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Multicultural Literature: The Need for Inclusion

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MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE:
THE NEED FOR
INCLUSION

Barbara Gripton

Spring 1993

MASTERS THESIS

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Grand Valley State University
in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Education

ABSTRACT

Since Muskegon Public Schools serves a multicultural population, and since the canon of the textbooks used in the secondary language arts classes reflects neither this diverse population nor the current publications of the diverse cultures of the society, this study, in the form of a survey will show the need for the district to include literature contributed by ethnic minority writers from the American literature scene. The study shows the increasing need for such inclusion as well as offering rationale for doing so.

Finally, this paper will propose a three year pilot class, minority literature, similar to the minority history class which is currently offered to students at Muskegon High School. Following the three year pilot and its evaluation, the recommendation will propose the placement of ethnic minority literature into the canon of the language arts curriculum.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many students who attend Muskegon High School possess little or no knowledge about the diverse cultures and people who make up their school, the community where they live, and the society that is America. One reason for this lack of awareness is the relatively small amount of literature by and about these various cultures offered in the language arts curriculum. These students read mainly from the traditional canon, the required reading lists of writers and selections found in curriculum guides and in textbooks. University professors are petitioning for a new canon but cannot agree on the process (Lauter, Kolb 1991). Others argue the content (Ramsey, Hemenway 1991). Minority critics have their own agendas (Baker, Flores, Ling, Rouff 1991). Thus, currently used textbooks and curriculum are not culturally inclusive.

IMPORTANCE AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Recent realization that America is, has always been a cultural plurality dictates a complete examination of the curriculum in both public schools and the institutions of higher learning. Few issues have created as much polarization as has the issue of multicultural education, particularly multicultural literature. The Ethnic Heritage

Act, passed by Congress 1972, stated that multicultural education was to uphold the values of cultural pluralism.

The question of what to include in the sacred canon of American literature has been the subject and focus of a number of studies encouraging use of multicultural literature for its social, educational, and personal value as well as for its aesthetic worth (Rouff 1991 Christian 1988 Duly 1989). Lack of a multicultural literature program exposes students to a narrow linguistic, historical, and cultural picture (Flores and Hadaway 1986). Reading differing cultural viewpoints through literature can point students in the direction to become more enlightened, providing an awareness of other cultures, and a consciousness of oneself and one's relationships to a new culture (Flores and Hadaway 1986). Students who read the multicultural literature will begin to realize that all ethnic groups have roots in the past and all have a strong heritage which contributes to the total culture. Universals exist in the literature of all people. Therefore, the myth that multicultural literature is necessarily different from other types must be exposed (Rodriquez 1975).

Redefining the canon has clarified lines of verbal battle into three groups. First, the traditionalists who wish to maintain the status quo and who believe the only writers worthy of study and inclusion are for the most part Dead White Men (DWM), work written primarily by, for, and about male Euro-Americans. The second group wishes to leave

the traditional canon alone and to study the work of women and people of color as a separate diverse part of American literature. The third group, transformers or revisionists, petition for inclusion of authors from all cultures to study as part of the total American scene. This last group supports the ideal situation and should be the long range goal of language arts people. Curriculum writers should disregard the philosophy of the first group. They will only impede the change, not prevent it. Educators should listen to the second group with caution, since by this time the American public should have learned that separation does not produce equity. Critic Alan Word observes that "a select patriarchal European aesthetic mind set systematically diminishes, trivializes, displaces, and distorts the culture of the new authors" (1990 p 23).

One cannot presume to determine the canon. Who and what to include in the list has brought university professors, as well as publishers and even some writers to the field of debate. But debate they will and decide they must. However, this may take some time. Meanwhile, a generation of high school students will graduate with a limited picture of American literature. Until the canon changes and the conservative textbook publishers accept the change as lasting, the task plummets to the desks of the language arts teachers to awaken in students the awareness of the contributions of ethnic minority writers and their

worth as viable and equal members of the American literature scene.

Muskegon Public Schools has experienced a significant population shift since the early 1940s, when trainloads of African-American men journeyed north to the industrial centers to seek jobs in the busy factories to help the war effort. Following the war, many remained and sent for their families. Currently, the fourth generation of some of these men attend schools in the Muskegon area, primarily in the city and Heights districts. Also, the expansion of area farmlands to support the war effort as well saw the arrival of migrant workers from the Southwest. Many of these migrants follow the harvest of fruit and vegetables around this country, but many others have remained and their children and grandchildren attend schools in the greater Muskegon area. More recently, the influx of Vietnamese families to the county has added still another group of young people to the expanding population of the city school. Native Americans live in the county, but their population is greater in the suburban schools than in the city. The latest statistics from Muskegon Public Schools shows a 47% minority population (app A). The elementary schools reflect the neighborhood's population; but with students clustering in the two middle schools, Bunker and Steele, and all gathering at Muskegon High School, the need for a close look at the language arts curriculum is obvious.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The call for inclusion of multicultural literature into the language arts curriculum is not a new concept. During the 1970s, people charged teachers of literature to use the multicultural perspective to review and reflect upon their value system inherent in the life styles of all persons (Lightfoot 1973). More recently, Sandra Stotsky, Director, Institute on Writing, Reading, and Civic Education, Harvard University, believes that schools should "develop students' knowledge of and respect for the religious, social, and ethnic diversity of its citizens and enhance students' familiarity with an appreciation of the literary traditions of all" (1992 p 17). Another study suggests that the literature of ethnic minority writers properly presented and used, can provide "insight into the conditions of people that the historian might find difficult to document and discuss" (McBride 1988 p 32). "Multicultural literature must not be set aside as other literature or worse be dismissed as second class literature" (Mehta 1991 p 22).

How to change the canon and for whom has sparked another debate. Several groups have their agendas. Some believe that to include one new author requires the exclusion of an older traditional one. African-American fiction novelist, Walter Mosley, argued in a speech, "Don't change the canon, merely add to it" (1993). Philipa Kafka, in her paper, asserts that there is room and space enough

for all. "Both canonical and non-canonical authors truly parallel, reflect and are grounded in a global historical context" (1991 p 44). Ethnic minority writers "combine in their works, the conventions of American literature and the traditions and themes from their own ethnic backgrounds" (Rouff 1990 p 4). By reading literature written by ethnic minority writers, students can "learn about, study, and become sensitive to a far broader range of audiences, conventions, functions, histories, and subjects than has, in general, been the case in literary analysis" (Lauter 1990 p 31).

Many people in the traditionalist group argue that in the new literature, the ethnic minority literature, authors write for a limited audience, that it does not measure up to the standard of the canon, and that it is primitive and undeveloped. Karl Kroeber answers that charge by explaining that the academic world lags far behind studying this literature. The traditional literature is the subject of all the earlier studies. "It is the scholars not the literature that is undeveloped" (1990 p 75). American literature includes a body of diversified writings previously unacknowledged by most literary critics. These writings are expressions of vital but neglected cultures within our society. A redefined inclusive literary canon is necessary if we are to be pluralistic yet truly democratic. "The canon is never fixed....but every changing...a national repository where citizens constantly make deposits and

withdrawals" (Kolb 1990 p 40). "Rethinking the canon is essential to the health of the discipline" (Hemenway 1990 p 72).

Despite the request and support for change, textbooks and anthologies, particularly at the secondary level, have remained much the same, according to one recent study which showed minor adjustments in the content of the textbooks in language arts between 1963 and 1989 (Aix 1989). The National Council of teachers of English curriculum study discovered a trend, lasting up to through the mid 1980s which showed a reduction of students' exposure to all of literature. A lack of consensus concerning what should be taught was solved by leaving it all out of the curriculum. This curriculum, the study found, focused on non-fiction work. The council surmised that curriculum planners were not aware of the wealth of literature out there and teachers feel the constant and persistent pressure from administration and tax payers to raise the standardized test scores of students (Bernstein 1984).

But, the canon has been changing. George Tanner began compiling what students read in school in 1907, when mostly British writers were student fare. During each of the ten year periods that the data was compiled, the list shifted toward more American writers. By the 1990 compilation, which followed Tanner's procedure, only five of the original authors remained on the list of the top forty-five authors studied, Shakespeare, Poe included, (Stotsky 1992). This

shift likely reflects the philosophy of the community, the school administration, and the boards of education; but the changes from Dickens and Shakespeare to Hemingway and Faulkner continued with themes which reflect the majority power culture or Dead White Men.

Language arts teachers must renew their faith in the power of the written word to reach, to teach, to empower, and encourage everyone to change. All the literature can help to empower. All of the literature can help create sensitive aware readers and citizens. The wider the range of reading, the more knowledge acquired. The more knowledge acquired the more responsible will be the decision makers.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to determine if a need exists to include multicultural literature i.e. literature written by and about all members of the various cultures and ethnic groups in America, into the curriculum of the language arts classes at Muskegon High School. Further, if the need is there to encourage that inclusion. The study will detail benefits for this inclusion for students as well as for teachers and the community. These benefits may include but are not limited to the following;

1. become aware of and better understand the differences in the school population
2. increase a sensitivity to the different customs and backgrounds of this population
3. develop a broader look at and increase appreciation for the quality of all of American literature

4. improve student learning and faculty teaching through expanded use of literature of all members of the society
5. create citizens who are aware of their own backgrounds, the contributions of members of their own cultures and those of other cultures

More specifically, this study will analyze the literature textbooks currently used in grades seven through eleven in Muskegon Public Schools to determine the inclusion of adequate numbers of selections by members of all ethnic groups or lack thereof. Further, this study will propose a method of implementation, without undo expense, to include literature which is lacking, through a pilot class similar to one in existence. Finally, the study will include a tool, a survey, for evaluation that may assess students' attitudes about and awareness of all people who contribute to American literature. The study will conclude with suggestions for continued research for staff development to create knowledgeable teachers who are sensitive to and aware of the diverse literature and the benefits of its use.

Limitations

This study will not attempt to revise the literary canon of American literature, nor will it rewrite the secondary language arts curriculum for Muskegon Public Schools. It will not offer a model of an entire multicultural school curriculum. It will not monitor student learning nor promise to raise standardized test scores.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Assimilation	A person or group whose cultural traits are submerged or erased by the society
Bias	Favoring one person, idea, or group to the exclusion of and/or degradation of other people, ideas, or groups
Canon (literary)	A required reading list of writers and selections which students are expected to study
Culture	Members of a group who share perceptions, beliefs, values, and behaviors
Diversity	The acceptance of differences between groups within a society
Ethnic minority	Members of a group or subculture who do not have the power that the majority has
Inclusion	Using the work of all members of the society not only those of the power group
Microcosims	A small group which ideally or realistically represents the entire society
Multiculture	People with the ability to operate successfully in more than one culture
Stereotypes	Judging a group by the knowledge of one member of that group, exaggerated generalizations and often dangerous oversimplifications

Chapter two

LITERATURE REVIEW

Government Mandates

The Board of Education for the state of Michigan issued a document January 21, 1992, outlining its concerns for multicultural education. The forward defined contributions of men and women from "diverse racial and ethnic groups whose contributions, values, life styles, and beliefs contribute to the dynamic elements of our democracy" (iii). Further, that these valid and viable elements be made available to all students and that the outcomes for these students include to "understand, appreciate, and value cultural diversity so that they will be participating members of a diverse society"(1992 7). The document charges local boards of education to review their current policies and curriculum and revamp, as necessary, to reflect the realities and diversity of the world today and that cultural diversity be dealt with in all classrooms but especially so in those where the teacher and the students are from the same cultural group. Two of the goals of the document directly address language arts curriculum and classes. They are stated:

1) to develop positive attitudes and behaviors toward cultural, racial, and ethnic groups other than their own

2) to enhance self esteem (p 8)

The document supports the philosophy that all curriculum should reflect in fair perspective the culture, history, beliefs, and contributions of various ethnic groups. The curriculum should provide accurate information on the lives, histories, and values of these groups and the district should provide system-wide seminars to prepare staff to present these ethnic diverse materials. Also the district should establish a depository for material and develop an ongoing evaluation of such material (1991).

Association support

Responding to the signing of Public Act 25, March 13, 1990, by then Governor James Blanchard, which called for quality education, the Michigan Education Association (1991) published its belief that "for excellence to become a reality for all students, an equity provision both gender and multicultural, must be a component of every school improvement plan" (p 2). The association endorses affirmative action that erases stereotyping from the curriculum and that works to include materials which portray individuals in positive career and personal roles, the ethnic diversity of our society, and the contributions of all groups to that society. Julius Maddox, MEA president, advises the membership to "work to insure that our schools are microcosms of a multicultural fair society. Then and only then, will we realize excellence for all students" (1991 p 2).

District compliance

Dr. Joseph Schulze, Superintendent of Muskegon Public Schools, issued April, 1993, a district mission statement which includes, " dedication to providing and promoting comprehensive educational, social, and cultural opportunities to its diverse citizenry...developing individuals who can thrive and positively contribute to a more just and democratic society" (district memo).

The state board of education has mandated that each school district, by 1995, will write outcomes for curriculum. Included in the outcomes of language arts are two goals which address multicultural inclusion; a literate student is one who

- 1) "uses knowledge gained from literature to act in socially and civically responsible ways and
- 2) uses literature to understand and appreciate diversity" (p 15).

Muskegon High School's newly written language arts outcomes assert, in the general statement, that students will "construct meaning as they explore others' thoughts, cultures, and values" (p 8). Its first outcome states that a literate person is one who "uses knowledge and awareness gained from the language arts as a basis for understanding cultural diversity and for developing global, social, environmental, and personal responsibility" (p 10). Inclusion of ethnic minority writers into the language arts

curriculum will address these goals, outcomes, missions, and laws.

After extensive interviews with a title nine compliance officer, an administrator in a chapter one office, local directors of both the Civil Rights and Urban League offices and their kind help in directing questions to regional and federal agencies, and a contact with congressional people, none were able to find any mandate from the federal government which suggested multi-cultural literature inclusion. The state of Michigan should be commended for its forward step in writing such a document.

Canon Debate

The committee on the Literatures and Languages of America of the Modern Language Association believes that the history of American literature, the list of required reading for students, or the canon, should be reconstructed. Its 1981 conference and forum, *The New American Literary History*, stressed the critical approaches and scholarship necessary to rethink the history. Following the conference and the committee's pressure, many scholars stepped forward with arguments, suggestions, and support. Robert Spiller called for a more complex later American identity in literature (1981 p 12). He believes that the twentieth century offers more and wider groups of authors, the more contemporary the more variety. Paul Lauter requests a comparative approach (1991). He cites the variety in time of the arrival of different ethnic groups into the American

society as a factor in determining the canon. Harold Kolb suggests defining the canon (1991). He questions what educators want when they teach American literature; only aesthetics or are culture and history equally important. Jarold Ramsey and Robert Hemenway emphasize the value of an expanded canon (1991). Both want all writers listed but often in order of importance. All who speak of the re-definition of a canon support careful study and discussion. They also concede that the literature by ethnic minority writers has largely been ignored and does not have the extensive research, study, and dissertation as that of the traditional literature.

Members of ethnic minority groups are also making their voices heard through essays, critical reviews, and professional articles. Houston A. Baker offers African-American slave narratives as a "fit ideological perspective" on African-American literary history (1990 p 201). Juan Florez argues for a historical overview for Hispanic-American consideration (1991). Amy Ling supports biographical fiction by Asian-American writers which contains contemporary themes and content (1991). LaVonne Brown Rouff presents the spirituality of the nineteenth century biographies by Native-American writers (1991). And so the debate continues.

Stereotypes

Historically, literature which students read, has inaccurately depicted members of minority groups resulting

in creation or continuance of cultural stereotyping observed Molefi Kete Asante, Chair, Department of African-American Studies, Temple University, (1992). This stereotyping can be obvious in the basic plot of the story or development of the characters or it can be part of the hidden curriculum often as a result of exclusion or assumption. "What students read affects their attitudes, personality development, academic achievement, and career aspirations and attainment" (Wirtenberg 1980 p 3). If all they read are the classics written from the perspective of dead white men, then this becomes their own stereotype of achievement. For non white or female students, that achievement is impossible. Distorted images of minorities appear in much of the literature students read. Therefore, these distortions must be replaced with "positive images which reflect their real worth and their contributions to American life" (de Ortego 1978 p 4).

"Stereotypes appear in literature in the language, in the depiction of the patterns of daily life, in pictures, and by implication" (Washburn 1978 p 24). They create negative images of the historical, cultural, and social backgrounds of minority Americans as well as discriminatory attitudes, bias in social and employment situations, and poor self image, (Seidner 1976).

Subliminal bias, another problem hidden in textbooks, resulted in a study of textbooks for a sixteen year period of publication. The study found that the largest

improvement was a mere 2% (Britton 1976). Degradation can also include a particular occupation class, peculiar customs, rate of delinquency, crime rate or illiteracy, and physical appearance (Ciampa 1974). Another concern, the "self fulfilling prophecy", limits the choices the minority students have, marginalizing them even more, and offering still another hidden message that unless one becomes "like the power class, white and male, one cannot achieve membership in the society" (Palomares 1970 p 32).

Other studies found that, since the early 1970's, fewer and less representative selections of minority writers appeared in the textbooks, (Foster, 1987, Applebee 1989, Pace 1992). A study suggests that while some curriculum writers and local selectors of textbooks try to find one all encompassing book which will cover everything, others select non cultural material, that which erases all diversity, while still others include newer material about minorities which continues to be stereotypical in nature (Foster, 1987). The risk and cost of rewriting a curriculum is too much for many local districts, who are not yet convinced that "it will work". Another concern is the background of the teachers, many who are anglo and therefore, some local boards and many multiculturalists believe, cannot teach the material properly (Gollnick 1990). Others suggest that simply because a text contains material about an ethnic minority group or individual, it is therefore acceptable (Gollnick 1990). Another problem in literature is the awful

"tokenism" a situation multiculturalists find in which the minority character is happily entrenched in a white society and all is well. (Simone, 1993).

Several minority groups express concern that the material students view on television, especially older shows, which advance or introduce stereotypes, is enforced in the school through the literature (Maddox 1993). Language which contains references to the noble savage, migrant worker, share cropper, or slant eyes do not reduce the inaccuracies in either the literature or the minds of the readers. Dialect is a concern of these same groups and is an area where publishers and book selectors must tread softly (Gollnick 1990). Dialect in literature is an attempt by the writer to create a sense of realism and that is good, but too often, the dialect in reality develops the user as stumbling, illiterate, unable to communicate or associate with other characters, (Deane 1990).

Stereotyping further occurs, especially in adolescent literature, where minority characters are "members of neighborhood gangs, have dropped out of school, have little to do with families, and are connected in a negative manner to the law authorities" (Bruner 1988 p 124). Hardly, a role model for teen aged minority readers or for any reader. The role of the family, according to many, has not appeared in much literature where minorities are present, again the tokenism (Asante 1992). A student's world is supersaturated with hundreds of images that obscure, misrepresent, and

render trivial, the rich culture and history of minority Americans, (Hirschfelder 1982). These unauthentic, offensive, and unreal images must be corrected through counter imagery. Curriculum inclusion of literature by and about ethnic minority Americans can help erase these stereotypes (Hirschfelder 1982).

Role models and self-esteem

Importance of and the need for families, education, acceptable behavior, short and long term goals, one's place in a democratic society can be stressed without erasing one's culture through exclusion or assimilation (Maddox 1993). These are values the society cherishes no matter what the group. Research suggests and practitioners agree that when people have to do something they do a better job if they feel good about themselves (Asante 1992, LaMeres 1991). Self esteem has been a priority in education research for sometime. Students who have a good self concept will exhibit fewer acting out behaviors and often increase their classroom participation, thereby enhancing their learning. (Asante 1992). Researchers caution that in the teachers' desire to improve self esteem, they often create false esteem builders (Black, 1991). What better way to insure real esteem building and enhance learning by using literature the students can identify with as that of their own culture (Jones 1987). The possibilities are many: better readers, better behaved students, responsible decision making, increase in understanding of the society and all its

people, as well as appreciation of the literary contributions of all writers.

Another advantage of a multicultural program in the language arts is that it can "avoid the risk of ethnocentrism and provide for the self worth of each individual student" (Balasubramonian 1976 p 21). Since language and culture are inextricably related, planners can develop programs and use materials which will avoid that risk. The schools and particularly the language arts departments, through the teaching of ethnic minority writers, can lead the way for all the disciplines in the building toward a complete multicultural curriculum (Simone 1993)

Donna Norton provides a strong argument for multicultural literature, which includes meeting the needs of the students relative to their concerns about themselves and others, understanding and appreciating the diverse literary heritage that is American literature, discovering the threads that lead the past to the present, understanding of the values and beliefs of others as both alike and different from their own, and developing an understanding of the needs of those other than themselves, (1990). Kathryn Reimer agrees. "Multicultural literature offers role models and a sense of identity" (1992 p 20). It also provides, she continues, a warm and loving relationships within the family and community while often still focusing on social problems within a minority community in a realistic manner, from the

inside. While students want to belong, be part of the school setting, they should not have to be assimilated to do so (Reimer 1992).

Research during the 1980s, asserted that the "psychological impact of reading multicultural materials enhances reading skills, sharpens sensitivity on the commonalities of human experience, and improves the self esteem of racial and ethnic minorities", (Foster 1987 p 14). Multicultural reading can "strengthen cognitive skills, language skills, social organization, and language patterns, (Clark 1987 p 26). The students will "learn more about other cultures while analyzing their own cultural experiences," (Foster 1987 p 17). Multicultural reading will benefit the minority student but other students as well will benefit by moving closer to becoming productive caring citizens, who are sensitive to the needs and contributions of all members of the society. Multicultural approaches to a discipline not only foster self esteem but can, according to one study, include a gain in political influence and exposure (Seidner 1976). Another study asserted that, "student attitudes and self image clearly affects learning" (Arias 1977 p 7). A third study suggested that the manner and materials with which a person is dealt will have "a great deal to do with that person establishing a satisfactory identity and self image" (Palomares 1970 p 22).

Author, Rudolfo Anaya, suggests that the teaching of multicultural literature will reflect America and will

"help create a positive self-image in our students....by presenting the literatures which reflect our true diversity" (1992 p 19). He believes that what is "pertinent to personal background is pertinent to the process of learning" (1992 p 22). Literature, he believes, is one of the most humanistic endeavors which has been used to reflect back to readers their own images (1992). Without reading the literature from their own culture, ethnic minority children have nothing to reflect back on and children from the majority see their culture as the only one (1992). Many believe that reading is the key to a liberated life so it becomes the task of the language arts teachers to "infuse into the study of language and literature, the stories of the many communities that compose our country" (Anaya 1992 p 21). To do any less is to deny the students the tools with which to enter the diverse world they will encounter.

James Comer, Yale University director of the Child Study Center, asserts that, "we will enhance opportunities for our children to live and learn together when we can provide them with fair and accurate materials that describe one another's heritage and experience" (1992 iv). He observes that "impressive work has recently been published for young people in multi-cultural literature," (1992 v). But he cautions that "much more needs to be written and publishers need to increase their commitment to develop multi-cultural literature for children of all ages" (1992 v).

Summary

What the literature review clearly shows is the need for the inclusion of the material written by members of all multicultural groups for a number of reasons that include; to alleviate low self esteem, to smash dangerous stereotypes, and to follow state mandates. These issues bring the inclusion of ethnic minority literature to the top of priority lists of American public schools. Attention and inclusion will provide all students with the justice of a well-deserved positive ethnic identity and heritage on which to look back, (Ciampa 1974). Educators must utilize the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students as a vehicle to enrich American society because of, not in spite of, their ethnic heritage, (Ciampa 1974).

Like the study of our own individual history, literature, and philosophy, the study of the culture of others gives us a broader perspective on human existence. Students will routinely deal with people from widely varying cultures. A narrow vision of the society will, leave them isolated and apprehensive (Cheney 1989). Awareness of their own and other cultures will allow students to break out of the narrow circle of the moment" (Olds 1990). The story will become much richer when we "can hear all the voices" (Romero & Zancanella 1990).

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT COMPONENTS

This study has three components. First, it will look at the literature textbooks used by the language arts department of Muskegon Public Schools assigned to grades seven through eleven in the required English classes. The study will determine the inclusion of writers who are members of the following ethnic minority groups; African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American by number and percentage and compare their representation to the representation of Euro-American entries and the amount of inclusion of each group. The study will take the form of a survey of each text. Study of the material will determine representation of the minority literature to which students are exposed from grades seven through eleven.

The study will use a format similar to a study conducted for the National Council of Teachers of English which researched similar data. This study, headed by Barbara G. Price (1992), looked at five of the most widely used American literature anthologies used primarily in eleventh grade. She looked at gender and ethnic minority inclusion and from her research she developed a list or canon of those writers who appeared in at least three of the five anthologies (app B).

Next, the study will propose a plan for the district to offset the results of the textbook survey in the form of a pilot class in language arts similar to a pilot in use called minority history.

Finally, the study will conclude with an evaluation tool by which the district can assess the success of the minority literature class according to the elements that the research indicates will be to an advantage for the students.

PROJECT RESULTS/DATA

Part one

The seventh grade anthology, Adventures for Readers Book 1 (1985), Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, presented a total of ninety seven writers. Of the ninety seven, 5 or 5.2% were African-American, 3 or 3.2% were Asian-American, and 2 or 2.1% were Native-American writers. No Hispanic-American writers found their way into the seventh grade book.

**Seventh Grade Textbook Survey Results
Multicultural Inclusion**

Minority group writers	Number of entries	Percent of inclusion
African-American	5	5.1
Asian-American	3	3.1
Hispanic-American	0	0.0
Native-American	2	2.1

Seventy-six writers appeared in the eighth grade book,

Adventures for Readers Book 2 (1985), Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. The reduction in number from the ninety-seven in the seventh grade text to seventy-six appears to be the result of longer entries and several entries by the same authors. The survey showed 8 or 10.5% of African-American writers and one each by an Asian-American, a Hispanic-American, and a Native-American for 1.3% each.

**Eighth Grade Textbook Survey
Multicultural Inclusion**

Minority group writers	Number of entries	Percent of inclusion
African-American	8	10.
Asian-American	1	1.3
Hispanic-American	1	1.3
Native-American	1	1.3

The ninth grade book, Adventures in Reading Heritage revised (1985), Harcourt Brace Jovanovich survey showed the presence of only two of the ethnic minority groups. 5 or 5.3% were African-American and 1 or 1.1% was Hispanic-American of the ninety-four total entries. Neither Asian-American nor Native-American group is represented.

**Ninth Grade Textbook Survey Results
Multicultural Inclusion**

Minority group writers	Number of entries	Percent of inclusion
African-American	5	5.3
Asian-American	0	0.0
Hispanic-American	1	1.1
Native-American	0	0.0

One hundred sixteen authors comprise the tenth grade anthology, Adventures in Appreciation Heritage Edition (1980), Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 6.9% or 8 from the African-American group, 4.3% or 5 were from Native-American writers, and .9% or only 1 from the Hispanic-American group. No Asian-American writers were included.

Tenth Grade Textbook Survey

Minority group writers	Number of entries	Percent of inclusion
African-American	8	6.9
Asian-American	0	0.0
Hispanic-American	1	0.9
Native-American	5	4.3

American Literature, A Chronological Approach, (1985), published by McGraw Hill, contained a total of 108 authors.

Of that total, 13 or 12% were African-American, 1 or .9% was Hispanic-American, and 9 or 8.3% were Native-American. Again, no Asian-American was included.

**Eleventh Grade Textbook Survey Results
Multicultural Inclusion**

Minority group writers	Number of entries	Percent of inclusion
African-American	13	12.
Asian-American	0	0.0
Hispanic-American	1	0.9
Native-American	9	8.3

The compilation of the survey for all five grades of the textbooks follows;

Minority group writers	Total number of entries	Total percent of inclusion
African-American	39	7.9
Asian-American	4	.8
Hispanic-American	4	.8
Native-American	17	3.5
Total	64	13

Euro-American total	427	87
Grand Total	491	100 (See App C-H)

The survey clearly shows the lack of adequate numbers of contributions by minority group writers in the textbooks

in grades seven through eleven at Muskegon Middle and High Schools. Local textbooks offer only a slight increase in inclusion from the five textbook survey which Barbara Price conducted for the National Council of Teachers of English 1992 (see app B). The problem is not only with the currently used material at Muskegon, it is a national problem with all textbooks, so a change of publishers would do little to solve the problem or change the curriculum.

The survey indicates the need for use of supplemental material until such time as the required anthologies change in content. Current textbooks lack the material to offer Muskegon students information about their own cultures in line with the current population (see App A). Further, the material provides little for all students to learn about the diverse cultures of the people they encounter in their school environment, their community and those with whom they will work and live as adults.

Another concern, which the survey indicates, is the nearly absent selections by both Asian and Hispanic Americans. These are two of the fastest growing population groups in this country, according to the 1990 census. They are badly under represented in the textbooks despite the fact that many writers from both groups are producing quality literature appropriate for adolescents. In some grade levels a minority group is not represented at all.

The literature offers many reasons for the inclusion of all writers from this diverse society which will improve and

enhance the educational life of the students such as improving self-worth and developing a broader understanding of the society and its members. Very simply, the writers are out there and they are producing valid, quality, and significant work which should be available to all students.

Part two

Muskegon Public Schools has a very strict method of introducing a new class into the curriculum. It must pass a committee, be supported by the building principal, be approved by the office of instructional services acting for the Superintendent, and be stamped by the Board of Education. Through the use of a pilot proposal, a class may be placed in the curriculum on a temporary basis for up to three years (app I). Following the three years, when the project can be evaluated and the data shown, the board may review the request to add to the curriculum (App J). Recommendation for a pilot class must follow the same procedures as a curriculum addition without the final step and often can be implemented more quickly through this procedure.

This study recommends a pilot class in the language arts curriculum in the high school for upper level students (eleventh and twelfth graders) for three years beginning with the 1994-1995 school year. Reasons are cited in both the rationale, the literature review, and in the data from the local textbook survey. Assessment of students who enroll in the class can take place on a semester or yearly basis, depending on the make up of the class. This assessment would determine the multi-cultural awareness level of students and the difference or increase of that awareness after going through the class.

The objectives would correspond with the mission of the school district, the new state outcomes, MEA recommendation, and MHS language arts outcomes and goals, (see Rationale and Literature Review). The evaluation at the end of the three year period can be an analysis of the assessment tool used for the students or a comparison between students enrolled in the pilot and those who are not.

Selection of materials would include novels from writers from each of the four ethnic minority groups, chosen on a basis of historical value, critical review, significance for the age and reading levels, and availability. Additionally, anthologies of short stories, essays, poetry, and drama will round out the class. Since the class is for upper level it should reflect the American scene as well as focus on the contributions of members of ethnic minority groups of writers.

Since the cost of a hard cover textbook is about \$25.00, three paperbacks can be purchased for that amount. With thirty students in a class, each student can have a set of three paperbacks each semester for the cost of one hard cover. The books can rotate so students will receive access to six of the selections. The collections can stay in the room. The cost would estimate to no more than a set of hard cover books for a classroom. A sample of a syllabus for such a class follows.

-SYLLABUS FOR MINORITY LITERATURE

Purpose -- The students will become aware of and access the contributions of a wide variety of ethnic minority writers: African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American from American literature through the study of their novels, short stories, poetry, essays, and drama.

Objectives - The students will read literature written by members of ethnic minority groups and will
interpret for thematic value
determine historical content
evaluate for aesthetic worth
discover the minority voice
develop an understanding of all cultures
accept the placement of all writers into the American literary canon

Outcomes -- The students will
express an increased understanding of all American literature
interpret a piece of literature based on knowledge of the background of the author
demonstrate awareness of the diversity of cultures
appreciate contributions of all members of the American literary community
apply knowledge of the diverse literature to understand their own heritage as a part of the entire society

Evaluation - The teacher may determine progress in class by, but not be limited to, the following;
topical journals
role playing
value assessments
creative projects - group and individual
research
critique of literature
class discussion - oral and written

Materials - Paperback novels, short story anthologies, essays, plays, poetry, videos, speakers, media center, individuals. A language arts committee will select the reading materials for their aesthetic value, historical significance, and age appropriateness

A list of authors which the committee may select but is not limited to the following;

African-American

Ntozake Shange	Walter Dean Myers
Charles Mosley	Toni Morrison
Zora Neale Hurston	Charles Johnson

Asian-American

Jean Wakatsuki Houston	Gus Lee
Maxine Hong Kingston	Danial K. Inouye
Jade Snow Wong	Frank Chin

Hispanic-American

Sandra Cisneros	Nicholassa Mohr
Americo Paredes	Gary Paulson
Rudolfo Anaya	Josephina Niggli

Native-American

Clarence Major	Leslie Marmon Silko
J. Carroll Arnett	James Welch
Patty Harjo	Vine Deloria Jr.

Part three

The assessment tool takes the form of a survey which will determine the attitudes of students when they enter the class in September concerning knowledge of and sensitivity to members of ethnic groups other than their own. It is a twenty question survey in which no answer is wrong, but merely determines where one's thinking about members and history of other cultures is at a given moment. The students will take the same survey when they finish the class to determine improvement in knowledge and understanding. The survey can show the change in the attitudes of the students who take the class for a period of time or between minority literature students and a select group of students not enrolled in the class.

The specific questions on the survey are what the literature indicates are the qualities which will benefit those students who are made aware of the contributions of all writers, those students who will improve self-awareness from a study of work of all cultures, those students who will be better prepared to enter the multi-cultural society of the twenty-first century. The survey follows.

Name _____

Assigned number _____

Date _____

SURVEY

PLEASE ANSWER EACH QUESTION TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE, IN THE BLANK ON THE PROVIDED ANSWER SHEET. USE THE FOLLOWING CODE AND WRITE ONLY THE NUMBERS IN THE BLANKS. TRY TO RESPOND TO EACH STATEMENT.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 - strongly disagree | 4 - agree |
| 2 - disagree | 5 - strongly agree |
| 3 - uncertain | |

1. A person's race determines his/her intelligence.
2. American society is a huge "melting pot" of many ethnic groups who have assimilated into the mainstream of our society.
3. Prejudice, discrimination, and racism are learned from relatives and peers.
4. American literature gives clear and concise information and pictures about all our ethnic groups.
5. One of the largest conflicts in our country is the white/non white situation.
6. White students should read literature about Blacks, Chinese, Jewish, and other ethnic groups.
7. Non-white students should read literature about the different white ethnic groups.
8. It is important to respect people for their opinions even if they are different from my own opinion.
9. Through reading literature by members of different ethnic groups in the United States, racism, prejudice, and discrimination can be eliminated.
10. It is up to the youth of the United States to curb the hatred of people who are different.
11. I can make a difference in the way I treat people if I could read their literature and learn about their

cultures.

12. The only way attitudes toward ethnic groups can improve is through education and empathy.
13. I can make a difference in ethnic relations in my
 - a. neighborhood
 - b. school
 - c. community
14. The color of a person's skin has no bearing on my judgement of him/her.
15. All people who live in the United States belong to an ethnic group.
16. Racism exists because we do not understand each other.
17. Cultural awareness is necessary if America is to work in harmony.
18. Stereotypes are often true.
19. I respect peoples' opinions and listen. In return, people should listen to and respect mine.
20. A teacher can be effective only if he/she is a member of the same ethnic group as the students.

CONCLUSIONS

As long as Muskegon Public Schools continues to use the traditional literature anthologies in the required language arts classes in grades seven through eleven, and until the university professors and textbook companies decide whom and what they should include in the literary canon, and finally with a goal to prepare students to become global citizens; a minority literature class at the high school level seems the most easily achieved method to filling in the gap in literature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the literature shows that students with exposure to a variety of literary experiences from several ethnic perspectives, potentially have a greater sensitivity to their own and others' cultures, MPS should initiate a class of ethnic minority literature. This class, a three year pilot should not be a replacement for the current literature classes but an addition, until such time as the conventional textbooks present a complete ethnic American literary picture.

Since a number of staff members may be involved in this project, the district should look into a training program to sensitize staff to the wealth and value of ethnic literature as well as the benefits for the students, through inservices or workshops.

The central curriculum committee and the office of instructional services as well as language arts teachers should continue to seek out that literature which best represents those about whom it is written and to whom the staff is teaching. Also, language arts teachers should read what the modern critics are saying about the new literature which comes from the minority voices.

Finally, the district should continue to research the information about the inclusion of ethnic minority writers, their contribution to American literature, and their value in the classroom.

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Multicultural Literature

MUSKEGON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

RACIAL-ETHNIC PERCENTAGES BY SCHOOLS

1992 - 93

School	Amer. Ind.		Asian		Black		Hispanic		White		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Angell	1	.2	0	.0	453	83.7	7	1.3	80	14.8	541
Bluffton	0	.0	1	.5	5	2.6	5	2.6	180	94.3	191
Bunker	9	1.2	2	.3	202	27.5	35	4.8	487	66.2	735
Bunker A.I.	0	.0	0	.0	1	20.0	0	.0	4	80.0	5
Glenside	3	.8	2	.5	38	10.3	16	4.3	312	84.1	371
Marquette	0	.0	2	.6	246	72.3	0	.0	92	27.1	340
Marq PVHI	1	1.3	0	.0	29	37.7	3	3.9	44	57.1	77
McLaughlin	5	1.5	0	.0	168	50.6	34	10.2	125	37.7	332
McLaugh PPI	0	.0	0	.0	32	51.6	0	.0	30	48.4	62
Moon	9	2.2	0	.0	123	29.7	35	8.4	247	59.7	414
Musk Alt Ctr	2	1.8	0	.0	68	60.7	8	7.1	34	30.4	112
Musk Sr High	23	1.5	8	.5	728	46.3	81	5.2	731	46.5	1571
Nelson	2	.5	1	.2	237	57.1	9	2.2	166	40.0	415
Nims	6	1.3	3	.7	23	5.0	13	2.9	411	90.1	456
Oakview	9	1.8	3	.6	114	22.7	29	5.8	346	69.1	501
Phillips	19	6.5	0	.0	57	19.4	16	5.5	201	68.6	293
South Shores	0	.0	0	.0	30	37.5	2	2.5	48	60.0	80
Steele	13	1.7	3	.4	411	52.9	39	5.0	311	40.0	777
Terrace Place	0	.0	0	.0	1	6.3	0	.0	15	93.7	16
Youth Home	0	.0	0	.0	12	44.4	0	.0	15	55.6	27
*	102		25		2978		332		3879		7316

*Figures Based on 4th Friday Headcount
(including preschool)

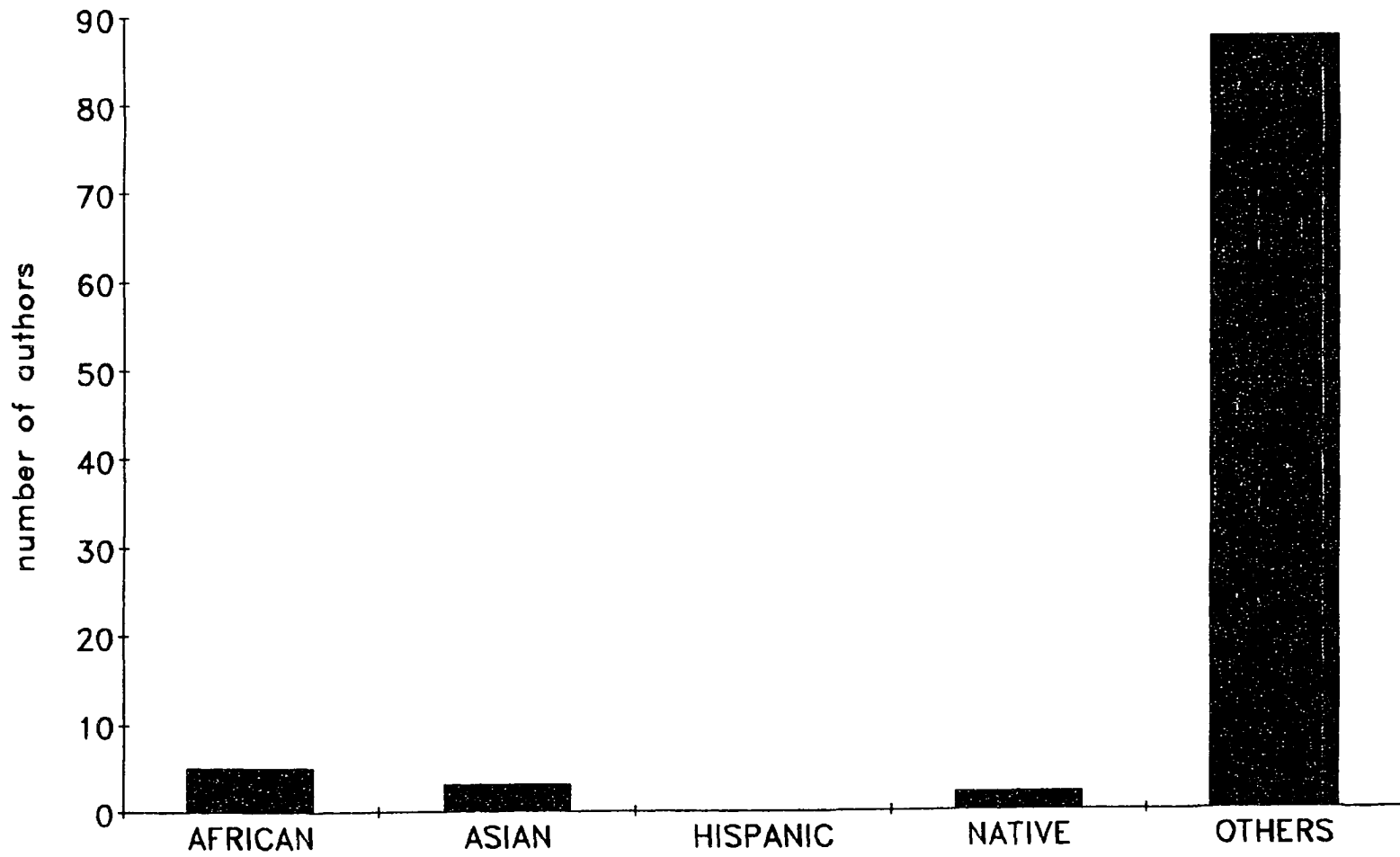
OFFICE OF PUPIL ACCOUNTING

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
348 W WEBSTER AVENUE
MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN 48448

TOTAL MINORITY = 3437 or 47 %

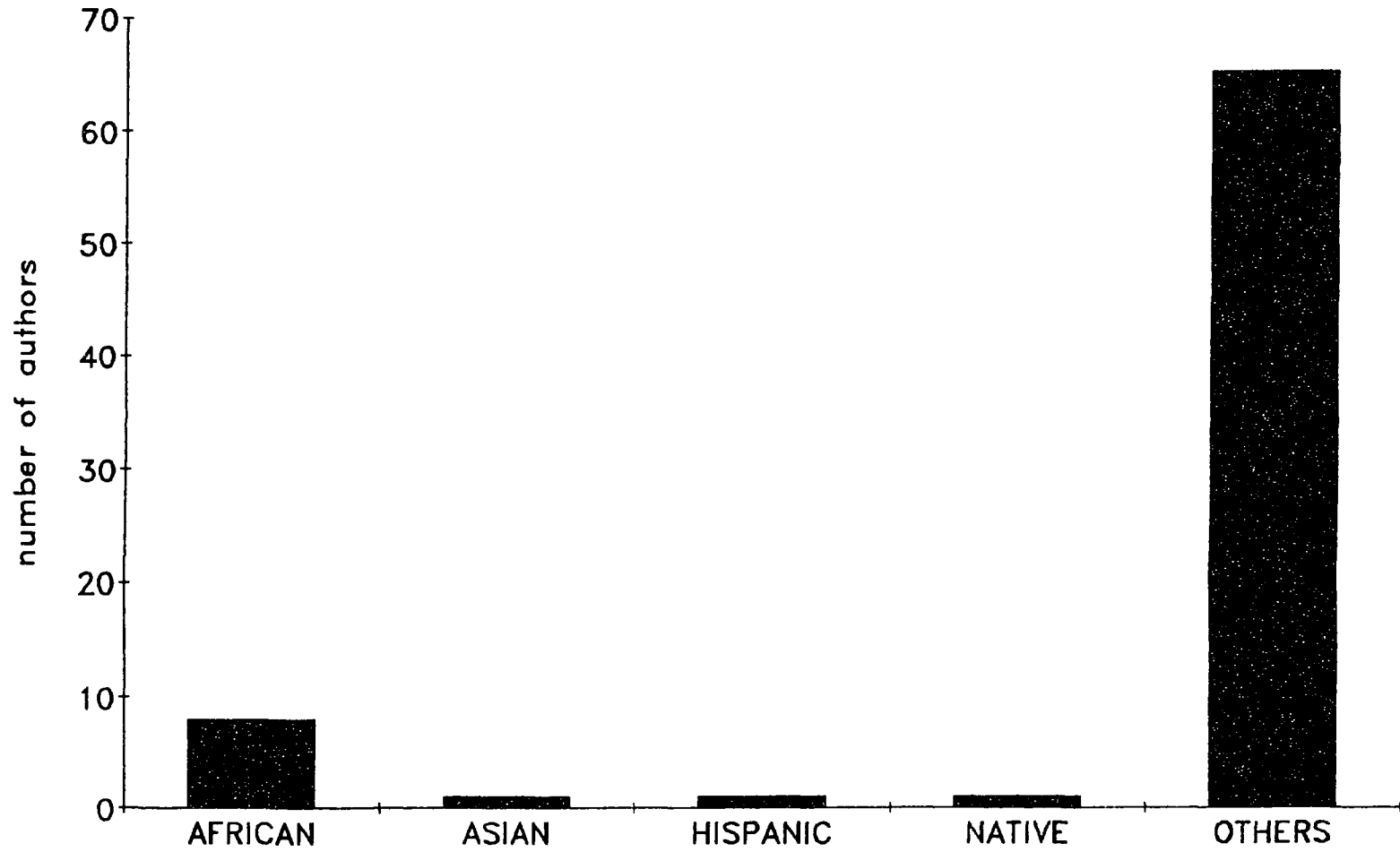
ETHNIC MINORITY AMERICAN AUTHORS

TEXTBOOK SURVEY - SEVENTH GRADE

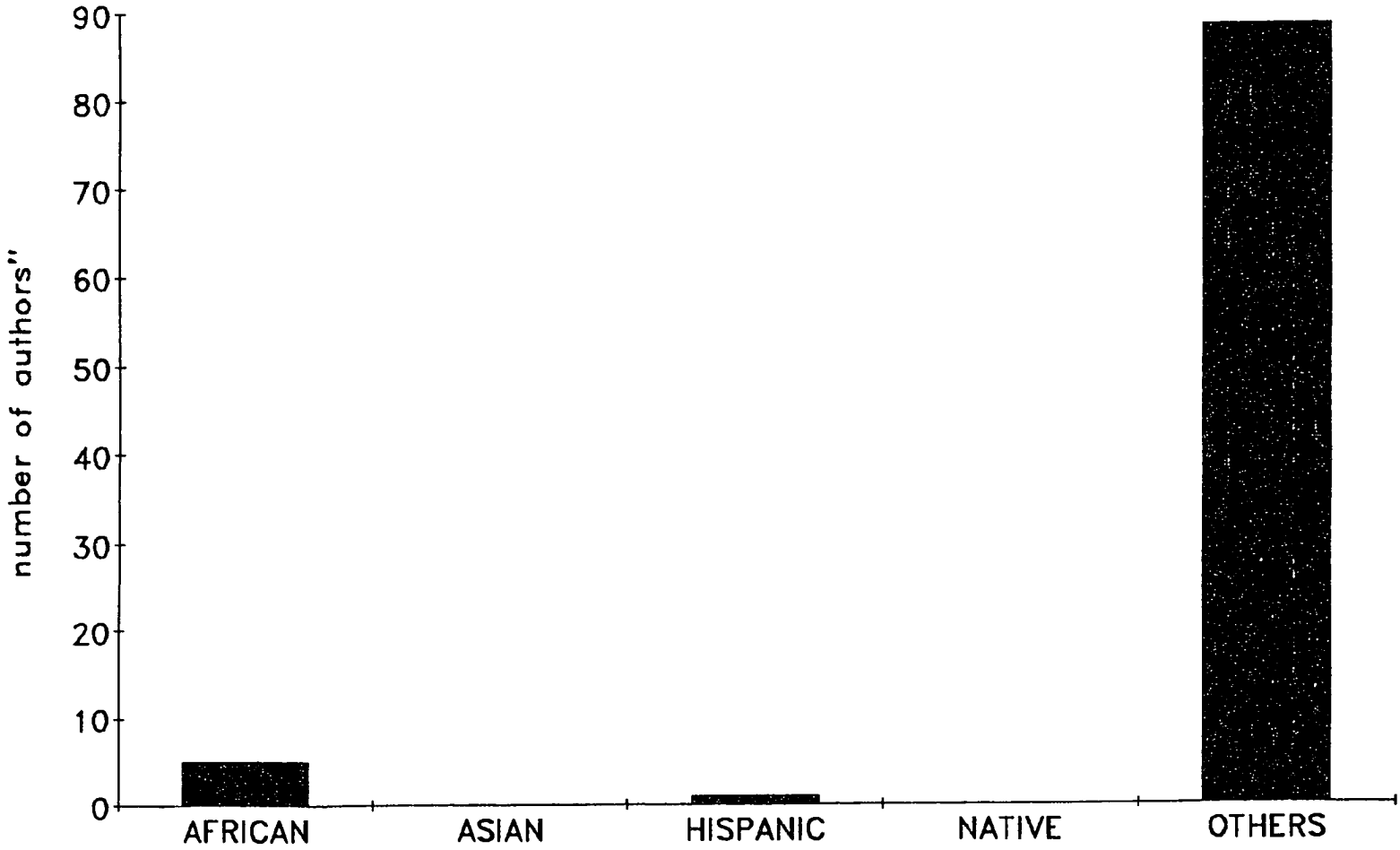


ETHNIC MINORITY AMERICAN AUTHORS

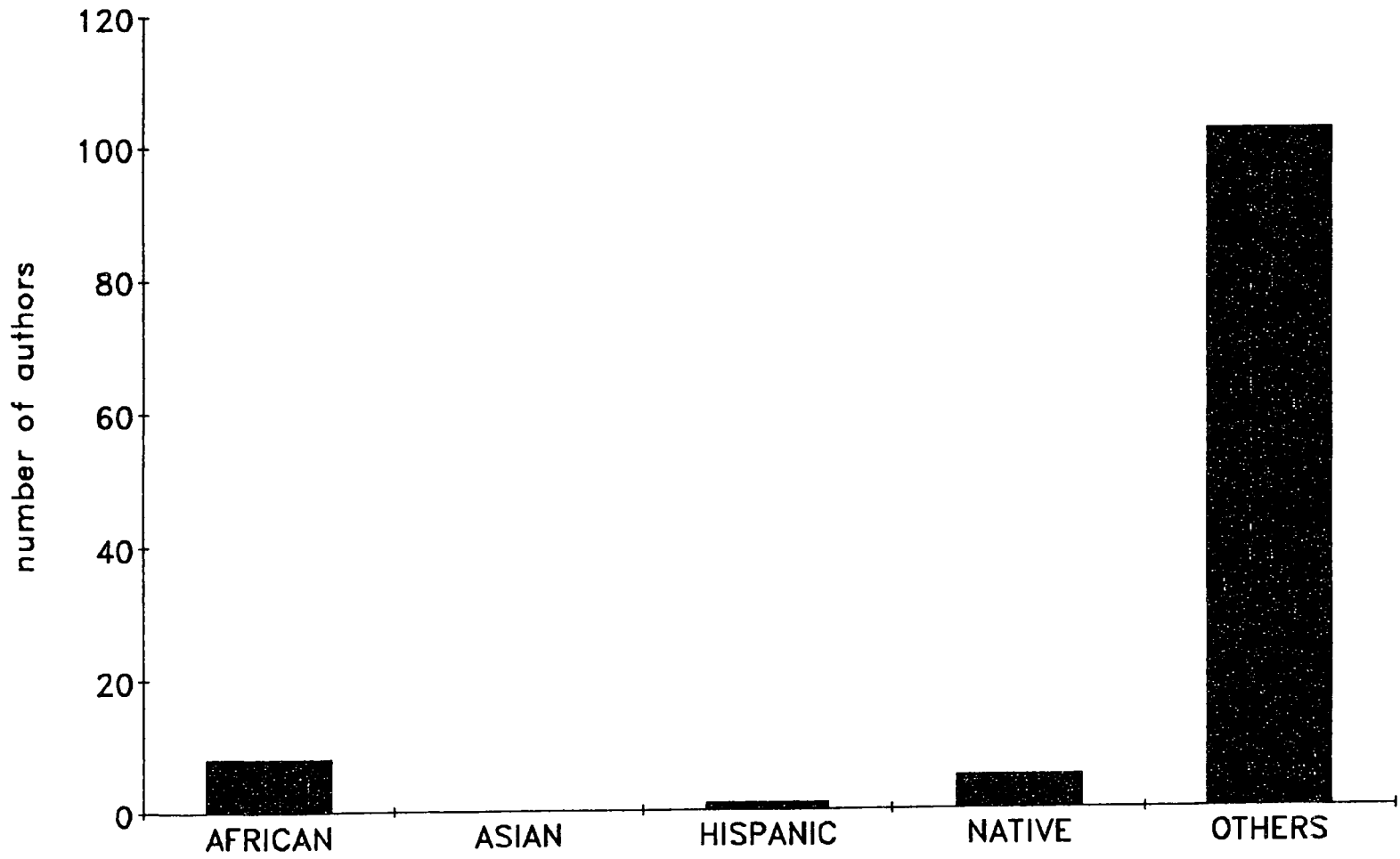
TEXTBOOK SURVEY – EIGHTH GRADE



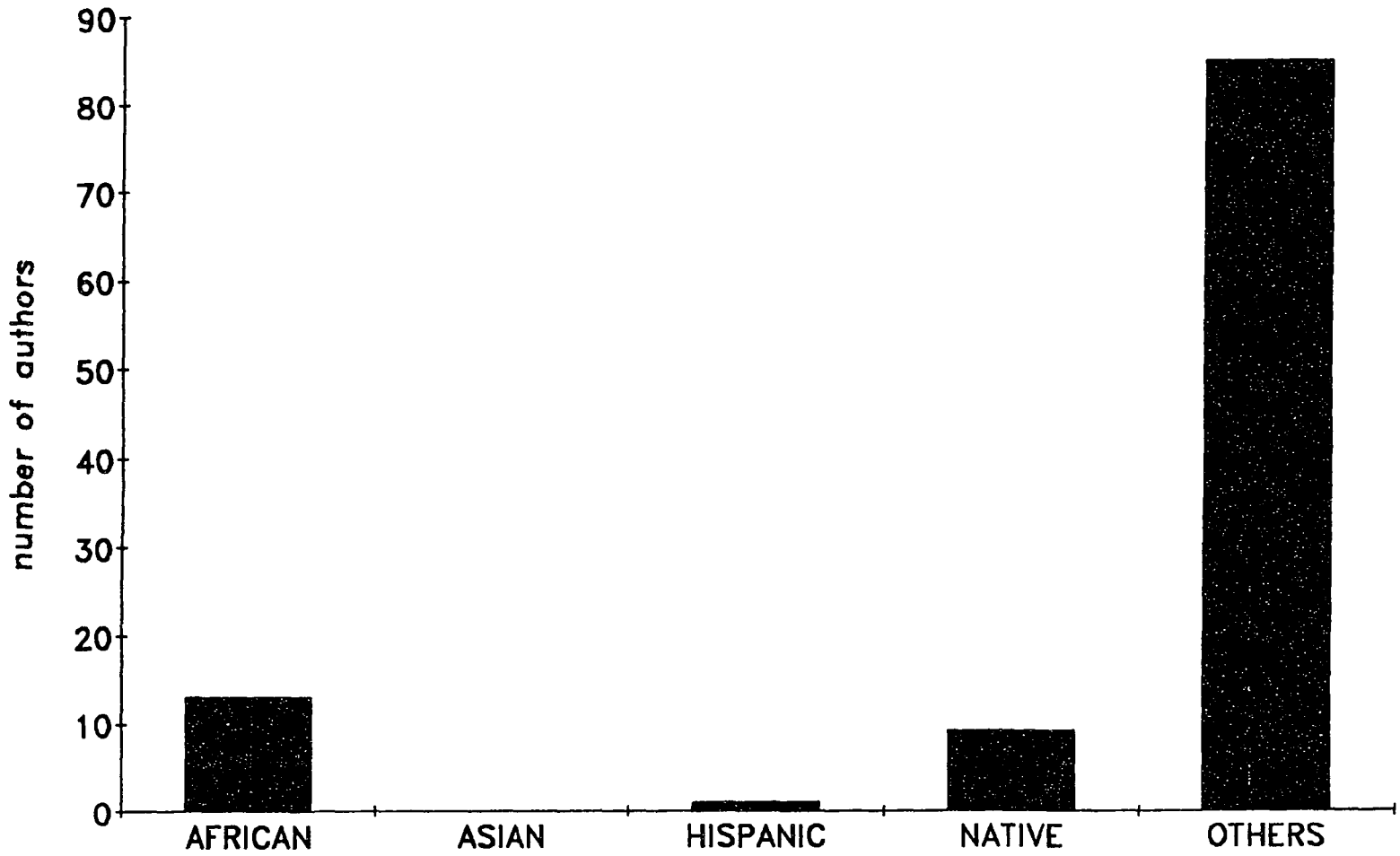
ETHNIC MINORITY AMERICAN AUTHORS TEXTBOOK SURVEY – NINTH GRADE



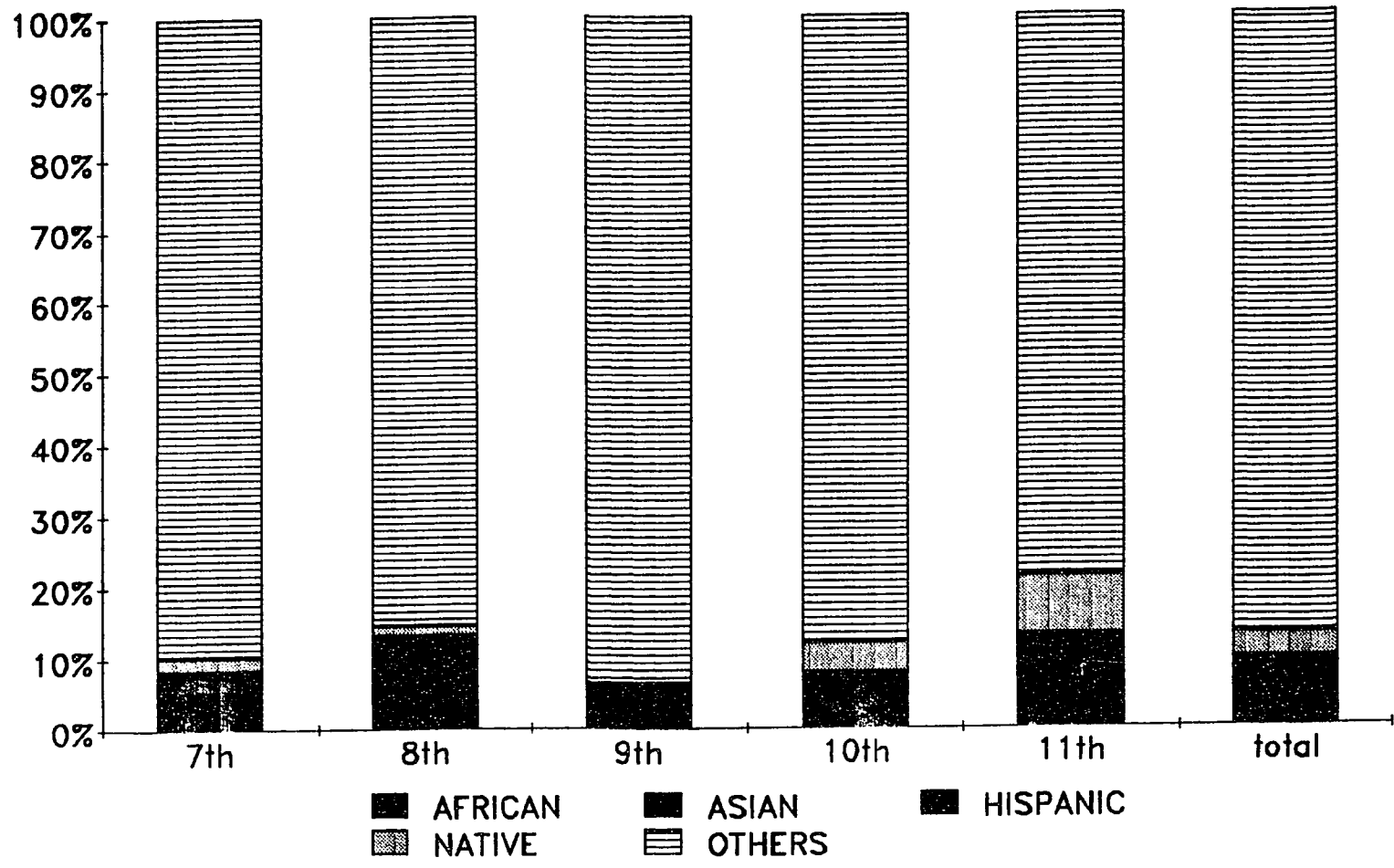
ETHNIC MINORITY AMERICAN AUTHORS TEXTBOOK SURVEY – TENTH GRADE



ETHNIC MINORITY AMERICAN AUTHORS TEXTBOOK SURVEY - ELEVENTH GRADE



ETHNIC MINORITY AMERICAN AUTHORS TEXTBOOK SURVEY



Appendix I

PILOT PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Objectives.

Outline Project Objectives on an attached sheet.

Outline of Main Subject Matter Concepts and Skills.

Outline Course Content on an attached sheet.

Plans to Evaluate the Project

Instructional Materials and Equipment Required to Carry Out the Project

Estimated Cost Breakdown for the Project

RECOMMENDATION FOR PILOT PROJECT

School(s) _____ Date _____

Grade Level(s) and Subject(s) _____ Number of Students _____

Reason for Requested Pilot Project _____

Duration of Project _____ Final Date for Evaluation _____

Signatures of Recommending Committee:

Approved: _____
Building Principal

APPROVED:

Director of Instructional Services

Assistant Superintendent-Instruction

Date

Appendix J

EVALUATION OF PILOT PROJECT

School(s) _____ Date _____

Grade Level(s) and Subject(s) _____ Number of Students _____

Description of the Project _____

Duration of Pilot Project _____ from _____ TO _____

Is Project Recommended for Board Adoption? _____ Yes _____ No

Signatures of Evaluation Committee:

Approved: _____
Building Principal

APPROVED:

Director of Instructional Services

Assistant Superintendent-Instruction

Date

EVALUATION REPORT

Project Objectives (including refinements).

Outline Project Objectives on an attached sheet.

Outline of Main Subject Matter Concepts and Skills (including refinements).

Outline Course Content on an attached sheet.

Evaluation Procedures and Results

Instructional Materials and Equipment required for adoption (specify texts)

Estimated Cost Breakdown for Adoption

Where space does not permit, put information on attached sheets and indicate the same in spaces above.

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

ED 695 DATA FORM

NAME: Barbara K. Gripton

MAJOR: (Choose only 1)

<input type="checkbox"/> Ed Tech	<input type="checkbox"/> Ed Leadership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sec/Adult
<input type="checkbox"/> Elem Ed	<input type="checkbox"/> G/T Ed	<input type="checkbox"/> Early Child
<input type="checkbox"/> Elem LD	<input type="checkbox"/> Sec LD	<input type="checkbox"/> SpEd Admin
<input type="checkbox"/> Read/Lang Arts		<input type="checkbox"/> SpEd PPI

TITLE OF PROJECT: Multicultural Literature:
The Need For Inclusion

PROJECT TYPE: (Choose only 1) SEM/YR COMPLETED: Sp 93

<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative/Policy Study
<input type="checkbox"/> Case Study Research
<input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum Development & Instructional Material
<input type="checkbox"/> Descriptive Research
<input type="checkbox"/> Experimental Research
<input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Materials
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey Research

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Tyrus Wessell

Write 3 major DESCRIPTORS of your project. Choose from those listed on the back.

Curriculum English Language Arts

ABSTRACT: (50 words or less)

This study did an analysis of the language arts textbooks, grades seven through eleven used in Muskegon Public Schools. The analysis determined the number of contributions by ethnic minority authors. The required anthologies were charted at each grade level and showed a lack of contributions by multicultural authors.

The literature suggests lack of inclusion remains a major concern among scholars, teachers, and professional organizations. Additional research suggests the study of multicultural literature provides benefits for students such as; erasing stereotypes, building self-esteem, and providing positive role models.

This study offered a method to include the work of ethnic minority writers through a pilot class and an evaluation tool.