A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTION OF BOOK CLUB MEMBERS READING MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE:
A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

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A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTION OF BOOK CLUB MEMBERS READING MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE:
A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

This quasi-experimental, quantitative study examined the attitudes and actions of book club members after reading and discussing a multicultural book, *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003). The specific focus of this study was to determine the significant differences in attitudes and actions concerning race and ethnicity. A Diversity Survey was used to gather information from 11 book clubs. The Survey was analyzed through a dependent *t* test for six research hypotheses.

Results of the study indicated statistically significant changes in book club members’ attitudes concerning multicultural issues after they had read and discussed *The Namesake*. Moreover, there were statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning issues of race. However, there were not significant changes in actions concerning racial and ethnic issues.

Future research should examine demographic factors and shared purposes that appear to be a significant influence in participants’ discussions. Overall, results of the study indicate that book clubs which provide a common reading experience through which participants can share, listen, and discuss personal responses to text in a supportive environment may be catalysts for growth.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF GRAPHS</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Background of the Study .............................................. 2
- General History of Multiculturalism.............................. 4
- Statement of the Problem.............................................. 6
- Theoretical Framework.................................................. 9
- Purpose of the Study.................................................... 10
- Research Question...................................................... 12
- Assumptions............................................................... 12
- Definition of Terms..................................................... 12
- Limitations............................................................... 15
- Summary of Chapter I................................................... 16

### II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

- Introduction............................................................. 18
- Book Clubs in the United States................................. 18
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Variable Matrix</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Statistical Treatment</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Cronbach’s Alpha Internal Reliability Estimates of Instruments</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Descriptive Statistics</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Descriptive Statistics Frequencies</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Pre-Test/Post-Test Relationships</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Averages on Pretest and Posttest</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Research Hypotheses Results: Dependent Sample ( t )-Tests</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Summary</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF GRAPHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graph</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Pre-test post-test mean comparisons across all subscales</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Books are to be called for and supplied on the assumption that the process of reading is not a half-sleep; but in the highest sense an exercise, a gymnastic struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself.

Walt Whitman

The above quotation from *Democratic Vistas* is written by Walt Whitman (1892), possibly America's most influential and innovative poet of the 19th century. This reference raises fundamental issues involving literature’s place in the world of readers, since readers might need to attain more insight into their own lives. The excerpt meaningfully introduces the following study.

In books, readers travel, not only to other worlds, but deeper into their own worlds. They learn who they are, who they want to be, what they might inspire to, and what they might dare to dream about their world and themselves (Ladson-Billings, 1994). For readers, such book worlds may often include multicultural literature that examines not only diversity and ethics, but societal issues, problems, and realities. Multicultural literature provides readers with more knowledge of other cultures, and consequently they can benefit from the total human experience (Banks, 1988).

Many people believe that racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity is a positive element in a society because it enriches a nation and increases the ways in which its citizens can
perceive and solve personal and public problems (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Diversity also enriches a society because it provides individuals with more opportunities to experience other cultures and thus to become more fulfilled as human beings (Bucher, 2000). Banks (1988) observes that when individuals are able to participate in a variety of cultures, they are more able to benefit from the total human experience. It follows that reading multicultural literature in book clubs might encourage the understanding of other cultures.

Included in the first chapter is a general introduction to the study and some background information, the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework, the statement of the problem, the methodology, the null hypotheses, some assumptions regarding the study, the definition of terms, several limitations and a summary of the first chapter.

Background of the Study

Since the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, the United States has experienced its largest wave of immigrants since the turn of the century (Banks, 1988). Not only the number of immigrants entering the United States increased, but the demographic characteristics of those immigrants have also changed dramatically. Prior to the Reform Act, most of the immigrants came from Europe. However, after the Reform Act most of the immigrants came from Asian and Latino American nations (Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

The wave of new immigrants to the United States from non-European nations and the relatively low birthrate among traditional “white” American citizens is having a significant impact on the United States, creating a country with greater ethnic and racial diversity than ever before (Bucher, 2000).
The diverse population of the United States continues to develop at a rapid rate. Results from the 2000 census (U.S. Census Bureau) indicate that 72% of the population is European American; 11.2% African American; 11% Latino; 3.8% Asian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; 0.7% Native American or Alaskan Native; and 1.3% two or more races.

The culturally diverse inhabitants of the United States, now at 28%, continue to grow at a rapid rate. As Latinos surpass African Americans as the largest minority, this has an influence on our American popular culture. Spanish music and music with a Spanish beat are everywhere, tortilla chips and salsa outsell other snacks, and “Ugly Betty” has become the most-watched new series as observed by news-commentator Anderson Cooper (2007). Since record immigration creates unparalleled racial and ethnic diversity, the need to appreciate human unity has never been more vital (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). The solution to the tension is to respect and value diversity while working for unity and wholeness, otherwise exclusion could be the result.

During the 1960s and the 1970s events such as the Civil Rights movement, ethnic revival movements, the quest for women’s rights, and the Vietnam War challenged many U.S. values and demanded that U.S. ideals and realities become more consistent. Multiculturalism has emerged to “promote the interests of all groups that have faced discrimination” (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003, p. 61). Sensitivity to the cultural experiences of everyone in the United States has led to the understanding that reading should include literature by and about members of all cultural groups (Norton, 2003).

The United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF - works for children's rights, their survival, development and protection, believe that if the following five goals exist, then readers will attain higher levels of inter-group attitudes of people from all groups. The
five values of multiculturalism are: (a) understanding and respect for cultural group identities; (b) respect for and acceptance of cultural differences, including differences of gender, language, race, ethnicity, religion, region and disabilities; (c) understanding of and respect for worldwide human rights and basic freedoms; (d) training for a responsible life in a free society; and (e) knowledge of cross-cultural communication strategies to ensure understanding, peace, tolerance, and friendship among all peoples and groups (United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, 1989).

General History of Multiculturalism

For democracy to function well in a pluralistic society, citizens must be able to transcend their ethnic and cultural boundaries in order to participate in public discussion and action (Banks, 1988). Consequently, as diversity increases in the United States, it becomes critically important that Americans acquire the knowledge, skills, and values essential for functioning in multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural situations.

The term “multicultural” can be problematic, since it means different things to different people. For example, there is not always agreement about what forms of diversity the term “multicultural” addresses. Some people think only about racial or cultural diversity, while others include gender, social class, sexual orientation, chronological age, physical limitations, and other differences. Also, people who identify gender equity as “multicultural” might virtually ignore race and culture. Still others consider multiculturalism in relationship to issues of public policy, such as immigration and bilingualism (Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

According to Banks (1996), a multicultural paradigm explores the concepts of diversity, pluralism and inclusivity through analysis of power, privilege, oppression, and
resistance. Kottak and Kozaitis (2003) argue that multicultural analysis is intended to help us understand the relationships between different forms of domination and subordination.

Multiculturalism may also bring people on the margins of society, due to their race, class, gender, or sexual orientation, to the center making one nation from many people. “Multiculturalism is an inclusive and cementing movement . . . because it attempts to bring various groups that have been on the margins of society to the center of society. Rather than divisive, it’s inclusive” (Banks, 1988, p. 30). Multicultural awareness requires a format that gradually leads towards a more inclusive world view. This study will explore whether one way for people to become more inclusive and sensitive to marginalized groups is through discussion of multicultural literature in book clubs.

Multicultural literature is defined as any genre of literature in which the protagonist is a person who is socially or culturally different from the European American majority in the United States (Norton, 2003). According to Norton this explanation as literature concerns African Americans, Native Americans, Latino Americans (including people of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Spanish heritage), Jewish Americans, and Asian Americans (including people of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese heritage). Definitions of multicultural literature vary in terms of what constitutes membership in a multicultural community and will be further discussed in Chapter II.

Multicultural literature attempts to acquaint each ethnic group with the unique cultures of other ethnic groups (Sleeter & Grant, 1994). It also tries to help ethnic group
members see that other ethnic cultures are just as meaningful and valid as their own. Sleeter and Grant (1994) advocate that multiculturalism assumes that with acquaintance and understanding, respect might follow.

Statement of the Problem

This was a quasi-experimental study using empirical data to examine the attitudes and actions of book club members after reading and discussing a multicultural book in a mid-size city in northeastern Ohio. The specific focus of this study was to determine the significant difference towards attitudes and actions on race and ethnicity.

The dynamics of book clubs have been difficult for scholars to analyze since most book clubs are invisible. These clubs are hard to see, as they are leisure groups, not part of the traditional world of education. They are small groups, so they do not have the interest of radical transformations to dictate policy. Yet as a social event that brings people together in groups to share conversation, book clubs can be as important source of community building with potentially transformative influence (Jacobsohn, 1998). Consequently, analyzing their impact on participants’ attitudes and actions, if any, might yield valuable insights.

In fact, reading in groups may be a cultural phenomenon of enormous strength in the literary world. When embedded with democratic practices, book clubs could have the capacity of developing a powerful learning environment that can facilitate the development of human growth. The reading of multicultural literature in a book club setting may have the potential to influence individual attitudes about diversity as the population of the United States is rapidly becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.
Although diversity expands the breadth of cultural resources in the United States, it also brings a good deal of misunderstanding and bitterness (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). “Following the terrorist attack on America on September 11, 2001, many people of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent were victimized” (p. 81). Also, there has been backlash from isolationist and anti-immigrant groups. Book clubs may enable readers to view concepts, issues, events and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups and thus reduce some of these tensions. The discussion emphasis should be on how the accepted culture emerged from a synthesis of diverse cultural elements. This diversity originated within the various cultural, racial, ethnic and religious groups that constitute the United States society. Critical thinking skills are used to promote reflection, transformation and action (Rosenblatt, 1978). Book clubs may promote cultural awareness and open readers to social criticism and social change and teach decision-making skills (Jacobsohn, 1998). Empowered readers are reflective social critics and skilled participants in social change (Dewey, 1940).

Multicultural literature may help readers develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function within various cultures in their own society. However, because we live in a highly interdependent world society, book clubs may also help readers develop the attitudes and competencies needed to function within cultures outside of their country (Van Soest, 1996).

A linkage would help contribute important knowledge in cultural studies. If readers develop the ability to view events and situations from the perspective of ethnic groups, they will be better able to view events within other nations from the perspectives of the major participants in these events. Readers who are able to relate positively to and
function within a variety of cultures within their own country are also more likely to function successfully in foreign cultures than are individuals who view domestic ethnic cultures as alien or peculiar (Banks, 1988).

Since we live in a global society in which the solutions to the world’s troubles require the cooperation of all the nations of the world, it is also important for readers to develop global identification and the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to become effective and influential citizens in the world. Most readers have conscious identifications with their communities and country, but they are only vaguely aware of their status as world citizens (Banks, 1996).

Compared to European countries, the United States is a huge continental landmass, isolated by two massive oceans. Its large domestic market has meant that international trade was, until recently, a small part of the economy (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). New immigrants, fleeing repression at home, often wanted to forget where they had come from. Two world wars fueled Americans’ sense of isolationism and contributed to intense suspicion of those who spoke languages other than English and fear of terrorism. Global education can make a significant change in bringing a global perspective to America (Tye, 2003).

America is a culturally pluralistic society in which numerous distinct class, ethnic, religious, and political interest groups coexist within one nation (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Reading multicultural literature in book clubs is not a remedy for social inequality, but it could teach readers the skills, knowledge, and critical awareness to become productive members of a diverse and democratic society.
Theoretical Framework

The critical inquiry framework that informs the data in this study is rooted in the reader response theory of Rosenblatt (1938, 1978), who asserted that the reading of literacy text was a unique “transaction” between a reader and a text, one influenced by the reader’s experience, and the context. It is also embedded in a constructivist framework, as we construct our own understandings of the world in which we live. In addition, the social practices of a book club facilitate the meaning-making process, which supports the sociocultural theory.

Louise Rosenblatt (1938, 1978), proposed that readers bring emotions, experiences, and knowledge to a reading event that rouses associations with the words, images and ideas in the text. Rosenblatt believed that experiencing literature in this way makes the diverse reader visible and promotes the open-minded essentials for democracy. As our urban public school classrooms and our society become increasingly diverse, Rosenblatt's transactional approach makes all interpretations valid. When diverse readers bring their own reading interpretations to a discussion, there is no one true meaning. “Since he interprets the book or poem in terms of his fund of past experiences, it is equally possible and necessary that he come to reinterpret his old sense of things in the light of this new literature experience, in the light of the new ways of thinking and feeling offered by the work of art” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 101).

Extended contact with literature might result in increased social sensitivity. “A democratic society, whose institutions and political and economic procedures are constantly being developed and remolded, needs citizens with the imagination to see what political doctrines mean for human beings” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 176). Rosenblatt
Rosenblatt’s transactional theory causes readers to be motivated to construct their own meaning for a text. Because reading as a personally meaning-making activity is also compatible with constructivist learning theory, this study is also theoretically rooted in a constructivist framework. Constructivism (a sociocultural perspective) is an extension of cognitive theories coming from the cognitive psychology of Piaget, the developmental psychology of Vygotsky and the interactionism of Bruner (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Brooks and Brooks (1993) explain that the constructivist view involves two principles:

1. Knowledge is actively constructed in the context of collaborative, purposeful activities.
2. Coming to know is a process of adaptation based on and constantly modified by a learner's experience of the world. The social practices of a book club happen because they are part of the sociocultural context. Making-meaning for readers is dependent on the environment of social actions, as well as social interactions (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

Multiculturalism helps provide protection against discrimination to racial minorities, women, and underrepresented groups, thereby liberating and democratizing all marginalized groups (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). As our cultural landscape has changed with the advent of a demographically diverse population, the attitudes and actions of people in the United States towards all forms of diversity, has also shifted. “From daily cultural exchange with others we learn to be more aware, thoughtful, and appreciative of human diversity and unity” (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003, p. 293). However, to date there has been no research that indicates whether attitudes and actions
can be influenced through sustained engagement with multicultural literature in an interactive and social setting such as a book club. This study investigated the perception of book club members reading multicultural literature.

Very little data, in general, have been collected from adult book clubs (Long, 2003). These clubs are difficult to see, as they are leisure groups, not part of the conventional world of instruction. Most book clubs are small, independent groups, so they do not have the attention of policymakers. Yet, book clubs provide readers with opportunities to interact and explore situations within a social justice agenda and could help readers think about people in society, particularly those who are marginal in the system. “Through the literature and through hearing others’ responses, group members ‘walk’ in another’s shoes. The readings and the discussions are eye-openers, as to diverse ways of living and thinking” (Jacobsohn, 1998, p. xvii).

Having interactions with others also helps in the process of democratic growth, because one is able to better understand other perspectives (Dewey, 1940). Dewey wrote about “getting outside” of the situation, seeing it as another would see it. Therefore, discussion increases clarity of thought so that one might articulate one’s perspective to other’s more effectively. Through reflection and discussion in a book club setting, personal perspectives might be clarified and the perspectives of other participants better understood. “We select and read great books, books that move us, that change us as people, that create a powerful and caring community among us” (Daniels, 2002, p. 3).

Increasingly discussion is viewed as not only purposeful in communication, but as a tool for learning. Discussion is an integral part of developing a working knowledge of multicultural literature. Discussion plays an important part in guiding readers’
comprehension and interpretation of reading selections (Alvermann, Dillon, & O’Brien, 1987). By talking about the texts they read, readers collaboratively construct meanings around texts. Discussion implies conversation and should actively engage learners in reflecting on texts and revealing their connections to the author’s message.

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to provide scientific data detailing with whether reading and discussing multicultural literature in a book club setting may influence one’s attitude and actions about diversity, knowledge, moral, and ethical beliefs and support for multiculturalism.

Research Question

Is there going to be a change of attitudes and actions towards race and ethnicity of book club members after reading and discussing the multicultural book *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003)?

Assumptions

The following assumptions apply in this study:

1. The non-mailed questionnaires are assumed to allow the researcher to capture a larger response rate of readers than any other survey method.

2. The self-reported data are sufficiently error-free.

3. The honesty of the respondents is assumed in their responses to survey questions.

4. All subscales are sufficiently valid.

Definition of Terms

**Action** – The constitutive definition for action is the “manner or method of performing; an act of will” (Webster, 1969, p. 9).
**Agency** – Agency is the active role of individuals in making and remaking culture (Kottak and Kozaitis, 2003).

**Attitude** – A mental state of readiness organized from experience; an idea charged with an emotion towards a particular class of social situations (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). [as operationally defined by behavioral differential, survey questions, Appendix B].

**Canon** – Canon is a standard or criteria used to define, select, and evaluate knowledge. Historically in the United States, the canon that has dominated has been Eurocentric and male-oriented (Banks, 1994).

**Critical literacy** – Critical literacy views readers as active participants in the reading process and invites them to move beyond passively accepting the text’s message to question, examine, or dispute the power relations that exist between readers and authors. It focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation, and action (Freire, 1970).

**Culture** – Culture consists of traditions and customs that govern behavior and beliefs of all humans; transmitted through learning (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Culture comprises of behavior patterns, symbols, institutions, values and other human-made elements of society (Banks, 2003).

**Diversity** – Diversity refers to all the ways in which people are unique from one another. This includes individual, group, and cultural differences (Bucher, 2000).

**Ethnic group** – An ethnic group is distinguished by cultural similarities (shared among members of that group) and differences (between that group and others); ethnic group members share beliefs, values, habits, customs, and norms, and a common language, religion, history, geography, kinship of race (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003).
Ethnic minorities – Ethnic minorities are indigenous peoples who have moved to urban areas where their group is dissimilar from the dominant ethnic group (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003).

Ethnicity – Ethnicity is a population of people with common ancestry. Ethnic groups are often united by common cultural, behavioral, linguistic, ritualistic, or religious traits (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003).

Globalization – Globalization is the accelerating interdependence of nations in a world system linked economically and through mass media and modern transportation systems (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003).

Metacognition – Metacognition refers to the quality of being aware of one’s thinking process (Gunning, 2003). Metacognition is the ability to think about and control our own learning (Vacca & Vacca, 2008).

Minority – A minority is a part of a subordinate population differing from others by inferior power and less access to resources than the majority (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003).

Multiculturalism – The view of cultural diversity in a country as something good and desirable; a multicultural society socializes individuals not only into the dominant (national) culture but also into an ethnic culture (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003).

Multicultural literature – Multicultural literature is defined as any genre of literature in which the protagonist is a person who is socially or culturally different from the European American majority in the United States (Norton, D. E., 2003). Norton expands this explanation as literature concerning African Americans, Native Americans, Latino Americans (including people of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Spanish heritage),
Jewish Americans, and Asian Americans (including people of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese heritage). Multicultural literature is also defined as every book, because every book comes from the point of view of a culture (Mitchell, 2003).

**Pluralism** – Pluralism is the view that ethnic and racial differences should be allowed to thrive, so long as such diversity does not threaten dominant values and norms (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003).

**Quasi-experiment** – A quasi-experimental study is one in which research participants from the experimental and control groups are selected by a procedure other than random selection (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005).

**Race** – Race describes a group of people distinguished by different sets of characteristics, and beliefs about common ancestry. The most commonly used human racial categories are based on visible traits (especially skin color, facial features, and hair texture) and self-identification (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003; Putnam, 2000).

**Social capital** – The social capital core idea is that social networks have value; so social contacts affect the production of individuals and groups (Putnam, 2000).

**Limitations**

There are limitations within a quasi pre-experimental design. A key limitation of this study was the convenient sampling method. However the sampling method was chosen for economic and geographic reasons. The second limitation was the limited number of participants available for the study. Focusing on 11 book clubs, the study collected data from a minimum of 80 people. Also, without random assignment it is impossible to know if every book club member had an equal probability of being assigned to any of the groups. They are not statistically equivalent. The low population
sample, homogeneous selection, and high diversity awareness of the participants could result in a ceiling effect. The participants are already at the upper limit of the survey levels. Thus, there is a selection bias and ceiling effect that could threaten the study.

Furthermore, a problem also arises when groups differ in their propensity to maturation. Book club members could mature or change (biological or psychological) differently during the course of the experiment. Participants might perform differently on the dependent variable measure because they are older, hungrier, more fatigued or less motivated than they were at the time of the first measurement. Finally, a statistical regression could occur in this design if the book clubs are from populations having different means. Even though the groups are high or low on the pretest, the regression toward the mean effect that occurs could result in a shift (change) from pretest to posttest that is incorrectly interpreted as an experimental effect (Gall et al., 2003). Therefore, maturation and statistical regression could be a threat to the internal validity of the study.

Finally, survey research is based on self-report; participants can keep viewpoints to themselves. In addition, even if participants want to give correct information, they might not have the self-understanding to do so. Therefore, the data obtained are likely to be distorted. More accurate results are obtained if researchers can establish good rapport with the participants and guarantee confidentiality (Gall et al., 2003).

Summary of Chapter I

Proponents of multiculturalism believe it has the potential to affect a pluralistic democracy positively by promoting understanding and supporting integration of all groups into American society. Reading multicultural literature may lead us to diverse insights and book clubs help us explore the value of responses. When dialogue is
presented as a vehicle for continual exploration and reflection, it becomes a central process to engage with each other as a community to nurture both human growth and democracy (Dewey, 1938). This study sought to determine whether there is a relationship between socio-economic variables on attitudes and actions for diversity after reading and discussing multicultural literature in book clubs. Specifically, it probed whether the attitudes of book club members towards diversity might be affected by reading and discussing multicultural literature in a book club setting.

This chapter offered a brief overview of the history of American immigration that has resulted in a diverse population, the rise of multiculturalism as a response to this demographic change, and the role that book clubs have played in American life. In addition to describing the problem, this chapter provided the study’s reader response and constructivist theoretical framework, research questions, which guided data collection and analysis.

Ultimately, the purpose of this dissertation was to study the perception of book club members reading multicultural literature. Through the collection and statistical analysis of data this study underscored the characteristics of book club members making-meaning through diversity reading.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study probed whether the attitudes and actions of book club members towards diversity may be affected by reading and discussing multicultural literature in a book club setting. This chapter begins with a review of the literature for the historical background of book clubs and reader response theory. The literature review presents the history of multiculturalism and multicultural literature. Pertinent literature that focuses on discussion theory, patterns of discourse and learning styles is also presented. This chapter reviewed progress and studies in each field as they relate to meaning-making in a book club environment. Ultimately, the purpose of this dissertation was to study the perception of book club members reading multicultural literature.

Book Clubs in the United States

Book clubs in United States date back to the early 19th century, when interested New England women met to converse about the issues addressed in serious poetry, nonfiction, and publications of the day (Laskin & Hughes, 1995). By the turn of the century, book clubs were thriving (Daniels, 2002). Literary societies and book clubs evolved from women’s reform groups, church groups, and formed discussion groups because of a shared desire to improve the communication of ideas for the opportunity to socialize (Putnam, 2000).
Furthermore, mass immigration, World War I, and the Great Depression had an extraordinary result on the way Americans perceived their relationship to books (Putnam, 2000). No longer were books just utilized to reinforce conventional value systems or to escape from everyday life. Readers looked to writers to help them make sense of their worlds. The works of Darwin and Freud, for example, challenged the traditional scientific theories about evolution and about the psyche (Jacobsohn, 1998).

The Great Books Foundation was one outcome of this change in the way Americans perceived books. Moore and Stevens (2004) describe the Great Books Foundation as a nonprofit educational corporation that developed a structured literature reading program with a guideline for discussion for students and adults in 1947. Its purpose was to provide a program of reading for adults who wanted to improve their understanding of fundamental ideas found in the liberal arts of reading, speaking, and listening. The Great Books philosophy was “I am, therefore I think, and I can think about what I read.” This approach moved literary theory and analysis from the intellectuals to the readers. The Great Books Foundation is still in existence (Moore and Stevens, 2004).

During the social and political activism of the 1960s, the United States saw an increase in the popularity and number of book clubs (Putnam, 2000). Putnam posits that though women have primarily been participants, there are now also groups of men, couples, and singles. Newspapers frequently included articles from book club members valuing the importance of book clubs in their lives. In rural towns across America, the book club has become a salvation for people feeling isolated in their communities. This isolation leads to a lack of “social capital” (Putnam, 2000). Putnam (2000) suggests that social
networks have value so social contacts affect the production of individuals and groups. Book clubs provide this social capital.

Moreover, the number of book clubs has not declined in recent years. An enormous spurt in book clubs currently is credited to Oprah Winfrey’s television driven book club (Daniels, 2002). Reading groups gained a high profile when *Oprah’s Book Club* was launched. In this age of ubiquitous telecommunications, the presence of book clubs provides a positive reassurance of the value of face-to-face human discussion (Putnam, 2000).

Intimate relationships develop in book clubs as discussion and social interaction can have positive collective consequences (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). Friendships might offer adults more opportunity for empowering language and communication patterns than do familial relationships. Friendships are voluntary and not controlled by various kinship obligations (Crohan & Antonucci, 1989). They tend to be more equitable in nature and present opportunities for adults to make personal choices increasing their perceptions of independence and social value (Field, 1999). Interactions with friends are often perceived as more rewarding than family because they do not center upon daily issues such as finances, managing a household, and care giving, thus allowing for more socially supportive, reciprocal, identity affirming interactions or deeds (Larson, Mannell & Zuzanek, 1986). Finally, compared to interactions with adult children, interactions with friends have been found to bolster older adults’ morale (Litwin, 1999). While aging is a biological process, research on the social practice of participation in a book club may contribute to healthy aging.
A sense of interconnectedness and community develops within a book club, so that the resulting group is an inclusive one pervaded by attitudes of open-mindedness and mutual respect (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). When people conduct their conversations with personal responses, they connect with one another around questions of value (Daniels, 2002). The book club community can afford all of its members the opportunity to be respected for their own unique sets of differences, as well as, encourage them to develop a respect and appreciation for those whose cultural and ethnic backgrounds are different from their own (Long, 2003). Long (2003) advocates for the importance of a high quality, balanced, diverse literature selection in order to create an inviting book club community.

Oprah’s Book Club selections soar to the top of the bestseller list, giving fiction power and bringing fame and riches to even obscure authors (Long, 2003). The economic indicators of her selected novels reflect the effect of her power of suggestion. The confluence of trends as diverse as growth in book club membership, the rise of feminism, a television-centered self-help culture, and a world-wide move toward democracy have contributed to the success of Oprah’s Book Club (Farr, 2005).

In the American tradition, reading good books for self-improvement and reflection has always been popular (Long, 2003). Reading about dissimilar people provides an opportunity to explore and feel new things. It may change people, bringing them together by deepening insights, inviting social interaction, intellectual engagement and even personal transformation (McMahon and Raphael, 1997). A good book may highlight a difficult social issue such as race relations, expanding one’s vision of self and the world (Long, 2003). According to Long (2003), this emphasis on social justice
(equality) issues opens avenues for compassionate connection, both within the books and beyond them.

History of Multiculturalism

Before the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, a number of forces contributed to social class conflict in the United States. The majority of immigrants were mainly Protestants from Northern and Western Europe, such as England, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland. Although conflicts developed between these various immigrant groups, the English dominated social, economic and political life by the 1700s (Banks, 1988). By 1890, when mostly Catholic immigrants arrived in the United States from Southern, Central and Western and Eastern Europe, the original immigrants perceived themselves as the true, legal inhabitants of America.

The Early 1900s to the 1950s

Because of cultural differences and competition for jobs, a strong movement of anti-Catholicism developed (Banks, 1988). A suspicion and distrust of all new immigrants became prevalent at the turn of the century and increased with the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Assimilation was encouraged so that recent immigrants would adopt the traits of the dominant culture (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Assimilation refers to the “merging groups and their traditions within a society that endorses a single common culture” (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003, p. 48). The preferred “common culture” representation was that of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs), who had dominated the United States since the 17th century. They were encouraged to embrace the Latin motto e pluribus unum, to “build one” nation out of “many” nationalities and seek to melt into one people. Kottak and Kozaitis (2003) believe that the “melting pot” approach to
assimilation implied that all groups should adopt dominant traits as their own and is not
democratic (Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

A political democratic view emerged in the early 20th century with the purpose of
immigrant groups having a right to maintain their ethnic cultures (Banks, 1988).
According to Banks (1988), writers and philosophers like Horace Kallen, Randolph
Bourne, and Julius Drachsler defended the rights of immigrants in the United States.
These men advocated that a political democracy must also be a cultural democracy
(cultural pluralism). The salad bowl term was used, explaining that each individual
ethnic culture would contribute positively to a pluralistic society (Banks, 1988).
Pluralism holds that “ethnic and racial differences should be allowed to thrive, so long as
such diversity does not threaten dominant values and norms” (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003,
p. 49). Kottak and Kozaitis suggest that pluralism views ethnic groups through
further explain that while tolerating diversity, pluralism regards ethnic boundaries as
fixed and does not challenge the need for a dominant culture or stratification.

The arguments of the cultural pluralists were not heeded. The triumph of the
assimilationist model in American life was symbolized by the Immigration Acts of 1917
and 1924 (Banks, 1988). These halted the immigration of Southern, Central, and Eastern
European groups, such as Poles, Greeks, and Italians.

The 1960s to the 1970s

Largely as a result of the Civil Rights, feminist and gay rights revitalization
movements of the 1960s and 1970s, a multicultural perspective currently dominates our
society. Multiculturalism differs from assimilation and pluralism by (a) recognizing
many cultural cores in our global origins, (b) pushing society towards sociocultural equity, and (c) enforcing laws promoting equality among all groups and therefore protecting against discrimination of minorities (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Assimilation and pluralism are founded on the adage “out of many, one” (*e pluribus unum*).

Multiculturalism introduces a new philosophy as “in one, many”. Society is seen not as many cultures unifying into one heritage, but as the co-existence of many cultures within one country (Banks, 1988). Tolerating diversity is no longer enough. While United States law advocates equality among all groups of citizens and supports policies that discourage stratification or stereotyping, there are still inequities in access to economic and social equality. Multiculturalism’s main organizing standard is the protection of culture and its relation to political power to create change with opportunity (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003).

*The 1980s to the 1990s*

The multicultural mission of bringing focus to human rights and eliminating discrimination in political, social, and economic institutions has increased with the efforts of other marginalized groups such as, homosexuals and lesbians, the elderly, and people with physical or mental disabilities, (Banks, 2001). In its purest form, then, multiculturalism seeks to liberate and democratize all minority groups that inhabit the periphery of society (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Kottak and Kozaitis advocate that this effort has elevated culture as power, and an appreciation of culture as an agent of social change.

Furthermore, multiculturalism recognizes a multiplicity of legitimate cultural centers, acknowledges cultural criteria as the source of group formation, and promotes
democracy among groups (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). The United States has embraced the coexistence of many heritages and traditions. In its effort to respect diversity this policy has promoted cultural equality, nondiscrimination, and what some people call “political correctness” (Long, 1997).

Ethnic and racial diversity is embraced in a pluralistic society (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Cultural/ethnic traditions are promoted in a society that socializes individuals not only into the dominant culture, but also into an ethnic culture. With the respectful interaction of ethnic groups, multiculturalism uses legal and political means to advance these beliefs (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). The United States promotes freedom of expression in a society of many diverse culturally organized groups (U.S. Constitution).

Human agency, the collective capacity of human beings to construct culture, is a key feature in a society that thrives on diversity (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Kottak and Kozaitis (2003) further explain that organized efforts of collected identities, like the African-American, feminist, gay, aged, and people with disabilities movements, ensures their human rights. People use culture (shared knowledge, values, and experience) to organize society into cohesive groups with political, economic, educational, and moral goals (Long, 2003). Multiculturalism now pervades the worlds of work, politics, public service, and personal relationships. Multiculturalism influences marketers, lobbyists, physicians, architects, and managers (Kottak and Kozaitis, 2003). Consequently, the quality of life for individuals and groups has improved considerably. The cultural system of the United States changes to embrace and validate different ways of life (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Multiculturalism has prompted government, business, and educational
institutions to take actions to capitalize upon the potential of diversity (Brewer & Brewer, 1995).

Not surprisingly, issues of diversity are central to mainstream education (Ladson-Billings, 1994). To experience the lives of others is to understand how they see and experience the world. Greene (1991) observes that engagement with literature can develop people’s capacity to relate to those who are culturally different from themselves. It is her belief that reading, reflecting on, and discussing literature creates possibilities for readers to develop emotions and empathic understanding, and not through abstract reasoning. Readers experience, even if vicariously, the lives of diverse communities and families they may rarely encounter in their own lives. For Greene (1991) literary imagination is what makes compassion in hearts as well as minds possible.

Consequently, proponents of multiculturalism have promoted its presence in educational curricula, particularly in the teaching of literary texts.

2000 to Today

The culturally diverse population of the United States continues to grow at a rapid rate. Results from the 2000 census (U.S. Census Bureau) indicate that 72% of the U.S. population is European American; 11.2% African American; 11% Latino; 3.8% Asian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander; 0.7% Native American or Alaskan Native; and 1.3% two or more races. With over one fourth of the population culturally diverse, the need to appreciate cultural uniqueness has never been more vital (Kottak and Kozaitis, 2003).

A multicultural paradigm explores the concepts of diversity and pluralism through analysis of the relationship between power, privilege, oppression, and resistance (Banks, 1996). Banks suggests that to bring about a truly pluralistic democracy, our educational
system not only must reflect this diversity but also must seek to achieve comparable educational outcomes for all groups in American society.

Ethnic identity growth as proposed by Banks (2001) is achieved in stages. For individuals to succeed in redefining their ethnic self-concepts a perceptual metamorphosis must occur. This transformation involves interactions of individuals and sociocultural contexts. The change is a liberating process representing a psychological healthier state of being. There is a series of stages from negativism and shame to positivism and pride until finally the new perceptions are projected in their attitudes.

While multiculturalism is applauded by many, there is currently a backlash against it by some. Many political conservatives, for example, have placed the issue of culture and difference at the center of the debate about education and democracy (Ravitch, 1989). A plethora of books have sought to protect the sanctity of Eurocentric identity and racism, among them Ravitch’s *The Language Police* (2006), Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), Schlesinger’s *The Disuniting of America* (1998), D’Souza’s *Illiberal Education* (1992), Bennett’s *The De-Valuing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children* (1992), Hirsch’s *Cultural Literacy* (1988) and Lynne Cheney’s *American Memory* (1985). Ravitch (1989) asserts that multiculturalism and political correctness are a threat to the foundations of United States history and identity. Orwin (1996) believes that the goal of these attacks is to reverse the benefits of civil rights and social welfare reforms constructed over the last three decades. “These abuses warrant grave concern” (Orwin, 1996, p. 51).

A harmful misconception about multiculturalism is that it is a movement that threatens the sociocultural values of Western civilization. Multiculturalism is a Western
movement, as it grew out of a civil rights movement grounded in the Western ideals of freedom, justice, and equality (Banks, 2001). Banks explains that multiculturalism seeks to extend to all people the ideals that were meant only for an elite few at the beginning of this country.

History of Multicultural Literature

As noted earlier, great demographic changes occurred in the United States between 1890 and 1920 as immigrants from European countries arrived. Cross-cultural or multicultural understanding was needed to educate the children of these immigrants. The history of multicultural literature describes the content represented in books about people from four cultural or racial categories: African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans.

1820s to 1930s

Between the early 19th century and the early 20th century milestone multicultural books were just beginning to be published in the United States depicting characters representing diverse groups. In the 1800s, two of these books with African American characters are Stowe’s (1852) *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Bannerman’s (1899) *Little Black Sambo*. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* became the second best-selling novel of that century. According to Cunliffe (1986), the anti-slavery novel created stereotypes about African Americans like the affectionate, dark-skinned mammy and the dutiful, long-suffering faithful servant. In both books African American children used the deprecating slave dialect, and were interpreted as neglected by their parents with unkempt hair, bulging eyes and often naked (Cunliffe, 1986).
In the 1930s, publishers started releasing literature representing Asian American culture. These books authored by Claire Bishop, Arthur Bowie Chrisman, Elizabeth Forman Lewis, Elizabeth Seeger, and Thomas Handforth similarly replicated the stereotypical Asian American. The characters have a racist reference as all looking alike, long pony tails, expressionless smiles and yellow skin (Ellermeyer & Chick, 2003).

In the early 1900s, Native-American authors like Elias Boudinot, William Apes, and Charles Eastman were published. These books by Native Americans represented the exception rather than the rule. Stith Thompson’s (1929) comprehensive study, Tales of the North American Indians compiled all the folktales of the North American Indians (Spiller, 1963). As noted by Spiller (1963), this six volume index of Folk Literature also provided insight into the interactions between various Native American cultures. Books depicting characters representing diverse groups continue to be either distorted or omitted entirely from literature in the early 20th century (Cunliffe, 1986).

1940s to the 1950s

After World War II various groups suggested that love and respect should be developed to bring people who differ culturally, closer together (Sleeter and Grant, 1999). Literature attempted to promote better relations among people throughout the world. Books, such as Courlander’s (1948) The Cow-Tail Switch, and Bontemps’ (1949) Story of the Negro, and Yate’s (1951) Amos Fortune, Free Man accurately portray African Americans as free, proud people longing to help others. Five worthy Latino American books published in this period were Politi’s (1947) Pedro, the Angel of Alvera Street and Song of the Swallows, Clark’s (1953) Secret of the Andes, Krumgold’s (1954) …And Now Miguel, and Kalnay’s (1959) Chucaro: Wild Pony of the Pampa (Norton,
2003). These are examples of quality coming of age books with nonwhite protagonists that face real dreams and conflicts, endure hardships, and make tough decisions (Ellermeyer & Chick, 2003).

1960s

In the 1960s Americans began to object to the use of stereotypes in literature. In 1965, Larrick’s article “The All White World of Children’s Books” in Saturday Review revealed the paucity of literature about minorities. From 70 surveys sent to members of the Children’s Book Council, Larrick asked how many African American characters emerged in their books. Of the 5,000 children’s books published from 1962 through 1964, only 6.7% included one or more African American children (Larrick, 1965). Her article brought attention to the white world of children’s books in the United States, even though integration was the law. The outcome of Civil Rights and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act saw more literature on specific groups in order to raise consciousness regarding that group’s oppression.

During the 1960s, in efforts to mitigate white male dominance and to support the goals of school desegregation, a large number of books about African Americans appeared (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). A fine example of these African American books was Lester’s (1969) To Be a Slave. To Be a Slave presented what it felt like to be slave in America in the words of black men and women who lived it, rather than filtered through the eyes of others. Two truthful Native American books published at this time are Mowat’s (1966) Lost in the Barrens, and Momaday’s (1969) House Made of Dawn. These books gave us insight into the theme of the difficulty of cultural integration. Books such as Ets’ and Labastida’s (1960) Nine Days to Christmas-A Story of Mexico,

In 1969, the Coretta Scott King Award was launched by African American librarians to recognize excellence in African American authors and artists (Smith, 2004). According to Smith (2004) the momentum for the award came from the observation of two librarians “that no African American author or illustrator had ever been honored by the prestigious Newberry and Caldecott awards, sponsored by what was then the Children’s Service Division of the American Library Association . . . even though those awards had been established in 1922 and 1938, respectively” (p. ix). The Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) of the American Library Association managed the award until 2004 when the Task Force changed hands to the Ethical and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIRT) (Smith, 2004). Smith elaborated that the Award Jury consisted of seven, ethnically mixed evaluators.

1970s

The theme of stereotypes and cultural images became an important area of research. In 1976, Bettye Latimer, an African American author, warned that some books about African Americans still maintained the negative messages about minorities or make minorities invisible by omission (Ellermeyer & Chick, 2003).

In the 1970s, more literature linked race, language, culture, gender, and disability to celebrate human diversity and equal opportunity (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). This was

In 1976, the Asian American Children’s Book Project (Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1976) recognized 66 books with Asian-American main characters (Ellermeyer & Chick, 2003). One of these books was Laurence Yep’s *Dragonwings*. Norton (2003) reported that with few exceptions, the books presented stereotypes that suggested all Asian-Americans look the same and cling to outdated traditions.

1980s

The lack of literature about Latino Americans and the negative Latino American stereotypes was criticized by Charpenel (1980), Literature for Children Conference at the
University of Texas where he reported the need for books and poetry written for or about Mexican Americans and the need to create positive images of their traditions (Norton, 2003).

In 1985, Greenfield, severely condemned authors who perpetuate racism and stereotypes in books (Norton, 2003). Sleeter and Grant (1991) analyzed 47 textbooks that were in use for grades one through eight, with copyright dates between 1980 and 1988. The results supported the following conclusion:

Whites consistently dominate textbooks, although their margin of dominance varies widely. Whites receive the most attention, are shown the widest variety of roles, and dominate the story line and lists of accomplishments. Blacks are the next most included racial group. However, the books show Blacks in a more limited range of roles than Whites and give only a sketchy account of Black history and little sense of contemporary Black life. Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans appear mainly as figures on the landscape with virtually no history or contemporary ethnic experience. Native Americans appear mainly as historical figures. Males predominate in most books, but even in books in which females have a major presence, females of color are shown very little. (Sleeter & Grant, 1991, pp. 97-98)

Efforts in the 1980s to publish African American literature prevailed, as the amount of African American literature available had gradually been growing. Many multicultural authors published at this time. A few of the more prominent ones were: Virginia Hamilton, Ashley Bryan, Eloise Greenfield, John Steptoe, Camille Yarbrough and Tom Feelings (Henderson & May, 2005).

Literature can try to expand the social conscience of white children (Banks, 1988). The Asian American books that are effective in raising social awareness are Mariki’s (1983) Hiroshima No Pika, and Blumberg’s (1986) Commodore Perry in the Land of Shogun. Similarly, books that featured Native Americans also exude social conscience from the 1980s are Spears’ The Sign of the Beavers, Paulsen’s Dogsong and

**1990s to Today**

Throughout the 1990s multicultural literature focuses as much on challenging social stratification as on celebrating human diversity and equal opportunity (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Educators are appealing for more multicultural books that characterize their students as standards require literature-based instruction. The trend for increased Asian American literature with strong-spirited individuals is available from Say’s (1994) *Grandfather’s Journey*, Yep’s (1994) *Dragon’s Gate*, Sis’ (1997) *Tibet through the Red Box*, Welan’s (2000) *Homeless Bird*, and Park’s (2001) *A Single Shard*. In 1999 Ancona’s *Barrio: Jose’s Neighborhood* and Carling’s *Mama and Papa Have a Store* represented equal opportunity in Latino American literature.

Disaster and Curtis’ Bud, Not Buddy that illustrated the diversity experience and responsibility in a more contemporary situation (Norton, 2003).

Moreover, dramatic changes have taken place in the secondary schools of this country during this time (Stotsky, 1995 cited in Smith, 1997). Stotsky (1995) reviewed a 1907 report by George Tanner to reveal only 9 of the 40 most assigned high school works were written by Americans; the rest were by British writers. Ninety years later, two studies by Arthur Applebee and one study by Phillip Anderson reveal the situation has reversed. Today, there is a predominance of American works over British works in high school literature programs (Stotsky, 1995).

Definitions of Multicultural Literature

Banks (1988) defines multicultural literature as literature that “reflects the culture, ethos, and experiences of the diverse groups” (p. 28). Similarly, Sleeter and Grant (1999) also feel multicultural literature should present the diverse perspectives, experiences, and contributions of omitted or misrepresented groups. According to Norton (2003), multicultural literature is about racial or ethnic minority groups who are different from white middle-class Anglo Saxons whose traditions and values are most represented in American literature.

Multicultural literature is intended to represent two broad principles: inclusiveness and the avoidance of stereotyping (Stotsky, 1995, cited in Long, 1997). Stotsky (1995) characterizes inclusiveness as acknowledged “existence of all self-identified ethnic/racial/religious groups in this country by assigning literary works by or about members of these groups” (p. 73). With respect to preventing stereotyping, Stotsky (1995) views multicultural literature as not portraying members of any group in ways that
can be unflattering or demeaning. These definitions share a belief that the United States is a society of many different cultures, and that one of its strengths as a nation is its extraordinary diversity (Banks, 1988).

The debate surrounding multicultural literature is a political rather than literary issue (Cai, 2002). Two factors give rise to this theory. First, multicultural literature can be used as a political weapon in a cultural war. Second, it can be used as an educational tool to perhaps change people’s attitudes and actions toward cultural diversity. Because multiculturalism is about marginalized social groups, it has always met with resistance from political conservatives since fundamentalist conservatives view multiculturalism as an evil force that seeks to undermine Western culture (Texel, 1997).

Another controversial political debate occurs among those who believe in multiculturalism as a personification of democratic ideals. These groups have different notions of multiculturalism and different agendas for advocating multicultural literature. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) classified five types of multicultural groups: (1) Conservative multiculturalists only pay lip service to the equality of all races: “Conservative multiculturalism is a form of neo-colonialism - a new embrace of the colonialist tradition of white male supremacy” (p. 3). (2) Liberals argue for intellectual equality among races, but not social opportunities: “The unexamined sameness of liberal multiculturalism allows educators and cultural producers to speak the language of diversity, but to normalize Eurocentric culture as the tacit norm everyone references” (p. 11). (3) Pluralists believe differences should thrive but not threaten dominant values: “Diversity becomes intrinsically valuable and is pursued for its own sake to the point that difference is exoticized and fetishized” (p. 15). (4) Left-essentialist multiculturalism
emphasizes cultural differences and rejects traditional curricula.  Critical multiculturalism supports social justice and the existence of many heritages.  Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) advocated that critical multiculturalism is preferable to the other forms because it not only values diversity, but also deals with issues of equality in society.  Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) suggested that unless people accept the same form of multiculturalism, controversy is unavoidable.

Another point of argument in understanding what multiculturalism means and the implications of that meaning for multicultural literature centers around the concept of political correctness (PC) (Long, 1997).  Political correctness is defined by Webster’s Dictionary as “a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in manners of sex or race) should be eliminated” (p. 901).  Tolerance is a principle of democracy that must be practiced in public through sensitivity in speech and action towards a particular group (Fu & Stremmel, 1999).  Fu and Stremmel (1999) believe that tolerance involves, listening to the stories of those from diverse groups promotes a searching for truth.  Continuous search for truth is the legacy of freedom of the mind (Dewey, 1940).  Political correctness provides the environment in which the concept of tolerance is challenged: “The extent to which one can be faulted for defying political correctness, through insensitivity in word and action towards a particular group, is the object of much conflict” (Long, 1997, p. 1).

An additional area of disagreement is about the central issue of authenticity or ‘insider-outsider’ perspective.  The ‘insider’ perspective might better represent the culture and the ‘outsider’ representation, not familiar with the culture, might be more likely to portray an inaccurate depiction of the culture.  Through the eyes of ‘insider’ the
quality and authenticity of research is assured by the participation in cultural groups (Sims-Bishop, 1992).

Educators and librarians viewed multicultural literature as works that focus on non-dominant cultures in a society (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). One of the most important issues in defining multicultural literature concerns authorship. According to Cai (2002) the core of the issue of multicultural literature is “insider versus outsider” or rather between experience and imagination. This implies that multicultural literature is only the province of writers who are themselves members of the non-dominant group being written about. There is a discrepancy in representation, between the implied author using imagination and the real author using experience. Cai (2002) believed although any writer, whether a member of the group being written about or not, can write about anything, but in doing so the integrity of the culture being described could inadvertently be harmed. Consequently, while characteristics of multicultural literature can be identified, confusion and disagreement continued over the definition of multicultural literature. As yet there is little consensus, nor one wholly accepted definition.

Norton (2003) identified shared characteristics of multicultural literature in texts about African Americans, Asian Americans, Latin Americans, and Native Americans. They all include a (a) truthful portrayal of characters; (b) transcendence of cultural stereotypes; (c) truthful portrayal of physical diversity; (d) truthful portrayal of the characters in the text and illustrations; (e) truthful portrayal of the culture; (f) truthful portrayal of social concerns without generalization; (g) depiction of stable nonwhite characters; (h) portrayal of nonwhite characters equal to white characters; (i) non-glamorization of nonwhite characters; (j) truthful portrayal of the setting; (k) truthful
portrayal of the factual and historical details; (l) truthful portrayal of the setting; (m) rectification of historical distortions or omissions; (n) truthful portrayal of dialect; (o) circumvent offensive or degrading vocabulary; (p) truthful portrayal of illustrations; and (q) positive awareness of the shifting status of women.

Yokota (1998) posits four criteria of cultural accuracy for selecting multicultural literature: 1) richness in cultural detail, 2) authentic dialogue and relationships, 3) in-depth treatment of cultural issues, and 4) inclusion of members of a “minority” group for a purpose. The Namesake (Lahiri, 2003) meets these criteria as a multicultural book with numerous details from the Taj Mahal to Pearl Jam. Examples of the key points that reflect the values and beliefs are given for each of the criteria. 1) Richness in cultural detail. Lahiri uses food and clothing, as two illustrations, to explore cultural customs. The Bengali food Ashima makes is often mentioned, even the dishes out of American substitutes. Lahiri provides detailed clothing descriptions of the Indian sari, chappal, salwar karmeeze, dhoti, and the topor. Moreover, deeper cultural issues of values and beliefs are also explored in manners. Indian manners are an important component of their culture as Ashima serves guests as if they are a part of the family (Seymour, 1999). In addition, Gogol and Sonia treat their parents and others with respect and demonstrate a helpful nature to others. 2) Authentic dialogue and relationships. Gogol’s relationship with his father enhances the story along with his relationships with the women in his life: Ashima, Sonia, Maxine, and Moushumi. Gogol respects his father as respect for elders is an important component of Indian culture (Seymour, 1999). Similarly, his respect is consistent with the women in his life, as Indian culture teaches reverence for one another as one’s duty (Seymour, 1999). 3) In-depth treatment of cultural issues. Indian cultural
factors are vital in the Indian wedding, the Calcutta holiday and Ashoke’s funeral. Indians participate whole-heartedly in occasions of joy and grief by including the Indian community in events (Seymour, 1999). 4) Inclusion of members of a “minority” group for a purpose. The Namesake’s immigrant experience features the rituals of Indian culture from Gogol’s parents’ arranged marriage to their children trying to find their place in American culture. The details from The Namesake enhance the readers’ sense of Indian culture through nuances of daily life to meet the criteria of quality multicultural literature.

Long (1997) suggested that the canon and the school curriculum in general should include as many diverse cultures as possible. This policy will inevitably mean replacing some of the standard Western works currently in school curricula.

Multicultural Literature in School

Dewey (1933) believed that learning to be human occurred through “the give and take” of communication. This process helped people develop an effective sense of being individual participants in a democratic community. Similarly, one goal of multicultural literature is the promotion of critical and constructive dialogue on issues regarding race, gender, class, sexual orientation and citizenship (Van Soest, 1996). Multicultural literature therefore offers readers an opportunity to explore the construction of cultural identity, the situations of various societal groups, the foundations of privilege and oppression and the methods activists use to promote change. Van Soest believed engaging readers in this dialogue on issues of multiculturalism better prepares them for living in diverse settings. Encounters with multicultural literature help readers make connections that deepen their understanding of diversity and can ultimately lead to community building.
Similarly, in the Standards for the English Language Arts ((IRA & NCTE, 1996) the International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English posit the need for students to examine works that “develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles” (p. 3). The Standards recognize that multicultural literature and diversity in learners’ reading selections provide a means for helping readers “build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience” (p. 3).

When individuals are able to read multicultural literature, they are more able to gain from the total human experience (Banks, 1988). Banks (1988) explains that “individuals who know, participate in, and see the world from only their unique cultural and ethnic perspectives are denied important parts of the human experience and are culturally and ethically encapsulated” (p. 33).

Promoting mutual respect, self-reflection, and empathy are important instructional goals as well. Multicultural literature can serve as a mirror of a reader’s own cultures and a lens through which they can view the cultures of others. The Standards for the English Language Arts (IRA & NCTE, 1996) value language as a medium to promote understanding, a characteristic vital to readers’ success in today’s pluralistic society. Through meaningful interactions with multicultural literature, readers can discover the universality of the human experience that unites people of all backgrounds.

Moreover, multicultural literature provides the opportunity to be respectful to the assortment of cultural opinions represented by the text (Banks, 1988). Dewey (1971) elaborates that all citizens should be equal participants and all voices should be heard and
in a critical discussion. Readers experience passages in vastly different ways. Rosenblatt’s (2005) reader response theory espouses the idea that readers come to passages imbued with thoughts, ideas, interests, histories, experiences, etc. that affect the ways they interact or transact with the information.

Paralleling the growth of adult book clubs, as noted earlier, many language arts programs use Literature Circles as an instructional strategy to engage the interests of many students (Daniels, 2002). Literature Circles involve small student-led groups discussing books they have chosen for themselves. This instructional strategy has been endorsed by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association as one of the "best classroom practices" in their 1996 Standards for the English Language Arts. Defining what children should know about language and what they should be able to do with it, the NCTE Standards call for proficiency in six language arts, which can be set in three connected pairs:

1. Reading and writing – print-oriented language
2. Listening and speaking – spoken communication
3. Viewing and visually representing – visual language

Several of the 12 NCTE Standards are directly addressed in Literature Circles, where students develop the academic and social skills to collaborate in choosing what they read and in preparing and leading subsequent discussions with the aid of a variety of media (Daniels, 2002). In doing so, students may use all the language arts–written, spoken, and visual–in the critical analysis to engage with and study multicultural literature. Moreover, Hansen-Krening (1997) has found that when students read
multicultural texts and discuss them through Literature Circles, it enhances their multicultural awareness.

As they read and critique texts (Henderson & May, 2005) espouse that readers are “searching for the author’s meaning of reality . . . learning to listen and respond to new ideas in positive ways” (p. xvii). Readers reflect on questions when they synthesize between what they have read and what they already know about a topic, to make larger inferences and connections (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005). Consequently, one benefit of this approach is that readers often gain an understanding that all multicultural texts can be read from multiple perspectives (Henderson & May, 2005).

A Brief History of Reader Response

In 1938, Rosenblatt (1978) first proposed a fundamental new analysis of how readers make meaning from text. Main features of her theory are (a) a focus on readers’ psychological processes and (b) seeing literature as a way of promoting critical thinking and multiple perspectives. She proposed that readers bring emotions, experiences, and knowledge to a reading that rouses associations with the words, images and ideas in the text. Rosenblatt also believed that experiencing literature in this way makes the reader an active participant who is visible in the interpretive process and therefore promotes the diversity of opinion and open-mindedness essentials for democracy: “The individual will be liberated from blind subservience to the norms of his group, not by throwing overboard all standards, but by seeing them in relation to the whole complex of attitudes and values into which they fit” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 145).

Reader response, then, stresses the importance of the reader’s role in interpreting texts. Rosenblatt (1938, 1978) explained that approaching any text causes readers to
adopt a position or “stance.” These stances are expressions of the reading purpose. An
efferent reading stance extracts information or facts to be remembered from the reading
experience, while an aesthetic reading stance evokes an emotional emphasis on the
experience, as the reader becomes an integral participant in the developing events of the

Rosenblatt (1938, 1978) suggested that her aesthetic and efferential stances are
“aspects of consciousness.” Rosenblatt noted that no reading experience is purely
aesthetic or purely efferential, but rather that readers are always making choices about
their thinking, focusing on the stances, and sometimes more on one than the other.
Reading falls somewhere in the efferent-aesthetic continuum, which is determined by the
purpose for reading. This “stream of consciousness” activates certain areas of meaning
depending on the stance.

Rosenblatt’s pioneering ideas were disregarded as traditional approaches to
literature education by the New Critics, emphasized reading as a passive process where
the meaning resides in the text (Vacca & Newton, 1995). Vacca and Newton explained
that in the New Critical approach each literary work contains a correct interpretation that
renders the reader invisible. Text-based reading emphasizes student’s knowledge of the
literary canon and expects them to arrive at a commonly accepted meaning of the studied
literature.

A large body of research from psycholinguists and cognitive psychologists by
Goodman (1994), Halliday (1975), Bloome (1985), Squire (1964), and Purves and
Rippere (1968) noted the New Critics’ belief in the pure meaning of a text did not
adequately recognize the primacy of a reader in the meaning-making process. Vacca and
Newton (1995) noted that oral and written languages develop in parallel fashion as students make-meaning from linguistic and environmental signals, providing further support for Rosenblatt’s transactional view of reading and literary interpretation. Encompassing major ideas from her work, the range of Rosenblatt’s influence is evident in three areas: theory, literary criticism and practice.

Reader Response Theory

What continues to distinguish Rosenblatt’s (1938, 1978) ideas from other critical approaches is her proposition that meaning is derived from the transaction that occurs between the reader, the text, and the context of the literary act based on language and life experiences. Thus, the interpretations of the reader are not static, but continually shaped by transactions between the reader’s experiences and the new information acquired from the text. Her transactional views, that deeply respect individual reader responses, apply to all language behavior, not just reading.

Rosenblatt’s (1938, 1978) transactional approach insisted equally on the role the words on the page play in defining the act of meaning-making. This led her to emphasize the role of discussion on meaning: “Discussion of personal responses, of the text as lived through, can thus give rise to a truly inductive study of literature” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 272). Such discussion is epitomized by democratic discourse, where there is community collaboration to make meaning. Rosenblatt focused on the dialogue occurring after each reader’s response has been recalled. She saw fostering an imagination needed in a democracy as central to the reading experience. “Literature acts as one of the agencies in our culture that transmit images of behavior, emotional attitudes clustering about different social relationships, and social and personal standards (Rosenblatt, 1938, p.
The reading transaction causes the reader to be motivated to construct a private meaning. Situational conditions, like time, mood, pressures, reason, intent, and purposes influence a reader’s intention for reading (Ruetzel, 2000).

Rosenblatt (1938) described how a reader’s meaning is both individually and socially constructed. Her response viewed accounts for multiple and diverse responses within and between readers “We can create in our classrooms as atmosphere of give-and-take and mutual challenge; through this, we shall surely find indirect evidences of the real literary experiences, the sources of growth” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 273). Some cognitive processes of response are predicting, imaging, inferring, questioning, and connecting (Asselin, 2000). These processes activate background knowledge. According to Gunning (2003), “more than any other factor, background knowledge will determine what students learn and, indeed, how well they understand their texts” (p. 409).

Rosenblatt (2005) supported context as a factor in the construction of meaning. She suggested that readers transact with the text and the context in order to comprehend. Transaction implies that readers’ personal experiences shape their understanding of narrative and expository text, indicating that response is personal and may vary (Moss, 2003). The power relationship between the author and the reader shifts somewhat, allowing the reader more authority to read beyond the literal text. The relationship between the author and the reader can flow in both directions in the act of reading and teaching. Rosenblatt asserted that this kind of interpretation of the text frees the reader from the confines of literal comprehension, since even though the text is written by the author; the comprehension of it is a dialogue between the reader and the author.
Reader-Text Relationship in Reading

Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional theory is seen in action when exploring her ideas on democracy, life, and art. Rosenblatt (1938) believed that language engages the entire person and can enable us to reach out beyond ourselves as we make the choices that structure our lives. For example, a reader can accept or reject the shocking novels of F. Scot Fitzgerald’s view of life in the Jazz Age, interpreting it in ways that are personally instructive. Accordingly to response theory, then, the ultimate value of literary interpretation is its relevance and ability to influence the beliefs of each specific reader.

Rosenblatt’s (1978) literary criticism viewed readers as active participants in the reading process and invited them to move beyond the assumption that the truth of a text is to be found in passively accepting its surface message. Rather, readers are urged to question, examine, or dispute the power relations that exist between readers and authors. She maintained that a response approach also focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation and action. This power reasoning is often expressed through dialogue with others who are seeking to understand the hidden strategies at work (Freire, 1970).

From this perspective, comprehension includes understanding the power relationship between the reader and the author (Lewison, Flint, & VanSluys, 2002). Readers have the power and the right to be textual critics by reading, questioning and analyzing the information sources and purposes. They can take action by representing different perspectives. Readers need to refocus and actively engage to become text critics (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004).
The relationship of literary criticism to reader response becomes clear when examining the body of Rosenblatt’s work (1938, 1978, 2005). Reading from a critical stance can be viewed as an extension of her aesthetic/efficent stances. When reading from a critical stance, readers use their background knowledge in language, social or cultural context to understand the “power relationships” between a reader’s ideas and those of the author. In this process, readers play the role of textual critics (Luke, 2000). In other words, readers have the power to envision alternate ways of viewing the author’s topic, and they exert this power when they read from a critical stance. According to Rosenblatt, readers will “develop a more critical, questioning attitude and will see the need of a more reasoned foundation for their thoughts and judgments” (p. 114). The critical stance functions just like the aesthetic and efferent stances do during reading. Our reading experiences may involve one stance more than the others, but all three are represented during a reading event (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Implications of Reader Response for Literary Criticism

Reader-response criticism is a group of approaches to understanding literature that privilege the reader’s role in creating the meaning and experience of a text (Beach, 1993). More specifically, reader-response criticism refers to a group of critics who primarily study, not the text, but the reader in the act of responding to a literary work. Reader response theory has implications for both individual readers and the literature classroom. Reading, writing, and discussion play a vital role in a response curriculum when they are used to aide comprehension before, during and after reading through making-meaning and activating background knowledge (Vacca & Newton, 1995). Reader response helps teachers and students expand their comprehension, seek out multiple perspectives and
become active thinkers (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Response theory is a starting point for helping students to become engaged in literacy.

Beach (1993) offered five theoretical perspectives that move from specific to global in the reader and text transaction. Each of them weights the reader-text relationship somewhat differently. *Textual* theorists focus on the task of identifying the uniform meaning that was contained in the text. All emotional reactions are labeled ‘affective fallacies’ (Iser, 1974, Ingarden, 1973). *Experimental* theorists center on unpacking the reader’s own unique experience with text (Bleich, 1975; Rosenblatt, 1938). *Psychological* theorists center on how characteristics of the reader’s personality affect his or her response. From this perspective, even Piaget’s developmental levels can be analyzed to explain responses (Holland, 1968). *Social* theorists center on the sociocultural context of responses, investigating how these circumstances can influence a reader’s understanding (Bakhtin, 1981; Fish, 1970). *Cultural* theorists center on the unconscious roles, attitudes and values readers have that shape their responses to a text (Giroux & Simon, 1989).

Rosenblatt’s influential work has had an interdisciplinary impact in philosophy, the social sciences and pedagogy. According to Probst (1988), because of Rosenblatt’s influence readers have the authority and responsibility to make judgments about what they read. Because their personal responses are valued, using reader response theory in teaching supports readers as they become active learners. The responses of other readers also play an important role. Through interaction, readers move beyond their initial individual reaction to take into account a multiplicity of ideas and interpretations, thus expanding their perspective (Dewey, 1971).
Rosenblatt (1938) suggested that the study of world cultures and their literature cultivates individualism and mutual respect, qualities essential to the optimal functioning of a democratic society:

The problem is to fulfill our democratic goal of equal justice for all without regard to differences and yet to maintain respect for such differences. In the schools the aim is to develop students’ respect for their own ethnic or group background and for the cultural traits of others and at the same time to prepare the students for constructive citizenship in our democracy. The current movement termed multiculturalism is having widespread impact, but at times seems to be heightening the sense of difference and conflicts interests among groups. (Rosenblatt, 1938, pp. 245-246)

She prescribed individual instruction to guarantee that teachers will maximize the probability of offering the right book at the right time. Reader response helps readers recognize their own cultural backgrounds. In addition, it helps them better understand the cultural background of others. The dual purposes of literary study should be delight and increased critical judgment (Dewey, 1971).

Rosenblatt (1938) emphasized efferent reading over aesthetic for assessment, but she did not rule out critical response to make meaning. She stated that questions such as, “What does this poem mean?” imply an efferent stance and limit the reader’s attention to the aesthetic value of the work. Rosenblatt championed aesthetic response, because it develops readers who have a sound understanding, and ability to relate the experience to literary, historical or social contexts. Reader response impacts how readers in how they see their own role in the meaning making process. Rather than relying on a facilitator, readers learn to construct their own meaning by connecting the textual material to issues in their lives. The diverse responses of individual readers are important to discovering the variety of possible meanings in a text.
The challenge Rosenblatt posed is how to be aware of both of the possibilities and the pitfalls, once freedom is introduced. One establishes a democratic disposition toward reading by valuing the “nature of the past out of which society has grown and in becoming aware of the forces at work in it today” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 257). The goal of this disposition for a meaningful, self-critical literary experience serves a broader purpose of nurturing readers capable of building a fully democratic society (Clifford, 1991). The success of such a democratic society relies on the quality of participation of its citizens (Dewey, 1971).

Rosenblatt hoped for readers to become thoughtful and responsible citizens capable of functioning in a democracy: “Prolonged contact with literature may result in increased social sensitivity” (Rosenblatt, 1938, p. 175). According to Rosenblatt, such citizens will approach intellectual tasks with humanity and empathy, with a desire for the greater good for all people, with an appreciation of both the diversity and the commonalities obvious in our world. Rosenblatt (1938) wanted readers to be more skillful and articulate, and consequently more humane. Citizens can learn from those in difficult circumstances; they can imagine what life might be like for other people in other places with cultural forces shaping each day (Clifford, 1991). If the reading environment influences readers’ sense of value, then it has a huge responsibility and opportunity. It has the possibility of helping readers become not only articulate and thoughtful people, but good people as well (Rosenblatt, 1938).

Implementing activities that support the development of these perspectives is a central goal of the reading and literature classroom. One area of focus for instruction is building metacognitive awareness. Metacognition refers to the quality of being aware of
one’s thinking techniques (Gunning, 2003). Teachers know that proficient readers are metacognitive about their reading purpose, stance, and the possibilities intrinsic in the interaction of text and reader (Moss, 2003). Effective readers and writers are metacognitive as they inspect the author’s meaning to connect the author’s point with their own background knowledge. They know how to use a variety of strategies to meet their goals, and they can revise their learning plans to gain meaning. Vacca and Newton (1995) suggest using “free response” and journaling as writing activities to activate prior knowledge and create meaning. Successful readers make connections, ask questions, reread, and organize information to represent the meaning of the content (Santa, 2006).

A reader’s response is socially constructed (Rosenblatt, 1978). Creating environments that enhance responsibility and provide pathways for readers to participate as members of a community of learners is essential to internalizing democratic principles such as fairness, equity and responsibility (Dewey, 1971). When readers share in decision making, negotiating a book list and procedures, engaging in assessment of actions, reflecting on learning, collaborating with their peers, they are practicing roles and responsibilities as active citizens.

Discourse

Discussion is an integral part of developing a working knowledge of literature. Discussion can help readers address social, cognitive, and affective dimensions of learning, and provide the chance to explore diverse ideas and process difficult emotional content (Torres & Jones, 1997). Three developmental domains that benefit from discussion involve social responses, cognitive responses, and affective responses (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). Each of these areas is described below and lends a more
comprehensive picture of how a book club can provide a literature conversation for multicultural sensitivity.

_Socially-Constructed Learning_

Literacy is socially constructed and socially rooted (Rosenblatt, 2005). Interpretations are constructed through interaction. In the real world, people read for some social purpose, to get information, understanding, and education. Socially appropriate behaviors provide another dimension for collaborative learning systems (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). Part of the conversation behavior involves the participatory roles that individuals accept within a group. In collaboration the responsibility for learning is transferred from the teacher to students, as they come to understand they can negotiate their own meaning as they interact with one another (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). Gambrell and Almasi speculate that learning in book clubs takes place through interactions with four social values: (a) respectful listening, (b) respect for diversity of voices and experiences, (c) communication of ideas and meaning, and (d) learning democratic discourse.

Vygotsky (1980) examined the gap between what readers are able to accomplish alone and what they could accomplish with collaboration. Vygotsky defined the zone of proximal development as the space between the independent level and potential level. This suggests that, collaborative social interaction among peers can promote cognitive growth. Almasi (1996) supported increased use of collaborative learning because interaction leads to achievement.
Cognitive Learning

Vygotsky (1980) advocated social interaction as the principal means that children arrive at new understandings. This communication enables meaning to be constructed within the experience. Verbal and cognitive processes related to higher-level thinking are expressed as children interact to share ideas. Cognitive theories of the reading process place equal emphasis on the role of prior knowledge and the importance of the print on the page (Rosenblatt, 2005). Readers ask questions to arrive at an interpretation of the text. Participation in collaborative discussions provides readers with the ability to examine their understanding (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). Book clubs utilize this interactive theory by looking at four cognitive values: (a) investigating critical thinking, (b) affirming the learning community, (c) increasing intellectual agility, and (d) developing skills of synthesis and integration. Gambrell and Almasi (1996) mentioned each of these four values to lend a more inclusive depiction of how cognitive theories can provide a background for multicultural sensitivity.

Affective Learning

Social interaction is associated with reading activity, as readers make discoveries about themselves as individuals and as learners (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). Responses have the power to evoke strong feelings and images. Responses reflect beliefs and attitudes as well as learning strategies. Attitudes, interests, beliefs, feelings, and values make up the affective aspects to drive the interactive reading process (Mathewson, 1985). An interactive, holistic approach bridges readers understanding of the culture under study. This contextual style focuses not only on the culture, but also on the history, geography, and time. This can have a potent effect in Book Clubs when discussing the
five affective values: (a) helps explore a diversity of perspectives, (b) increases tolerance, (c) leads to transformation, (d) makes more empathic, and (e) helps become connected to a topic (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996).

**Patterns of Discourse**

Discussion has much to offer in the area of literacy development in connection with providing opportunities for creating environments that support thinking and engagement with text (Almasi, 1996). There are three patterns of discourse for discussing literature used in classroom discussion: (a) Initiate-Response-Evaluate Pattern (I-R-E) – teacher directed (Cazden, 1988); (b) grand conversations – whole class student generated (Gall & Gall, 1976); and (c) small group peer-led (O’Flahavan, 1989). Small group peer-led discussions include idea circles, reader reaction circles (Gambrell, 1995), jigsaws (Aronson, 1978; Slavin, 1996), and literature circles (Daniels, 2002) that are used in classroom discussion.

*Initiate-Response-Evaluate Pattern (I-R-E) Cazden, 1988*

In the traditional Initiate-Response-Evaluate (I-R-E) participatory structure the teacher initiates the discussion by asking a question; the students then respond with an answer; and the teacher evaluates the student’s response (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). This centralized grouping and pattern of discourse consists of repeated sequences of teacher questions and student answers, which hampers student’s thinking. Gambrell and Almasi, (1996) continue to explain that in these teacher-dominated discussions the teacher asks 93% of the questions and talks 62% of the time. None of the student remarks reveals anything about how they reached their conclusions. There is no collaboration to make-meaning so students interpret the meaning as being located in the
text, which is extracted from the teacher. The difference between this recitation pattern and discussions is where chief responsibility for the meaning-making takes place. Specifically, with respect to students learning from the text, the I-R-E pattern is insufficient for developing deeper meanings of text (Cazden, 1986). This centralized, whole-class model is effective only as a before reading strategy to assess background knowledge (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996).

Researchers have investigated that the way teachers respond to student’s comments affects how children will participate in communication. When a teacher repeated or rephrased five to six year old remarks, students usually responded by elaborating on the subject (Orsolini and Pontecorvo, 1992). Dillon (1990) found that teachers can encourage collaboration by asking fewer questions, rephrasing or refraining from speaking.

**Grand Discussion Pattern** (Gall & Gall, 1976)

Grand discussions are response-centered with students developing and articulating their own questions about literature, building a shared common understanding of the meaning of a book and developing a sense of community in the classroom (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). Gambrell and Almasi explained further that the students set the agenda for discussion and select the personal response activities. Their comments from personal responses to books initiate topics of discussion. The resulting literary interpretations arise from their collective reasoning and problem solving. The teacher involves students with an open-ended request for comments and contributes his or her own comments, which reveal his or her opinions. The teacher must provide instructional support that fosters deeper understandings of participation in groups in terms of how to interact and
what to discuss. The teacher also invites several quiet children into the discussion as she supports students in leading their own discussions.

*Peer-Led Discussion Pattern* (O’Flahavan, 1989)

Peer-led discussion has become a popular instructional practice of literary discourse (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). In the 1980s, attention shifted from teacher-led to peer-led discussions that reflected collaborative reasoning capabilities (Baker, 2000). Participation in peer-led discussion is characterized by overlapping talk and interruptions as the students relate to subjects of concern, make connections to life, and contest opposing positions (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). The students are free to reject the subject for another they find more meaningful (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). This interaction pattern of teacher initiation strategies fosters social interactions among students. Almasi’s (1996) research indicates that one way to promote this method is to provide readers with opportunity for collaboratively investigating the meaning of text through small-group peer-led discussions. Such heterogeneous discussion groups are consistent with sociocultural models of learning (Vygotsky, 1980) and response-based theories of comprehension (Rosenblatt, 2005). As members in this diverse community, the students increase their learning and satisfaction of reading and discussing texts (McMahon and Raphael, 1997). McMahon & Raphael (1997) suggest that this diversity is noted not only in race, class and gender differences, but in facility with literacy. Small group peer-led discussions include idea circles (Guthrie & McCann, 1996), reader reaction circles (Gambrell, 1995), jigsaws (Aronson, 1978; Slavin, 1996), and literature circles (Daniels, 2002) that are used in classroom discussion and are briefly explained.
Idea Circles (Guthrie & McCann, 1996). Idea circles are peer-led, small group discussions based on the reading of multiple texts (Guthrie & McCann, 1996). Guthrie and McCann inform us that idea circles engage children in questioning and challenging information for conceptual learning. Literature circles are often used to foster discussion about a specific book (Daniels, 2002). Idea circles focus on the ability to integrate information from multiple sources. “Although both literature circles and idea circles depend on text-based information, literature circles encourage the possibility of different conclusions, whereas idea circles promote the participants’ convergence of conceptual understanding” ((Guthrie & McCann, 1996, p. 89). According to Guthrie and McCann, the most successful idea circles are made up of three to six readers. Guthrie and McCann (1996) suggest starting with a broad, interesting, expansive concept such as “What is a river?” for strategy learning with multiple resources. Idea circles sustain readers in learning understand that reading is more than a systematic skill, but rather is “an avenue for the pursuit of information and the discovery of ideas. They learn that books are reservoirs they can tap for their own purposes” (Guthrie & McCann, 1996, p. 98).

Reader Reaction Circles (Gambrell, 1995). A discussion approach, reader reaction circles, engage students in reading, listening, and speaking experiences about books or stories (Gambrell, 1995). Sociocognitive theories of learning suggest that learning is enhanced when children have opportunities to share and discuss what they are reading with others (Almasi, 1996). Reader reaction circles give ownership of strategies for engaging in discussion. There are three ways to enter discussions after an oral reading: (Gambrell, 1995)
1. Comment on what you like or agree with.

2. Comment on what you would like to know more about.

3. Ask a question.

Gambrell (1995) elaborated that reader reaction circles is motivating for children to share books for pleasure in collaboration, as each child has a specific assignment after the child has read a brief section from a book. Gambrell advocates the necessity of children practicing reading their text in preparation for the read aloud. In conclusion, research suggest that as children share information about books, the likelihood that group members will be motivated to read those books increases (Gambrell, 1995).

Jigsaw (Aronson, 1978; Slavin, 1996). Jigsaw is a cooperative learning activities that can develop a deeper understanding of content (Gunning, 2003). The task is divided into four or five subtasks, with each member of the group taking one segment (Aronson, 1978; Slavin, 1996). Gunning (2003) explained that each student is to become an authority on his topic and teach it first to his own team and then to another group. In a study conducted by Lucker, Rosenfiels, Sikes, and Aronson (1979) with fifth and sixth grade Anglo, Mexican American and African American students, the jigsaw method resulted in superior performance for minority students as compared with the control group, which received traditional whole-class instruction. There were no significant differences for the Anglo students.

Literature Circles (Daniels, 2002). A component of a comprehensive and balanced literacy program, literature circles afford students rich opportunities to use many skills they learn in other areas of the program such as reading aloud, oral language, making connections, and critical thinking (Daniels, 2002). Students come to the
discussion with role sheets to help perform a specific role, such as summarizer, connector, recorder, vocabulary developer. Daniels (2002) explained that roles are designed to support collaborative learning by giving students clearly defined, interlocking, and open-ended tasks. In fact, role sheets are designed to help each student approach a text with clear and conscious purposes (Daniels, 2002). Consequently, their goal is to ensure chunks of class time to be comfortably reallocated to genuine student-led, small-group discussions.

“Literature circles” support readers in thinking critically about books and reading as a transaction (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978). Rosenblatt (1938) noted that when readers actively construct meaning from a text by bringing meaning to as well as taking meaning from a text, “the reader may gain critical consciousness” (p. 101). This approach encourages students to engage in reading the text first and then be active participant in the group discussions and extension projects (Gunning, 2003). Students take responsibility and collaborate with each other as they develop more complex levels of thought, language, and literacy (Daniels, 2002).

Cultural and Social Context for Discussion

Theoretical support for research into the cultural and social context for language development can be found in the work of Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1986), as well as Bruner (1990). Vygotsky (1978) asserted that understanding is social in origin. Children construct knowledge of language through socially interactive situations. From the sociocultural viewpoint, learning involves individual and group communications. When readers participate in the learning environments that encourage communication, the learning process is viewed as an important factor in gaining knowledge.
Literacy development is enhanced when children work together to discuss and reflect on what they are reading (Vygotsky, 1978). Research performed by O’Flahavan (1989) established that successful discussion groups first develop ground rules for classroom discussion. To further acquaint you with “How to Have a Good Discussion”, a list was developed at an elementary school in Maryland (Gambrell, 1996):

1. Listen carefully to the ideas of others.
2. Contribute at least one idea to the discussion.
3. Use text ideas and language in your comments.
4. Use the text of others and add to them.
5. Look at the speakers.
6. Treat others with respect.
7. Keep to the topic.
8. Let others have a turn.

Teaching charts can also be adapted as self-evaluation, so students can assess their own progress toward meeting goals (Gunning, 2003). Gunning proposed that students should use their sense of how they are doing, to appraise their progress and make improvements in their work habits and effort as needed. Gunning concluded that virtually all “evaluation begins with the setting of goals and ends with action. An essential component is improvement in achievement” (p. 418).

Discussion takes place in a physical environment with noticeable physical characteristics. The average classroom of 25-30 students will need to accommodate four to six discussion groups sitting in a circle on the floor or at a table. Group participants should be seated at the same height, therefore giving participants equal status (Cazden, 1988). Group members should be able to make eye contact with each another, so they can indicate time on task by looking at the speaker (Gall & Gall, 1976).
There exists an important dimension of learning as a result of discussion. Sociocognitive theories (cooperation) of learning suggest that learning is enhanced when children have opportunities to share and discuss what they are reading with others (Almasi, 1996). Reader’s multicultural experiences and perceptions may vary from those in the book and from other readers. Reader’s ideas can be challenged by conflicts with self, text, or others as evidenced in the Sociolinguistic Theory (Bloom & Green, 1984) and the Oracy Project (Barnes, 1992). Social learning emphasizes the important role of social interaction in the development of knowledge and learning (Bloom and Green, 1984). Bloom and Green (1984) note in their Sociolinguistic Theory that reading is rooted in a social and a linguistic process. “As a social process, reading is used to establish structure and maintain social relationships between and among people. As a linguistic process, reading is used to communicate intentions and meanings, not only between an author and a reader, but also between people involved in the reading event (p. 395). Bloom and Green’s (1984) Sociolinguistic Theory is also imbedded in literary analysis. During the reading process meaning-making is located in the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Barnes (1992), as mentioned earlier in the Oracy Project, also emphasized a sociocognitive theory where the learning potential of discussions is reflective and speech is exploratory. Research was conducted in British primary schools. As a result, the Oracy Project promoted collaboration and investigative learning for the development of cognitive understanding through dialogue. Barnes, (1992), explained that investigative learning or ‘exploratory talk’ required students to manipulate what they already know, and explore possibilities. When learners have opportunities to communicate with group
members about their understandings or perceptions through talk, their opinions are put forth to be pondered, and modified (Barnes, 1992). The sociocognitive nature of reading may support multicultural understanding, as a result of engaging in book discussions.

Summary

This chapter has investigated four broad areas: (a) book clubs in the United States, (b) multicultural literature, (c) reader response theory, and (d) discussion. Book clubs help capture richly interactive and collaborative environments in which readers work together as a learning community in their mutual construction of knowledge. Multicultural literature expands spaces for the multiplicity of voices that define our culturally pluralistic society. This chapter has outlined the theoretical reader-response teachings of Louise Rosenblatt, who emphasized the importance of the reader’s role in interpreting texts. Finally, this chapter has investigated the characteristics of effective discussion groups by exploring discussion patterns and discussion learning styles and settings, as an integral part of developing a working knowledge of literature.

The following chapter introduces the procedures for conducting the research measuring book club members’ attitudes and actions.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

*How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book. The book exists for us perchance which will explain our miracles and reveal new ones.*

Henry David Thoreau, “Walden; or Life in the Woods”

People believe the statements of known authorities. For information difficult to know by personal experience, people frequently turn to authority. However, they are hesitant to rely on an individual or an authority merely because of position. They are prone to accept the assertions of an authority only when that authority bases its declarations on experience or the scientific method.

The scientific method is widely regarded as the single most reliable source of new information (Gall et al., 2003). Scientific investigators seek theories that explain and predict phenomena in a reliable manner by using hypotheses. A hypothesis is a statement describing relationships among variables that is tentatively assumed to be true, or basically “an educated guess” (Salkind, 2004). Additionally, it identifies observations to be made to investigate a question. All hypotheses indicate specific phenomena to be observed (the variables), in this case attitudes and actions on racism and ethnicity. Scientific investigators infer the consequences that would follow if a hypothesized
relationship were valid and then, test them by gathering data. On the basis of the evidence, they accept or reject the hypotheses (Glesne, 2006).

Included in Chapter III is an overview of the research design, a statement of the research null hypotheses, a description of the participants, a description of the sampling procedures that were used, a description of the pilot study that was used, instrumentation of the study, and a review of the assessments, a variable matrix, an explanation of the data collection, the statistical treatment utilized, and the limitations of the study.

Research Design

Descriptive research involves the collection and analysis of quantitative data in order to develop a precise description of a sample’s behavior or personal characteristics. Survey research is a form of descriptive research that involves collecting information about research participants’ beliefs, attitudes, interests, or behavior through surveys (Gall et al, 2005).

Our laws are changing towards nondiscrimination; however, little research has been conducted to access book club members’ perceptions of attitudes and actions about multiculturalism. The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and actions of book club members before and after reading and discussing a multicultural book in a mid-size city in northeastern Ohio. Independent variables and dependent variables were used in the quasi-experimental design in order to determine possible causes for any observed differences between book club groups. Variables were selected and measured as plausible causes based upon the researcher’s personal observations and interests, as well as the scarcity of nonrandomized pre-experimental, multiple-group, pretest-posttest research regarding book club members’ perceptions.
To have a true experiment, subjects must be randomly assigned to the experimental treatment, reading and discussing *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003). In this study the researcher cannot randomly assign subjects to the experimental treatment for the study. Instead, the researcher used already assembled groups, such as book clubs. In this case, the research is called a quasi-pre-experimental design.

*Book Club Culture*

At the beginning of the study the researcher estimated there would be approximately a half dozen reading groups around a northeastern Ohio city. Through informal networks of acquaintances, it became obvious that the trend of book clubs was significantly more prevalent than expected. In fact, book clubs participating in this study met in city mansions, lakefront homes, restaurants, country clubs, library meeting rooms, and book stores. Members shared a variety of refreshments, including wine gourmet dinners, salad lunches, and appetizers with fruit, coffee with dessert to bring your own brown bag lunch.

Many book clubs were casual gatherings of friends, making them virtually invisible to the outside world. The groups were documented with lists of phone numbers, addresses for other members and a bibliography of titles they have read, but there was no public record. Therefore, the demographic information about the target population was difficult to acquire. Demographic information was provided on all participants from the 11 book clubs in the study after the final data had been collected.

Inquiring about what readers do in books clubs defined who they are as a group for population validity. The social productive activity of reading and talking is conducted, while at the same time support was given to each other. This intellectual
companionship helped extend their literary interpretation. This researcher observed book clubs making connections to new meanings, characters in the books, and members of the book club. Reading and talking enabled readers to possibly remake themselves, because in linking new information to identities they already have, they might become less subjective.

Book club members often shared a common background such as: church, education, or their neighborhood. This kind of homogeneity might make it easier for members to share information in their book clubs. In the course of the investigation, the researcher drove a couple hundred miles to observe meetings of reading groups. Therefore, the researcher’s field notes from these observations, as well as results from a survey, that the researcher administered to 11 groups, contributed to the comments in this section.

Before definitely settling on book clubs as the topic for this dissertation, the researcher actively belonged to two book clubs. These two groups, included in this study, are the Poland Book Club, meeting in members’ homes, with a program committee responsible for selecting the next year’s reading. The other book club, the Happy Bookers, was a group of athletic country club women that met monthly at the club with a December home party, including the husbands in the discussion. There was also BB’s Book Club of university professors and high school English teachers that selected very serious fiction and nonfiction. The three book-store groups that met at Barnes and Noble are the DZ Book Club, with a sorority base, the Eclectic Book Club, and Ebony Perspectives, which reviews literature of African American authors. Additionally, of the two library groups, one was held in the Austintown Library, attended by elderly women.
who met for the purpose of “grand-conversations” and the other Reuben’s Readers at the Poland Library. Furthermore, the neighborhood groups of general fiction and nonfiction included a small group of retired teachers, the Salem Book Club, meeting for lunch book discussions in restaurants, and a larger group centered in Salem, Stephanie’s Book Club. The larger group, which always met at Stephanie’s in the evening for dessert and wine was composed of teachers, nurses and retirees. In conclusion, the only church group drew members from the First Presbyterian Church and met in the church parlor with a large core of long standing members.

Threats to the Validity of the Study

Studies need to eliminate all variables that might affect the outcome of the posttest. There are three threats in this study.

1. Interaction of Selection and Maturation. All the book clubs mature during the course of the study, so as stated maturation is not a threat. There is a problem if the book clubs differ in their tendency to maturation. If one of the book clubs is more subject to maturation than another, we have an internal threat (Gall et al., 2005). The gain to be expected in the book clubs is affected.

2. Interaction of Selection and Regression. A selection regression interaction could occur if the book clubs have groups from populations having different means. Even though the book clubs are equivalent on the pretest, the regression towards the mean effect that occurs could result in a change from pretest to posttest, which is incorrectly interpreted as an experimental effect. The regression toward the mean is the tendency to score nearer the mean when the test is re-given (Gall et al., 2003).
3. Experimental Mortality. The mortality threat occurs when there is a loss of participants. The research for this study was conducted over the summer of 2007. Many of the participants take their vacations during the summer months of June, July, and August. If several of the lowest scorers on the pretest drop out, this book club will have a higher mean, not because of the experimental treatment (Gall et al., 2003). This will affect the outcome of the study.

Research Hypotheses

Is there going to be a change of attitudes and actions towards race and ethnicity of book club members after reading and discussing the multicultural book *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003)? Six directional, research hypotheses were posed to accomplish the purpose of the study and were tested through the use of *t*-test analysis.

Hypothesis 1. There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 2. There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 3. There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 4. There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 5. There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 6. There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Participants

Book club members from the northeastern Ohio area were selected for the study. The sample of approximately 11 book clubs was located from informal social networking
of the author, book stores, and libraries. The study attempted to determine the significant difference towards attitudes and actions on race and ethnicity. Members from the book clubs took the Demographic Survey and the Diversity Survey. Careful recoding was administered for reverse items. After reading the multicultural literature, *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003), they returned in a month. Following a discussion of the book, they retook the Diversity Survey. Demographic information was supplied by the participants.

This study seeks to probe how people respond to reading and discussing multicultural literature in book clubs. Specifically, the multicultural book *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003) is about the adjustment of a family from India, who has immigrated to the United States.

Approximately 84 surveys were given out at the 11 book club meetings. The response rate refers to the proportion of the selected sample that agrees to complete the surveys. Personal contact increases the likelihood that the individual will provide the desired information. The response rate of the expected face-to-face setting rate of 95% or higher was equal to a projected 84 or more participants, from the original 90, for this study. In fact, everyone present agreed to complete the surveys.

**Pilot Study**

For purposes of the study, the following sampling procedures were utilized. In the summer of 2007 a thorough pilot test of the surveys was conducted. Members from one book club and five experts took the Demographic Survey and the Diversity Survey to estimate validity and reliability of the research instrument. Sampling validity (or fair representation) of the instrument was important, because it allowed experts and book club members alike to disagree on the full domain of diversity.
Generally, the survey instruments took about 10 minutes to complete. Participants read the directions on how to complete the surveys on the title page. There was provision of space for respondents to make criticisms and recommendations for improving the surveys. The criticisms and recommendations of the book club members and five experts who participated in the pilot study were used in refining the final survey.

Participation was voluntary. The five experts and book club members independently assessed the content of the instrument and recommended semantic changes. Since book club members are part of the intended population for this study, the suggestions from the book club members was very useful in identifying items that need semantic changes. Specifically, the five experts were professionals in the areas of diversity and literacy, who have doctorate degrees with 5 to 40 years of experience (Mean = 28). Experts were asked to assess if the survey items and subcategories (measuring attitudes and actions) captured the meaning of anti-discrimination and clarity; to which they virtually all agreed.

The book club members and experts agreed that the level and extent of the coverage of diversity issues with 28 items/questions provided a fair representation of the issues of diversity. An expert requested realigning the religion category in the Demographic Survey. The experts proposed replacing one ethnicity question with an attitude question about the value of learning a foreign language. One expert advised a definition was needed for Racial and Ethnicity with sources. Moreover, to clarify the instructions, book club members suggested that the directions and definitions of racial and ethnicity be read aloud. The members further decided a definition of Merit was needed, in this context for Question #1, in parentheses. All of the 28 items (14 on
attitude and 14 on action) were retained except one. A survey that measures attitudes must use a significant number of items (at least 10) in order to acquire a reliable assessment of an individual’s attitude (Gall et al., 2003).

**Instruments**

The survey is a research technique in which data are gathered by asking questions of a group of individuals called respondents. It is a widely used method of research in sociology, business, political science, and government, as well as in education. Researchers use the information they collect to make inferences about the population as a whole (Gall et al., 2003).

The survey instrument used in this study was developed by the researcher after careful examination of the definitions for race and ethnicity, review of the literature, the stems of the Diversity Awareness Profile (Wiley, 2007), and the collaboration of five experts. However, the researcher could not locate a scale suitable for the general population, as characterized by book club members.

The survey instrument consisted of 28 items/questions, indicators. Data were collected from the 28 item Diversity Survey to determine the key variables influencing attitudes and action for diversity. In the first 14 items for attitude a 4-point Likert scale format was used (i.e., strongly disagree to strongly agree) to provide balanced choices and to minimize research bias in survey design and analysis. A higher response as indicated by these numbers indicated a stronger attitude with the exception of two items (#3, #9) which were scored in reverse order (4, 3, 2, and 1). In the last 14 items for action a 4-point Likert scale format was used (i.e., not at all to very often). The participant indicated a response by checking one of four boxes. Each item was scored on
a 1, 2, 3, 4 basis coinciding with the letters, A higher response as indicated by these numbers indicated a stronger action.

The subscales for both parts were divided into two subheadings: race and ethnicity. Each subscale contained 14 items. They were broken down equally for 7 items in attitude and 7 items in action. The first scale of the survey instrument, items 1 through 14, was designed to elicit respondents’ attitudes towards race and ethnicity. This was a measure of the degree of favorableness a subject has toward a group. The second scale of the survey, items 15 through 28, was designed to elicit respondents’ actions towards race and ethnicity. This was a measure of the degree of favorableness a subject has in dealings toward a group. These attributes played important roles in the respondents’ participation in diversity functions, moral and ethical belief systems about quotas, and special preference for underrepresented minority groups.

The two subscales: Race and Ethnicity as defined by Kottak and Kozaitis (2003) and Putnam (2000) for the participants on the cover page define Race as a group of people distinguished by different sets of characteristics and beliefs about common ancestry. The most commonly used human racial categories are based on visible traits (especially skin color, facial features, and hair texture) and self-identification. Ethnicity was described as a population of people with common ancestry. Ethnic groups are often united by common cultural, behavioral, linguistic, ritualistic, or religious traits.

Attitudes about race and ethnicity might affect our actions. The constitutive definition for attitude was a mental state of readiness organized from experience; an idea charged with an emotion which predisposes a class of action to a particular class of social situations (as operationally defined by behavioral differential, survey questions,
Appendix B). The constitutive definition for action was the “manner or method of performing; an act of will” (Webster, 1969, p. 9).

The tone and intensity of the survey questionnaire can produce bias to predetermine a respondent’s answer (Gall et al., 2003). The wording of a question should not influence the respondent in a certain direction. Therefore, concerted efforts were made to use neutralized tones to ensure that respondents would not detect any research bias. Simple language was also incorporated in order to create a comfortable environment for the survey respondent filling out the questionnaire.

In general, these guidelines were designed to establish the reliability and validity of the research and concepts being measured.

Variable List

Following is how the variables were coded in the present study. The demographic variables are:

- Gender (1 = male; 2 = female) of book club members
- Age of book club members
- Educational level (1 = high school diploma; 2 = bachelor diploma; 3 = postgraduate work; 4 = masters or postgraduate diploma) of book club members
- Religion (1 = Christian; 2 = Hindu; 3 = Jewish; 4 = Islam; 4 = Other) of book club members
- Party (1 = Conservative/Right; 2 = moderate/Middle; 3 = Liberal/Left; 4 = No Situation) of book club members
- Travel (1 = Never; 2 = Once every 5 years; 3 = Once a year; 4 = More than once a year) of book club members
- Marital (1 = None; 2 = One; 3 = Two; 4 = Many) of book club members
• Language (1 = None; 2 = One; 3 = Two; 4 = Many) of book club members

• Fluency (1 = None; 2 = Poor; 3 = Moderate; 4 = Excellent) of book club members

• Income (1 = Under $30,000; 2 = $31,000-60,000; 3 = $61,000-99,000; 4 = $100,000 +) of book club members

Following is the Variable Matrix for constructing the Diversity Survey:

Table 3.1

Variable Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Item #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>1,2,5,6,9,10,13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>3,4,7,8,11,12,14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>15,16,19,21,25,26,28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>17,18,20,22,23,24,27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The matrix chart provided a graphical, rectangular overview of the survey variables that the researcher wants to measure. Table 3.1 showed the distribution of the variables and their occurrences in the Diversity Survey. This comprehensive representation of the concepts provided the Diversity Survey with a degree of content validity.

The study was specifically focused on the effects that the independent variables of Race and Ethnicity have on the perceptions of book club members’ attitudes and actions. Additionally, the effects of attitude on race and ethnicity were analyzed. Finally, the effects of action on race and ethnicity were studied. After assessing the dependent
variables in the pretest, we could then determine whether the variables differ on the
dependent variable, the posttest.

*Observation List*

An observation list is an efficient tool to keep a record of literacy behaviors
(Gunning, 2003). The researcher designed an Observation List scale of 14 items to
organize in a consistent approach the exploration experience of each of the eleven book
clubs. The Observation List scale, for the researcher’s use only, was categorized into
three behaviors. The scale, utilized during the discussion of the book, consisted of a 4-
point Likert scale format (i.e., Not at all to Very often) to provide balanced choices and to
minimize research bias in survey design and analysis. A higher response as indicated by
these numbers indicated a stronger achievement.

1. The Initial Observations are:
   - Optimum seating layout of the group setting.
   - Level of the facilitator-reader interactions.
   - Level of reader-reader interactions.
   - Level of the interactions shaped by the context of readers’ lives, their
culture, and the community/society.

2. The Text Inquiries are:
   - Group provides a brief description of the book’s strengths and
   weaknesses.
   - Choice of materials/media and use of resources support/limit the
discussion.
   - Degree of information about the author.

3. The Reader Inquiries are:
   - Describe the readers in this book club.
• Level of the readers’ interests, regarding the subject matter.

• Level of the readers’ motivation, regarding the subject matter.

• Readers monitor, reflect on, and share insights about their impressions and experiences after reading.

• Listening ability of the group.

*Instrument Validity*

At the heart of quantitative research is the concern for the validity of surveys, that is, whether they are really measuring what they are supposed to measure. The survey should have face validity (Gall et al., 2003). It should appear valid for its intended purpose. Face validity is a form of content validity (Baker, 1988). It is concerned with the careful assessment of an instrument after it is constructed, whereas content validity is concerned with the content of the instrument prior to or during the development of the survey instrument (Gall et al., 2003). Gall et al. (2003) contend that the content validity is determined by the experts, who define the terms of the content, how well the content is represented, and then sampled by the survey items.

For the purpose of this study, face validity is defined as the apparent or obvious meaning which can be ascertained from the language of the items/questions used in the instrument, without additional or external information. It is the degree to which the survey items/questions appear to be meaningful dimensions of the domains (universe of specific content) of diversity, based on the subjectivity judgment of the experts and the pilot sample of intended populations.

Piloting the survey instrument in a book club of seven members and exposing it to five experts helped to establish face validity of the instrument. The members and experts
agreed (with few semantic changes) that the apparent of obvious meaning ascertained with the domains of diversity. They clearly understood the meaning of the language employed in the items/questions, with only one exception, merit. Few semantic changes were made before the final survey was implemented. Sampling validity of an instrument is a form of content validity, which assesses the fair representation (or sample) of each of the different domains underlying a concept (Baker, 1988).

The various domains of issues relating to diversity are covered by the instrument used in this study. As discussed earlier, the survey instrument consists of 28 items/questions covering diversity issues. The sample of issues covered, ranged from facts, preference, diversity, moral and ethical beliefs to respondents demographic attributes, which play important roles in the attitudes and actions about diversity.

Two important variables influence the validity of a survey (Gall et al., 2005). First, how important was the topic to the respondent? It can be assumed that more valid responses from individuals who are interested in the topic and/or are informed about it. And second, does the survey protect the respondents’ anonymity? It is reasonable to assume that greater truthfulness could be obtained if the respondents could remain anonymous, especially when sensitive or personal questions were asked.

**Instrument Reliability**

Survey data must have reliability, if they are to be useful (Gall et al., 2003). If respondents’ answers were not consistent, then validity of the research was also questionable. Internal consistency might be checked by building some redundancy into the instrument; items on the same topic may be rephrased and repeated in the survey. As the responses became more consistent; the reliability became higher. The internal
consistency of the Diversity Survey was vital in this study, in that it was important to ensure that the items represented only one direction. Test-retest reliability was a way to estimate reliability in which scores from the administration of an instrument at one point in time are correlated with scores obtained at another point in time using the same instrument, and for the same individuals.

The reliability levels for 1. Attitudes regarding Race, 2. Attitudes regarding Ethnicity. 3. Actions regarding Race, and 4. Actions regarding Ethnicity were determined after the data were collected.

*External Validity Design*

Gall et al. (2003) stated that “generalizability is the extent that findings can be applied to individuals or situations other than those in which the findings were obtained” (p. 465). If the convenient sample selected was truly representative of the accessible population, then there was little difficulty in making a generalization from a sample to the target population.

Sampling enabled the researcher to study a portion of the population, rather than the whole population. Because the purpose of the study was to obtain information concerning the population, it was important that the individuals included in this sample constitute a representative cross section of adult book club members in northeastern Ohio. This unbiased sample can legitimately be generalized to the population from which it was taken.

Readers’ attitudes that emerged in response to the research process can be a threat to the external validity (Gall et al., 2003). The inclination for readers to change their responses on the surveys just because they are participated in a multicultural study is
called the Hawthorne effect. The readers replied not as they normally might, but as they believed the researcher wanted them to reply. Consequently, the generalizing of the findings might be jeopardized.

Data Collection

Data in this study were collected from book club members as discussed previously in this chapter, utilizing survey research specifically with self-administered questionnaires. The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and actions of book club members after reading and discussing a multicultural book in a mid-size city in northeastern Ohio. Consequently, the study attempted to determine the significant difference towards attitudes and actions on race and ethnicity. All book clubs were notified of the date to take the pretest. Book club members took the Demographic Survey and the Diversity Survey. After reading the multicultural literature, The Namesake (Lahiri, 2003), they returned in a month. During the discussion the researcher used the Observation List to be consistent in the exploration experience evaluation within each of the 11 book clubs. The packet of materials for each member included the following items:

1. A written invitation to participate in the study (Appendix A).
2. A Demographic Survey (Appendix B).
4. Observation List Appendix D).

One month later, during the discussion of the book, the researcher observed the discussion and took notes to complete the Observation List (Appendix D). Then the book club members retook the Diversity Survey. The primary ethical consideration in the
study was to maintain confidentiality of book club members. Social desirability bias in which respondents want to please the researcher by giving socially acceptable responses, that they would not necessarily give, can be a problem. Surveys were not identified by individual names, only the three selected initials, accomplished the goal of anonymity. The surveys were kept in a secured file at my residence for the maximum time of six months. All surveys were scored into a data base for statistical analysis and then destroyed by shredding.

Directly Administered Surveys

The directly administered survey is administered to a group of people assembled at a certain place for a specific purpose. The main advantage of a directly administered survey is the high response rate. Other advantages are the low cost and the fact that the researcher is present to provide assistance or answer questions. The disadvantage is that the researcher is usually restricted in terms of where and when the survey can be administered. Also, because the sample is usually quite specific, the findings are generalizable only to the population that the sample represents (Gall et al., 2003).

Population Validity

Studies are externally valid if their results can be generalized to other individuals (Gall et al., 2005). Suitable sampling procedures must be used so that the book clubs utilized for the study accurately represent the population to which the findings are to generalize to the target population of book clubs in northeastern Ohio. This research was conducted with volunteer samples or one’s willingness to participate rather than random samples. The volunteer book clubs are the population of subjects experimentally accessible to the researcher. Members develop trust over time together with each other’s
personal information. The more nearly similar the accessible and target populations are, the sample is said to have high population validity. Generalizing from the accessible population to the target population cannot be done statistically. There is no target population on variables that are relevant to the research problem. Most book clubs are invisible to outside investigators, so it is difficult to acquire demographic information. Therefore, the researcher and the readers of this study can make intelligent judgments about how likely the results are to generalize to the target population or other populations.

Sample Size

According to Gall et al. (2003), there was no general rule about the number of participants as it was a judgment call on the part of the researcher. The sample size of the current study was determined to be sufficient, because the goal of the study was to gather statistics about the population and subject them to analyses. Consequently, this goal was achieved.

Type I and Type II Errors

The purpose of drawing a sample from a population was to obtain information concerning that population, as it was a representative cross section of individuals in the population (Gall et al., 2005). Most book clubs have six members, but in some book clubs there were more members. Therefore, the projected sample size was set minimally at 66 (11 book clubs, multiplied by 6).

The rejection of the null hypothesis when it is true, is called Type I error. The researcher thinks there is something in the study, when there is nothing there. The level of statistical significance for rejecting the null hypothesis was set at alpha level .05 for
this study. There is one chance in 10 that the researcher will reject the null hypothesis when it is correct. If we raise the significance level, there is less apt to be a Type I error, but the likelihood of a Type II error increases (Gall et al., 2003). The researcher concludes there’s nothing, when there really is something. The difference is due to chance and that the null hypothesis is true. The participation of 66 readers helped to minimize the possibility of a Type II error. To decrease a Type II error and increase the power, combining the use of an alpha level (.05) and sample selection of more homogenous subjects was utilized (Gall et al., 2005).

According to Gall et al., sample size was mostly determined by the researcher, and there was seldom a perfect answer as to the size needed for a given study. The sample size of the present study was determined to be adequate, since the goal of the study was to collect statistics about the book club population and subject them to a multicultural book and discussion. As a result, this goal was accomplished.

Statistical Treatment

Data in the study were collected using the Diversity Survey, a Demographic Survey, and an Observation List. The data were received from the members in 11 book clubs in the greater Youngstown, Ohio area. Six hypotheses were used to investigate the insights of book club members’ perceptions of attitudes and actions about multiculturalism. Statistical tests provided the tools for analyzing data for purposes of making implications for the research questions, as well as provide data for use in future studies.

In this quasi-experimental design, the participants were not randomly assigned. The book clubs cannot be reorganized to accommodate a research study. They are
already organized into a preexisting intact group. A nonrandomized pre-experimental, multiple-group pretest-posttest design was therefore used for this study.

Table 3.2

Statistical Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Y1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Y2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Y2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surveys typically don’t require complex statistical analysis. The data analysis of this research simply consisted of determining the percentages of responses for the questions of the study. It was useful to convert numbers to percentages in order to be able to talk about the proportion responding in a certain way and to be able to make comparisons.

The \( t \) test was utilized to test the hypotheses and compare the mean of a sample with the population mean by using the \( z \)-score to see whether the sample was representative of the population mean (difference between the two means). The composition of one book club was related to the composition of other book clubs. The dependent variable scores were expected to be correlated; therefore, the \( t \) test for dependent, or correlated, samples was used. This test was also known as the correlated or paired observations, \( t \) test. The measure to be analyzed by the dependent \( t \) test was the mean difference between the paired scores (pretest and posttest). The \( t \) curves were
labeled according to their degrees of freedom, abbreviated \( df \). The number of degrees of freedom was the number of observations free to vary around a constant parameter (Gall et al., 2003).

**Limitations**

There are limitations for a quasi-pre-experimental design. A key limitation of the study is the convenient sampling method. However, the sampling method was chosen for economic and geographic reasons. The second limitation is the limited number of participants available for the study. From 11 book clubs, I have an estimation of a minimum 60 people. Also, without random assignment we do not know if the book clubs were equivalent before the study began. Thus, there is a selection bias that can threaten the study. Furthermore, a problem also arises when groups differ in their propensity to maturation. Book clubs will mature differently during the course of the experiment. Finally, a selection-regression interaction could occur in this design if the book clubs are from populations having different means. Even though the groups are equivalent on a pretest, the regression toward the mean effect that occurs could result in a shift (change) from pretest to posttest that is incorrectly interpreted as an experimental effect.

**Summary of Chapter III**

Chapter III presented an overview of the research design, a statement of the general and specific research hypotheses, a description of the participants who were surveyed in this study, and a description of the sampling methods that was utilized. Moreover, a description of the instrument accompanied by validity and reliability information was provided, as well as a list of variables used in the study. An explanation
of the data collection methods was given, and the statistical treatment utilized to analyze the data was explained, followed by a description of limitations of this study.

Findings from the study helped to provide data regarding the attitudes and actions on race and ethnicity in book clubs. This information may be useful in providing a better understanding of certain biases that may exist among book club members. Additionally, the information of this study added to the body of research that can be helpful to multiculturalism in other studies, especially given the fact that there is little quantitative research about diversity in the area of adult book clubs.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to report the results of the statistical analysis used to test the hypotheses upon which this study is based. The researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows version 15.0 as the statistical software for conducting the analysis. The data were normally distributed so no transformations were required. Demographic statistics were computed in order to determine the reliability of the instrument used in this study, to establish the demographics and distribution of the survey respondents, and to analyze the mean difference between the paired scores (pretest and posttest).

The chapter is organized into three sections. The first section describes the internal consistency estimates for the subscales of the instrument used in this study. The second section provides descriptive statistics which display the means, standard deviations, frequencies, and first order relationships for all of the relevant variables reported. The third section focuses on inferential statistics, which answer the six overarching research hypotheses posed by this study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.
The goal of data analysis was to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 2. There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 3. There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 4. There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 5. There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Hypothesis 6. There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Internal Consistency Examination of the Survey Instrument

Internal consistency is a procedure to estimate test score reliability, specifically, whether all the items in a test are measuring the same thing (Gall & Gall, 2003). This method requires an analysis of scores from only a single administration of a test. A test is reliable when scores remain nearly the same in repeated measurements. Whereas, internal consistency determines if the test items are measuring the same thing the liability verifies if the participants scored nearly the same in repeated measurements (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002).

Reliability is an estimate of measurement error, the higher the validity the lower the measurement error (Kerlinger & Lee, 2002). Gall and Gall (2003) explain that the reliability of a test is indicated by how much measurement error is in the scores. The reliability coefficient of .00 indicates no reliability and .80 or higher is sufficiently
A test is not valid without validity. If there is only measurement error, it is not valid.

**Reliability**

To determine the reliability of the instrument used in this study a Cronbach’s Alpha was conducted to get estimates of internal consistency for both the pretest and posttest (Salkind, 2004). The Cronbach’s Alpha instrument was chosen because the items on the Diversity Survey were not scored simply as right or wrong. The items scored had a range of values on the Likert scale from one to four. In fact, each item score was correlated with the total score for each individual. Scores with modest reliability provide a reasonable degree of reliability for making a decision for research purposes. Coefficients in the range of .65 are acceptable and .60 is a bit low (Cronbach, 1951).

The reliability was on the low side for Attitudes Towards Race and Attitudes Towards Ethnicity which ranged from .504 on the pretest to .6 on the posttest. All of the other subscales had relatively high internal consistency with Action Totals having the highest Alpha score of .878 on the pretest and .867 on the posttest (see Table 4.1). Consequently, the overall reliability of the subscales with all 14 items in the table was relatively high ($r = 0.867$).

The validity of an instrument reported whether the instrument actually measured what it purported to measure (Salkind, 2004). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) argue that the content validity is determined by content experts. These experts defined the terms of the content, how well the content is represented, and then sampled by the survey items. Moreover, an instrument could not be valid if it was not reliable. It could, however, be reliable, but not valid (Gall & Gall, 2003). The $N$ represented the number of items in the
subscales. The overall reliability of all 28 items was 0.855 for the pretest and 0.875 for the posttest.

Table 4.1

Cronbach’s Alpha Internal Reliability Estimates of Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes race</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.535</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes ethnicity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions race</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.811</td>
<td>0.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions ethnicity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td>0.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td>0.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.867</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive Statistics

An important concern in statistical analysis was identifying the demographics and distribution of the survey respondents. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 and Graph 4.1 presented the descriptive statistics for the participants and the instrument used in this research. The sample included all the participants in the 11 book clubs (total \(N = 11\) book clubs): the response rate was 100%. Additionally, a total of 84 participants took the pretest; 14 participants (15%) were not present for the posttest the following month.

Table 4.3 listed dependent variables for which data are available \((N)\), the mean \((M)\), the standard deviation \((SD)\), and the minimum value and the maximum value. The study measured the central tendency \(M\) (Mean); the sum of the scores divided by the number of scores in the distribution. The Standard Deviation \((SD)\) showed the difference between the raw score and the mean of the distribution. The age of the participants from a sample size of 84 ranged from 17 years to 92 years with a mean of 62.2 years and a
standard deviation of 15.8. Analysis of the data revealed that all of the posttest (one month time difference) scores were higher on the Diversity Survey except for Action Totals which went down from 39.6 on the pretest to 39 on the posttest. In addition there was no change on Actions Towards Race from the pretest to the posttest with an average of 18.9 (See Table 4.2). It is desirable, as mentioned in the previous chapter, for the data to be normally distributed so that no transformations are required.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Race Pre</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Ethnicity Pre</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Race Pre</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Ethnicity Pre</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Total Pre</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Total Pre</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Race Post</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Ethnicity Post</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Race Post</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Ethnicity Post</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Total Post</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Total Post</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Variables</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Valid percents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor diploma</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate work</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters or postgraduate diploma</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious affiliation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political situation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative / right</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate / middle</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal / left</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No situation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International travel experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every five years</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a year</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interracial marriages in my family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign language background</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One language</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two languages</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many languages</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics Frequencies (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Valid percents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language fluency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income before taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under $30,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$31,000 - $60,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$61,000 - $99,000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 +</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skewness and Kurtosis statistics were calculated for each of the scales to test for normality of the distributions. Specifically, kurtosis was a measure of the extent to which observations cluster around a central point (Salkind, 2004). For a normal distribution, the value of the kurtosis statistic was zero. Positive kurtosis indicated that the observations cluster more and have longer tails than those in the normal distribution, and negative kurtosis indicated that the observations cluster less and have shorter tails. In addition, skewness was a measure of the asymmetry of a distribution (Salkind, 2004). Moreover, the normal distribution was symmetric and had a skewness value of 0. A distribution with a significant positive skewness had a long right tail. The distribution with a significant negative skewness had a long left tail. As a guideline, a skewness value of more than twice its standard error is taken to indicate a departure from symmetry. The
overall skewness was .073 with a standard error of .273 and the overall Krutosis was 1.03 with the standard error was .54.

Graph 4.1. Pre-test post-test mean comparisons across all subscales.

Demographic Data

Descriptive statistics for the participants are presented in Table 4.3. The majority of the participants (97.6%) were females who held a baccalaureate degree (35.7%). The percentage statistics give us a valid description of a typical participant as Christian (90.5%), whose political views are Moderate / Middle (54.8%). The typical participant experienced international travel once every 5 years (49.4%), had no interracial marriages in the family (73.5%), had experience with one foreign language (36.1), and no fluency in a foreign language (44.6%). The typical participant had a family income before taxes between $61,000 and $99,000 (31.6%).
Based on Tables 4.2 and 4.3, then, the 84 book club members from 11 book clubs are mostly Christian, with a Bachelors degree, and of moderate political views. The book club members travel overseas once every 5 years, are not fluent in one foreign language and have no interracial marriages in the family. Also, the members have an average family income between $61,000 and $99,000.

The $t$ test was utilized to test the hypotheses and compare the mean of a sample with the population mean by using the $z$-score to see whether the sample is representative of the population mean (difference between the two means) (Gall & Gall, 2003). Since, the composition of one book club is related to the composition of other book clubs the dependent variable scores are expected to be correlated. Consequently, the $t$ test for dependent, or correlated, samples was used. The measure to be analyzed by the dependent $t$ test is the mean difference between the paired scores (pretest and posttest).

Correlations were run between all of the pretest and posttest to investigate each of the first-order relationships. The first-order partial correlation is the “remaining correlation between two variables when their correlation with a third variable is removed” (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002, p. 363). This is an alternative way of looking at the data to describe what is happening. The correlations found that there were high relationships between the pretest and posttest across all of the subscales. These correlations ranged from a high of .739 (Action Total Pre/ Action Total Post) to a low of .156 (Attitudes Race Pre/Action Ethnicity Post). The only three pretest/posttest relationships that were not statistically significant were Attitudes Race Pre with Action Ethnicity Post ($p = .193$) Attitudes Race Pre with Action total Post ($p = .067$) and Attitudes Race Post with Action Ethnicity Pre ($p = .061$) (see Table 4.4).
In Table 4.4 \( r \) indicates the strength of the relationship. The higher the \( r \) the more the two variables are related. An \( r \) of 1 or -1 indicates that the two variables are measuring the exact same thing.

The \( p \) in Table 4.4 displays indicates the significance level. It stands for probability, or the likelihood that the difference or relationship is due to chance. It is hoped that the \( p \) appears to be less than .05, so that the likelihood of this difference or relationship would occur by chance less than 5 times in 100.

Table 4.4

Pre-Test/Post-Test Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes Race Pre</th>
<th>Attitudes Ethnicity Pre</th>
<th>Actions Race Pre</th>
<th>Actions Ethnicity Pre</th>
<th>Attitudes Total Pre</th>
<th>Actions Total Pre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( r ) 0.610 0.521</td>
<td>( r ) 0.545 0.619</td>
<td>( r ) 0.334 0.465</td>
<td>( r ) 0.385 0.319</td>
<td>( r ) 0.641 0.218</td>
<td>( r ) 0.374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.004 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.001 0.007</td>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.067</td>
<td>( p ) 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions Race Pre</th>
<th>Attitudes Ethnicity Pre</th>
<th>Actions Race Pre</th>
<th>Actions Ethnicity Pre</th>
<th>Attitudes Total Pre</th>
<th>Actions Total Pre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( r ) 0.545 0.619</td>
<td>( r ) 0.385 0.319</td>
<td>( r ) 0.714 0.563</td>
<td>( r ) 0.657 0.662</td>
<td>( r ) 0.450 0.000</td>
<td>( r ) 0.677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes Total Pre</th>
<th>Actions Total Pre</th>
<th>Attitudes Total Pre</th>
<th>Actions Total Pre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( r ) 0.647 0.627</td>
<td>( r ) 0.349 0.253</td>
<td>( r ) 0.303 0.454</td>
<td>( r ) 0.738 0.739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.003 0.033</td>
<td>( p ) 0.010 0.000</td>
<td>( p ) 0.000 0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
<td>( N ) 71 71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All Bolded \( r \)(s) are significant at the .05 Alpha or less.
Research Hypotheses Results

Is there going to be a change of attitudes and actions towards race and ethnicity of book club members after they have read and discussed *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003)?

Six directional, research hypotheses were posed to accomplish the purpose of the study and were tested through the use of *t*-test analysis.

This section presents the statistical results and reviews the findings of all six research questions and hypotheses in table form. Each hypothesis was tested using a dependent *t* test with an alpha level of .05. The measure to be analyzed by the dependent *t* test is the mean difference between the paired scores. Furthermore, the analysis seeks to find a relationship between the effect size and number as well as a statistical significance. The larger the effect size, the larger the *t* and the more likely the results are statistically significant (Gall & Gall, 2003).

The significances were all reported with using a directional treatment (one-tailed) (Gall & Gall, 2003). Only one alternative to the null hypothesis was investigated. In testing a null hypothesis, researchers may not be concerned with the direction of the differences in either direction. Moreover, they are only interested in the departure of the sample from the population boundaries. This kind of test is called non-directional (two-tailed) (Salkind, 2004). For example, in this study the researcher investigated the effects of discussing a multicultural book on the gains in participant attitudes and actions towards race and ethnicity. Therefore, book clubs and teachers would only employ the directional treatment if there was reasonable evidence that it increased success.
Hypothesis 1

There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book. This hypothesis was statistically significant with a $t = 2.153$, $df = 70$ and a $p = .018$ (see Table 4.6).

Hypothesis 2

There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book. This hypothesis was not found to be statistically significant with a $t = 1.134$, $df = 70$ and a $p = .261$ (see Table 4.6).

Hypothesis 3

There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book. This hypothesis was statistically significant with a $t = 2.691$, $df = 70$ and a $p = .005$ (see Table 4.6).

Hypothesis 4

There are statistically significant overall changes in attitudes concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book. This hypothesis was not found to be statistically significant with a $t = .375$, $df = 70$ and a $p = .355$ (see Table 4.6).

Hypothesis 5

There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book. This hypothesis was not found to be statistically significant with a $t = .0$, $df = 70$ and a $p = 1.00$ (see Table 4.6).
Hypothesis 6

There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book. This hypothesis was not found to be statistically significant with a $t = 1.851$, $df = 70$ and a $p = .068$ (see Table 4.6).

The following table shows the average pretest and posttest scores for the participants who took both tests.

Table 4.5
Averages on Pretest and Posttest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes total</td>
<td>37.873</td>
<td>38.803</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions total</td>
<td>39.648</td>
<td>38.986</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes race</td>
<td>18.183</td>
<td>19.014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes ethnicity</td>
<td>19.690</td>
<td>19.789</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions race</td>
<td>18.859</td>
<td>18.859</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions ethnicity</td>
<td>20.789</td>
<td>19.789</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.6

Research Hypotheses Results: Dependent Sample t-Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-test/ Post-test Variables</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (1-tailed)</th>
<th>$M_1-M_2$</th>
<th>$f^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Total Pre VS Attitudes Total Post</td>
<td>-2.153</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>-0.930</td>
<td>0.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Total Pre VS Actions Total Post</td>
<td>1.134</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>0.662</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Race Pre VS Attitudes Race Post</td>
<td>-2.691</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>-0.831</td>
<td>0.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Ethnicity Pre VS Attitudes Ethnicity Post</td>
<td>-0.375</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>-0.099</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Race Pre VS Actions Race Post</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions Ethnicity Pre VS Actions Ethnicity Post</td>
<td>1.851</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.0489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 4.6 the $t$ represents the average mean difference divided by the pulled variance. For Hypothesis 1 the obtained value is $t = 2.153$. This value is interpreted with the probability ($p < .05$) for significance.

The higher the $df$ the greater the number of subjects. A higher $df$ in the denominator tends to give the results greater power. The degrees of freedom ($df$) approximates the sample size of our population of 70 book club members in this experimental design ($df = 70$). In fact, using this number (70) the level of risk (.05), and a one tailed test (because there is direction to the research hypothesis), the critical value is...
for Hypothesis 1 Sig = 0.018. In short, at the .05 level, with 70 degrees of freedom for a one-tailed test, the value needed for rejection of the null hypothesis is 0.05. Therefore, the null is rejected and the increase in the posttest scores is 98.2% not likely due to chance.

Additionally, the average mean difference of the pretest and posttest scores in Hypothesis 1 is $M_1 - M_2 = -0.930$. The pretest mean in Hypothesis 1 for attitude total was 37.8732 and the average posttest mean was 38.0828. As a result, the $M_1 - M_2 = -0.930$.

Only the participants (70) taking both the pretest and posttest were used to calculate these means.

Effect size ($f^2$) is the measure of how different the pretest and posttest are from one another, or the magnitude of the treatment of reading and discussing a multicultural book. If the effect size of 0 means that both tests tend to be very similar; there is no difference between the two tests.

The difference in this study between the two tests is not significant with these levels, which is $p < .05$. The small effect size ($f^2 = <.15$, Cohen, 1997) is created by the short time of the study (4 weeks) and the high starting norm levels of the participants. Specifically, this means the effect size cannot be used to explain the difference between the pretest and posttest.

Measuring the effect size is a procedure to evaluate the magnitude of the difference in the population represented by the sample (Cohen. 1997). Moreover, it can be used to help decide if the difference is strong enough to recommend its procedure in practice. The formula to change a $t$ to an effect size is $rm^2 = t^2 / (t^2 + df)$; $f^2 = rm^2 / (1 - rm^2)$ (McNeil, Newman, and Kelly, 1996). The effect size is the $f^2$. Cohen (1997) has
projected this explanation: (a) < .15 is small; (b) .15 to .35 is medium; and (c) > .35 is large. An effect size of $f^2 = 1$ means that the two tests overlap about 45% (having that much in common). Consequently, as the effect size gets larger, it reflects the increasing difference between the two tests.

There is a small effect size in this study, except for Actions Towards Race Pretest versus Actions Towards Race Posttest ($f^2 = 0$), which has no difference in effect size; they are very similar or overlap entirely. Although this might not appear to be practically significant, it does suggest that within a one month period with above-average participants, there was very little change in attitudes and actions. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter V.

In short, the higher the $df$, the better the analyses and the greater power to detect a difference or relationship, if one is actually there. The $df$ in this study reveals a medium high score. The $t$-ratio ($t$) is the same as the $r$. It is the measure of the extent of the difference and can be converted to an effect size. Specifically, the formula used is $t = (\text{Mean}_1 - \text{Mean}_2) / [(\text{SD}_1^2 / N_1 + \text{SD}_2^2 / N_2)]^{1/2}$. This states in standard deviation terms how far apart are the mean differences of the pretest and posttest. As a result, only two are statistically significant: Attitudes after reading and discussing a multicultural book (-2.153) and Attitudes towards race after reading and discussing a multicultural book (-2.691).

Summary of Results

Chapter IV began with the internal consistency estimates for the subscales of the instrument used in this study. These descriptive statistics were explained by supporting
tables. The chapter concluded with the six research questions under study and a summary for each hypothesis.

In conclusion, the results of the study indicated that there were significant differences in the attitudes of book club members reading and discussing multicultural literature. These differences were observed specifically in the following two areas. In the Research Hypothesis 1, there are statistically significant changes in multicultural issues for attitudes after reading and discussing a multicultural book. Likewise, for Research Hypothesis 3, there are statistically significant changes in multicultural issues in attitude towards race after reading and discussing a multicultural book. The other four Research Hypotheses were not found to be statistically significant (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book.</td>
<td>-2.153</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book.</td>
<td>1.134</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book.</td>
<td>-2.691</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>There are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book.</td>
<td>-0.375</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7

Summary (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6  There are statistically significant changes in actions concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book.</td>
<td>1.851</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter V will examine the findings noted in Chapter IV and discuss conclusions and recommendations based on these results.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Novels are for talking about and quarrelling about and engaging in some powerful way. However that happens, at a reading group, a study group, a classroom or just some friends getting together, it’s a delightful, desirable thing to do. And I think it helps. Reading is solitary, but that’s not its only life. It should have a talking life, a discourse that follows.

Toni Morrison (Farr, 2005)

The quote embodies the belief of book club advocates that readers should engage in meaningful conversations about the texts they read. Furthermore, when embedded in democratic practices such as everyone having an equal voice, book clubs have the capacity to foster a powerful learning environment that can facilitate the development of human growth.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an interpretation of statistical findings generated by analysis of the data collected for this study. The chapter is divided into three sections: (1) a summary of the study, (2) conclusions drawn from the study, and (3) implications and suggestions for further research. The summary of the study includes a
restatement of the problem investigated a review of the procedures, and the specific research hypotheses. The conclusions highlight the major findings of the study. The final section, implications, will suggest the instructive significance of these research findings as well as directions for future research.

This research investigated the perception of book club members’ attitudes and actions towards race and ethnicity after they had read and discussed a multicultural book in a moderate-sized city in northeastern Ohio. The specific focus of this study was to determine whether a significant difference regarding attitudes and actions about race and ethnicity would result from participation in a book club experience focused specifically on reading a multicultural text.

Statement of the Problem

The United States is becoming an increasingly diverse nation (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Many people believe that racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity is a positive element in a society, because it enriches a nation and increases the ways in which its citizens can perceive and solve personal and public problems (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003). Diversity also enriches a society because it provides individuals with more opportunities to experience other cultures and thus to become more fulfilled as human beings (Bucher, 2000; Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

A review of the literature suggests that the shifting demographics of the U. S. population has caused educators to study the academic performance and unique learning styles of children from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds (Norton, 2003). For example, in 1994 children of color represented 30% of our public school population; and in urban areas, they made up over 70% of total school enrollment (Ladson-Billings). By
2000, children of color and ethnic groups represented 38% of the nation’s school age children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools (U.S. Census, 2001). The contrast between the academic achievement of children of color and their white counterparts has been a longstanding concern of many literacy educators (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

Multicultural literature provides readers with increased knowledge and awareness of other cultures that enables its readers to benefit from a deeper understanding of the total human experience (Banks, 1988). It follows that reading and discussing multicultural literature in book clubs might encourage an understanding of other cultures that might contribute positively to narrowing the achievement gap between ethnic and racial groups.

The popularity of book clubs, as evidenced by the many readers in schools and communities who participate in them, suggests that reading and discussing multicultural literature in the context of a book club group may prove an effective venue for deepening multicultural awareness. Currently, research literature is extremely limited regarding adult book club members’ attitudes and actions (Long, 2003). This study sought to determine whether participation in a book club experience focused on a multicultural text might have an impact on readers’ attitudes and actions with regard to issues of race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism.

Statement of the Procedures

Data for this study were collected from 11 book clubs. The majority of the participants (97.6%) were female, with a mean age of 62.2 years, and holding a baccalaureate degree (35.7%). The percentage statistics further identify a typical
participant as a Christian (90.5%), whose political views were moderate or in the middle of a “left-right” political continuum (54.8%). The typical participant traveled internationally once in every 5 years (49.4%), had foreign language experience limited to one language (36.1), with no foreign language fluency (44.6%). Family income before taxes was between $61,000 and $99,000 (31.6%). In addition, there were no interracial marriages among family members (73.5%).

The researcher developed a Diversity Survey that was used as the primary data collection instrument. To test reliability for purposes of replicating a study of the Diversity Survey Cronbach’s Alpha Internal Reliability Estimates of Instruments was utilized. Demographic and descriptive statistics were computed with SPSS, version 15. All six research hypotheses were tested using a dependent t-test with an alpha level of .05. The significances were all reported with using a directional (one-tailed) test.

The study employed a quasi-pre-experimental design using empirical data to examine the attitudes and actions of book club members after they had read The Namesake (Lahiri, 2003). In summary, the book was about the struggle of Indian immigrants with issues of identity and survival. The main character, Gogol, represented a world of American immigrants who are born in one country but spend their life in the culture of another people. Independent variables and dependent variables were used in the nonrandomized pre-experimental, multiple group, pretest-posttest design. Descriptive statistic tests were used for data analysis. Additionally, the Observation List of 14 items aided the researcher in organizing with a consistent approach the on-task discussion and the exploration experience of each of the 11 book clubs.
Analysis of the data revealed that there were significant differences. These differences were observed primarily in two areas. In the Research Hypothesis 1, there are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book. Likewise, for Research Hypothesis 3, there are statistically significant changes in attitudes concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

**The Research Hypotheses**

Hypotheses were formulated to measure the attitudes and actions of book club members toward race and ethnicity. Six directional, research hypotheses were tested through the use of *t*-test analysis to accomplish the purpose of the study. The interpretation for each research hypothesis is as follows:

**Research Hypothesis 1.** A dependent *t*-test analysis revealed the following results (see Chapter IV, Table 4.6):

1. An overall significant change (*p* = .018) was found in attitudes about multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book. So, at the .05 level of risk, with 70 degrees of freedom (*df* = 70) for a one-tailed test, the value needed for rejection of the null hypothesis is 0.05. This signifies the probability of obtaining a mean difference score by chance. The 0.018 symbolizes a 1.8% due to chance, and 98.2% not due to chance.

2. The $M_1 - M_2 = -0.930$ is the mean difference of the pretest and posttest scores. The pretest mean in Hypothesis 1 for attitudes total was 37.873 and the average posttest mean was 38.803. As a result, the $M_1 - M_2 = -0.930$. The mean difference between the paired scores for attitude total was $t = -2.153$ and there was a small effect size ($f^2 =$
0.066), indicating a main effect of the pretest to the posttest to be not significant (Cohen, 1986).

3. The small effect size ($f^2 = 0.066$) may be attributed to the short time of the study (4 weeks) and the high starting norm levels of the participants. The pretests and posttests tend to be very similar (Cohen, 1986).

4. The researcher accepts the research hypothesis that there are statistically significant overall changes in attitudes concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Research Hypothesis 2. A dependent $t$-test analysis revealed the following results (see Chapter IV, Table 4.6):

1. An overall significant change ($p = 0.216$) was not found in actions about multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book. Using a dependent $t$ test, the mean difference between the paired scores for actions was $t = 1.134$. The $p = 0.216$ symbolizes a 21.6% due to chance, and 78.4% not due to chance.

2. The $M_1 - M_2 = 0.662$ is the mean difference of the pretest and posttest scores. The pretest mean in Hypothesis 2 for actions total was 39.648 and the average posttest mean was 38.986. As a result, the $M_1 - M_2 = 0.662$.

3. The small effect size ($f^2 = 0.018$) may be attributed to the short time of the study (4 weeks) and the high starting norm levels of the participants. The pretests and posttests tend to be very similar (Cohen, 1986).

4. The researcher fails to accept the hypothesis that there are statistically significant overall changes in actions concerning multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book.
Research Hypothesis 3. A dependent t-test analysis revealed the following results (see Chapter IV, Table 4.6):

1. An overall significant change \((p = 0.005)\) was found in attitudes about race after reading and discussing a multicultural book \(df = 70.\) Using a dependent \(t\) test, the mean difference between the paired scores for attitude towards race was \(t = -2.691.\) The 0.005 symbolizes a .5% due to chance, and 95.5% not due to chance.

2. The \(M_1-M_2 = -0.831\) is the mean difference of the pretest and posttest scores. The pretest mean in Hypothesis 3 for attitude about race was 18.183 and the average posttest mean was 19.014. As a result, the \(M_1-M_2 = -0.831.\)

3. The small effect size \((f^2 = 0.103)\) may be attributed to the short time of the study (4 weeks) and the high starting norm levels of the participants. The pretests and posttests tend to be very similar (Cohen, 1986).

4. The researcher accepts the hypothesis that there are statistically significant overall changes in attitudes concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Research Hypothesis 4. A dependent t-test analysis revealed the following results (see Chapter IV, Table 4.6):

1. An overall significant change \((p = 0.355)\) was not found in attitudes towards ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book. Using a dependent \(t\) test, the mean difference between the paired scores for attitude towards ethnicity was \(t = -0.375.\) The 0.355 symbolizes a 35.5% due to chance, and 64.5% not due to chance.
2. The $M_1-M_2 = -0.099$ is the mean difference of the pretest and posttest scores. The pretest mean in Hypothesis 4 for attitude about ethnicity was 19.690 and the average posttest mean was 19.789. As a result, the $M_1-M_2 = -0.099$.

3. The small effect size ($f^2 = 0.002$) may be attributed to the short time of the study (4 weeks) and the high starting norm levels of the participants. The pretests and posttests tend to be very similar (Cohen, 1986).

4. The researcher fails to accept the hypothesis that there are statistically significant overall changes in attitudes concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

*Research Hypothesis 5.* A dependent $t$-test analysis revealed the following results (see Chapter IV, Table 4.6):

1. An overall significant change ($p = 1.000$) was not found in actions about race after reading and discussing a multicultural book. Using a dependent $t$ test, the mean difference between the paired scores for action towards race was $t = 0$. The 1 symbolizes a 100% due to chance, and 0% not due to chance.

2. The $M_1-M_2 = 0.000$ is the mean difference of the pretest and posttest scores. The pretest mean in Hypothesis 5 for action about race was 18.859 and the average posttest mean was 18.859. As a result, the $M_1-M_2 = 0.000$.

3. The small effect size ($f^2 = 0$) may be attributed to the short time of the study (4 weeks) and the high starting norm levels of the participants. The pretests and posttests tend to be very similar (Cohen, 1986).
4. The researcher fails to accept the hypothesis that there are statistically significant overall changes in actions concerning issues of race after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Research Hypothesis 6. A dependent $t$-test analysis revealed the following results (see Chapter IV, Table 4.6):

1. An overall significant change ($p = 0.068$) was not found in actions about ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book. Using a dependent $t$ test, the mean difference between the paired scores for action towards ethnicity was $t = 1.851$. The 0.068 symbolizes a 6.8% due to chance, and 93.2% not due to chance.

2. The $M_1 - M_2 = 1.000$ is the mean difference of the pretest and posttest scores. The pretest mean in Hypothesis 6 for action about ethnicity was 20.789 and the average posttest mean was 19.789. As a result, the $M_1 - M_2 = 1.000$. The scores on the pretest were actually higher than the posttest.

3. The small effect size ($f^2 = 0.0489$) may be attributed to the short time of the study (4 weeks) and the high starting norm levels of the participants. The pretests and posttests tend to be very similar (Cohen, 1986).

4. The researcher fails to accept the hypothesis that there are statistically significant overall changes in actions concerning issues of ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book.

Statistical analysis led to Research Hypotheses 1 and 3 being accepted (null hypotheses were rejected), while Research Hypotheses 2, 4, 5, and 6 were rejected (null hypotheses were accepted).
As stated earlier, the low population sample, homogeneous selection, and high diversity awareness of the participants as a limitation, might threaten the internal validity of the study. The participants are already at the upper limit of the survey levels, which could result in a ceiling effect. Thus, there is a selection bias and ceiling effect that could threaten the control of the design and produce an effect that could be mistaken for the effect of the experimental treatment.

The empirical data from this study revealed an attitude change for participants after reading and discussing a multicultural book. It was implied that attitudes might be the first step to change, perhaps serving as a forerunner to changes in “action” or behavior. An example of this is the power of advertising to influence people’s attitudes and behaviors. Fazio (1990) advocated that attitudes play a major role in determining behavior. This attitude drives behavior theory was created by Fazio (1990) if the attitude is both available and relevant in a given situation. However, a meaningful classroom dialogue study of Bowman and Gottlieb (2007) at the American Educational Research Association’s annual meeting reported that many students kept minority viewpoints to themselves. Survey research is based on self-report; participants can keep viewpoints to themselves. In addition, even if participants want to give correct information, they might not have the self-understanding to do so (Gall et al., 2003). Interestingly, this study explained that opinion diversity within a single-session dialogue does not statistically contribute to people’s questioning their own beliefs.

In this study book club members were demographically similar in age, gender, socioeconomic, and cultural homogeneity. Many of the connections members were able to make and share in discussion, for instance, were related to their own lived experiences.
Whereas, it is beyond the scope of this study to determine how, field notes suggest that discussion and attitude change might be influenced by homogeneity.

Conclusions

This quantitative study was designed to examine the perceptions of book club members reading multicultural literature. The five conclusions will be addressed in terms of this study.

1. Book clubs can foster positive attitudes about multicultural issues.

A review of the discussion literature suggested that oral discourse and conversation can encourage readers to reflect and make new connections that support their personal growth (Barnes, 1992; Bloom & Green, 1984; Dewey, 1938; Gambrell & Almasi, 1996; Torres & Jones, 1997). Results of this study confirm and extend this body of research. In this study, new connections were evident as participants’ engagement with the book and with the perspectives of other readers affected a change in their attitudes. Book club conversations emphasized the painful dilemma of people struggling to understand each other, as well as themselves.

As noted in Chapter II, some theorists posit that novels might make the ethnic and racial “Other” less different (Banks, 1988; Long, 1997). Findings of this study support this belief. Data collected from field notes and observations of group discussions indicated that empathy with characters in the novel developed through conversations, particularly those in which participants’ drew meaningful comparisons between their own experiences and events in *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003). For example, book club members shared their own near death experiences, homesickness, empty-nest syndrome, divorces, parent’s deaths, and personal issues of conflicting cultures. Results of this
study therefore provide additional evidence for an extensive body of research literature that finds reader response theory an effective catalyst for self awareness (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978).

As the conversations demonstrated, discussion helped readers feel empathy (Dewey, 1940). Results of this study further indicate that when readers are empathetic, they listen to one another more carefully and feel connected to one another, thus building a community. While findings do not argue that discussion was a panacea for social problems, it corroborated research demonstrating the importance of discussion (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996) in deepening awareness of new cultures and therefore generating more understanding. As Dewey (1940) noted, communication is essential for understanding one another’s perspective.

Furthermore, the power of these conversations was underscored by the major finding of this study: book club members revealed a statistically significant change in their attitude scores toward multicultural issues after reading and discussing a multicultural book. This suggested that opportunities to share responses and hear other interpretations of characters and events in a multicultural text can enable participants to forge new connections that altered their attitudes about multicultural issues. In fact, findings of this study indicated that deliberate crafting of similar opportunities may result in greater insight and sensitivity to other cultures. Moreover, with new experiences like reading and discussing a multicultural book, attitudes might be the first variable to change, perhaps serving as a precursor to changes in “action” or behavior.

Data analysis indicated that all book club discussions corroborated this finding, demonstrating that participants were able to make connections with characters in the
books, and with other book club members that resulted in new knowledge. There were
discussions, for example, about Indian life that heightened awareness of sociocultural
traditions and rituals, such as arranged marriages. Participants also shared knowledge as
they connected to routine features of Indian life impacted by immigration to America
such as trains, food preferences, nicknames, and weddings. Consequently, this study
confirms the value of personal response (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978) and discussion (Dewey,
1938; Gambrell & Almasi, 1996) research presented in Chapter II. It further suggests the
effectiveness of personal response that is shared and negotiated in a discussion
community.

Responses to characters in novels reflected a self-discovery that can also occur in
solitary reading (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978). Group discussion may magnify the responses
to make the make-believe world genuine (Daniels, 2002; Gambrell & Almasi, 1996).
Connections to characters in books that readers can identify with may make the
characters seem real: “I can understand Gogol’s family’s comfort level of socializing in
this country with other Bengalis. If I moved to Calcutta, I would mix with Americans,”
observed one member sympathetically.

As noted earlier, findings of this study suggest that a dialogue with others who
share a book experience may help a reader connect a personal experience in a way that
results in new insights and personal growth. This power to promote reflection might
even make a personal experience feel like a spiritual experience or a transformation. In
discussing The Namesake (Lahiri, 2003), for example, readers identified with Gogol’s
mother, Ashima, to the point of making this character seem real. One woman in a book
club said of Ashima: “I found myself closest to Ashima, because I could understand her
loneliness and homesickness.” Another member echoed this connection to Ashima: “I’m not Indian, but this book hits really deep in the issue of a mother’s love”. The transformative power of deep connection may become a personal identification during a book club discussion.

2. Book clubs can foster positive attitudes about race.

Another major finding in the statistical analyses indicated that there was a significant positive gain in book club members’ attitude towards race. Although *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003) focused on a specific ethnic community, data analysis indicated that participants applied these new insights to race as well as ethnicity. In *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003), characters made a conscious effort to maintain important features of their Indian culture (e.g., language, ethnic foods) in their new American culture. In fact, discussion around these aspects of the novel allowed participants to understand why members of non-dominant ethnic and racial groups value unique features of their cultures. “There is a different mind set today. Immigrants can keep their own language and culture. Now immigrants get all of the benefits of being bilingual. The United States used to be a melting pot, now it is vegetable soup.” reflected a book club member. One member generalized: “As the world flattens out, there is a desire to know more about others.” As noted earlier, some theorists posit that novels might make the ethnic and racial “Other” less different (Banks, 1988; Long, 1997). The positive gain in attitude towards race found in this study underscores the soundness of these theories. Moreover, it extends this theory by indicating that through personal response shared in the context of a discussion community, readers may gain insights about the “Other” that transcend specifics of the culture under discussion.
3. Book clubs may have little impact on participants’ actions towards multicultural, racial, or ethnic issues.

The other four specific research hypotheses (RH2, RH4, RH5, and RH6) associated with this study were tested. All these t tests of mean difference were not significant (see Table 4.6). The Diversity Survey results may indicate that book club members are more likely to have some informal knowledge of diversity. However, because the readers are not required to, or are seldom involved in diversity functions, they may have little practical or intricate knowledge of diversity issues.

As noted in Chapter II, Banks (1988) maintains that when individuals are able to participate in a variety of cultures, they are more able to benefit from the total human experience. Findings of this study corroborate that belief, demonstrating, a book club discussion of a multicultural text may not have the impact of action. Participants may indeed experience a consequence in ideas, but this will not be evident in a change of personal behavior. Book clubs discussions could change attitudes, but they do not appear to be catalysts for immediate action. Ingrained behaviors may take more time and experiences to change.

4. Book clubs have little impact on actions towards ethnicity.

This result was particularly interesting as The Namesake (Lahiri, 2003) dealt with ethnicity. The opportunity for growth diminished when the pretest was high or otherwise stated the book club members may have started above the norm. Participants started with a high pretest and after reading and discussing the book, the scores were still high. There was growth, but not enough to be significant. The pretest scores on attitudes concerning race started at a lower level and had more chance for significant growth. There was
evidence of book club members having a high attentiveness of attitudes concerning ethnicity. Many participants, for example, had attended the Catholic Diversity Lecture Series, and were also aware of the Beatitude House program to help Mexicans speak English. Given that there were no positive changes in action across all three action hypotheses, results of this study suggest that while book club discussion groups can result in attitude changes, those changes do not immediately result in commensurate or immediate demonstrable actions. There may be measurable changes in action over time, but such findings would be beyond the temporal limits of this study.

5. Book clubs provide a common reading experience that can be a catalyst for self-discovery as personal response is shared and negotiated in a discussion community.

Making-meaning in book clubs can be two-fold: (1) personal response to and reflection about literature with (2) communication of self-reflection with others who have also read and reflected on the same text. As discussed in Chapter II, response theory posits that meaning-making begins in the transaction of personal experience with the events narrated in a text (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978). Data analysis revealed that participants in this book club brought their own perceptions and personal responses to the discussions: “As the immigrants in this country inter-married, it usually diluted their culture. Many even changed their names,” noted one woman. The ensuing discussion brought additional personal opinions that were compared to events in the text.

A large and widely-respected body of research has demonstrated that during a reading event, learners make sense of their world by connecting their prior knowledge with what they are learning (Bruner, 1973; Goodman, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978). Results of this study provide additional evidence that supports this body of research. By
reading and talking about their experiences and reactions, book club members appeared to “remake” themselves, because in linking new information to identities they already have, they can become less self-involved and develop a more global perspective. One member said enthusiastically: “My book club is a wonderful learning experience. I have read books I never would have selected for myself to read.”

Similarly, book clubs support the social aspect of constructivism in negotiating meaning with others through discussion. As noted in Chapter II, Vygotsky (1978) believed that thinking and learning are social practices. “Knowing” is a matter of being able to participate, and “learning” is a matter of changing patterns of participation (Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, when these members talk about the book they evaluated characters and novels on their own interpretations, not those of critics. Members were aware of this personal interpretation or self-understanding as one group called their discussion “lighthearted.” Therefore, book clubs provided an interaction that enabled self-discovery.

Implications of the Study

While additional research needs to be conducted on this topic, this quantitative study contributed to our understanding of the potential of adult book clubs to enhance multicultural awareness. Specifically, the study sought to identify whether a book club discussion of multicultural literature might impact the attitudes and actions of its members on multicultural issues, particularly those related to race and ethnicity. Following are several implications generated by the findings of the study.
1. Homogeneous demographic factors have an impact in book club discussions.

These book clubs were demographically similar in age, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural homogeneity. Many of the connections participants were able to make and share in discussion, for example, were related to their own lived experiences. Given the similarity in age, gender, and cultural backgrounds, reference to such experiences were quickly understood by other group members. In fact, while it is beyond the scope of this study to determine how, field notes suggest that social interaction and discussion were clearly influenced by this factor. Future studies should replicate this one with groups that are both heterogeneous and homogeneous. Attention should be paid to differences in age and gender, as well as cultural and racial backgrounds.

2. A shared purpose of members has an impact in openness to sharing in book club discussions.

Although book club membership is voluntary, participants appeared to share a common purpose and goal for their involvement: “I joined a group because I wanted someone to discuss my books with.” Another member observed, “The more I read and the older I get, the more questions I have, and the more I want to discuss these questions.” Still another said, “It’s really important for me to discuss with other people what I read.” Moreover, members clearly felt comfortable with one another in the discussion setting: "I kick off my shoes, and say exactly what I believe about issues I care about” one woman observed. This same idea was spoken at every book club. While it is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether participants’ openness to sharing and growth was due in part to the similarity of purpose they brought, future studies should explore this factor.
3. The role of text selection has an impact to connections in book club discussions.

As noted earlier, participants were able to make personal connections with characters and events in *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003) that enabled them to gain new insights and positive attitudes about multicultural issues and race. This ability may have been accelerated by features of the text with which these participants could easily relate. The powerful response to the matriarch Ashima, for example, may be attributed in part to the age and gender of participants who quickly understood the complex nature of a “mother’s love.” These small intimate groups often exchanged memories (background knowledge) and reflections inspired by *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003). Moreover, some book club members’ stories from their middle-east travel impressions of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Thailand, Vietnam, and India helped these book club members relate to the book through various personal experiences with: food, clothing, camels, and Hinduism.

Since response theory (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978) posited that literary interpretation begins in the unique transaction of a reader’s personality and experience with the content of a text, it was likely that the age, gender, socioeconomic, and cultural background of participants had an impact in their response to this text. As noted earlier, book club members focused on characters as if they were real people. Novels with characters that shared similar characteristics with these book club readers might appear to help members “transact” (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1978) with the book. Would a younger group of readers, for example, have responded to *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003) in a way that resulted in attitude growth? Similarly, would the discussion of a demographically diverse group
who read *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003) have resulted in similar participant changes in attitude and action? While it is beyond the scope of this study, future research should explore the relationship between the content of a multicultural text and the age, gender, socioeconomic and cultural background of discussion participants. Ultimately, results of this study endorsed the value of reading and discussing multicultural literature in a book club setting.

4. Literature circles have an impact as an effective instructional tool for teaching multicultural literature.

As noted earlier, results of this study validate other research that found book clubs may enrich people’s understanding of an issue by bringing them together in a discussion format (Vygotsky, 1980). Such conversation with other readers may deepen insights; invite social interaction, intellectual engagement, and even personal transformation (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). In fact, the opportunity for in-depth analysis of books in the context of conversation with other people is a combination; adults may only get in a book club.

Part of what gave each book club its unique character is how its members spent their time together. In most clubs, there was very little formal organizational structure. The main activities involved deciding when and where to meet, how to select what the group would read, and how to manage the discussion. Groups tended to deal with all of these matters informally. While it is beyond the scope of this study, future research should explore the influence of organizational structure on book club participants’ understanding of a text. How, for example, might designating a leader who provided scripted questions affect personal response and possibly alter the discussion?
As noted earlier, peer-led discussion has become a popular instructional practice of literary discourse (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). Literature circles, a popular language arts instructional strategy in many schools, are small group peer-led discussions similar to the adult book clubs which were the subject of this study (Daniels, 2002). Literature circles provide readers with rich opportunities to use many skills they learn in other areas of the program such as reading aloud, oral language, making connections, and critical thinking (Daniels, 2002). Given the growth participants experienced in their attitudes towards multicultural issues and race, results of this study confirm the value of literature circles as an instructional strategy. Furthermore, results of this study suggest that educators should use peer-led discussion and literature circles as an effective instructional tool for teaching multicultural texts.

5. Discussions have an impact as a means for growth in book clubs.

Discussion is a staple of any book club framework. The literature review of discourse theory and practice in Chapter II suggests that well-structured discussion in an educational setting can spur readers to think in new ways and provoke further avenues for conversation. Moreover, in a well-structured discussion differences in perspectives can be argued or resolved without recrimination. As one participant explained, “The airing of differences sometimes makes for the best discussions.” Results of this study, then, confirm the importance of discussion as a tool for growth and corroborate a large body of educational research that promotes discussion as a classroom learning strategy (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996).

Furthermore, engaging in intellectual conversation about the meaning of literature is an important curricular focus (Henderson & May, 2005). Henderson and May (2005)
elaborate that discussing multicultural literature can support “the ways to identify difference and celebrate its artistic significance” (p. xv). Results of this study indicate that discussion organized around book clubs are a viable instructional strategy for the study of literary text in general and multicultural literary texts in particular.

These book clubs do not simply report what each reader thought about the book. The researcher noticed that what happens in these meetings is primarily a conversation. The conversation begins with a book, but connections are made to self, to other texts, and to other people. Even though the setting for *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003) occurred in the United States and the middle-eastern country of India, members made connections from this book to their international travel experiences in Africa, Russia, Italy, and Greece. This happens in book clubs because the discussion can give insight and empathy in the process of self-reflection. As one member claimed: “This is a space where I can imagine living in another person’s life.” Through reading a book and sharing responses a reader may “walk” in another’s shoes.

6. The view of multiculturalism has an impact in book club discussions.

Many advocates of multiculturalism believe that behavior is guided mainly by culturally learned ideas and that society is the way it is, because of our cultural beliefs and values (Banks, 1988). Results of this study suggest that discussing the cultures of diverse groups in a book club setting may help develop an understanding and appreciation of how a particular cultural or racial group has attempted to live among other groups. Reading and discussing *The Namesake* (Lahiri, 2003), for example, reveals something about culture clash. One book club had a good discussion about arranged marriages; why it happens, and why it is a continuing theme in history. A democracy
requires citizens who are capable of critical thought and collective social action (Dewey, 1938). For Dewey, these traits are not developed by telling people to think or by explaining the principles of democracy. They are developed by discussing and practicing critical thought and social decision. One important implication of this study is that book clubs, which provide a social forum for reflection and analysis of sensitive or complex civic issues, are an effective tool for developing an informed and active citizenry. In addition, book clubs are voluntary. The rules, around which book clubs rules are organized, show a concern for the satisfaction of all members. Consequently, they promote the democratic principle of full participation and respect for the opinions of all citizens. These rules are intended to provide a pleasurable, as well as thoughtful, experience for members. The book clubs in this study allowed everyone in the group to feel they had an equal voice and equal attention from other readers.

Book clubs, then, can naturally create comfortable and safe learning environments (McMahon & Raphael, 1997). One implication of this study is that a safe environment can assist in the cultivation of a learning community. A large body of research indicates that a safe environment invites open discussion and debate so that necessary risk-taking occurs (Garcia & Van Soest, 1997; Latting, 1990).

As noted earlier, relatively small social differences existed in these book clubs. Perhaps this homogeneity enabled these readers to build on shared values and experiences that create a community of trust that supports a pleasant conversation. Field notes observed that book club members engaged in comfortable conversation beyond the book topic, petting each other’s dogs and recommending movies to one another. The
people in each book club have enough in common to be able to talk to, rather than past each other.

Intimacy is produced by these discussions in a learning community, as they give access to parts of the self not usually activated by daily activities. Personal responses to the book is shared in confidence or shared in comfort. At book club meetings after reading *The Namesake* (Lahiri. 2003) the researcher heard the sharing of a member’s own painful childhood memories of unaffectionate parents. “Were they really that much worse in Calcutta?” one woman asked. The discussion concluded that this subject is broader than communication in an Indian family.

As a result, the book club could become a support group. “The children were very caring for their aging mother after the father died. My own aging mother is in a very similar situation” observed a book club member. Books in these book clubs only increase discussion in a discourse that encourages private understanding. One woman said of her group: “We share feelings about joy and sadness. By the end of the meeting, we have experienced some change in knowledge. Our combined viewpoints have enriched our understanding of the book. We become more than we were, without changing who we are.” Future research that explores demographic differences in book club group discussions should also focus on the relationship between age, gender, socioeconomic and cultural homogeneity and the ability to foster a comfortable and safe environment for discussion.

7. Identifying characteristics of a safe discussion environment is particularly important if the book club is used as a way of exploring sensitive and complex issues of multiculturalism.
As our cultural setting has changed with the influx of a demographically diverse population, the attitudes and actions of people in the United States towards all forms of diversity has also shifted (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003, p. 293). In one book club, it was pointed out that ethnic discrimination has come a long way: “When Irish immigrants first came to this country in the late 1900s, they could not attend Italian Catholic churches. So, many became Protestant.” Results of this study suggest that attitudes about diversity may be positively influenced through sustained engagement with multicultural literature in a social setting such as a book club.

Recommendations for Future Research

In addition to the recommendations already identified a number of additional questions arose while conducting this study which could serve as the basis for future investigations: This study could be replicated under different circumstances to see whether the results of this study are consistent with studies of other adult populations.

Moreover, replicating this study in different settings and with different populations might reveal salient patterns in how reading a multicultural text can support changes in attitude and actions regarding multicultural issues. A range of adults could be studied, groups that are both homogeneous and heterogeneous in age, gender, socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds. It might also be informative to study groups with similar occupations (e.g., educators, clergy).

Clearly, it would be valuable to follow up this study with one surveying attitudes and actions towards race and ethnicity after reading and discussing a multicultural book of groups that do not begin above the norm in terms of multicultural awareness. Most of these book club members had a high level of multicultural awareness at the onset of the
study; consequently the opportunity for growth may have been reduced due to the ceiling effect. Future research exploring groups who began with little multicultural awareness could reveal whether the small statistical significance found in the hypotheses of this study is typical.

These studies should also be conducted across geographical regions of the United States in order to see how effective this treatment could be in another location. Future research might also include a control group, an intact book club, measured at the same time as the other book clubs, but would not experience the treatment (reading and discussing a multicultural book). This design overcomes the weakness of this study, which is failure to control history as a cause of extraneous variance.

Finally, one limitation of this study was that it focused on the study of only one book over a short period of time. Future research should assess the impact of book clubs reading multicultural texts over a longer period of time to provide optimal opportunity for growth. The one month treatment represents a short period of time in the lives of readers to be effective in changing attitudes and actions. A study might also involve repeated surveys of book club members’ attitudes and actions after reading and discussing several multicultural books.

Summary

In conclusion, the findings of this study added to the body of knowledge about the effectiveness of book clubs, specifically in their ability to support changes in attitude and action regarding multicultural issues. Analysis of the data implied that book club member attitudes towards race after reading and discussing a multicultural book are positively affected. Additionally, the major findings show that personal and collective
reflection of multicultural books in a book club setting may promote growth in these areas. These findings are advantageous to readers in order to improve awareness on the issues of diversity, and support for multiculturalism.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

PERMISSION LETTERS

May 29, 2007

Sue Huber
810 Clifton Place
Carnfield, Ohio 44046

Mr. Huber:

Your protocol entitled "An Analysis of the Perception of Book Club Members Reading Multicultural Literature: A Quantitative Study" was determined to be exempt from IRB review on May 25, 2007. The IRB application number assigned to this project is E07-05. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☐ Exemption 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 - Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 - Test and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact the IRB to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Associate Director

G.C.:

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Institution Name]
May 31, 2007

Dear Book Club Members,

My name is Susan Huber and I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Education at the University of Akron. My dissertation topic is focused on the perception of book club members reading multicultural literature. The following information is provided so you can participate with the full understanding of the research.

The procedures of collecting data will be to survey book club members using a personal data sheet and twice using a Diversity Survey. You will be asked to complete the survey before you read “The Namesake” by Jhumpa Lahiri and again after you read the book. I will also be observing the book club discussion of this book and taking notes. The surveys to be completed will take a total of approximately 5 to 10 minutes.

There is little or no risk involved on the part of the participants. The surveys and observations will not be identified by individual names. They will be completed anonymously and will be maintained confidentially. I will keep the surveys in a secured file at my personal residence. The surveys will be maintained for a maximum time period of six months. All surveys will be scored and entered into a database for statistical analysis, then will be destroyed by shredding.

Please complete the surveys when they are distributed at your book club. Your completion and return of the data sheet and surveys will serve as your consent to participate in this study. To match up your surveys for statistical analysis, put the same three initials on the before and after surveys. Once the surveys have been matched, your initials will no longer be used to identify your data.

Your participation in completing the surveys is strictly voluntary. Should you have further questions, you can contact me at 330-799-4800 or my advisor, Dr. Evangeline Newton at 330-972-6916. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Akron can be contacted at 330-972-7666, should you have questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Susan U. Huber

Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies
College of Education
Akron, OH 44325-4205
330-972-7769 Office • 330-972-9159 Office • 330-972-5209 Fax
The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution
APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Three initials: __ __ __

Please complete the following information. This information will NOT be used for identification purposes.

GENDER My gender is (Select One):

☐ Male = 1
☐ Female = 2

AGE My age is ______

EDUCAT My education level is (Select One):

☐ High School Diploma = 1
☐ Bachelor Diploma = 2
☐ Postgraduate Work = 3
☐ Masters or Postgraduate Diploma = 4

RELIG My religious affiliation is (Select One):

☐ Christian = 1
☐ Hindu = 2
☐ Jewish = 3
☐ Islam = 4
☐ Other = 5

PARTY My political situation is (Select One):

☐ Conservative / Right = 1
☐ Moderate / Middle = 2
☐ Liberal / Left = 3
☐ No Situation = 4
TRAVEL  My international travel experience is (Select One):
- □ Never  =1
- □ Once every five years  =2
- □ Once a year  =3
- □ More than once a year  =4

MARITAL  The interracial marriages in my family are (Select One):
- □ None  =1
- □ One  =2
- □ Two  =3
- □ Many  =4

LANG  My foreign language background is (Select One):
- □ None  =1
- □ One language  =2
- □ Two languages  =3
- □ Many languages  =4

FLUENC  My foreign language fluency is (Select One):
- □ None  =1
- □ Poor  =2
- □ Moderate  =3
- □ Excellent  =4

INCOME  Total family income before taxes (Select One):
- □ Under $30,000  =1
- □ $31,000 - $60,000  =2
- □ $61,000 - $99,000  =3
- □ $100,000 +  =4
APPENDIX C

DIVERSITY SURVEY

Three initials: __ __ __

On the following five pages is a list of items dealing with your attitudes and actions. The confidential information will only be used to record the outcome of the pre and post-test. This is not a test of ability. It simply asks you to describe how you react when facing these situations.

Note: The word Race describes a group of people distinguished by different sets of characteristics, and beliefs about common ancestry. The most commonly used human racial categories are based on visible traits (especially skin color, facial features, and hair texture) and self-identification (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003; Putnam, 2000).

The word Ethnicity is a population of people with common ancestry. Ethnic groups are often united by common cultural, behavioral, linguistic, ritualistic or religious traits (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2003).

DIRECTIONS:

a. READ each item carefully.

b. CHECK the box of the item to show the answer you selected to the first 14 items.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

c. CHECK the box of the item to show the answer you selected to the last 14 items.

- Not at all
Not often
Often
Very Often

Diversity Survey

1. Equal opportunity of all races in admissions/hiring based on merit (worth) is a good moral principle.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

2. It is ethically right to hold individuals responsible for the consequences of slavery.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

3. Support of a person of my ethnicity is acceptable, regardless of the situation.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

4. It is important to learn a foreign language.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

5. Polite feedback to all races is appropriate behavior.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
6. Preferential treatment of victims of past racial discrimination is morally appropriate compensation.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

7. Ethnically diverse individuals are as skilled or competent as others.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

8. Targeting underrepresented cultures for academic scholarships as a remedy to past discrimination is ethical.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

9. To support a person of my race is acceptable, regardless of the situation.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

10. It is right to provide jobs on merit for minority races.
    □ Strongly Disagree
    □ Disagree
    □ Agree
    □ Strongly Agree

11. Institutions should collect and analyze data broken down by ethnicity.
    □ Strongly Disagree
    □ Disagree
    □ Agree
    □ Strongly Agree
12. There are similarities between women’s issues and issues with minority cultures.

13. Diversity is not just about race and the disabled.

14. The manner in which parents share their values affects a child’s cultural framework.

15. How often do you get involved in activities with people of another race.

16. How often do you involve yourself in activities for people of other religions?

17. How often have you made a conscious effort to understand the culture of others?
18. How often do you discuss interracial issues with others?
   - Not at all
   - Not often
   - Often
   - Very Often

19. How often do you make the extra effort to help someone who speaks a different language?
   - Not at all
   - Not often
   - Often
   - Very Often

20. How often do you challenge others on racially inappropriate comments?
   - Not at all
   - Not often
   - Often
   - Very Often

21. How often do you think about the impact of your comments on people of other religions before you speak or act?
   - Not at all
   - Not often
   - Often
   - Very Often

22. How often do you refuse to participate in jokes that are culturally slighting?
   - Not at all
   - Not often
   - Often
   - Very Often

23. How often do you avoid using language that reinforces ethnic stereotypes?
   - Not at all
   - Not often
   - Often
   - Very Often
24. How often do you demonstrate by your actions that not everyone has to look a certain way to be successful?

- Not at all
- Not often
- Often
- Very Often

25. How often do you make sure that all activities are accessible to individuals of all races?

- Not at all
- Not often
- Often
- Very Often

26. How often do you try to learn about other cultures and respect their practices and observations?

- Not at all
- Not often
- Often
- Very Often

27. How often do you practice patience when interacting with individuals with accents?

- Not at all
- Not often
- Often
- Very Often

28. How often do you create an environment in which all races feel respected and valued?

- Not at all
- Not often
- Often
- Very Often
APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION LIST

Book Club Exploration Experience

Club Name: __________________

Initial Observation

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Optimum seating layout of the group setting.</td>
<td>☐ Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Not often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Very Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Level of the facilitator-reader interactions.</td>
<td>☐ Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Not often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>☐ Often</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Very Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Level of reader-reader interactions.</td>
<td>☐ Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Not often</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>☐ Often</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Very Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Level of the interactions shaped by the context of readers’ lives, their culture, and the community/society.</td>
<td>☐ Not at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Not often</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>☐ Often</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Very Often</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>
Text Inquiry

5. Group provides a brief description of the book’s strengths and weaknesses.
   - Not at all 1
   - Not often 2
   - Often 3
   - Very Often 4

6. Choice of materials/media and use of resources support/limit the discussion.
   - Not at all 1
   - Not often 2
   - Often 3
   - Very Often 4

7. Degree of information about the author.
   - Not at all 1
   - Not often 2
   - Often 3
   - Very Often 4

Reader Inquiry

8. Describe the readers in this book club in terms of their abilities.
   - Not at all 1
   - Not often 2
   - Often 3
   - Very Often 4

9. Level of the readers’ interests, regarding the subject matter.
   - Not at all 1
   - Not often 2
   - Often 3
   - Very Often 4

10. Level of the readers’ motivation, regarding the subject matter.
    - Not at all 1
    - Not often 2
    - Often 3
    - Very Often 4
11. Readers monitor, reflect on, and share insights about their impressions and experiences after reading.

   - Not at all 1
   - Not often 2
   - Often 3
   - Very Often 4

12. Listening ability of the group.

   - Not at all 1
   - Not often 2
   - Often 3
   - Very Often 4

13. The level of engagement.

   - Not at all 1
   - Not often 2
   - Often 3
   - Very Often 4

14. Respects opinions of others.

   - Not at all 1
   - Not often 2
   - Often 3
   - Very Often 4