Ross, 1982; Jacobs, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Pellebon, 2000; Phinney & Rotheram, 1987; Zou & Trueba, 1998). The research suggests that family exerts a bigger impact on ethnic youth's ethnic identity formation than any other context. This is especially true for

children of color who begin their ethnic identity formation through racial socialization as early as birth through family interaction. As a result of parents' own ethnic salience, these children of color are often ethnically and racially socialized from childhood (Demo, 1990; Helms, 2003; McHatton, 2007; Organista et al, 1998; Phinney, 1987). However, this does not diminish the influence of other contextual factors on socialization and identity formation. Integration of multicultural literature in curriculum provides students with opportunities to explore ethnicity and identity. Therefore exposure to multicultural literature has an influence on the ethnic identity development of participants.

This research concluded that there is no significant relationship between ethnic identity development and perceptions of other ethnic groups. Phinney (1992) defined other-group orientation as a reflection of one's attitude toward the majority group, citing the importance of identification with the majority for all individuals. However, ethnic identity development in adolescence is often characterized by a period of preference for and immersion in one's own ethnic group (Atkinson et. al., 1993; Cross, 1978; Helms, 2003; Jacobs, 1992 & Poston, 1992). The process of ethnic identity development is often explored socially during adolescence. The research literature suggests that adolescents often gravitate toward members of the same ethnic group to confirm their affirmation for and sense of belonging to their particular ethnic group (Atkinson et. al., 1993; Cross, 1978; Helms, 2003; Jacobs, 1992 & Poston, 1992).

### *Recommendations*

The finding that exposure to multicultural literature has a significant influence on ethnic identity development suggests that inclusion of multicultural literature is developmentally and subsequently academically beneficial. As Erikson (1963) asserted exploration is crucial to the development of an achieved ego identity for every adolescent. Creating educational

environments in which students are allowed to both explore and express their various identities is critical in helping students, specifically students of color, construct an internal sense of identity and their own belief systems. It is through these new perspectives that students can develop a worldview that is more complex, integrated, and inclusive.

When multicultural literature becomes an integral part of the curriculum and teachers act as models and guides, classrooms can become arenas for open exchange. Literature and the ensuing discussion permit students to read, think, and become actively engaged with the texts.

Students must be guided to seek a personal experience in literature. Language arts teachers should create classrooms that encourage students' connection to culturally diverse literature. According to Rosenblatt (1976), traditional classes tend to insulate the student from the impact of the literature. In these classrooms, the primary emphasis of instruction has been on the identification of literary elements such as plot, setting, and character description. When the concern is focused on the intellectual response, students are prevented from experiencing the literature, and consequently there is no personal response. Traditional classroom instruction tends to down play the rich cultural experiences students bring to the educational arena. In order to extract meaning from the literature, students need to connect what is in the text to what they already understand.

When integrated into the curriculum, multicultural literature emphasizes the development of greater self-understanding, positive self-concepts, and pride in one's ethnic identity through the exploration of diverse texts. Emphasizing these areas is part of a greater goal of contributing to the personal development of students, which contends that a better sense of self contributes to the overall intellectual, academic, and social achievement of students. Students who feel good about themselves are likely to be more open and receptive to interaction with others and to

respect their cultures and identities. This argument is further justified by claims made about the reciprocal relationship between self-concept, academic achievement, ethnicity, culture, and individual identity. Integrating multicultural literature into curricula also helps educators to fulfill the goals of maximizing human potential, meeting individual needs, and teaching the whole child by enhancing feelings of personal worth, confidence, and competence.

In order to promote identity development in all students, teachers need to make classrooms lively forums of open multicultural exchange. They must select materials that encourage a cultural revision so students can both understand another culture's point of view and see their own culture from an outsider's perspective. Educators must be willing to empower literary works outside the traditional texts in order to prepare students to live in their increasingly culturally diverse society. They must challenge students to become engaged with and to reflect on the material they read. In such classrooms, not only will students experience learning environments in which they explore their identity but that are also multi-culturally sensitive. They will be able to participate vicariously in different ways of life, and they will expand their frame of reference for experiencing the world.

### *Implications*

Self-report instruments were used to collect data on ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and exposure to multicultural literature. These instruments have their limitations as individuals may or may not accurately present how they feel about themselves (Hempel, 2004). Though this case study focused on adolescents' perspectives of ethnicity and multicultural literature, inclusion of other individuals' viewpoints may provide additional useful information. For example, teachers, counselors, and/or parents and guardians could rate the extent to which adolescents showed ethnic, affirmation, belonging, and commitment.

The limited ethnic diversity among the participants in this study may have skewed its findings. According to the current literature on development, several contexts affect development of identity including family, school, neighborhood, community, and society (Aries & Moorehead, 1989; Cokley, 2005, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Poston, 1990). The models of family ethnic background and the demographics of community, neighborhood, and school all influence individuals. Developmental theorists, such as Erikson (1963), suggest that the process of ethnic identity development occurs in stages beginning in childhood and continuing into young adulthood. Research further suggests that older adolescents, in general, are more likely to be at higher stages of development than younger adolescents (Phinney, 1989). These variances are not reflected in this current study of tenth and eleventh grade students in rural Southeastern Ohio. Future researchers are encouraged to select a broader sample that includes more ethnically diverse participants as well as a wider age range to further examine the effect of exposure to multicultural literature on ethnic identity development.

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## APPENDIX A:

**Student Self-Identification Survey**

**This questionnaire is to be filled out anonymously.**

In this country, people come from many different countries and cultures, and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American, Asian American, Chinese, Filipino, American Indian, Mexican American, Caucasian or White, Italian American, and many others. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

Please fill in: In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be \_\_\_\_\_

Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

**(4) Strongly agree    (3) Agree    (2) Disagree    (1) Strongly disagree**

- 1- I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
- 2- I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.
- 3- I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me.
- 4- I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.
- 5- I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.
- 6- I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
- 7- I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
- 8- In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.
- 9- I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group.
- 10- I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs.
- 11- I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.
- 12- I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.
- 13- My ethnicity is
  - (1) Asian or Asian American, including Chinese, Japanese, and others
  - (2) Black or African American
  - (3) Hispanic or Latino, including Mexican American, Central American, and others
  - (4) White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American; not Hispanic
  - (5) American Indian/Native American
  - (6) Mixed; Parents are from two different groups
  - (7) Other (write in): \_\_\_\_\_

14- My father's ethnicity is (use numbers above)

15- My mother's ethnicity is (use numbers above)

16- I feel it is important to learn about other ethnic groups.

17- I spend time trying to find out more about various ethnic groups, such as their histories, traditions, and/or customs.

18- I talk to people about their ethnic group in order to learn more about their background.

19- I think about how the lives of others are affected by their ethnic group membership.

20- I participate in cultural practices of other ethnic groups, such as special food, music, or customs.

**APPENDIX B:**

List at least three multicultural books that you have read.

What did you learn about the respective ethnic groups represented in the texts?

What major similarities and differences to find between your ethnic group and those represented in the texts?

Do you intentionally read multicultural young adult novels? Why or why not?

Have you read texts with which you could personally identify? How so?

What makes a text memorable and meaningful?

Do you believe it is important for high school students, specifically students at your high school, to study multicultural literature? Why or why not?

Can students benefit from reading multicultural literature? If so, how?

**APPENDIX C:****Parental Permission Form for Participation of a Minor in a Research Study****Adolescents' Development of Ethnic Identity****Description of the research and your child's participation**

My name is Danielle Moore and I am currently student teaching in the English department at Federal Hocking High School. I am working towards my master's degree in Adolescent-to-Young Adult Education at Ohio University. As part of my master's research project, I have to design and implement a research study. The purpose of my study is to gain further understanding of how being exposed to multicultural literature affects adolescents' development of ethnic identity.

Your child will be asked to complete a brief, anonymous survey about his or her ethnicity and how he or she feels and reacts to it.

**Risks and discomforts**

There are no known risks associated with this research.

**Potential benefits**

Your child will not directly benefit from participation in this research. However, this research may help to determine the effects of reading multicultural literature on your child's personal development of ethnic identity.

**Protection of confidentiality**

Your child will remain anonymous throughout the entire study.

Your child's name will not be included in any documents. No one will be able to be identified from any of this information. No one besides Dr. Doppen, my academic advisor, or me will have access to the surveys. All documents will be kept in locked storage.

**Voluntary participation**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to allow your child to participate or withdraw your child from the study at any time. Your child will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to allow your child to participate or withdraw your child from this study. Whether your child participates will have absolutely no impact on his or her grades in any of his or her classes. There is no compensation for participation in this study.

**Contact information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Danielle Moore at 513.766.6388 or [dm206600@ohio.edu](mailto:dm206600@ohio.edu) or Dr. Doppen at 740.593.0254 or [doppen@ohio.edu](mailto:doppen@ohio.edu). If you have any questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research participant, please contact the Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University Institutional Review Board at 740.594.0664.

**Consent**

**I have read this parental permission form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my permission for my child to participate in this study.**

**Waiver**

**I agree that all known risk to me have been explained to my satisfaction and**

**I understand that no compensation is available from Ohio University and its employees for any injury resulting from my participation in this research.**

Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

A copy of this parental permission form should be given to you.

## **STUDENT ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

### **Adolescents' Development of Ethnic Identity**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Below you will find answers to some of the questions that you may have.

#### **What is an Ethnic group?**

- Ethnic group refers to a large group of people categorized according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background.

#### **What is it for?**

- The purpose of this study is to try to understand how reading books about people from other ethnic groups affects students' personal development of ethnic identity.

#### **What Will I Have to Do?**

- You will be asked to complete a very brief, anonymous questionnaire

#### **Do My Parents Need to Say It Is Okay?**

- In order to participate you must have a signed consent form from your parent or guardian

#### **Who Will Be Helped By This Study?**

- This study may help teachers and other educators understand how reading about others has influenced your own ideas about what your ethnic group is like.

#### **Will anyone have access to my survey?**

- Your will remain anonymous throughout the entire study. Your name will not be included in any documents. No one will be able to be identified from any of this information. No one besides Dr. Doppen, my academic advisor, or me will have access to the surveys. All documents will be kept in locked storage.

#### **What If I Want to Stop? Will I Get In Trouble?**

- You can stop your participation at anytime. You may refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study. Whether you participate will have absolutely no impact on your grades in any of your classes.

By signing below, I am saying that I have read this form and have asked any questions that I may have. All of my questions have been answered so that I understand what I am being asked to do. By signing, I am saying that I am willing to participate in this study. I also have received a copy of this form to keep.

**Waiver**

**I agree that all known risk to me have been explained to my satisfaction and I understand that no compensation is available from Ohio University and its employees for any injury resulting from my participation in this research.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child/Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date