



Conceptualizing Nationalism in Black Children Literature

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ABSTRACT

*Understanding the unity among different individuals who are dispersed in space and time under the umbrella term of nation is not an easily recognizable task. Cognitive criticism has provided the way for delineating the way abstract entities are conceptualized. Nation is conceptualized through cognitive modeling or metaphor that is sometimes referred to as a conceptual metaphor. Cognitive theorists, beginning with George Lakoff, Mark Johnson and Mark Turner, have examined the ways metaphorical structures form the system of thought, language and behavior. Conceptual metaphors are shaped through mapping one domain of experience to another to convey a message about the "target" which is here the nation. This study intends to analyze the metaphorical patterns discussed by Patrick Colm Hogan concerning discourses on national identity within the African-American children novel, *One Crazy Summer* by Rita William Garcia. This study explores how nation is imagined and how unity, functionality, affectivity, salience and durability of a nation can be inferred by Black children and affect their identity.*

Keywords: Rita William Garcia, *One Crazy Summer*, Nation, Cognitive criticism, Conceptual metaphor, identity, African-American Children Literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Through postcolonial and ethnic studies, writers no doubt have frequently conceived the issue of identity and nationalism and have explored different ways to illustrate subaltern culture and history. African-American Children and Adolescent literature is no exception and it illustrates the rifts and crisis between White racists and Black people or between those who want to retain and link to their indigenous traditions and those who adopted the culture of slave holders and whites. In either way, elements of African tradition survive and form a distinguished nation and these traditions bring about their unity in practice. Among these struggles for resistance and empowerment, women has got special roles since they regenerate radical ideas and practices in their literary works and conceptualize Black Women's distinguished dimension through their characters as Patricia Hill Collins (2000) states: "Recognizing that the path to individual and collective empowerment lies in the power of a free mind, these spheres of influence often rely on crafting independent and oppositional identities for African-American women" (p. 204). Rita Williams Garcia is a young-adult writer who draws on the difficulties within the lives of Black Men, Women and children in the metropolitan context. She has used authentic and exclusive Black identity styles and through the urban Black language invigorates the discourse for better interpretation of the world of Black people and Black nation. *One Crazy summer* (2010) is the true-life story of people who were represented as mischievous in history. Childhood in the 1960s was coincident with the Black movements and Black Panthers party. The children as well as adults were entangled with issues of the day concerning government, media and Black Panther party. The hypocrisy, discrimination and poverty were the key factors in the people's tendency to increase their awareness and take an action against the dominant groups who control the media, schools, and markets. There also happened a fracture between Black people in all structures of their life since some people were influenced by the media and saw Black Panthers as the cause of vandalism and anarchy. They believed that African American people can lift themselves out of crime through strength of character and being a spectacle of honor in the Whites' view. In this sense, they regarded the Panthers as "defiant posturing over substance" (Pearson 1994, p.340) while others believed that nothing changes by itself and the voices of people against