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DISSERTATION

SCHOOL CONTROVERSY AND STUDENT PROTEST CENTERED
AROUND A BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF STUDENT ACTIVISTS

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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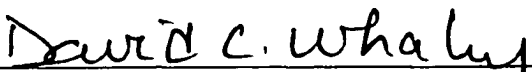
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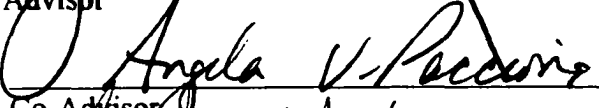
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY ABUL A. PITRE ENTITLED SCHOOL CONTROVERSY AND STUDENT PROTEST CENTERED AROUND A BLACK HISTORY MONTH PROGRAM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF STUDENT ACTIVISTS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.


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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

SCHOOL CONTROVERSY AND STUDENT PROTEST CENTERED AROUND A
BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
STUDENT ACTIVISTS

Since 1926 there has been controversy around the implementation of Black History into the school curriculum. Currently, schools are faced with the controversy that surrounds the implementation of activities associated with Black History and multicultural education. The purpose of this dissertation was to find out the narrative experience of student activists involved with a school controversy and student protest centered around a Black History Program in a Louisiana school. Seven student activists were interviewed about their experiences.

A modified Seidman (1998) interviewing technique was used to give the researcher the necessary data. Two students from an additional school were used for triangulation purposes, which further added validity to the study. Thematic analysis was used to develop themes for this study. Once the themes were developed, excerpts and analysis allowed for the voices of student activists to be heard.

Six themes emerged from this study: 1) Misinformation, 2) Monocultural attitudes, 3) Awareness, 4) Empowerment, 5) Teachers who care, and 6) Voice in the curriculum.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Public school systems throughout America have been faced with the problem of implementing curricula that reflect a pluralistic society, in particular curricula regarding the African American experience (Banks, 1999; Wilhelm, 1994). This problem has often led to student protest in which students have demanded the implementation of courses that reflect a more diverse society (Rhoads, 1998; Proposal to scuttle Afrocentric curricula, 1997). Administrators and teachers have hypothesized on ways to promote a more multicultural-centered curriculum. However, in many school systems the idea of a multicultural curriculum has not yet become a reality.

Recently schools in Wisconsin, California, and Louisiana have witnessed student protest as a result of Black History activities. In Milwaukee, a school board member's effort to remove Afrocentric curricula from the schools resulted in an emotional protest by hundreds of parents and raised questions about what is being taught in multicultural programs (Proposal to scuttle Afrocentric curricula, 1997). In Los Angeles two racial flare ups demonstrated the challenges faced by many school districts. During the month of February 1999, a White principal at a mostly Hispanic elementary school was beaten up outside of the school by two men who told him, "We don't want you here anymore, principal" (Covarrubias, 1999). In another incident, Inglewood High School dropped

both Black History Month and Cinco de Mayo for fear of violence and student walkouts that have occurred in the past (Covarrubias, 1999). Added to the problem at Inglewood was that after dropping these programs the school was forced to close for one day in May because of a riot, which required dozens of police to be called in (Covarrubias, 1999).

A similar protest to those in California and Wisconsin took place in Louisiana. The situation in Louisiana made the headlines for several weeks, with the controversy lasting well over one year. The controversy began when a few White teachers walked out of a Black History Program, prompting Black students, parents and teachers to become upset. Immediately following the Black History Program a White teacher phoned the school board to inform them that there would be trouble at the school as a result of the Black History Program. The next day the school was surrounded with school board personnel, sheriff deputies and newspaper reporters. The headline of the newspaper stated that, "A Contingent of School Board administrators and a Cadre of Deputies, including the chief deputy with the Sheriff's Office were patrolling the halls" (Controversy at high school, 1994).

The Black students complained that during the Black History Month Program a year earlier, just before the speaker arrived, all the White students checked out of school (Controversy at high school, 1994). One month after the Black History Program in 1994 one of the teachers who walked out of the program had a confrontation with a student. The local newspaper printed on its front page "Teacher Attacked by Student." In the article the teacher claimed, ever since the speech at the Black History Program, he has felt animosity from Black parents and students at the school (Teacher attacked, 1994).

As a result of these events, the Black parents demanded that the teachers who walked out of the program be removed from the school. A parent leader of a newly formed organization called Concerned Parents stated, "We are asking the two teachers to resign because they are racist. It has happened before and it just got bad after the Black History Program" (School troubles, 1994).

The President of the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, expressed his feelings about the situation by saying, "The system is racist for allowing those type of things to happen... We met with the superintendent last year about White teachers leading White students out of those programs." He would also state that the School Board had been approached about implementing a policy that would deter this type of behavior. "We approached the superintendent a week prior to the assembly and asked that a policy be established" (Parents want to oust principal, 2 teachers, 1994).

Other problems with the implementation of Black History curricula can be seen in studies conducted by Alexander (1982) and Wilhelm (1994). In a study of 36 elementary public school principals in Chesapeake, and Maryland public school systems. Alexander reported that even though February was designated as Black History Month this had "negligible impact on actual observances in the schools" (Alexander, 1982). In the study conducted by Wilhelm, which consisted of 48 elementary schools in the Dallas Fort Worth area, he reported that many of the schools had no policy regarding the implementation of Black History Month (Wilhelm, 1994). Wilhelm stated, "The large percentage of schools with no planned

observances suggested that this kind laissez-faire policy may be common place in most districts” (Wilhelm, 1994, p. 220).

The finding that most school districts have no policy with regards to Black History Month is consistent with Alexander’s findings, as he stated, “... no signs of leadership were offered at the central administration level to actually provide programmatic leadership {regarding Black History Month} to the schools” (Alexander, 1982, p. 6). As Wilhelm (1994) describes it, “most public school curricula related to Black History and culture as antiseptic and lacking in analysis of the Black experience in a meaningful and real life manner” (p. 217). While administrators and teachers are cognizant of this problem, solutions have been slow in forthcoming. This research explores student activists' experiences regarding the controversy and student protest surrounding a Black History Program at their school.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of implementing a multicultural curriculum is one that is not going away. Today the current curriculum is being challenged to become more multicultural (Banks, 1999). Challenges are being put forward by African Americans, Asian Americans and Latinos, “for inclusion and reformulation of the cannon used to select content for the school, college, and university curriculum” (Banks, 1999, p. 25). Furthermore, coalitions are being formed with White students who wish to see a more inclusive curriculum (Banks, 1999).

Issues around the implementation of Black History and multicultural curricula have caused a new student movement which is the primary cause of student activism

in the 1990's (Rhoads, 1998). Rhoads (1998) has "found multiculturalism to be the number one cause of student unrest in the 1990's" (p. 24). Added to this fact is that it is projected that by the year 2020 students of color will make up 46 percent of the nations school age youth (Pallas, Natriello, & McDill, 1989).

Under the umbrella of multicultural education curriculum reform is the push for Black History, which is sometimes synonymously used with Afrocentric History (Banks, 1999). African American students, parents, and community groups are leading the push for curriculum that reflects the experience of Africans and African Americans (Chmelynski, 1990; Lee, 1992). This challenge, according to Banks (1999), "will continue, will be fierce and will at times become ugly and pernicious. It will take diverse forms, expressions and shapes" (p. 27).

In order to alleviate such problems from becoming overwhelming it is important to study controversy and protest with regard to the implementation of Black History. More importantly is the need for studies to ascertain what the experience is like for individuals involved. This could go a long way in helping those for and against the implementation of Black History to reach some common ground. A major problem with the implementation of Black History lies in the lack of studies about the experiences of proponents and opponents of this issue.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of the student activists in order to ascertain how their experiences of the Black History Program and student protest were viewed at the time of the controversy, and the effect of this phenomenon

on their personal lives. Findings from this study can enhance the knowledge base of school districts and administrators planning to implement Black History Programs (Afrocentric History) into the curriculum. Furthermore, these experiences may provide an additional opportunity for school administrators to look at the impact of Black History on the attitudes of students. In addition, findings from this study could demonstrate the impact of student activism on the development of leadership characteristics of students.

The primary goal of this research project, therefore, is to determine how a Black History Program and student protest have shaped student views of the world (How has this incident affected students lives?). This study, through in-depth interviews, will examine the self-reported life impact of a Black History Program and student protest in shaping the student's view of the world.

Research Questions

The research on student activism suggests the need for a phenomenological study to examine the narrative experience of student activists. The researcher modified Seidman's (1998) in-depth phenomenological interviewing approach. Seidman's approach uses in-depth phenomenological interviews to ascertain the narrative experience of student activists. This approach has three levels of questioning: 1) Background information about the participants; 2) Investigating how individuals recall events associated with the phenomenon in relationship to their personal thoughts and actions; and 3) Exploring the meaning and impact of the

phenomenon on participants. The three levels of questioning were arranged in the following format:

- 1) The age of students and a description of their family background with regards to socio-economic status and education.

- 2) What was the essence of the Black History Program and Student Protest?
 - a.) How do participants remember events associated with the Black History Program and Student Protest?
 - b.) What motivated students to engage in protest?
 - c.) What were the objectives of the student protest?
 - d.) How far were student's willing to go to have their demands met?
 - e.) How did students perceive faculty and staff response to student activism and student protest?

- 3) Has this phenomena impacted the students' perspective of the world?

Research Cautions

The reader should be cautioned that this study includes only student activists within the same Louisiana school district. It should also be noted that the data was limited to the experiences of student activists. As a result, the accuracy of the findings are dependent upon the degree of objectivity and honesty of the individual students. Furthermore, the time period between the occurrence of the events and the interview of the participants could affect the students' recollection of events. Finally, the findings of this study are not entirely generalizable to other student protest movements in different schools.

Significance of the Study

This study, unlike other studies that have focused on college student protest, will focus on high school student protest and the student activist experiences. The study will focus on the experience of student activists who were at odds with lead administrators and school board members regarding issues which surrounded a Black History Program. What makes this study unique is that it captures the high school student activist experiences about activities associated with this phenomenon.

A study that focused on high school student protest was done on Cleveland Ohio High School (Hickerson, 1975). This study outlined the nature of student protest and changes as a result of high school student protest. Hickerson (1975) suggested that another study related to the relationship between protest and change should be undertaken in another region of the United States, to identify demands, strategies, and outcomes of protests between cities of different regions and between rural and urban schools (Hickerson, 1975).

In an attempt to understand the student activists groups, Wetsby and Braugnart (1970) studied four political activist groups. The primary purpose of the study was to examine the utopian conceptions of activist student political groups (Wetsby & Braugnart, 1970). While the study examined the student activist groups there was no information about the individual student activist.

In perhaps one of the most extensive studies regarding student activism, Astin (1970) conducted a national study of 246 colleges and 35,000 students across the United States. Astin attempted to answer questions about the individual differences

of the protest among college students and institutions. He discovered that students who participated in demonstrations in high school were more active in college. Furthermore those students who participated in high school protest were more likely to protests administrative changes in educational institutions. The study by Astin was quantitative, therefore it did not look at the essence of the experience for student activists.

Banks (1995) notes that studies should be done at each of the five components of multicultural education. According to Banks, "context integration studies, using both interview and ethnographic techniques, should describe the approaches that teachers use to implement their curricula with ethnic content, the problems they face, and how they resolve them" (p. 4). Banks also suggests that studies are needed to ascertain the particulars of teaching African American History in both the schools and colleges.

Recent literature has suggested that student activism has returned to college campuses. the literature also suggests that there is indeed student activism taking place on high school campuses across the nation. Research from HERI (Higher Education Research Institute) revealed that 37 percent of the incoming freshman in 1989 reported that they participated in some type of demonstration before going to college (Rhoads, 1998). In 1992 the number of freshman participating in some type of protest was even higher (at 40 percent).

Levine and Cureton (1998) conducted an extensive study of U.S. campuses and noted that 93 percent of the college campuses had some type of student unrest within the last two years. This suggests that studies are needed to ascertain possible

factors that contribute to student protest on both university and high school campuses. Furthermore, it suggests that student protest on high school campuses has either been ignored or very little has been done to study this phenomena.

This study will add to the literature information about high school student protest. It will also examine the essence of the implementation of Black History and student protest from the experience of students. Finally, this study will find out if this experience has impacted the way students view the world.

Definitions of Terms

Afrocentricity- Explanations, cultural characteristics, teaching materials and other factors related to the heritages, histories, and cultures of people of African descent who live in the United States (Banks, 1999).

Critical Incident - An incident that has significantly shaped one's personal characteristics, ideas, and philosophies of the world.

Black History- Is the struggle and record of Africans in the process of Africanizing the world and shaping it in their own image and interest (Karenga, 1982).

Black Studies- The scientific study of multidimensional aspects of Black thought and practice in their current and historical unfolding (Karenga, 1982).

Multicultural education- An educational reform movement whose major goal is to restructure curricula and educational institutions so that students from diverse social class, racial, and ethnic groups as well as both gender groups will experience educational opportunities (Banks, 1999).

Student Activist- Individuals who were involved with activities associated with the Black History Program and student protest.

Chapter II Review of Literature

This review is principally for the purpose of examining the origin and controversy about the implementation of Black History into the curriculum and student protests that have taken place at higher education institutions and public schools. The variables included in this study forced the researcher to explore literature from various sources, including books, dissertation abstracts, newspaper articles, journals, and newsletters.

The review of literature is presented under three major headings 1) Theoretical Underpinnings; 2) Origin and Controversy Around Black History; and 3) Overview of Student Activism. In the section regarding theoretical underpinnings, critical incident theory, critical theory and Kawaiida theory are presented to provide the theoretical foundation for looking at a critical incident for important information, the understanding of oppression and the importance of empowerment. The second section gives an historical view of Black History and the current controversy that exists around Black History. The third section, an overview of student activism focuses on relevant literature associated with protests and activism within educational settings. Chapter III entitled "Case Study" is presented to give the reader a view of how the themes of the literature impact a real life protest over a Black History program, and provide background for the current study.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Critical Incident Theory

The term critical incident has its origin in work conducted by John Flanagan (Paccione, 1998). Critical incident is defined as “some event or situation which marked a significant turning point or change in the life of a person or institution or in some social phenomenon” (Tripp, 1993). According to Tripp, most critical incidents are not dramatic at first, but merely normal events. What makes most incidents critical usually comes as a result of what was written about the incident or what was seen.

There are two major aspects in the development of a critical incident. First, being the observation and notation of some phenomenon that provides a description of what has happened (Tripp, 1993). Second, the critical incident is created to fit into a larger context (1993). Paccione (1998) summarizes eight steps in the critical incident technique used by Rutherford (1974):

1. Conduct preliminary testing.
2. Select observer group.
3. Collect an adequate and representative sample of critical incident, that is, those that are precise, complete and consistent.
4. Examine all incidents and reject those that do not meet specified criteria.
5. Isolate the critical elements contained in the critical incidents.
6. Place elements into categories of developing taxonomy.

7. Have independent analysts make consistency checks by categorizing random sample incidents.
8. Assess proportions of elements in... the more frequently reported incident is often the most critical to job performance.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the critical incident technique is that it can result in “factual reports, specific episodes, and narrative accounts of actual incidents rather than general impressions, estimates or opinions” (Paccione, 1998).

Currently the critical incident technique is being used to make teachers more effective (Tripp, 1993). Tripp alludes that effective teaching lies in the teacher’s ability to make judgments about situations that have no “right answer”. In this respect, teachers are able to look at critical incidents that have shaped both the student and teacher perspective of world views.

Critical Theory

Critical theory is primarily the study of improving the lives of oppressed people (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). The idea of improving the lives of all people, by giving people control over their lives, emerged from the Frankfurt School of thought (Tripp, 1993). The term critical theory was used to demonstrate the road to liberation, by means of self-conscious and rational critique.

Freire (1972), while working with minority groups that were oppressed, used the term “critical pedagogy” to describe teaching methods used to empower minority students. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) note that critical theory and Afrocentrism merge together for social and curricular change. Critical theory explains many of the

realities that confront African Americans. The use of critical theory is a very straightforward approach that does not attempt to sugarcoat the realities of the African American experience. More importantly critical theory pays close attention to the work of African American youth in the form of hip hop, reggae, rap, etc. (1997). Baker (1973) believes that by paying attention to critical theory pedagogy one can empower minority youth.

Kawaida Theory

The Kawaida Theory has its roots in the works of African American scholar Maulana Karenga. Karenga (1982) describes Kawaida theory as “a theory of cultural and social change which has as one of its main propositions, the contention that the solution to the problems of Black life demand critiques and corrections in seven basic areas of culture” (p. 26). Those seven areas are the major components of Black Studies (history, religion, economics, sociology, politics, creative production and psychology). Kawaida theory is the knowledge of an individuals’ past, present, and future possibilities. To understand the past, present and future possibilities of one’s self, enables one to produce, based on past accomplishments and current circumstances (Karenga, 1982). The major premise of Kawaida is to know thyself.

Kawaida theory is an essential component for African Americans in the process of developing a true self-concept. Karenga (1982) notes “a people whose achievements are minor or whose knowledge of its history and the possibilities it suggests is deficient. develops a self consciousness of similar characteristics” (p. 70).

Summary

The critical incident theory is very useful in examining the impact of a critical incident in the shaping of personal characteristics and one's view of the world.

Critical incident theory has brought into fruition the critical theory or critical pedagogy technique. The ideas contained in critical theory are very important with regard to curricula changes that need to take place in educational institutions. More importantly is that the critical theory has the potential to empower those who have been oppressed by a Eurocentric curricula. Finally, the Kawaida theory helps people to understand their human potential, which can only be unlocked by the knowledge of self. Kawaida offers the individual the opportunity to develop a self-concept.

One of the purposes of this study is to examine the controversy around a Black History program that led to student protest. To better understand the controversy around Black History, the origin and current controversy around Black History will be given in the next section.

Origin and Controversy Around Black History

In 1926 when Carter G. Woodson declared Negro History Week, it was the beginning of a controversy that would continue into the twenty-first century. Woodson's Negro History Week was a major step in the process of eradicating many of the problems that confront African Americans as a result of the institution of slavery. Some of those problems include a lack of meaningful education, lack of self-knowledge, stereotypes and little self-esteem. The idea of Black History has stirred controversy since its inception and continues to be an important issue in the

educational arena. Opponents of the implementation of Black History have argued that its implementation into the curriculum will be dishonest, divisive, and will make children ill prepared for the work force. Proponents of Black History believe that it will promote cultural diversity, develop self-esteem, and correct many of the myths espoused by the Eurocentric centered curriculum. Carter G. Woodson was confronted with many of the current arguments that attempt to keep Black History out of the curriculum. A good example of this can be seen when comparing the controversy that occurred in a Louisiana school district with Woodson's *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1989). It is important for the reader to note that the terms Black History and Afrocentricity are used synonymously. The definition of the terms Black History and Afrocentricity have Africa as the center of shaping ideas, and are interested in people of African descent in America.

Over the years, Negro History Week has evolved into Black History Month, which was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter (Sesay, 1996). Prior to Carter signing Black History Month into law, student protest in the 1960's involved issues with regard to Black Studies. Presently, the controversy around Black History Month continues to be a problem that confronts American institutions, in particular, public education institutions.

Seltzer, Frazier, and Rick (1996) note that some conservative scholars have argued that Black History Month/MCE (Multicultural Education) results in dishonesty, with little academic credibility. Mattia (1992) affirms this by stating,

... attempts to introduce multiculturalism into the curriculum appear to be political responses to infuse the American educational curriculum with multiculturalism largely partisan activities engaging only those few who are

committed to effecting significant educational and societal changes. Thus, after almost two decades of curricular engineering, a great deal of suspicion regarding the multicultural education movement exists among African American, Latinos, and Native Americans, many of whom presently raise serious questions about what the movement has done and/or failed to do for them (Mattai, 1992, p. 65).

Others in opposition of MCE and, in particular, Afrocentrism, believe that such implementation into the current curriculum will “make Europe and the U.S. rogue elephants of the world history” (Bennett, 1992). According to Bennett, this will take place because Afrocentrists will assert that North American culture is an offshoot of Western European philosophy, and that both are offshoots of African culture. This argument is best seen in the debate between the scholars Bernal, and Lefkowitz.

Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse To Teach Myth as History*, asserted that “Afrocentric mythologies of the ancient world appear to have been created,” and they are simply mythologies rather than history (Lefkowitz, 1996). Teaching fiction is harmful according Lefkowitz, who stated “suppose we allow one particular group to rewrite history to its own specification, and suppose that we judge the groups’ ultimate aims to be laudable” (1996). Lefkowitz’s primary assertion is that Afrocentricity or Black History has been contrived by some African American scholars in their attempt to rewrite history.

Other arguments against the implementation of Black History is that it causes divisiveness and that students will lack basic work skills if they concentrate on this subject. In their book, *Changing Multiculturalism*, Kincheloe and Steinberg argue that monoculturalists believe that when blacks learn of the historical injustice perpetrated against them they will seek vengeance against white people (1997).

However, Kincheloe and Steinberg argue that this is senseless and is used to eliminate

Black History from being implemented into the curriculum. Kincheloe and Steinberg state:

Such an argument could gain credence and plausibility only in a society where people of African descent were viewed as naturally violent.... Any program or curriculum that induces people of African descent to group themselves in opposition to white policies must be squashed in the name of our mutual safety as white people (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 7).

Seltzer, Frazier, and Ricks state that the opponents of Black History/MCE have also argued that the infusion of Black History/MCE will result in students not having basic work skills for the twenty-first century (1996).

Schlesinger (1991) contends that Afrocentricity is used as a method of therapy for African Americans. The use of Afrocentricity will result in the "corruption of history as history". According to Schlesinger, this will result in "self pity and self ghettoization" of African American students. The implementation of Afrocentricity and multiculturalism results in deviation from the original purpose of the American republic, which is to create a common identity among the people of America (1991).

While Schlesinger makes the contention that the common purpose of the American republic was to create a common identity, this has meant for African Americans the loss of self-identity. This loss of self-identity has resulted in self-hatred, which has made African Americans of very little service to their own community, while serving the needs of a Eurocentric value system. Asante (1991) mentions that in most classrooms the center of perspective is white. This undeniably leaves the African American child to feel like a bystander in the classroom (1991).

A good example of this is seen in the work of Kozol in his observation of an elementary classroom:

The children recite the verses with her as she turns the pages of the book. She's not very warm or animated as she does it, but the children are obedient and seem to like the fun of showing that they know the words. The book looks worn and old, as if the teacher's used it many, many years, and it shows no signs of adaptation to the race of children in the school. Mary is white. Old Mother Hubbard is white. Jack is white. Jill is white. Little Jack Horner is white. Mother Goose is white. Only Mother Hubbard's dog is black (Kozol, 1991, p. 45).

Asante (1991) does not see Afrocentricity as an equivalent to Eurocentricity.

While Afrocentricity focuses on an African-centered perspective, it does not contend that Afrocentricity is the sum total of reality. The Afrocentric theory is seen by its scholars (Nobles, 1986; Hillard, 1978; Karenga, 1982; Keto, 1990; & Richards, 1991) as a method to provide every American child with a curriculum that is not comprised of a monoethnic hegemony perspective. The Afrocentric theory has three main foci:

- 1) It questions the imposition of the white supremacist view as universal and / or classical (Asante, 1991).
- 2) It demonstrates the indefensibility of racist theories that assault multiculturalism and pluralism.
- 3) It projects a humanistic and pluralistic viewpoint by articulating Afrocentricity as a valid, non-hegemonic perspective.

Vann (1993) and Kunjufu (1993) demonstrate how the current curriculum has a Eurocentric value system. According to Vann and Kunjufu, the discovery of America by Columbus and the celebration of Thanksgiving both demonstrate the Eurocentric point of view. The Afrocentric, multicultural perspective challenges the notion of the Columbus discovery of America, and asks the question: How do Native people view the celebration of Thanksgiving?

Karenga (1982) views the implementation Black History as a "source of self understanding" comprised of three major categories. The three major categories that describe the need for Black History are 1) Need for identity; 2) A need for understanding of the world and society; and 3) The need for "the measure of people's humanity".

The institution of slavery has affected the mentality of African Americans to the degree of creating what is called "historical amnesia" (Karenga, 1982). Black History serves the purpose of helping African Americans understand themselves by looking at the uniqueness and origin of their history in relation to the development of world history. Black History would encourage African Americans to embrace their personal identity as opposed to negating one's self (Karenga, 1982).

Secondly, Black History serves the purpose of helping African Americans understand where they fit into the global scheme of society (Karenga, 1982). Karenga also sees history as cyclical, which means that the history of peoples and nations have what is called "tides of history". A good understanding of history would help African Americans understand that they will become a productive and free people as the tide of history changes.

Thirdly, Black History debunks the myths that African Americans did not belong to humanity. A relevant history of African Americans exposes the world to the great contributions that African people made to the world (Karenga, 1982).

Perhaps the best statement about the need for Black History is that:

...Black History is a contribution to an indispensable part of the rescue and reconstruction of Black humanity. For history is the substance and mirror of a people's humanity in others eyes as well as in their own eyes. It is then, not only what they have done, but also a reflection of

who they are what they can do, and equally important what they can become as a result of the past which reveals their possibilities (Karenga, 1982, p. 69).

Bernal (1996), in his reply to Lefkowitz believes that "history is fictional," which leaves much open to interpretation. Bernal also believes that professors like Lefkowitz have not painstakingly taken the time to research the assertions made by scholars who study Afrocentrism (1996). It is this misinterpretation of the facts about Black History that has caused much of confusion with regard to Black History.

Proponents of Black History/MCE have argued that a multicultural education helps students develop self-esteem as well as appreciation for cultural diversity (Heard, 1990). Asante (1988) and other African American scholars have argued that Afrocentrism is culturally correct and pedagogically a good practice for African American students. Other reasons for promoting Black History, according to some black scholars, is that it will: (a) increase self-esteem in African Americans, (b) motivate students to learn, and (c) give students alternative attitudes and values (Kershaw, 1989). Perhaps the most important aspect of Black History Month is that it introduces the world to the illustrious past of African Americans (Young, 1980).

Carter G. Woodson, the founder of Black History Month, described in *The Mis-education of the Negro*, many of the present scenarios that negate the essence of Black History Month. In 1926 Woodson, started what was called Negro History Week. This week emerged as a result of Woodson's discontent with the public school's curricula with regards to Black History. Woodson contended that very little was stated of African Americans in the textbooks and when African Americans were mentioned it was in an inferior status (Woodson, 1999). According to Woodson, this

caused African American children to develop a sense of inferiority. Woodson stated, "Even schools for Negroes, then, are places where they must be convinced of their inferiority" (p.2). This "inferiority" of African Americans was demonstrated in the textbooks and classrooms. In essence, the education of African Americans made them of no service to their people. Woodson also stated, "The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and every book he studies" (1999, p. 2). Today African Americans receive very little mention in history books. The true story of African Americans has yet to be told (Loewen, 1995). In a recent visit to a school, the movie *History of the World* was shown. It depicted African Americans as dancers, boom-box carriers, and drug users. Woodson was indeed very prophetic with regard to problems that confront African Americans today.

Woodson mentioned several of the problems that confront African Americans today in terms of education and the implementation of Black History Month. One of the major problems that African Americans are confronted with is the high incarceration of African American males. Woodson clearly describes the reason for such: "As another has well said, to handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is the worst sort of lynching. It kills one's aspirations and dooms him to vagabondage and crime" (Woodson, 1999, p.3). Today, very few schools have implemented a curriculum that would meet Woodson's standards for educating African Americans and as a result we see the overrepresentation of African Americans in the penal system (Green, 1991).

In the initial stages of implementing Black History curriculum, Woodson mentioned many of the present-day debates. Many African Americans and Whites were in disagreement with Woodson's implementation of Black History Month. Opponents of Woodson thought that teaching students Black History would cause a problem between the races. They suggested that such topics should not be taught until students were in college (Woodson, 1999). Woodson contended that students are confronted with the race problem every day they wake up, so why not expose them to the truth. In one of the controversies regarding the speaker at a recent Black History Program in Louisiana, a school board member responded that the program, "would have been more appropriate for college students rather than high school students" (School plans apology for speaker, 1994). The same school board member also responded that, "Parents were upset by an outsider coming in and in their opinion, was trying to divide blacks and whites in this community. I too feel that it is unfortunate that outside forces made an attempt to divide the relationship between blacks and whites" (School plans apology for speaker, 1994). The debate continues as to when to implement Black History and who should be involved. Perhaps the biggest problem facing the implementation of some Black History celebrations is related to what Woodson discussed as those who control the education of African Americans.

African Americans have very little control over the education of themselves and their children. As a result, the attempt to implement African American curricula is often times met with hostility. In Louisiana a principal was fired and two African American teachers were transferred as a result of Black History programs (Personnel

flap sparks debate, 1995; & Teacher says move racially motivated, 1999). In Levy, Louisiana, the principal was fired and the teacher who organized the school's Black History program was transferred as a result of a Black History Program that went against the status quo (1995). The organizers of the program in Levy had invited a speaker from outside of the parish and when the principal refused to transfer the teacher, he was fired (1995). A teacher in Baton Rouge, publicly stated that he disagreed with the cancellation of the schools' Black History Month Program (1999). As result of voicing his opinion about the necessity of the Black History Program he was transferred.

In Milwaukee, a school board member's request to remove Afrocentric curricula drew emotional protest from parents (Scuttle Afrocentric curricula, 1997).

Woodson saw this as a problem in his day:

Negroes have no control over their education and have little voice in their other affairs pertaining thereto. In a few cases Negroes have been chosen as members of public boards of education, and some have been appointed members of private boards, but these Negroes are always such a small minority that they do not figure in the final working out of the educational program. The education of the Negroes, then, the most important thing in the uplift of Negroes, is almost entirely in the hands of those who enslaved them and now segregate them (Woodson, 1999, p. 22).

Ultimately, the education of African Americans has continued to result in the enslavement of their minds (Young, 1980). With very little control and input in the educational arena African Americans have continued to fulfill Woodson's words:

When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him stand here or go yonder. He will find his proper place and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no

back door he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary (Woodson, 1999, p. xiii).

Despite Woodson's effort to change this reality, with his implementation of Negro History Week, many scholars today debate whether the significance of Black History Month has been watered down to mere tokenism.

One of the questions that some African American scholars have posed about Black History Month is stated as follows: Does Black History Month effectively introduce the world to the achievements of African Americans or is it primarily a marketing device for selling books and making African Americans feel good (Franklin, Honre, Cruse, Ballard, & Mitchell, 1998)? In an attempt to explore this question I will examine the opinions of African American scholars.

Some African Americans scholars believe that Black History Month is a time for large corporations to make millions of dollars (Franklin et al., 1998). Corporations such as Phillip Morris, Anheuser-Busch and Coca-Cola have made a token effort to promote Black History in an attempt to increase marketing efforts in the Black community (1998). John Hope Franklin suggests that Black History Month has not moved closer to the ideals expressed by its founder Carter G. Woodson. Instead, it has become commercialized and, in Franklin's words: "The commercialization of the month that provides hucksters with a longer period in which to sell trinkets and souvenirs, corporations a greater opportunity to display their special brand of civic awareness" (1998, p. 88). However, Franklin believes that Black History Month does have a useful purpose.

Other scholars such as Horne, Cruse, Ballard, and Mitchell all feel that Black History serves a useful purpose (1998). These scholars believe that Black History Month provides a number of educational opportunities for people interested in the contributions of African Americans. The following list entails four of the major ideas of these scholars (Horne, Cruse, Ballard, and Mitchell, 1998): 1) A range of opportunity exists nationally as well as internationally for African American history; 2) It has implications for young African American scholars looking to discover something new or inventive; 3) The celebration of Black History Month is having an impact somewhere in the country; and 4) The story of African Americans must be told (1998). Despite the fact that Black History Month has become a period for large corporations to make large profits, it also serves a purpose in the education of people about the history of Africans and African Americans. Black History Month, however, in many of the public school systems has merely become a period to pacify African Americans. The essence of Black History Month has become a way to satisfy the need for diversity, but the exposure of historical facts has been limited. This can be seen in the two public schools that I will discuss.

Recently at Central South High School in Louisiana, students walked out of school in protest of the school's Black History Program. The students expressed their discontent with the content and format of the Black History Program. Students stated that the program was about the accomplishments of African American today (Program sparks protest, 2000). The program had merely mentioned African Americans who were involved in athletics, entertainment, and politics. This, according to students, was not about Black History but about the accomplishment of

many African Americans who didn't make any significant contributions to the African American community (2000). It was at best tokenism, in which token African American leaders were exposed to students. Students expressed their protest with signs saying, "Black History or No History". One student expressed the meaning of the protest by saying, " We want to hear about Black History, about how it was in the past" (2000).

The research and experience of the researcher with regard to Black History programs is similar to what the students expressed. Black History programs, for the most part, include speakers who have no knowledge of the history of African Americans and how that history has allowed the speaker to hold his/her present position. Furthermore, speakers who were active in the struggle for the equality of African Americans are very seldom invited to Black History programs. Most of the speakers, and the focus of Black History programs, have roles that are consistent with the dominant culture (Banks, 1999). As Banks mentions, it is more likely that Sacajawea would be included in the curriculum because she helped whites conquer Native people, whereas Geronimo would be excluded because he resisted White take-over of Native lands (1999). This scenario is all too often played out during Black History Month. It is fine to mention Dr. King, Andrew Young, and more recently Malcolm X as long as there is only mention of concepts and ideas that meet the needs of the dominant culture. For example, it is okay to mention Dr. King's dream, but not to mention his opposition to Vietnam (Nieto, 1992) nor his meeting with Elijah Muhammad. As James Loewen discusses in his book *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, history books are guilty of biased portrayal of historical events and personalities. This

is precisely what Black History has become for the most part, a biased display of historical facts, events, and personalities. The protest by students at Central South High School in Louisiana can best be seen in Banks' model of multicultural reform.

Banks describes four levels to the approaches of curriculum reform: contributions approach, additive approach, transformation approach and social action approach. The contributions approach focuses on heroes, holidays and cultural events. The additive approach focuses on concepts, themes and perspectives. The transformation approach focuses on the structure of the curriculum that enables students to view concepts, issues, events and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. The social action approach allows students to make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them (1999).

Of these four approaches, the first two were used at the *Black History Program* at Central South High School. The program coincided with the dominant culture and focused on heroes, concepts and themes that reflected the bias of the organizers. When the students were not given input in the organization of the *Black History Program* they moved to the transformation approach and social action approach. The students were able to view concepts, issues and themes from their perspective. After this, students took social action to help solve what they saw as a distortion of the meaning and purpose of *Black History*. It is important to note that the superintendent in this case did not get involved, nor did any school board members.

The *Black History program* at Central High School in Levy, Louisiana resulted in the firing of an African American principal and the transfer of an African

American teacher, which ultimately caused the students to walk out of school in protest (Principal fired, 1995; & Teacher transferred, 1995). This coincided with parents and students disrupting the school board meetings, which ultimately led to police action.

Students organized the program at Central High School, unlike the one at Central South High School. The students discussed with their advisor their desire to have a program that included a non-traditional guest speaker. In the selection of the speaker it was agreed upon that the speaker would be of the Islamic faith, which was non-traditional. Added to this was the fact that the speaker examined historical facts and how they pertained to the present status of African Americans. During his presentation the speaker discussed the relationship between alcohol and Native peoples. He then connected this to African American males in relationship to the drug problem. At the end of the program (in a school where students were constantly fighting against each other because of different neighborhoods), the students were in tears and vowed to never fight again. One student stated "In those few hours I learned more than I had been taught in all the years I have been learning history" (Rideau, 1994).

Immediately following the program a group of White teachers were reported to have called the school district to inform them that there would be trouble at the school as a result of the Black History Program. The next day the school was surrounded with school board personnel, sheriff deputies and newspaper reporters. The headline of the local newspaper read, "Muslim Stirs Controversy at the School",

which implied that the speaker had done something to create controversy (School controversy, 1994).

This program seems to have had a more lasting impact on students. The students were able to work from level four of the Banks model, which should be the ultimate goal in the implementation of Black History. It should be noted that in both cases there seems to have been a struggle between those in power and the students, to determine who would control the activities associated with the Black History Program. Students in both situations protested their desire to have a Black History Program that would meet the expectations of its founder Carter G. Woodson.

Overview of Student Protest

Student protest is not a new phenomenon to educational institutions in America. The earliest forms of protest have dated back to 1636 at Harvard, William and Mary in 1698, and Yale in 1701 (Rhoads, 1998). Early protest at Harvard was the result of strict disciplinary policies, and there are accounts of one student who was whipped. At Yale in 1767, students protested the ranking of students by their fathers' social status (Oren, 1985). Both Yale and Harvard students protested the strict rules that prohibited students from playing cards (Rhoads, 1998). Most colleges attempted to socialize students into the accepted norms of the upper class (Rhoads, 1998).

Despite this attempt, college students formed drinking, athletics, and secret societies (Rhoads, 1998). The result of student protest in the early years was that it helped students to develop what is termed "student culture". An example of this can be seen at Harvard where students played an annual football game between the

freshman and sophomores, which became known as Bloody Monday (Rhoads, 1998). When faculty at Harvard attempted to ban the game, students protested, what they thought was an intrusion on student rights.

Harvard sophomores showed their abhorrence of the faculty edict by conducting an elaborate funeral and burial of football. The new freshmen, 136 strong, looked on as the procession marched slowly through town, led by a pair of mourners performing on muffled drums. Behind them were four spade bearers, and six pallbearers carrying a six-foot coffin on their shoulders. The rest of the sophomore class, wearing torn shirts and trousers reminiscent of past battles, followed in full ranks (Smith, 1988, p. 68).

It was this type of student culture development that led to modern day athletics, as the early participants were student volunteers (Rhoads, 1998). Student protest did not only bring about athletics but it also helped in the formation of literary and debate clubs (1998). These early student protests laid the foundation for the Black student protest movement that took place in the 1960's.

Black student protest in the 1960's was a direct result of the civil rights movement (1998). In an assessment of the student protest movement Obear in (Rhoads, 1998) stated:

Evolution of student protest during the decade of the sixties was extremely rapid. Beginning with the inheritance of quietism, students came awake politically to fight segregation and racial injustice in the South. The escalation of the war in Vietnam had the effect of broadening their concern; the resultant draft calls added self-interested motives for political action to the existing idealism. Events at Berkeley showed how activists' techniques could be applied to campus reform. The three strands, race relations, peace and educational reform, became gradually fused together in a movement based largely on the campuses: a movement which has come to be called the New Left (p. 40).

Under the heading "race relations," Obear briefly described the evolution of student protest in relation to the civil rights movement. At the core of the Black student

protest movement in the 1960's was the formation of two organizations: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) (Vella, 1988). These organizations used acts of civil disobedience to engage in protest, with much of their protest taking place in the communities in which they were located (Rhoads, 1998).

Karenga's work on the origins of Black Studies discussed how the student movement made Black Studies an academic discipline in American institutions. The student movement was broken into four parts: 1) Black student roles in the civil rights movement in the South; 2) The student movement at the University of California at Berkley in 1964; 3) General student protest against the war in Vietnam; and 4) The Student protest which led directly to the implementation of Black Studies (Karenga, 1982).

The student movement in the South primarily sought to end segregation and establish social, political, and economic equality for African Americans. This led to the formation of such groups as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The SNCC was successful in organizing thousands of students, both Black and White around issues of equality (Karenga, 1982).

The second aspect of the student movement which led to Black Studies was a result of white students protesting the insensitivity of university officials at the University of California at Berkley in response to the civil rights issues on campus (Karenga, 1982). The University of California at Berkley student movement linked the civil rights movement on campus to larger society.

Thirdly, the student movement against the war in Vietnam began with a new student organization called the Student Democratic Society (SDS). This student organization held a massive Anti-War March on Washington. Leaders of SDS acknowledged the role of the Black student movement in the south and the role Black student activism played in creating a new consciousness and activism (Karenga, 1982). More importantly, the SDS exposed the University of Michigan's attitude about issues of social equality.

Finally, the student movement at San Francisco State College in 1968 led to the establishment of Black Studies programs throughout the nation (Karenga, 1982). In 1968, when San Francisco State College administrators failed to implement a Black Studies proposal submitted by Dr. Nathan Hare, the college erupted with student protest. The student protest resulted in the first Black Studies program in the nation (1982). The power of student protest was a phenomenon that changed many of the policies that discriminated against African Americans. To ascertain the types of student protest and the success of such protests, William Exum gives insight into this phenomenon.

William H. Exum, in *Paradoxes of Protest: Black Student Activism in a White University*, is concerned with the student movement at University College in New York. Exum states that the student protest at University College had real but limited success in achieving lasting changes directly benefiting blacks on and off campus (1985). One of the problems Exum discusses is that as the student protest became more of a collective action, factionalism developed. Without any centralization of authority, the student movement was doomed not to have any long-term effect on the

institution. Exum believes that the black student protest at University College presents an apparent paradox of beneficiaries attacking their benefactors while still needing the institution in order to fulfill their individual aspiration for status and social mobility (1985). Furthermore, African American students did not have the economic resources needed to carry out specific goals that would maintain them independently of support from family or the college (1985). The only resources available to African American students were psychic, social, moral and political.

Exum seems to view African American student protest as an event or movement that is not of continuity.

The movement of Black campus radicalism was short lived and failed to develop into a genuine youth movement.... Its abortive nature resulted in part, because of wide variations in the character of its operation, demands, and objectives...and strategies was confrontation politics directed toward rather specific and particular objectives at particular places and at particular times. Campus radicalism was oriented toward winning battles, but not the war (1985, p. 40).

Exum gives no conclusion on the events that caused student protest. Exum, while critical of the need for student protest and the effects it has had, does not represent all studies relating to student protest. Richard McCormick suggests that student protest can be one of continuity.

On February 24, 1969, when African American students took over Conklin Hall, the main building on the Newark campus of Rutgers University, change was about to take place (McCormick, 1990). African American students at Rutgers University were, like students across the country, demanding equal treatment of African Americans.

The Black student movement that burst forth on White campuses in the mid-1960's represented more than an extension of the older civil rights movement (1990). African American students had departed from the doctrines of the civil rights movement to new strategies that included black unity, Black pride, Black culture, and above all, Black power (1990). Many of the ideologies of African American students had come from the writings and speeches of Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Franz Fanon, Eldridge Cleaver, H. Rap Brown, Maulana Karenga, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seal.

The African American student movement, according to McCormick, brought significant changes to Rutgers University. The most significant being that five years later there were over 2500 Black, full time undergraduates, slightly more than 10 percent of the total enrollment. As a result of student protest there was a 5 percent increase of African Americans being appointed as full-time faculty (1990). In academics, new courses were added to the curriculum. Within a year or two, college faculties approved majors in African American Studies, and in some colleges the field acquired departmental status (1990).

Unlike Exum's study, McCormick states that the African American student protest movement did not end in 1968, but remained a lively force throughout the ensuing decade (1990). The different protest brought about positive results in the final analysis.

Francis Staten's thesis entitled, *Similarities and Differences Between Black and White Protest Demands at The University of California at Berkeley, San Francisco State and Columbia and Cornell 1964-1969*, outlines the effect of student

protest. In this study an examination of the forces that cause protest is discussed. Also discussed is the protest that students used to wage their campaign. Staten's view of student protest is that it was beneficial in bringing change to the colleges that were studied.

Staten says that Black student revolt began with weeding out racism and discrimination. Black student protest however, went further to protest the White oriented curriculum. The protest at San Francisco College became ignited when a part time Black teacher and graduate student at San Francisco State were suspended. George Murray had preached a fiery Black Panther gospel in which he told students to kill all slave masters (Staten, 1972). As a result, a strike was called in which students demanded a revitalized Black Studies Department manned, administered and controlled by the Black Students, faculty and staff of San Francisco State College, and headed by Nathan Hare (1972).

The result of the student protest, according to Staten, was positive for African Americans. In San Francisco, a Black Studies program, with 24 courses leading to a Bachelor's of Art degree was established. At Cornell, African American students were successful in not allowing a gymnasium to be built in a Black community. Black leaders thought that such a building would be an encroachment on the Black community. Furthermore, the students at Cornell made history because it was the first time an American university yielded to African American student demands because of fear and guns (1972).

Melinda Bartley's work on student activism at Southern University reveals the kinds of protest situation students were involved in. She examines the participants

and the consequences of their involvement in student protest at Southern University (1973).

Bartley's study found that the largest number of student protesters at Southern University participated in sit-ins. The second most popular activity was participating in marches. The popularity of the other activities, in order of greater percentages, were: picketing, leading or organizing protest activities, collecting money, freedom rides and wadin-in, etc. (Bartley, 1973). The majority of respondents in Bartley's study were arrested or jailed with the second largest group of participants, being those who were suspended from Southern because of their participation (1973).

The study also indicated that the majority of the participants seemed to have become more politically active as a result of their participation in student protest. Overall, student protest seems to have a positive effect on the participants individually and collectively. In the final analysis, African American student protest has brought significant change to colleges and universities as well as African American communities.

Characteristics and Environment

While student protest has brought about change, one of the important aspects of this study was to examine the experience of student leaders. In order to do this effectively, an examination of the characteristics of student activists as well as environments that may influence this type of behavior will be discussed.

Student activists have been posited to come from middle class families (Kula, 1970). Kula (1970) describes the student activist as one who reacts negatively to

doctrinaire interpretation of events. The student activists prefer to be more creative and not confined to any prescribed parameters. Keniston (1969), in extensive interviews with students who participated in protest against Vietnam, described these activists as seeing themselves as unique individuals. He further explains that these students excelled intellectually as well as politically (Kenniston, 1969). Many of these student activist's envisioned themselves as personally responsible for many of the social evils that existed (Kula, 1969). The rationale for this type of behavior is summed up in Kula's article:

In this situation the opposition of American youth could have a political effect. This opposition is free from ideology or permeated with a deep distrust of all ideology: it is sexual, moral, intellectual, and political rebellion all in one. In this sense it is total, directed against the system as a whole: it is disgust at the affluent society, it the vital need to break the rules of a deceitful and bloody game to stop cooperating any more. If these young people detest the prevailing system of needs and its ever increasing mass of goods, this is because they observe and know how much sacrifice, how much cruelty and stupidity contribute to the reproduction of the system. These young people no longer share the repressive need for the blessings and security of domination-in them perhaps a new consciousness appearing, a new type of person with another instinct for reality, life and happiness (Kula, 1969, p. 75).

It is important to note that student activists, regardless of race, are usually committed to social change (Kula, 1969). Hilliard (1972) noted that student activists showed differences "in self concept, degree of independence, emotional mood, attitude of despair and ego strength". Student activists showed themselves to be more positive on all of the above scales (1972). Hilliard (1972) wanted his study to provide research on Black protest to counter the "often heard public view".

Another important aspect of student activism with regard to protest can be seen in the ecology of the campus. As stated by Keniston 1967 there can be no single factor which helps to explain student activism. Keniston asserts that there is a

combination of factors at work, which include individual, institutional, cultural and historical (1967). Banning and McKinley (1980) have applied six dimensions of the campus environment that may be used to view campus environments during the 1960's.

These six dimensions are:

- Behavioral setting
- Organizational structure
- Personal and behavioral characteristics of inhabitants
- Psychosocial characteristics
- Functional analysis of environments
- Geographical, meteorological, architectural and physical design variables. (Banning & McKinley, 1980).

Banning and McKinley point out a very important aspect with regard to the student protest movement in the 1960's in relation to the weather. They posit that major protests did not take place when the temperature was cold (Banning & McKinley, 1980). This relation is also seen (Berke & Wilson, 1951) in regard to heat and general rebellion. Another important aspect of student activism lies in the concept of behavior setting and environment (Barker, 1968).

According to Barker, environment helps to shape behavior, Barker (1968) believes that activism in the future should be expected to come from places that had prior histories of activism. Since the environment of these campuses has remained unchanged, one should expect similar protest (Barker, 1968).

Demands of Student Activists

To get a proper understanding of student activism on college campuses and high schools, educational policy makers need to know the demands of student

activists. These demands have primarily been focused on two major concepts: 1) Relevant classroom instruction; and 2) Teachers who care.

Kula (1970) concludes that students want a curriculum that is more relevant to prevailing problems that exist in the larger society. The student activist sees the current curriculum as too academic, with very little or no emphasis on current social issues. Keniston (1969) refers to the student activists as being action oriented. This means that students would like to see curriculum that involves them with social issues of the day. The Black student movement for Black Studies is a primary example of the student's desire to have a more relevant curriculum.

Black students saw the implementation of Black Studies as a way to throw off the psychological chains of slavery and develop a sense of self-identity (Smith, 1972). W.E.B. Dubois book *The Souls of Black Folk*, describes one of the problems of Black identity. Dubois states:

One ever feels his twoness- an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body... The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife- this longing to attain self-consciousness manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of White Americanism for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face (Dubois, 1989, p. 5).

This inability to define one's self is a major reason that students demand a curriculum that includes Black History. The development of a self-identity is important for the overall good of the individual (Goodman, 1946).

Clark and Clark (1947), in an observation of African American children in a nursery noted that the majority of the children preferred to play with White dolls. They noted that the African American children thought that the White dolls were nice, while the Black dolls “looked bad” . Goodman (1946) noted that when the African American children were asked to assign houses for their dolls the White dolls lived in wealthy homes and the Black dolls were assigned poor houses. Research done by Morland (1963) concluded that the research on African American children had not changed much. It was research on self-identification that further fueled the push for Black studies.

Johnson (1966) noted that pedagogy impacts the attitudes of students. Johnson observed that when students were taught Black History, this significantly impacted their attitudes about self. African American males were more significantly affected than were female students. They gained more self-confidence and a more positive attitude toward other African Americans. Litcher and Johnson (1969), while studying the effect of a multiethnic course with white elementary school students, noting that all of the students showed more positive attitudes toward African Americans. Young (1972) did a study on the impact of Black Studies on High School students noted that 85 percent of the students thought that Black Studies was very helpful or somewhat helpful in promoting self confidence. Kozol (1972) believes that young people are often preoccupied with how other people view them. The Afrocentric, Multicultural curricula can greatly contribute to the shaping of attitudes about one’s self and others.

Finally, students want teachers who care about them and have high expectations of them. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1967) noted that there was an important relationship between the teacher and student. In their study of rats, they noted that when the teachers observed that some rats were labeled abnormal, teachers had a tendency leave those rats unattended. This contributed to what is known as the self-fulfilling prophecy of the teacher. Smith concludes that teachers who stereotypically view students have a tendency to also contribute the self-fulfilling prophecy of the student. Teachers are vitally important to the achievement of students. As a result, student activists have continued to advocate the need for better teachers (Smith, 1972).

Chapter III A Case Study

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader insight into the school controversy and student protest centered around a Black History Program in a Louisiana school. The chapter is divided into three main parts: 1) Black Student Protest in Louisiana; 2) Controversy at Central High School: The Black History Program, and 3) Student Protest at Central High School. {It should be noted that in section two and three pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the participants.}

The case study approach is considered a bounded system, which means that it is bounded by time and place, "it is the case being studied a program, an event, an activity, or individuals" (Patton, 1990). A case study is used in this particular study with a focus on a Black History Program and the student protest that occurred. It is believed that the case study format will provide the reader with a background of the activities that have shaped the experiences of student activists.

There are multiple sources of information which must be used when doing a case study (Patton, 1990). This study employed the following multiple sources of information, observation, interviews, audio-visuals, newspapers, and public documents.

A very important aspect of the case study is shaping the context of the case (Patton, 1990). The context of a case could be its historical, physical, or social

setting. This study uses for the shaping of the context a historical approach. The history of Black student protest in Louisiana is used to provide a historical chronology of events that have taken place in Louisiana.

Black Student Protest in Louisiana

There were many instances in Louisiana in which Blacks had to protest for equal treatment. It was also common during the late 1960's and early 1970's for Black student protest to center around the desire for more knowledge in Black Studies. Many of these early student protests revealed the racist policies of colleges and schools throughout Louisiana.

At Southern University in New Orleans, students removed the American flag and replaced it with a flag that was black, green, and gold. The students took it a step further by pledging allegiance to the black, green, and gold. The pledge was as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Black Liberation Flag and to the cause for which it stands. Black people together indivisible for liberation, self-defense, self-determination. I am prepared to give my life in its defense (Murray, 1978, p.13).

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, actions such as these were occurring throughout America, particularly in the South. Black students from New York to San Francisco were brandishing guns and demanding courses in Black Studies. Some of the southern Black colleges, were patrolled by the National Guard and on some campuses Black students were shot to death (Fariclough, 1995).

At Southern University, Black student protests resulted in the death of two students, Denver Smith and Leonard Brown (Davis, 1997). Such situations were not

confined to only college campuses; there were several high schools in the state of Louisiana that had Black student protests. At many high schools, student protest was centered on desegregation issues. In 1969, at Alcee Fortier High School in New Orleans, Black students protested when the principal refused to accept the Black students demands for a Black student union. The protest and picketing of the school entrances resulted in the arrest of 80 demonstrators (Britton, 1969).

In Iberia Parish in 1970, a student protest took place similar to that of Alcee Fortier High School in New Orleans. In Iberia Parish, the racial situation was much more violent. On the opening day of school, students from Jennarete High began fighting. Three days later, after a Black girl was expelled for striking a White teacher, Black students left the school and tried to march to their old school which had been down graded to a junior high (Fairclough, 1995). The students were confronted by the police force, resulting in a clash involving rock throwing and tear gas. In 1972, Jennarete High would be the scene of another student protest; this time Black students protested the election of a White homecoming queen. The protest by Black students resulted in 40 Black students being suspended, whereas others were expelled for four years (1995).

Black students at Bogalusa High School also protested the homecoming activities. The controversy began in October 1969 when there were no Black students on the homecoming court. When Blacks walked out of school, Judge Heebe ordered that they should immediately return to school. The controversy soon escalated when a disturbance occurred at a football game, resulting in the expulsion of Black students and creation of more racial tensions. On one occasion, about six hundred students

engaged in a “free for all” during recess; police in riot gear were rushed to the high school campus (Fairclough, 1995).

In Abbeville and Vermillion Parishes, Black students walked out in October of 1971 because of a homecoming dispute. This conflict resulted in a riot two months later. One of the more violent student protests took place in 1974 at Destraham High School in St. Charles Parish, in 1974 when a Black student was arrested and convicted of killing a White student (Fairclough, 1995). Many of the racial problems in public schools were due to the fact that many of the Black teachers were regarded as incompetent. The National Teachers Examination is one of the tools used to replace Black teachers within the educational system; a Black lawyer stated:

The Whites have the power. The power to call Black teachers what they want to call them. And in a lot of cases they call them incompetent. Now I'm not saying that 100 percent of Black teachers who come through my office are competent. But it sure is strange that I haven't heard of any White teachers displaced because of incompetence (1995, p.446).

Between 1966 and 1971, the number of White teachers employed in public schools increased to over 4,000, while the number of Black teachers increased to only 650 (1995). Added to this racial problem in the public school system was that during the period of 1966 and 1971 there was a large decline in Black principals, while the number of White principals increased (Butler, 1974).

In St. Landry Parish in the spring of 1987, one of the largest African American student protests occurred in the state of Louisiana. This protest took place as a result of the school board's decision to consolidate the parishes predominantly African American high schools. The building sites of the new schools were approved in areas where the majority of the residents were White. Property was being donated

by a Black organization to keep the school in the African American neighborhood, however the board refused to accept the offer of \$1 per acre (Daily World, 1987). The school board decided to purchase land in the Prarie Rhonde area for \$100,000 per acre (1987). This decision outraged the Black communities, since the board rejected the forty-acre site that was offered by an African American organization in Lafayette (1987). Individuals in the African American communities felt this action showed the blatant racism of many of its school board members (1987).

The protest of the school board action would begin with the students at Plaisance High School. Organization of the student protest took place three days in advance with several student leaders meeting at the home of a school teacher (Pitre, personal experience, 1987). The students at this meeting met with community leaders and decided what type of strategy should be planned to protest the school board's decision (1987). On Friday morning, the student protest began when students walked out of class. Many of the students expressed their disgust with the school board's decision by expressing concern about the schools heritage, noting that their parents attended classes there also. Despite having little material to work with the students said they had one of the best schools in the parish (Protest school sites, 1987).

On March 24, 1987, Luther Hill, the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) president in the Palmetto area said, "The St. Landry school board did something we've been trying to do for the last 15 years. You've awakened us from our sleep" (Site vote protested, 1987). Over 1000 African Americans discussed the school consolidation issue at the Holy Ghost Catholic Church. With such an enormous crowd, there were people standing on the outside of the church, resulting in the

placement of speakers on the outside. One of the speakers suggested that a boycott of local businesses as well as the forcing resignation of some school board members was the method to employ. While the meeting was taking place, several Central South Police Department cars arrived at Holy Ghost Catholic Church. Father McKnight (Priest of Holy Ghost Catholic Church) and Joshua Pitre (School Board Member), were confronted by policemen who explained that there was a bomb threat and the bomb would go off in 15 minutes (Pitre, J. personal communication, June 1997). Despite the threat of a bomb the meeting was a success as African Americans remained steadfast in their quest for justice. At this meeting the St. Landry Parish protest received national attention when Dan Rather of CBS aired the meeting on his 5:30 show.

On March 25, 1987, over 50 protesters met with workers at the school board. Among those protesting were Willie Pitre, a local pastor, Samson Robinson, a parent, and Luther Hill, president of the Palmetto PTO. Hill stated that one of the primary goals would be the use of an economic boycott (Board office picketed, 25 March 1987). Economic measures would come later as the next major form of protest resulted when African American teachers held a sick-out. This tactic, along with student protest, on March 26, 1987, forced many of the schools to close down. In Plaisance, the police were dispatched when students threatened to burn the building. At Central South High School, fifteen teachers did not show up for work. In Lawtell six teachers failed to show up (Teachers stage sickout, 26 March 1987).

The African American student protest movement became confrontational when protesters entered the St. Landry school board office. Thirty-four

demonstrators were arrested when they took over the board's office for several hours (Protesters enter office, 27 March 1987). State troopers and sheriff deputies were called to the scene when protesters refused to leave. Palmetto teacher Augusta Rideau, one of the demonstrators, read a list of demands the African American community desired. Among the demands she stated that the two new parish high schools should be located in the predominantly Black communities of Plaisance and Grand Couteau; and that Black builders should receive half the school construction business, and Black educators half the administrative positions in the school system (Protesters enter office, 1987). There were protesters inside as well as outside the school board office. Meanwhile state troopers were positioned on the Creswell exit waiting for orders to move in (1987). When protesters were asked to leave and they refused, state troopers moved in, many of the protesters were hit with batons (1987).

Policemen began dragging and kicking protesters, several of whom were injured during the attempt to remove them from the school board's entrances. In the parking lot, a school board worker hit James Leblanc as he attempted to leave the scene. A woman identified as Frances Thibodeaux was injured by police and was taken to the Central South General Hospital (1987). Vernon White, one of those arrested for entering the school board building, was injured when he was pushed from behind. As White lay on the ground in obvious pain, many protesters began shouting at the policemen. Among the people arrested was Father McKnight who was later charged with enticing juveniles to violate the law and obstructing the entrance to a public building (1987). According to policemen, McKnight was on a bullhorn ordering protesters to resist arrest (1987). McKnight, in his autobiography *Whistling*

in the Wind, stated that the police had intended to arrest him before they arrived at the school board. According to McKnight, a young man told him that he had been monitoring the State Police radio and had heard that the latter were going to arrest him (Moore, 1985). McKnight stated:

When the officer spotted me he cried out "There's McKnight!" He lunged toward me but was stopped by their commander. Soon afterwards they started to remove those blocking the entrance, and the turmoil erupted. I got on the bullhorn and told the crowd to stay calm. Immediately the commander of the state police issued the order to arrest him. I was roughly seized by several officers, who knocked the bullhorn out of my hands and threw me against the car. My arms were pulled behind my back and handcuffed. I was then taken to the back seat of a city police car with two others. We sat squeezed in close quarters for quite some time (1985, p. 70).

One of the thirty-four people arrested was the athletic director at Plaisance High School, Murphy Guillory. He explained his reason for protesting by saying, "I was protesting where the school board voted to put the school. We're not protesting them closing our school down. I can't see why the school board wants to put a school in mud and water and leave a first class place they could have had for one dollar an acre" (Plaisance coach among group arrest, 27 March 1987).

In a final attempt to get justice, more than 500 African American protesters held a march from Holy Ghost Catholic Church to the school board, then back to the Holy Ghost Catholic Church behind a coffin symbolizing their determination to bury racism. McKnight, according to the White leadership, was disrupting the racial harmony that was perceived to exist. In a letter to father McKnight from Bishop Harry Flynn expressed his opinion to Father McKnight about the student protest.

No matter how worthy the cause, the Church decries and must speak out against any demonstration, speech or activity which may be considered inflammatory or which may promote or provoke violence.

The involvement of young people in activities which may be harmful to them or to others cannot be condoned (Moore, 1985).

Eventually the St. Landry school board made some concessions to the African American community. The predominantly African American high schools had African American principals appointed as well as one African American assistant principal at all of the schools. In those areas where African Americans were extremely poor and had very little representation, the school board refused to provide equal services to such schools. The primary lack of service was reflected in the curriculum and transportation of students who participated in extra-curricular activities.

The next major controversy in Louisiana occurred as the result of a Black History Program. The events that followed the Black History Program resulted in a student protest that made state news for several days.

Controversy at Central High School: The Black History Program

Background

Central High School is located in the northeastern part of Laurel Parish, in Levy, Louisiana, which is located about 50 miles from Alexandria, Louisiana. It is approximately 45 miles from the State Capital in Baton Rouge. In the early years of the civil rights movement in America, Levy, Louisiana served as one of the first examples of what could take place when African Americans united. "In 1950, one evening in the sweltering heat of June, Blacks gathered in a small church in the tiny hamlet of Levy, Louisiana to hear a distinguished guest speaker talk to them about Democracy" (Fairclough, 1995). During this meeting, Alvin Jones "a former school

teacher, and executive secretary of the New Orleans Urban League” (1995), reminded Blacks that they did not have a single person registered to vote in Laurel Parish.

When Jones attempted to get people to register to vote, by going to the courthouse in Central South, he was assaulted by a group of Whites. Jones stated, “I was slugged with the butt of a gun and pounded with a pair of brass knuckles (1995).” During this confrontation, Jones head was punctured with some type of object. “They left a hole in my head”, Jones recounted (1995). The researcher had the opportunity to meet with an individual who brought Jones to a local physician. A person who wished to remain anonymous stated it looked like someone had tried to scalp Jones skull. Eighteen months later Jones died from what could've been from the blow that he suffered.

Laurel Parish had been regarded by many as one of the worst places for Blacks to reside in. It was an area in which Whites were sternly against equality for Blacks. “A local priest told Black civil rights lawyer A.P Tureaud that Whites in Laurel Parish were immovably opposed to Black voting” (1995). Forty-five years later. Levy would stimulate the consciousness of African Americans throughout the Acadiana area.

History of Central High School

In 1989 it was approved by the Laurel Parish School Board that a consolidated school be placed in Levy, Louisiana. The consolidated school opened in 1990 and was comprised of students that formerly attended Walker, Carter, Wheatley and Dunbar High School (Morning Advocate, 1995). With the combination of different

schools attending Central, the first years were marked with extensive fighting among students.

In 1991, Mervyn Anderson was appointed principal at the newly created school. Several measures were taken by Mr. Anderson to curtail many of the problems that confronted the school. In the initial stages, Mr. Anderson began by looking for young teachers who could impact the students in a positive manner. In the fall of 1992, George Herbert, a student teacher from Southern University, was assigned to student teach at Central High School. Herbert's assignment was to teach Free Enterprise and American History under the supervision of Huey Kinister. The first week of Herbert's assignment was to observe Mr. Kinister's classes.

Herbert would state that his first days at Central were a learning experience. During this time he noticed the mediocre concern of the students toward learning history. In particular, the students did not have any knowledge of the accomplishments of Black people (Herbert, 1992). The following days would find Herbert teaching the class. Many times he would wonder how he would fair as a teacher. In the beginning Herbert was very nervous what he would say. He wondered how he would keep the students involved for an entire hour. He also felt kind of strange, because many of the students were not much younger than he was (1992). This would eventually change as time passed. However, Herbert was confronted with some of the problems of the school when a group of students were discussing their plans to fight at the Friday night football game. After overhearing this plan, Herbert did not report it to the principal because he thought that would have been an improper thing to do. Instead, he lectured on the historical subjects how ignorance leads to

people of the same condition fighting one against the other (1992). As time progressed the students at Central were introduced to a new way of learning history.

After George Herbert's semester of student teaching was up, he continued to work with the students. Although the first two years of consolidation marked a period of poor test results for students at Central, when the 1991-92 school year was over Central students showed a tremendous improvement in their exit exam scores. During this same year, the Central High school history department put together its first student council. It was a year in which the Booster Club was predominantly White: even though the school consisted of over ninety percent African American students. At the close of the 1991-92 school year, Central had begun the process of developing a school that would rank among the best in Laurel Parish.

The school year of 1992 found Central with at least two new teachers. Among those teachers was Mr. George Herbert, who had just recently graduated from Southern University. It was Mr. Anderson's idea to hire Mr. Herbert since he had done such a tremendous job in bringing up the exit exam scores at the school the previous year.

During the first month of Mr. Herbert's stay at Central, he was appointed as assistant football coach. His primary job was to coach the eighth grade sports. Since Central had just begun its football program, the school was not very good in that sport. The first two years had witnessed the school suffer two years of not winning a single game on the junior high level.

Not only was the new school plagued with athletic problems, but it was also plagued with academic problems. The list of academic problems included low grades

on report cards and very little participation in parish contests. These contests involved the Social Studies Fair, the Science Fair and other academic activities.

In his first day in the classroom, Mr. Herbert laid down the class rules. Herbert knew exactly what he intended to get out of his students. He was excited because Central was a majority Black school. It also provided an opportunity for him to develop students who were in some people's eyes un-redeemable and unworthy of any type of valuable education (1992). One of the student's recalled her first experience in Mr. Herbert's class, " I hated it, I was very scared, because he seemed mean (Hollier, personal interview, April 1997)." She recalls that Mr. Herbert said, "This is not going to be like the rest of your classes where you sit down and do nothing, you're going to work. And if you don't want to work you get your bag and get your scheduled changed. When he said that I knew I would have to get out of that class" (1997). Herbert's philosophy of no nonsense would eventually be viewed as the key to establishing a strong educational foundation for many of his students.

On the football field Central's eighth grade team would lose only two games during the 1992 season. This marked a dramatic turn around for the junior high program because they had not won a game in the previous years. It was difficult at first, because on his first day of observing the players he noticed that their pants were sagging. It was as though they were trying to be cool. He told them it was going to be " my way or the highway". His philosophy was winning is not everything it is the only thing (Herbert, 1992). This philosophy was no doubt valuable, as it resulted in positive results. Herbert, because of his athletic accomplishments, would be asked to direct Central High School's Black History Program.

Black History Program

The first controversy at Central High occurred as the result of a Black History Program in February of 1993. This program received *negative criticisms* because it was poorly planned. While the guest speaker was in the middle of his lecture, the bell sounded to dismiss students from school. Instead of the students sitting and waiting for further instructions, they walked out of the auditorium, leaving the guest speaker standing at the podium. Mr. Anderson received criticism for his appointment of those individuals in charge of the Black History Program.

The following school year Mr. Anderson appointed George Herbert to be in charge of putting the Black History Program together. Initially, he didn't know what to do because he had never organized a Black History Program (Herbert, 1992). Immediately after Mr. Anderson appointed Herbert to be in charge of the Black History Program, Herbert began consulting students and teachers about the mistakes made in the previous program. Finally it was decided that the Student Council along with Mr. Herbert would find a guest speaker that would be different from traditional guest speakers. The decision was made to get a speaker from the Nation of Islam.

Herbert remarked about the decision, "Initially we knew nothing about the Nation of Islam, it was probably Malcolm X who all of us knew more about" (Herbert, 1992). In the early part of January, Alfred Muhammad was asked to be the guest speaker at this event. Once he accepted the invitation, the program was well on its way to being a success. The day before the program Mr. Herbert had assigned a group of young men to help keep order during the program. Many of these young

men were considered the trouble-makers in the school. On the day of the program, only a few people knew who the speaker would be. When Alfred Muhammad arrived on the campus, he was met by at least twenty-five young men who were dressed in suits and ties. The majority of the faculty was shocked by the simple fact that these young men were dressed up. Muhammad's lecture would cause the first major controversy at Central High School.

Controversy After Black History Program

Immediately following Muhammad's lecture the controversy would began. A group of White teachers were reported to have called the school board and inform them of fighting among students, because of the Black History Program. The next day the school was surrounded with school board personnel, sheriff deputies and newspaper reporters. "A contingent of school board administrators and a cadre of deputies, including Laura Bemmini, chief criminal deputy with Laurel Parish Sheriff's Office were patrolling the halls at Central" (Muslim stirs controversy, 1994). On February 25, 1994 the Daily News Advertiser front page column read, "Muslim stirs controversy at High School". While this article seems to give the idea that the guest speaker was the primary reason for the controversy, this was not true. The controversy began when a few White teachers became upset about the content of Mr. Muhammad's speech. Many of the students expressed their feelings about Mr. Muhammad and the program by saying, "I think the program was actually wonderful," said Hope Lagrange, Student Council President at Central who is African American. "He did not come up with any off the wall stuff... He had done his

research." A White student who was present discussed his interpretation of the lecture by saying, "He put down on the Lord, It was very insulting ...I don't blame nobody for this, just the man for what he said" (1994). This statement was made by Charles Lester a student at Central. According to Lester, several teachers walked out during the assembly and he and his friend were also tempted to do the same thing. "He just put down on all the religions", said James Poterman, Lester's friend who was also waiting to leave school. "When he started to put down on religion, Charles and I looked at each other and said we are about to walk out" (1994).

The African American students, on the other hand, voiced their opinion about the situation. At least three students who voiced their views on the situation stated, "The man just spoke the truth," said Stephanie Wilhite, a 17- year-old Black student. "He said he could prove it and he gave names, dates, and times when it all began. I think it was a misunderstanding on the part of White students.... He didn't just talk about just White people." While some of the White students said the speech was offensive, Shonta Callister, a Black student, stated, "He really didn't say nothing to offend them. ... I think they just want to complicate the whole situation." According to some of the Black students, White students in Laurel Parish public schools have a tendency to check out before the Program. " Last year for Black History Month, just before the speaker got here, all the White students checked out of school" (1994).

At Central West High School a similar incident was reported a few days after the controversy at Central. The headline of the Daily News Advertiser newspaper read "Central West Students Protest". This time Black students walked out because of the lack of respect that White students have for Black History. Black

students Vince Spocke, student body president and Shamil Spurlock, parliamentarian for the senior class, were leading the student movement. Spocke said they felt they were being disrespected by White students' who did not attend the Black History Program (Central West students protest, 1994). The principal at Central West acknowledged the fact that "it is common for White students not to attend Black History assemblies" (1994). Despite such problems the Laurel School Board asked the principal at Central to make an apology for the remarks of Mr. Muhammad.

On February 27, 1997, the Daily News Advertiser's front page read "School Plans Apology for Speaker." The paper stated that an apology would be made on Monday. The principal was being asked to make an apology by the school board personnel, but in particular by school board member Lori Geege. Geege would say, "I talked to the principal and he told me there would be an investigation and a public apology would be made to the students and the public" (Plans apology, 1994). Several Black students and parents were upset over the fact that the principal would apologize for the truth. Because he was not present and an investigation into the matter had not been completed seemed to suggest that pleasing the White community was more important than accepting the truth (Pios, personal communication, 1997).

Many of the White parents were reacting to the actions of a few teachers who left the program. One White parent stated that her child came home upset about the program. The parent stated, "What was bad was that the Black teachers cheered him on. We have to get along at this school. We don't want racial problems in our school. It is just causing trouble" (Plans apology, 1994). School board member Lori Geege responded said, "Parents were upset by an outsider coming in and in their opinion,

was trying to divide the Whites and Blacks in District 5. ...There is great respect between Blacks and Whites in this community. I too feel that it is unfortunate that outside forces made an attempt to destroy the relationship between Blacks and Whites" (1994). Geege stated, "this type of Black History Program, which was organized by the Student Council and teacher advisor George Herbert, would have been more appropriate for college students rather than high schoolers" (1994).

In response to the White community's statements, the Black community responded by forming a group called Concerned Parents. The chairperson of the organization was Kathy Pios. In an attempt to get to the source of the controversy, the organization asked for the resignation of all those teachers that walked out of the program. The resignation of the principal was also requested because of the apology that he made without having full knowledge of what took place.

Teacher-Student Confrontation

The controversy escalated even more when a Black student and one of the White teachers who stirred the controversy got into a fight. The Daily News Advertiser printed on its front page on March 22, 1994, "Central Teacher Attacked by Student." Anthony Wofford, the teacher who was supposedly, attacked stated, "I was on lunch duty recess, and there were some students hitting or kicking one of the doors. I walked over to investigate and made a general statement, not to anyone specifically, that you need to stop kicking the door or you are going to break it (Teacher attacked, 1994). Wofford would later hear another strike on the door. This time Wofford would approach the crowd again but with particular emphasis being

placed on one particular student, Toni Green. Wofford would state about Green, "He walked off like I wasn't even speaking to him. At that point, I said I was going to have to write him up for disrespect" (1994). According to Wofford, Green braced up to him and stated, "Did you see me kick the door." Immediately following this incident Wofford requested that the administration remove Green from the campus.

Later in the day the actual confrontation between Green and Wofford would take place. Wofford stated that he heard the student say, "If he is a man he will come out" (1994). Wofford also stated that when he did step out of the classroom the assault began. "As soon as I stepped out into the hall to take the duty post, he grabbed me by the arm and threw me on the floor and I just went limp" (1994).

Wofford went to the Central South General Hospital after the incident. The Laurel Parish Sheriff's Office conducted an investigation into the incident to find out what actually took place. "We are waiting for Mr. Wofford to come in and give the complete details, said Laura Bemmini, chief criminal deputy for the Sheriff's Department. We really don't know what happened at this point" (1994).

While Wofford expressed his view on the incident, some students who were present stated that Wofford incited the attack by making comments about anyone who seemed to agree with the speaker of the Black History Program. Wofford would verify that the real reason behind the incident was his disgust over the Black History Program. "According to Wofford, ever since the speech at the Black History Program last month, he has felt animosity from Black faculty and students at Central" (1994). Wofford also made the following comments to his students, "I walked out of the assembly because I found it very insulting. I told the students what I thought about it

and I apologized to the Black students...because they had to listen to another African-American talk like that" (1994). One student, reported in her, opinion that Wofford was at the door saying something to Green. "Then Green ran up to Wofford and grabbed him by the collar, from the back, and snatched him and threw him to the other side of the hall. It seemed as though the air was knocked out of Wofford and as he hit the wall, Wofford uttered , "My words", and then started to slide down the wall. Then Green came up and snatched him by his tie, then he slapped his glasses off his face and they went flying down the hall" (Hollier, personal communication, May 1997). According to this same source. Wofford would use derogatory names toward Black students such a "Jiggaboo, big lip porch monkeys, shine, jungle bunny's and mammys." Lashaya Green, the first cousin of Toni Green, stated that she heard Wofford use derogatory statements when talking to one African American student in particular. "He would be funny with Shawn and use names with her, in a joking manner" (1997). "We could tell it was a difference between the way he treated the Black and White students. White students could call him by his first name" (Green, personal communication, 30 May 1997) Green would further state that when she asked her cousin why he had the confrontation with Wofford, indicated that, "Chuck (Green) told her that Wofford called him a nigger" (Green, Personal communication, 30 May 1997). As a result of the incident between Toni Green and Anthony Wofford, the Concerned Parents organization would ask for the removal of the principal and two teachers.

Efforts to Remove Teachers

On March 31, 1994, the front page of the Daily News Advertiser read "School Troubles: Parent Wants to Oust Principal, 2 Teachers." Kathy Pios would state that the reasons for the removal of the principal Mervyn Anderson was that, "Mr. Anderson we are asking him to resign because he is not treating things happening over here fairly.... He is not standing up for what is right." (School troubles, 31 March 1994). Pios would also state that they were asking two teachers at the school to resign. "We are asking the two teachers to resign because they are racist. It has happened before and it just got bad after the Black History Program" (1994). The two teachers who were asked to resign were Anthony Wofford and Elaine Reed. Many of the parents were extremely upset over the fact that Toni Green was expelled from school despite racial slurs made by Wofford. "According to those parents, the student was provoked by racial slurs made by the teacher" (1994).

In an effort to remove those teachers, the Concerned Parents Organization wrote a letter to the Laurel School Board. This letter was dated April 5, 1994, which expressed the major concerns for the removal of Wofford and Reed:

Daily we are asked to lead our children in choosing the path to be educated, corrected and accept adult guidance and leadership. Each morning we coax, praise, and pray that our children will enter the realm of learning in their classrooms, hoping they will be productive for that day and prepare themselves to be better people for the future. However, in the past few months we begun to question choices of leadership when a simple Black History Program was labeled as not beneficial because a chosen few unintelligent people chose to leave the audience, not accepting historical facts and comparisons for their true value. Can we change history? In life we have learned we must study history for the sake of not repeating its mistakes. The reign of Hitler, the bombing of Hiroshima, the bondage of slavery are some of the

cruel events of history. Why not tell our children Black and White the actualities of reality.

Racism was and is the basis used in past historical events that caused races to be intimidated and deprived of human dignity. Why should we repeat history that is destructive to mankind. There are a chosen few who have failed to rise above the level of making differences and continue to intimidate students by using derogatory terms we feel should not exist in any part of our educational system. If our instructors begin to use separatism and racism in identification and procedures in the classroom at Central as Mr. Wofford and Mrs. Reed have, we feel this should not and will not be the accepted norm.

We feel that due the severity of their action and behavior, we demand their immediate voluntary resignation as instructor at Central High School. Should they elect not to voluntarily resign, then we are demanding that the school board immediately remove them before their contagious racism infect other employees and most importantly our children. We sincerely suggest if any other educator or member of the system has chosen to be a negative force in the learning process, he or she need to take hold of the actual purpose of their profession and what it entails more study of the ramification of the Constitution.... All men are created equal, etc..

With best wishes together we can transform our bitter and ugly pass into a future where our ideas of our constitution would be made a reality for all (Pios & Herbert, letter to school board, 5 April 1994).

With pressure mounting and the situation becoming intensified there was a meeting among the ministers of the community. In the meeting, Wofford's, Minister, Mr. May, suggested that Wofford would leave Central if he could get Herbert- suggesting that Wofford would leave only if Herbert was removed (Fiener, personal communication, June 1997).

The NAACP supported the parents in this effort to remove Wofford and Reed. Several of the officials from the NAACP were present at the Black History Program. The president of the Laurel Parish NAACP, Luther Hillstockstock, expressed his feelings about the situation by saying, "The system is racist for allowing those type of things to happen. ...We met with the superintendent last year

about White teachers leading White students out of those programs” (Oust teacher, 1994). White teachers leading students out of Black History Programs have no doubt took place before Central's Program. Hillstock also stated that the Laurel School Board had been approached about implementing a policy that would deter this type of behavior. "We approached the superintendent a week prior to the assembly and asked that a policy be established,"(1994).

The battle over the removal of these two teachers was successful Wofford took a leave and Reed was transferred to Central East. The controversy took another turn, as it turned out to be a “war of the pen”. Both sides began writing newspaper editorials describing their feelings about the situation that occurred at Central. There were four letters detailing attitudes and beliefs about the controversy.

Letter to Editor

In one letter written by a student, entitled “Another View on Central”, the student expressed a positive attitude about the entire Central controversy. The student stated that this program did not divide the communities. She went on to say that the communities were never united, they only tolerated each other. "As far as separating the two communities, we were never united, totally, we simply tolerate each other. The only thing that will completely sever the ties between the Black and White communities is a certain group of people who continue to pursue this issue in a negative way." (Green, 1994). In explaining the value of the Black History Program, Green stated, "I would also like to thank Mr. George Herbert for bringing Brother Muhammad to Central. In those few hours I learned more than I had been taught in

all the years I have been learning about history”(1994) If this is true then it would serve community leaders well to investigate what is being taught in the public schools of Laurel Parish.

The second letter to the editor would take a significant twist as the athletic director was implicated as one of the teachers that walked out of the program. In this letter to the editor, Richard P. Stelly discussed how many of the teachers at Central were racist and that with such attitudes they should work in schools like ABW and Belmont.

We have some racist teachers in our public schools, those who send their children to private schools because a Black teacher isn't good enough to teach their children, but they teach ours. Well, let those teachers go to A.B.W., Belmont and teach at those schools. There they don't have to worry about a Black History Program.(Call for unity, 22 April 1994).

In the second part of the letter Stelly pointed out that the athletic director walked out of the Black History Program. He then revealed an incident in which the athletic director allowed his players to play in a game in which they were called racial epithets. Instead of pulling his players and walking off the field the athletic director let his players continue to play. If he could bear such racial epithets being called to his players, why couldn't he accept the cold hearted truth (1994).

Now to close out this matter, head coach Jack Fiener also walked out of the program. I recall last fall he took his football team to Buckeye High School, which is all White. After one of their players got injured tackling a CHS player, bedlam broke loose. His player had to listen to racial slurs and fight the rest of the game. There were fans for Buckeye trying to get in the fight and all, and this, I must say, had great chances of turning into a riot. Did Coach Fiener walk off the field with his players? Did he ask for an apology from the coach or principal from Buckeye?

Was this matter reported to LHSAA? No, it just blew over and the only thing we saw was CHS defeat Buckeye. (1994)

In a letter defending Coach Jack Fiener it was stated that Coach Fiener had the right to leave a program that he did not like. It went further to state that Coach Jack cares about his players. "Coach Fiener cares about his players. What would he have accomplished by taking his players off the field but depriving them of their first district win"(Writers defend coach, 1994). Dave Womack, who was one of the better players in the state, received a late scholarship because George Herbert took time to promote Johnson's talent to several colleges.

In defense of himself, Coach Jack stated he walked out of the program because he had a prior commitment. "I, along with an assistant left the assembly early because of a previously scheduled commitment and meeting with coaches from Central South Catholic concerning a basketball game as it pertained to the officials, schedule, etc." (Coach set record straight, 24 August 1994). This may have been a valid reason for coach Fiener leaving the program, however, his actions still warranted questioning, since White teachers have been known to lead White students out of Black History Programs. The controversy rose to another level when the principal of Central was fired on August 10, 1995.

Student Protest at Central High School: After School Board Changes Personnel

Principal Hearing

On August 10, 1995, a special meeting was held at the Laurel School Board to decide whether to renew the contract of Central's Mervyn Anderson. Mervyn

Anderson was charged with violating 10 of the Laurel School District School Board Policies. Anderson stated that many of the charges were racially motivated. The basis of one of the charges against Anderson was that he did not act properly after the school's Black History Program. The Superintendent Raymond Fiener told Anderson that George Herbert should be transferred from his position (Anderson, 1997).

The meeting began with both sides giving opening statements and presenting the witnesses they would call. One of the charges levied against Anderson was that he failed to attend a scheduled program on February 26, 1993, and proper respect was not given to the assembly presenter (Laurel School District Parish official proceeding, 1995). This program in 1993 resulted in students leaving because the bell sounded to dismiss students for the day. Immediately following the program there were no school board personnel at the school to investigate why students left the speaker standing. It was dismissed as just bad timing. This charge was upheld and Anderson was found liable.

Another charge levied against Anderson was that his failure to keep staffing appointments created difficulty for those involved in the staffing procedure. In his defense of this charge, Jacqueline Jones testified that she stopped Anderson as he was leaving the campus to inform him that a student was coming to the campus with a gun to kill her son (Central Principal Fired, 1995). This was one of the three charges that Anderson was cleared. The seven charges were as follows:

Charge 1 While employed by the Laurel Parish School Board, and while in the course scope of employment as principal of Central High School, you violated the Laurel Parish bookkeeping policies.

Charge 3 On or about November 30, 1992 while employed by

the St, Landry Parish School Board, and while in the course and scope of your employment, an internal audit of the books of Central High School revealed books not in balance and internal control problems. Deficiencies were found in receipts disbursements, fund raisers and athletic gate proceeds.

Charge 4 On February 26, 1993 while employed by the St, Landry Parish School Board, you failed to attend a scheduled assembly program.

Charge 5 On or about August 10, 1994 while employed by the Laurel Parish School board you neglected instruction from Mr. Drew Diaz, Assistant Superintendent, to send a faculty representative to a workshop to learn of anew program to be presented to all schools. By your school not having representation at this workshop, special arrangement had to be made to provide the information on grade level Teaching Kits to all faculty members, creating a burden on the school system as well as the local personnel for the American Cancer Society.

Charge 6 On August 1, 1994 you failed to remit payment for Central High School's athletic insurance. Notice was sent to you January 3, 1995 by Mr. Rado, Supervisor, that as of that date the insurance payment still was not made.

Charge 9 You were notified after an audit of your 1994-95 school records, that were policy violations and /or irregularities of 15 cumulative records and 9 teacher grade books.

Charge 10 On or about May 19, 1994 and May 11, 1995. The 1994 evaluation showed lack of support for board policy, and the need to attend all school activities. The rating scale showed needs improvement. The 1995 evaluation also showed lack of support of board policy, and rating scale showed needs improvement. The total points and average decreased from 1994 to 95 (Official proceedings, 1995).

Of the charges levied against Anderson none mentioned the controversy surrounding the Black History Program in February 24, 1994. This was probably

done purposely because the real reason behind Anderson's dismissal was the fact that the school board was under the order of Judge Harriet to reinstate Raymond Duhoss back to Central South High School. Duhoss, a Black principal at Central South High School, was fired from his position.

Before Anderson was fired, the school board hired Duhoss as principal at Central South High School. This caused Central South High to have two principals. The intention of the school board was to follow the order from the judge that stated that Duhoss had to be reinstated to Central South High School. However, the judge did not say that Duhoss had to stay at Central South an entire year. The board seized upon this opportunity and later transferred Duhoss to Central High School. Duhoss would state that the transfer was not anything he asked for and said his lawyer felt the school board was not in compliance with the ruling that said he had to be reinstated at Central South High School (Duhoss named, 1995).

Principal Fired

In the final analysis, Anderson was fired from his job as principal of Central High School. The board voted 8-4 not to renew Anderson's contract. Board member Lori Geege who is the representative of Central District, voted to have Anderson removed.

Geege also made the motion to have Anderson dismissed. Mervyn Anderson stated that Lori Geege told him that she would support him if he had all his document together (Anderson, personal communication, June 1997). Prior to Anderson being

selected as principal he had campaigned for Geege. Anderson would say, that he didn't know what he did to get out of Geege's favor (Principal fired, 1995).

Football Player Walkout

Immediately following the board's decision to fire Mervyn Anderson, football players boycotted the first days of practice. On August 14 and 15, the Daily News Advertiser ran articles discussing the athletic walkout by several of the Central football players.

It wasn't until about August 20, 1995 that the players began to return to practice. One of the organizers of the boycott, Kathy Pios, stated that in the four years that Jack Feiner had been here, no scholarships have been given out. She would further state that the players were talented enough to receive scholarships (CHS boycott ends, 1995). Jack Feiner stated that many of his players are talented; however, they are not able pass the ACT, and some of them don't have the grades (1995). Pios countered by saying "A good coach looks out for his kid and makes sure they take the ACT. I asked Jack Feiner if he knew they could take the ACT in the ninth grade and he said he didn't know that" (Pios, personal communication, June 25,1997).

There was an article in the Daily News Advertiser which stated "Coach Walks Miles for Dubois. " In this article it outlined how Herbert had received a scholarship for Herbert Dubois. This article showed the incompetency of Jack Feiner in his effort to receive football scholarships. It is believed that Fiener contacted Superintendent

Ryan Fiener and athletic supervisor James Rado, and he complained that Herbert was behind the football player walkout.

Transfer of Teacher

In a later school board meeting on August 17, 1995, Herbert was transferred to Central South High School. It wasn't until that Monday of August 14, 1995 that Herbert was informed that he would be transferred from Central High School. School had already begun, as teachers were reporting to school. The letter was placed in Herbert's mailbox.

During the August 17, 1995 meeting Mr. Charlie Reed (School board member) objected to the transfer and appointment of one teacher George Herbert (Official proceeding, 1995). Superintendent Fiener stated that the reason behind Herbert's transfer was that he had interfered with the harmonious operation of CHS (Personnel flap, 1995). The School Board then listened to comments from Ronald Herbert (Social Studies & Foreign Language Supervisor), who stated that such a transfer would be unfair because Herbert had done such a tremendous job at Central. James Rado then asked the board to speak. Herbert, according to Rado had been involved in the recent student protest concerning the football players. Immediately following Rado comments a vote was taken before a capacity filled school board meeting. The vote was 8-5 as the school board decided that Herbert should be transferred. While the vote was being taken Kathy Pios and several other spectators began to disrupt the meeting by shouting. Police from the Central South Department were called to the school board.

Community Reaction

Many of the community leaders were outraged at the action taken by the board. Parish NAACP President Luther Hillstock said the school board has continued to practice racist hiring policies. Hillstock went on to say that the board members have hired teachers from predominantly White private schools to teach at CHS and that they should change the name at Central to KKK Academy (1995). Hillstock recommended looking at teacher composition in Black and White schools in Laurel Parish, where the ratio is 50-50 in predominantly Black schools, while it is probably 85-15 in White schools. Furthermore, he recommended looking at the number of Whites hired before African Americans during the opening months of school, "Whites are practically guaranteed a job, whereas African Americans have to wait for what is available" (Hillstock, personal communication, June 25, 1997). Hillstock stated "you have two systems a White and Black system. Elementary administrators are bringing in White teachers to 80 percent African American schools. By the time African American students reach the seventh and eight grade they are ready to drop out of school" (1997). The board in its decision thought that such a transfer would end the controversy at Central . The newly, appointed principal warned that such a move was not proper because it did not give him the opportunity to select the personnel he wanted at his school.

Within the three-year period that Herbert was at Central he implemented a Boys to Men to program. He received two football scholarships and one academic scholarship at the school, he helped to start African American classes in the Laurel

Parish. In a school where fighting was common he helped to bring communities together. During the 1994-95 school year, Central had one of the highest overall scores on the exit exam in the parish. In the Laurel Social Studies Fair their students received more honors than any other school in the parish. The junior high football team went undefeated for two years, having a record of 21 and 2 losses, from 1992 to 1994. The eighth grade basketball team was the first to travel out of state to compete in a basketball tournament. At the tournament in Huntsville, Alabama Central placed first.

Student Protest

On August 24, 1995 students walked out of classes protesting the transfer of Herbert to Central South High School. The protesters carried signs that read, "If Mr. Herbert Goes, So Do We!" (Students Protest, 1995). The Daily News Advertiser stated that while at Central Herbert had organized a Boys to Men program in which students with problems got together to discuss them or go to the movies. One of the members of the Boys to Men, David Willis, stated that Wednesday would be his last day at school. "I used to like the school a lot but since all this happened I feel the school won't be the same until he returns" (1995). John Fiener, Parent Teacher Organization President, stated that, "the kids came to mind. The progress they were making doesn't count for anything. Society was ready to write off these kids and he was willing to fight for them" (1995).

The newly elected principal Raymond Duhoss said that he would not deny the students the right to make a statement, he just hopes it doesn't happen every day

(1995). Duhoss stated, "I don't encourage this, because you never encourage this sort of thing, but they do have the right to express themselves-as long as they do it in a responsible manner" (1995). The majority of students involved in the protest were Black with some Whites participating in the demonstration. The Rev. Dale Fiener pointed out that both White and Black students participated in the demonstrations (1995). Carolyn Dubois, a parent who was present at the demonstration stated, "I was shocked to see both White and Black students participating" (Dubois, personal communication, June 25 1997).

On August 7, 1995 the Laurel School District school board was filled with protesters who held signs of their disapproval. Picketers once again lined up in front of the Laurel Parish School Board as students from Central High School protested the transfer of one of their teachers, George Herbert, to Central South Senior High School (Job actions protest, 1995). The parents and students from Central had organized a group called Parents and Students Organized for Educational Improvement. At the September 7 meeting the organization expressed their dislike for the injustices at Central. Herbert, according to the group, was a Black man, gave the predominately Black school a good role model and was well liked by the students (1995).

During the meeting Ryan Fiener (School Superintendent) stated that Herbert was not certified and that he had interfered with the harmonious operation of the school. This was not true because at the date of the transfer Herbert had just completed his certification (Group Critical of Transfer, 1995). School board member Lori Geege stated she went along with the transfer because Herbert was instilling Muslim doctrines into the students (1995). One of the Black board members Charlie

Ross stated that, “ We have created an ill in that community and I think it would ease that ill to reappoint Herbert” (1995). A White board member, Jerry Domingo, stated "If we had a problem with him why transfer? Of if the problem was not that severe why not keep him at the school where he was?" Domingo then requested that the fate of a teacher should be decided by the administrator (Job actions protested, 1995).

Prior to this statement principal Raymond Duhoss had requested that Herbert remain at the school. When the vote was taken the board stood by its decision in a 7-4 vote. Lori Geege and Superintendent Ryan Fiener were escorted out of the building as parents and students began yelling obscenities at them. Lori Geege was cornered in the board members room, where a group of parents were holding her in. The students were talking to Geege about her decision to transfer Herbert. In the conversation she was saying that some people had contacted her and asked for the transfer. Kathy Pios then walked in the room and asked Geege to tell her who asked for this transfer. Geege responded she didn't have to answer to Pios. The police then entered along with a White male, as Pios told Geege, “If I wanted to do something to Lori I would” (Pios. personal communication, June 25 1997).

In the month of November Parents and Student for Quality Education sought to recall board member Lori Geege. Kathy Pios was the chairperson of the group which filed a recall petition with the Registrar of Voters in Laurel Parish. Pios stated several reasons why the group was asking for the recall of Lori Geege:

A lack of representation of the voters and failure to act in the best interests of the children of District 5.

Failure to assist in the promotion of Black administrators.

Failure to see accomplishments that directly affect District 5 schools.

Apparent prejudice against religious viewpoints.

Failure to speak out against racist viewpoint of school board which adversely affects the schools.

Failure to support concerns of District 5 parents who have raised issues regarding the racist policy of the hiring and firing of District 5 employees.

Failure to ensure that a proper and thorough investigation took place following the removal of a faculty member at Central High School. (Groups seeks recall, 2 November 1995).

Geege, in response to the petition, stated that she had stood up for the Black community and everyone else in her district and now she's being accused of not representing Blacks. Geege then showed her views by saying, "they have to realize that they are not the majority" (1995).

In the final analysis the Laurel School Board stood by its decision. The result was a steady decline of student scores on the exit exam and ACT (Jam, 1997). The enrollment of students at Central has dropped, forcing school board officials to decide whether it is feasible to keep the school open. The controversy continues as the Laurel School Board is under suit from a parent, who claims that the school board has discriminated against Central because it is a predominantly African American school. The dismissed principal Mervyn Anderson is also filing suit against the School Board. On graduation night students began singing when school board member Lori Geege attempted to speak (Pios, 1997). The controversy and student protest at Central High School, could turn out to be a major catalyst for change in Laurel Parish.

Summary

Since its inception in 1926, Black History Programs has caused a great debate. Many of the issues around Black History Programs that existed in 1926 continue to exist in the new millenium. The challenge of implementing Black History/MCE into the current curriculum is one that is not going away (Banks, 1999). Added to this is the new wave of student protest around issues of diversity (Rhoads, 1998). While the media has not focused on student protest in the 1990's with the same passion as it did in the 1960's, according to Levine and Cureton (1998), student protest is more prevalent in the 1990's. Added to this is the fact that very few studies have focused on student activist experiences of this type of phenomenon.

This gap in the literature encouraged the researcher to find out how the student activist experienced events associated with this type of controversy and protest. More importantly, the researcher wanted to know how this impacted the student activists' personal lives and their view of the world. Therefore, the present study targeted this phenomena by using a phenomenological study to ascertain what this experience was like for the student activists.

Chapter IV

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the procedures and design to be implemented for investigating and learning from the experiences of student activists at Central High School. Since the researcher's goal in this study was to understand the experience of student activists and how they made meaning of this experience, a qualitative methodology was used. The data for this study was collected using a modified Seidman's (1998) in-depth phenomenological interviewing model. In-depth phenomenological interviewing is one method that provided the researcher this access.

Rationale for Using Qualitative Methodology

According to Dumbuya (2000), Guba and Lincoln (1985) exposed the field of education to an emergent theory in qualitative research. Qualitative research involves an interpretative research approach to its subject matter. This means that in a qualitative research study, things are studied in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Qualitative research also means the studied use and collection of a variety of material experiences, life histories, interviews, and visual texts that describe routing and

problematic moments and meaning of individual lives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Bogdan and Taylor (1975) defined qualitative research as a research procedure which produces descriptive data, people's own written or spoken words, and observational behavior. This approach directs itself at natural settings and the study is not reduced to an isolated variable or to an hypothesis. The study is viewed instead as part of the whole. When we reduce people to statistical aggregates, as in the case of quantitative studies, we lose sight of the subjective nature of human behavior. It is therefore necessary for the researcher to be open and up front with his or her aims and goals, and to be cognizant of his or her own social and political biases (Myrdal, 1969).

Qualitative research seeks to interpret human actions, events, and customs. By doing so, researchers construct a portrayal of what was studied. The ultimate goal is to portray a complete pattern of the subject of study in sufficient depth and detail so that one who had not experienced it could understand it (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Until recently, the qualitative approach was rejected by many educational researchers as unscientific, mainly because of the lack of researcher control (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). However, this is still a debatable and controversial issue in many academic circles.

Supporters of positivism believe in the existence of a single reality that can only be discovered through a deductive approach, while advocates of qualitative research believe in the existence of multiple realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Chiza, 1994; Patton, 1990). Supporters of qualitative research typically provide a wealth of

detailed information about a much smaller number of cases. This wealth of information emerges from the participants' past experiences and events, as they recall them. This increases understanding of the cases and situations studied, but also reduces generalization (Patton, 1990).

Opponents of qualitative research question the legitimacy of a small sample size. However, experts in qualitative research believe that the size of the sample should depend on what the researcher wants to find out, how he can find it, how the findings will be used, and what resources the researcher has for the study (Patton, 1981).

An advantage of small samples is that in-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the participants are information rich (Patton, 1981). Therefore, the sample of qualitative research must be judged on context and not on sample size. For example, Piaget's major breakthrough study about understanding how children think was established by observing his two children (Dumbuya, 2000).

Qualitative inquiry focuses more on information richness than on sample size. Besides, the main rationale for using life histories is that a non-human instrument is sufficiently flexible to adjust to complex situations. Hence, no non-human instrument can take into consideration biases resulting from the interactions and value difference between the researcher and the subjects. Furthermore, as Guba and Lincoln (1985) note qualitative research provides depth, detail, and individual meaning to researchers.

Finally, the positivist and the qualitative paradigms use different methods in reporting their data. The positivist paradigm reports data as findings. These findings will subsequently become statements of generalizations and act as universals (Dumbuya, 2000; O'Donnell, 1990; Park, 1982). As generalizations, they help to obscure or to simplify the complexity of human interpretation. In the case of the qualitative paradigm, data are reported as descriptions. These descriptions are usually classified as (a) narratives of situational content, such as ethnography; (b) verbatim texts of the participants, such as in-depth interviews and oral histories or a combination of the two (Dumbuya, 2000).

Modified Seidman's (1998) In-Depth Interviewing Model

Since the purpose of this dissertation was to investigate and analyze the experiences of student activists at a Louisiana school and the subsequent controversy around a Black History program and student protest, the qualitative methodology permitted the researcher to use a modified Seidman (1998) in-depth interviewing model to collect the data for this study. The model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing used is based on the format first utilized by Ken Dolbeare and David Schuman (1982), and further modified by Seidman (1998).

In-Depth Phenomenological Interviewing Model

In-depth phenomenological interviewing operates on the premise that a person can make meaning of an experience after reflecting on the constitutive details of the experience (Seidman, 1998). Furthermore, this model of in-depth interviewing

assumes that how a person makes meaning of his or her work critically affects how he or she performs the work. The theoretical underpinnings are found in the phenomenological perspective elucidated by Alfred Schutz (1967).

According to Seidman (1998), Schutz, building on the perspective prescribed by Bergson and Husser (1967), asserted that meaning-making can be ascertained after one reflects on the constitutive details of an experience. It is therefore only the person who had the experience who can do meaning-making or signification of that experience. For Schutz (1967), this act of meaning-making occurs when the person turns a reflective glance toward an experience. The researcher used a modified Seidman's (1998) model because he was interested in understanding the experiences of student activists at a Louisiana High School and the meaning they make of their experiences.

The model of in-depth phenomenological interviewing follows a sequence of three 90-minute interviews, spaced three to seven days apart (Seidman, 1998). The sequence of the interviewing allows the participant to reconstruct the experience and then to reflect on the meaning of that experience (Seidman & Santilli, 1998, cited in O'Donnell, 1990; Dumbuya, 2000).

Since the researcher modified Seidman's in-depth phenomenological interview method, the interviews were done in one day as opposed to spreading the interview into segments. This was done for time constraints of participants and the amount of money it would cost the researcher. The interview segments were broken into three segments. Each segment of the interview varied in length. In the first interview segment, attention was focused on the participant's experience (Seidman, 1998). The

interviewer asked the participant's to describe their family background. This segment of the interview provided a description of the participant's background. The focus of the second segment of the interview was on the participant's experience of the events (Seidman, 1998). In this segment, the participants were asked to describe as much as possible about the event that took place at the Black History Program and student protest. Emphasis was placed on the participant's actions or thoughts about those experiences.

The third and final segment of the interview asked the participants how this experience impacted their lives. The first and second segments of the interview created the foundation from which participants could make connections. They were then able to reflect on the meaning of this phenomena on their lives (Seidman, 1998).

Role of Interviewer

The way the modified in-depth phenomenological interviews were structured allowed the subjects to reconstruct and to reflect on their experiences as student activists regarding the Black History Program and student protest at a Louisiana high school. This process of self-explication (Seidman & Santilli, 1988 cited in O'Donnel, 1990; Dumbuya, 2000) allowed the subjects to describe the events that they found relevant to their experiences. However, since the method was modified, the interviewer arrived with a set of predetermined questions.

The interviewer had three roles: first, he had to keep the participants centered on the focus of each segment of the interview, directing them to be as concrete as possible in describing their experiences. The second role was to know when to ask

the participants to clarify or to expand on a point. Third, the interviewer was an active listener (Seidman, 1998).

Population

Selection of Participants

Since the researcher was interested in the experiences of the student activists involved with a Black History Program and student protest at a Louisiana high school, the strategy for selecting participants was based on what is called purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). This is a method of sampling in analytic induction in which participants are chosen because the researcher believes they will contribute to the expansion of developing knowledge. A list of student activists was obtained from newspaper clippings, interviews with people associated with the events and from the researcher's knowledge of student activists. Five student activists who were present at the Black History Program in 1994, and two student activists attending other high schools were interviewed for this study. The age range of the participants was between the ages 18 to 26, with the average age being 22. Each participant was given the opportunity to respond to a personal interview on a voluntary basis.

Location and Setting for the Research

The high school used for the study was located in Louisiana and had a population of approximately 488 students from grades 8-12. This high school is made up of predominantly African American students. The total African American population at this high school consisted of about 92 percent of the student body, with

8 percent being White. Furthermore, in order to gain the confidence of the participants, the research was conducted in the natural setting of the participants.

Researcher's Perspective

I am an African American male who was born in Opelousas, Louisiana. I attended a predominantly African American school from grades K-12. Since elementary school to high school, I served as class president and was elected SGA President my senior year of high school. I was involved in track, basketball, and football, as well as other extracurricular activities.

Upon completion of high school I attended Southern University, a predominantly African American institution. I received both a bachelor's of science and a master of art's degree from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After several years of teaching in the public schools, I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in educational leadership. In one of the most difficult and trying times in my life I decided to pursue this degree at Colorado State University. My wife, after just having our baby, had become very ill, and in the periods that she could communicate, she advised me to pursue this degree. When I left Louisiana I had in mind the research topic that I would pursue.

As a social studies teacher who was involved with a Black History Program, which ultimately led to my transfer and later student protest, I decided to delve into the essence of this experience from the student activist's perspective. More importantly my decision to pursue this topic emerged when I received a packet from a parent, which contained newspaper documents, newsletters, and parent organization

letters. While reflecting on how significant, as well as the media attention of this matter, I began to document and pursue a case study approach to this issue.

As I began researching student protest I discovered that most research on this topic had been done in the form of case studies. I needed something more than a case study and my enrollment in a qualitative research class cleared my thoughts. As I reflected on the extent of progress the students were making prior to the culmination of this controversy, I decided to find out the essence of this experience from the eyes of students. Thus the research topic "School Controversy and Student Protest Centered Around a Black History Month Program: A Phenomenological Study of Student activists", emerged as the topic to be researched.

Instrumentation

Prior research has focused on the nature of student protest and the events that led to student protest. For the purpose of this study, a modified Seidman (1998) in-depth interview technique was used to ascertain the meaning of the experience for student activists.

Each prospective participant was contacted by phone to determine if they wished to participate in the study, and to provide some background information pertaining to the research topic, the purpose of the study and the actual interview process. Each prospective participant who indicated interest was then scheduled for an interview.

Copies of the interview questions were distributed to each participant, two weeks prior to the interview. This researcher was primarily interested in generating

thoughtfulness and introspective responses. The participants were asked to be frank and open, a theme that was stressed at the onset of the interview.

At the beginning of each interview session the participant was again updated about the process. Written permission was obtained from participants prior to their participation in the interview. It was explained to each participant that their responses would be tape-recorded and later transcribed, which would then become a part of the written dissertation provided to the Colorado State University Graduate School.

Interview questions were asked by the researcher in a consecutive manner. The duration of the interview ranged between 60 and 90 minutes. At the close of each interview, each participant was informed that copies would be made available at the local library as well as the Colorado State University Library. Each interview was then transcribed to complete the data analysis.

The primary questions to be answered by this study were:

- 1) Describe your family background?
- 2) What was the essence of the Black History Program and Student Protest?
 - a) How did student activists remember events associated with the Black History Program and Student Protest?
 - 1) What were student activists' feelings during and after the Black History Program?
 - 2) Was there anything that separated this Black History Program from previous programs that student activists experienced?
 - 3) Could student activists recall what happened the next day at school with regard to the program?
 - 4) How long would student activists say the controversy around the Black History Program lasted? Could they describe examples? How did this impact the student activists? How would student activists say it impacted other students?
 - b) What motivated students to engage in protest?
 - 1) How was the protest organized?
 - 2) What were some things the students talked about with regards to the protest?

- c) What were the objectives of the student protest?
- d) How far were students willing to go to have their demands met?
- e) How did faculty and staff respond to you as a student activist?
 - 1) Did it affect your grades, personal life or any thing else?

3) Has this experience (Black History Program and Student Protest) affected student activists in any way with regard to their present status? As far as shaping their ideas or philosophy about things?

a) If student activists had to suggest something to high school administrators planning to implement Black History Month Celebrations in their schools what would it be?

Data Analysis

To insure as much reliability and validity as possible, the following procedures were be employed. Moustakas (1990) states that epoche should be used by the researcher to eliminate prejudice viewpoints and assumptions with regards to the phenomenon being researched. Epoche is defined as the bracketing of one's pre-judgments and beginning the research interview with an unbiased presence (Patton, 1990). As stated by Hyoner (1999), this does not mean that the researcher is standing in some "presuppositionless space." It ultimately means that bracketing allows the researcher to enter into the world of persons being interviewed (Hyoner, 1999). Keen (1975) states:

The phenomenological reduction is a conscious, effortful, opening of ourselves to the phenomenon as a phenomenon... We want not to see this event as an example of this or that theory that we have; we want to see it as a phenomenon in its own right, with its own meaning and structure. Anybody can hear the words that were spoken; to listen for the meaning as they eventually emerged from the event as a whole is to have adopted in an attitude of openness to the phenomenon in its inherent meaningfulness. It is to have bracketed our response to separate parts of the conversation and to have let the event emerge as a meaningful whole (1975, p. 38).

To ensure validity and reliability the researcher followed the steps listed below.

Tape Recording Interviews

The researcher tape-recorded the in-depth interviews. However, the literature reflected varying opinions on this point (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Briggs, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1989). Some of these researchers suggested that tape-recording could enable the researcher to work most reliably with the world of the participants by transforming those spoken words into written text to study. The primary method of creating text from interviews is to tape-record the interviews and to transcribe them. Each word a participant speaks reflects his or her consciousness (Vygotsky, 1987). The participant's thoughts become embodied in the words. Tape-recording offers other benefits as well. Tape-recording preserves the words of the participants that reflect the original data. If something is not clear in the transcript or there is a controversy between the participants and the researcher on a question of interpretation, the researcher can return to the source and check for accuracy. The fact that participants know there is a record of what they have said to which they can have access, can give them more confidence that their words will be treated responsibly. In this particular study, the researcher used a slimline tape-recorder.

Transcribing Interview Tapes

The purpose of transcription was to have an accurate word- by -word written record of what the participants narrated in their own voices during the respective interviews. It was important for the transcriber to include the participant's "uh's" and

pauses, as well as interruptions such as cough, laughs, telephone rings, and all other non-verbal signals recorded in the tape. The purpose was to recreate for the interviewer the exact context of the interview session (Seidman, 1998).

It was also important for the researcher to protect the identity of the participants. Even when transcribing the interviews, the researcher used fictitious names to represent the participants.

Record Keeping

In order to work with the generated interview materials, the researcher organized the materials by keeping track of participants through their information forms. In addition it was the researcher's responsibility to accurately label the participant's audio tapes. This process is usually termed as administrative file management process in a qualitative research study (Lofland, 1975).

Reduction and Sharing Interview Data

According to Glasser and Strauss (1967), the most important assignment of a researcher is to reduce the data inductively rather than deductively. That is, the researcher cannot address the material with a set of hypotheses to test or with a theory developed in another context to which he or she wishes to match the data. One of the goals of the researcher is to reduce and then shape the material into a form in which it can be shared or displayed. Therefore, Seidman (1998) suggests two procedures for working with the material. The first procedure involves reading the transcripts of the interview, marking passages that are of interest to the researcher. These marked

passages were then labeled and placed in files. The second procedure was to construct a profile of the participants which is a condensed narrative taken from the participants interview and presented in the participant's own words (Seidman, 1998). The third important procedure is thematic analysis, which is a process the researcher used to encode the qualitative information derived from the interview process of the seven student participants. The various themes introduced later in chapter 5 are patterns found in the information. Therefore, the importance of thematic analysis is that it enabled the researcher to use a variety of types of information in a sustainable manner to increase the accuracy of sensibility in understanding and interpreting the transcribed interviews of the 7 student participants (Boyatzis, 1998). By presenting the data in the words of the participants, the participants shared and described their experiences for the reader. This form of presentation of the material in the words of the participants served to limit the interpretive bias of the researcher. The researcher chose the selection of the material but did not describe the experiences of the participants. The participants described their own experiences in their own words. In addition, the presentation of a person's experience as a story "conveys knowledge and provides a path to understanding that is grounded in the concrete details of their experience" (Seidman, 1998).

A more conventional way of presenting and analyzing interview data is to organize excerpts from the transcripts into categories. Using this process, the researcher searched for connecting threads and patterns among the excerpts within those categories, and for the connections between the various categories that might be called themes.

In addition to labeling each marked passage with a term that placed it in a category, the researcher labeled each passage with a notation system that designated its original place in the transcripts (Seidman, 1998).

The researcher reread all the marked excerpts file by file. At this stage, the most interesting files were filed separately from those which were not as interesting. At this stage the researcher is what Rowan (1981, p. 134) calls a "dialectical process" with the material. That is, the participants have spoken, and now the interviewer is responding to their words, concentrating his intuition on the process. What emerges is a synthesis of what the participant had said and how the researcher responded. The process of working with the excerpts from the participant interviews, seeking connections and building interpretative categories were demanding and involved risks. The danger was that the researcher might try to force the excerpts into categories and the categories into themes that he already had in mind, rather than let these develop from the experiences of the participants as represented in the interviews.

The next step the researcher took was to file the excerpts either in computer files under the name of the assigned category or in folders. In this research study, the researcher used both meanings.

Interpretation of the Data

This process was mainly done near the end of the project. Some tentative interpretation, however, began to influence the research questions even at the start of the interview process.

Marking of the interesting passages, followed by labeling and grounding, was analytic work that had within it the seed of interpretation. Crafting a profile is an act of analysis, as is presenting and commenting upon excerpts arranged in categories. Both processes laid the ground for interpretation (Walcott, 1994).

Although sometimes it was important for the researcher to let the categorized thematic excerpts speak for themselves, the researcher nevertheless had to ask himself what was he learning from this particular interviewing project. He also had to study, mark, and label the transcripts, thus creating profiles and organizing categories of excerpts. Further, he had to ask what connecting threads existed among the participant's experiences.

Glasser and Strauss (1967) and Maxwell (1996) address these questions, stating, "When you have identified passages that are important, but the category in which they fall seems undefined or its significance is unclear, the researcher should write a memorandum about the passages," (Seidman, 1998). From their point of view, the researcher could see how their individual experience interacted with powerful social and organizational forces pervading the context in which they live and work.

Finally, through in-depth interviewing, researchers may discover the interconnectedness among people who live and work in a shared context. Such discovery also provides researchers and administrators with a deeper understanding of the issues, structures, process and policies that imbue the participant's stories.

Validity and Reliability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that credibility is a key concept in establishing trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry. Trustworthiness refers to the validity of the study (Guba, 1981; & Krefting, 1990). To address the issues of validity and reliability, various methods were employed. Specifically the study employed member checks and debriefs. Member checking was used to ensure that what was recorded by the researcher represented the statements that were made by the respondents (Guba, 1981). Each participant involved in the study had the opportunity to review his/her interview and to correct any misinterpretations that may have existed.

Three criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Marshall and Roman (1989), and Erlandson et al. (1993) are used to assess the trustworthiness of this type of study. They include (a) credibility, (b) transferability, and (c) dependability.

Erlandson et al. (1993) wrote that the criterion of credibility can be achieved by triangulation, reflexivity, and peer examination. Regarding this study, credibility was met in the following ways. The data came from the voices and stories of students who were at the Black History Program and involved with student protest. Additional data included field-notes, newspapers, newsletters, school board documents, and relevant literature. Reflexivity was accomplished by keeping a journal with personal reflections with regard to the research. Member checking was employed by allowing participants to check transcriptions (Krefting, 1990). Finally to ensure credibility peer examination was used. According to Krefting (1990) this process enhances credibility.

The second criterion for trustworthiness is transferability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) wrote that transferability is the extent to which research findings can be utilized in other situations. It is the responsibility of the researcher to generate thick descriptions (Krefting, 1990) to demonstrate the possibility of applicability of research results to other contexts with shared characteristics. The researcher provided substantial description of experiences of student activists from their voices.

Dependability is the third criterion of trustworthiness and concerns the degree of consistency to be found if the study were to be repeated or replicated. Dependability is made evident from an audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Krefting (1990) wrote that the purpose of an audit trail is to leave an adequate amount of evidence so that interested parties can reconstruct the process by which the investigators reached their conclusions. The audit trail includes taped interviews, and transcriptions, which may vary between 60 and 90 minutes in length.

Summary

The main objective of this study was to share information about the student activist experience with regard to the controversy around a Black History program and student protest in a Louisiana school district.

The researcher notes that a modified Seidman in-depth phenomenological interview model lent itself to carrying out the qualitative research methodology of this study. Furthermore, by using thematic analysis, it allowed not only the collection and use of qualitative information in a manner that facilitates communication with a broader audience, but it also allowed the researcher to make qualitative results acceptable to others.

Chapter V

Qualitative Results

This dissertation was a qualitative study using a modified Siedman (1998) in-depth phenomenological interview technique. The researcher explored through in-depth interviews, the stories of seven participants enrolled in a Louisiana high school.

Though the study was an open-ended reflection of a qualitative research approach, the researcher was interested in obtaining various narration experiences of the participants.

This dissertation is not only important as an evaluation of student activism, but the study may be helpful to school districts and administrators planning to implement Black History Programs into the curriculum.

Furthermore, there is the lack of agreement upon the shared ground rules for drawing conclusions and verifying data. There is also no way of determining the significance, as in quantitative research studies, and no way of perfectly replicating this type of research, as the sample size is often small (Patton, 1990). Because of the above validity problems two participants from a different high school were interviewed as "two views outside the school" in order to form validity triangulation.

The following are brief biographies of the seven participants, developed by the researcher from their interviews. Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Table 1 depicts a condensed demographic chart with brief individual biographies that assisted the researcher in his subsequent thematic analysis. Four of the participants were college students, one attended technical school and the other two had full-time jobs.

It should be noted that students 5 and 7 are the outside participants for this study.

Table 1

Demographic Data of Student Activists

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation
Student 1	22	College Student
Student 2	21	Technical School Student
Student 3	26	Medical Technician
Student 4	22	College Student
Student 5	21	Counselor
Student 6	20	College Student
Student 7	18	College Student

Student 1 is a first generation college student, currently completing an associate of arts degree. After completing the associate of arts degree she plans to attend a four- year institution. Her plans are to become a teacher, track coach, and eventually a school principal. Student 1's mother completed high school while her father only managed to complete fourth grade. She says that as a child growing up they were very poor and she can remember the times when all family members had only cans of beans to eat.

Student 2 is currently attending a technical school, where she plans to complete a degree in computer technology. Student 2's mother completed high

school and her farther finished college. She has aspirations to finish school and one day pursue a bachelors degree. As a child growing up, Student 2 says they were poor. It wasn't that they didn't have the basic things, but they didn't have a lot of luxury.

Student 3 is working at a doctor's office as a medical technician. She has immediate plans to enter a community college and pursue a business degree. Her goals are to one day own a business. She wants to be an independent real estate agent, who will give back to her community. Student 3 said that both of her parents were "illiterate" and did not complete school. As a child most of her help came from her sisters; she states that her parents did motivate her to learn something and "just be better than them".

Student 4 is a college student majoring in English education. He has plans to pursue a master's degree in education. His primary goal is to become a teacher at his former high school. He believes that he can bring significant changes to the school. As a child, Student 4 grew up with his grandmother; his parents could not afford to keep him. His parents also got a divorce and he was very saddened as a child that he did not have parents at home to sit at the table for dinner. He said they were poor, but not as poor as he thought; he remembers the time when they had to take a taxi to the grocery store. For Student 4 was very embarrassing, however he notes that some students did not even have the money to pay for a taxi.

Student 5 is currently working with children in a behavioral clinic. She recalls that as a child she lived with her parents in Texas until the age of 6. Student 5 then moved to Louisiana where she lived with her aunt and uncle. Before student 5

completed high school she moved back to Texas, where she graduated from high school. Student 5 plans to one day own a business.

Student 6 grew up in a single parent home. She had only one sibling and an older sister who took care of her. Student 6 recalls that her mother worked two jobs and was absent from home. Currently, Student 6 has a family of her own: two children and a husband. She is pursuing a degree in elementary education. Student 6 hopes to work in a rural school district, preferably in the district she attended high school.

Student 7 was raised in a two-parent home and recalls that at the age of 9 her mother passed away. After the death of her mother, Student 7 was raised by her father. Student 7 also mentioned that she has been attending school in this district ever since her mother's death. Currently, Student 7 is enrolled in college and working.

Thematic Analysis

According to Miles and Humeran (1984), thematic analysis allows the collection and use of qualitative information in a manner that facilitates communication with a broader audience. Siedman (1998) states:

First I use profiles of individual participants and group them into categories that make sense. Second, I mark individual passages, group these in categories, and then study the categories for thematic connection within and among them (p.102).

Thematic analysis is important because it allows the researcher to use a variety of types of information in a substantial manner that increases the accuracy of

sensibility in understanding and interpreting the transcribed interviews (Boyatis, 1998; Dumbuya, 2000).

I used thematic analysis as a process to encode the qualitative information gathered during the interviewing process of the seven participants at a Louisiana high school. The various themes introduced later in this chapter represent patterns found in the information. These patterns describe and organize aspects of the phenomenon encountered in the interviews. This chapter outlines the themes as they emerged from each participant's point of view. These emergent themes frame the discussion in this chapter. To better understand the first theme that emerged the next section will briefly discuss the controversy around Black History. This will be followed by the first theme which explains the primary reason for the controversy at Central High School.

Controversy

The controversy around the implementation of Black History into the curriculum has been an on going problem for educational institutions in the United States. There are currently proponents and opponents of the implementation of Black History into the curriculum. This controversy around Black History has often resulted in student protest, in which students have demanded the implementation of a relevant Black History curriculum.

In this study, the seven student activists explain from their experiences reasons why the Black History Program at their school was a controversial issue. These student activists explain the narrative experience of a Black History Program and student protest.

This section also identifies reasons why there was controversy around this Black History Program. The researcher, therefore, discusses the emerging themes in this chapter in the following order: misinformation, monocultural attitudes, awareness, teachers who care, empowerment, and voice in planning curriculum.

One of the primary reasons behind much of the controversy around Black History Programs is a result of misinformation. Since the curriculum of most educational institutions in America has been dominated by Eurocentric ideology, this has caused great controversy regarding the implementation of Black History Programs.

Traditionally, schools have very seldom mentioned the accomplishments, achievements and impact that people of African descent have had on world history. The history of people of African descent in America has been one of oppression and of a people's ability to survive. Any mention of history from the African-centered perspective is viewed as non-history. Schlesinger (1992) expresses this as the "corruption of history as history". Lefkowitz (1996) sees Black History (Afrocentricism) as a way to teach mythology rather than history.

As a result, when Asante (1988), Karenga (1982), & Muhammad (1965) mention the history of people of African descent, this is met with hostility. The result has been controversy. In schools where Black History is taught from an Afrocentric view, the dominant culture and those in power seek to crush its presence. As Banks (1999) mentions, it is more likely that Sacajawea would be included in the curriculum because she helped whites conquer Native peoples, whereas Geronimo would be

excluded because he resisted white take-over of Native lands. This scenario is all too often played out during Black History Month.

Theme 1 Misinformation

A primary purpose of this research project was to find out what were the major factors that contributed to the controversy at Central High School. It is believed that by uncovering what caused the controversy, other schools and school districts planning to implement Black History Programs into the curriculum can become informed about problems that may occur. Through in-depth interviews with student activists, the major cause of the controversy around this Black History Program was concluded to be the result of misinformation. Misinformation was a theme that emerged from examining the narrative experiences of student activists.

Excerpt and Analysis

Student 1 who is aspiring to one day become a teacher had this to say about the controversy around the Black History Program:

Well, the thing that separated this program from all the other programs was something that should not have been a controversy in the first place. The program was very interesting and everybody I was associated with told me they got something out of the program. And that was different because, like I said, the programs before were boring and people just didn't want to be there. But this program, the speaker had the attention of the students. And it all started when we noticed students, more so faculty, started walking out of the program and that is how the controversy got started.

Student 1 also explained in further detail how the controversy was a result of misinformation:

Well, after the program was over we went into the lobby and message flies by the speed of light and we heard that somebody had called the news and said that it was going to be a fight, that it was going to be a riot and that wasn't even the case because nobody was fighting or anything and that is what really started the controversy, when those people left out of there and called the news media and said it is going to a big duhow up here because of this man. He is putting down religion and that's where it all started. And that is where the bulk of the problem came from, you know, when people hear something they are going to make it bigger and bigger and that is where a major problem came in, it wasn't so much that they just got up and left, I mean that was a problem, that was a part. Like I said about the disrespect, the real problem came when students started calling their parents and, you know, the media.

In further describing how the events associated with the Black History Program were blown out of proportion because of misinformation, Student 1 talks about three events. First she begins by describing what happened at school the day after the Black History Program:

I didn't have to walk on campus, I could see it from off the bus on the highway. I saw the cop lights and all the dogs. The people in suits and ties from the school board office and I knew right then and there that it was blown completely out of proportion, I knew that some one had been saying something that wasn't true. Because the program was a success and there was no reason for the cops to be there unless somebody was fabricating something and that is exactly what had taken place.

Well, it was myself and my best friend and we always sat together on the bus and we had talked about it the day before. But we didn't think it was going to be that much, we thought the man from the newspaper was going to be there asking what had happened, but we saw policeman, and school board members at the school. We got up and ran to the front of the bus and were the first ones, as soon as the doors open, we were the first ones off the bus and we were bombarded with cameras in our faces and dogs on leashes I was furious because we didn't need to talk to anyone we knew what was going on.

Student 1 explains the second event:

Well, you had different, like you had the White students and you had the Black students. I can recall this one White girl crying because she was, like I have Black friends and I don't know what is going on, and the Black kids were like what is up with this, why is there all this attention, you know? All our school ever got was negative attention and here comes some more. And we

just wanted to know why this thing was blown out of proportion, the bell would ring to go to class and there were still two hundred people in the hall.

Event three was explained as such:

Someone had told the White parents that the Black students were going to jump on the White students and the White students were going to jump on the Black students. They just thought we were going to be fighting and all of that came from somebody saying something that wasn't true.

Student 2 explained what she thinks could have caused the misinformation:

I knew they felt threatened by what the speaker had said and the teachers probably thought the students were going to start disobeying them all of a sudden. But personally, my friends and the people that got something out of the program, they were not trying to start chaos throughout the school. It wasn't about that, we laughed at them for being scared because you know it was just a speaker that was explaining the facts and that's all.

Student 3 is currently working as a medical technician with aspirations to one day own a real estate firm. Here is what she said about the controversy:

I remember it well and I remember the speaker he spoke something about life and what we should look out for. And what should be taking place. And how we should go about life as it is today. And what to look out for exactly. I remember that some of the teachers were walking out and I remember that some of the White kids. And I'm not a racial person, but I remember most of them checking out of school that day in fear that we were supposed to beat them up or something. And it was this one white student who stayed, her name, I shouldn't give her name. And I asked her why everybody was checking out and she said because they feared we were going to beat them up. Which I have no reason to beat nobody up. I am a peaceful person and uhm the media was very, very unfair. The media went about, I would say the media was supposed to be fair and they basically showed what they wanted to show. And the people who wanted to speak, they did not show at all, the people who spoke for the speaker, they edited them out, they didn't show them.

Student 3 explained how information was misinterpreted by a student to the media which added to the controversy she also explained that this aspect of the Black History Program impacted her the most:

It was a part in there where he came to.. and I remember it well. And he went down to the different groups and talked about the NAACP which is for colored people, he talked about the Ku Klux Klan and he compared the two. The Ku Klux Klan which he did bring in there, which he was bringing out the cruelty in them. What they had done to a little pregnant girl who was eight months pregnant. How they had cut open her womb and the baby fell on the ground and he was speaking of the cruelty and he was saying that uhm, you know just basically be aware. And the media I remember, the media well, they put that on T.V. And the little guy who spoke about it, he was a Caucasian, did not bring it out how the speaker brought it out at all.

Student 3 also talked about the controversy the day following the Black History Program:

That day I just knew the system was corrupted altogether. Here it was I was getting off the bus my defense is what has happened now. What did I do, it was like teachers were looking funny everybody was in fear of something. And still half of the student body didn't show up and it was mainly Caucasian kids. And it was like what the heck is going on, although I never asked any questions and I went on about my business. I had a feeling because of the fact all the white kids, all the Caucasian kids were not there. I guess their parents maybe, or somebody called them and told them somebody is going to beat up so and so.

Student 4 explained what he observed as misinformation. He started out by describing what he thought about the program and the events that led to the misinformation.

Well, actually at that particular program I remember that the students were actually interested in seeing what the minister would talk about. Because before I remember that the Black History Programs that we had prior to this one weren't successful in the planning, there wasn't much interest in the guest speaker. Usually when you have a Black History Program people are interested in knowing the person. Maybe to research to see if that person has any literature out or interviews so they can learn about that person. I remember myself wanted to hear what this person had to say. I think the difference came into play when they found out who the person was, being a minister from the Nation of Islam. Because what people, people have stereo types of people and I think that maybe some of the people were misinformed. They weren't educated enough to learn about everything. For instance, they may know one negative thing and they ran with it. I remember that particular guest speaker causing I wouldn't say a controversy because of them being uneducated. People being uneducated. What made it different was the

interest knowing that he had affiliation with the Nation of Islam and a lot of times they just tell you the way they see things. The just tell it like it is they don't try to sugarcoat stuff or they will bring to the table some issues that people don't want to talk about that often. And I think that is what they were expecting, that he would bring to the program something that they maybe thought people weren't ready to hear or kids weren't grown up to hear.

Student 4 also indicated that there were many versions of the story that probably left the school which added to the controversy. He also stated that he was confused the day after the program and therefore provided this narration of events:

I was confused, I didn't know what for. I didn't know what was going on, I thought something had happened prior to me getting to school that morning. I thought maybe a fight had broken out. When I first walked in the school. You usually see the assistant principal on duty and they weren't really saying anything. But you know, you go to your cliques, when I finally made my way to the students that I usually hang out with, they were talking about the Black History Program. And how some parents had called the superintendent and principal that night, after the Black History Program. I assumed they thought that maybe a fight would break out or something. I can say myself personally that it was only Black students in class the next day because the White parents thought that fights would break out. I even remember being in the class with one particular white student, she was cool with everybody, she managed to get along with everybody both Black and White. And she mentioned that her parents told her she shouldn't go. But she knew nothing would happen. And she said no I am going to school, I know these students, I know everyone and I attended the program, I didn't see any thing wrong. She said she maybe would have reworded a few things but she didn't take offense to them. We didn't go on with the scheduled lesson plans, we actually had a group discussion and some of the instructors led the discussion. We also had a lot of teachers absent and we actually sat and talked about it.

Student 4 explained more deeply what he thought was misinformation:

I think it is such a close-knit community, some of the parents may talk to teachers and they may attend the same church. I'm sure a teacher, if they are close friends, called parents and ministers. And when they talked they said, you know, they got the word out. If you have a speaker and you have thirty people in there, you are going to have thirty different versions of what that speaker said. So I'm sure what was said was left in different versions. I'm sure that had an effect on some of the teachers not being there. Because I remember one teacher being kind of cold to the students. I am sure if they

didn't want to be there they could have taken one of their days off. Because you have so many days or maybe they were there just to see what was going to happen.

Student 6 describes what she saw as causing the controversy:

First of all the controversy was uncalled for and some of the students took what was said out of context. They went home and told their parents. I really don't think it should have been handled to such an extreme because everybody was fine except a couple of students who took it too far.

Summary

The experiences narrated by these student activists indicate that much of the controversy with regard to the Black History Program was a result of misinformation. This misinformation led to the contingent of law enforcement and school administrators coming to the school the day after the Black History Program.

Some of the students also expressed the disrespect that White students have about Black History Programs. The fact that a few teachers walked out of the program confirmed their disrespect for Black History. There was also a conflict about what was true and false. As the students indicated, historical facts were distorted and the truth was something that not everyone wanted to hear.

Theme: 2 Monocultural Attitudes

Monoculture is the idea that a concept should be viewed by only one cultural perspective. The idea of a monocultural attitude sometimes causes individuals to believe that their values, ideas and concepts should be adopted by other ethnic groups. Monocultural attitude often results in the disrespect of other peoples' ideas, concepts, history and cultural values.

As the researcher examined the narrative experiences of the student activists, one of the themes that emerged was monocultural attitudes. Student activists noted the disrespect teachers of Eurocentric backgrounds have for Black History. This disrespect was observed when a few White teachers and students walked out of the Black History Program.

Excerpt and Analysis

Student 1 expressed her feelings about the monocultural attitudes she observed at the Black History Program, in the following manner:

We figured teachers are role models and you don't just get up and walk out of a Black History Program. I mean, normally in a Black History Program, you could hear, talking. The students were laughing and talking and you know, nobody was paying attention. But I mean in this program people were really listening to what this man had to say. And for them to get up and walk out was disrespect.

Student 2, currently enrolled in a technical school, described the monocultural attitudes in the following way:

I think the Black students felt like they were being disrespected because the White teachers walked out and the White teachers walked out because they felt that what the speaker was saying wasn't positive. When actually it was the truth and we felt like if it is the truth why should we be kept from the truth. You know, and were not like the White students, they have everything they need, they are not socially challenged, or economically challenged, they have a much better percentage rate of people going to college and people succeeding. You know, we felt like if this is just our month or our day to hear something positive, to do us some good, why should they be upset about it.

Student 5 explained how the monocultural attitudes led to a disrespect of Black History. Student 5 also believed that African American students are respectful of what she called the teaching of White history. This is what Student 5 had to say about the monocultural attitudes:

When a lot of White people walked out of our Black History Program and we believed that if we sat and learned, it was true, teachers walked out first and some students followed. And we just felt that this wasn't right, we sit and learn White history in class and we don't walk out. We were learning something and we felt it was disrespect for them to walk out on our Black History Program.

Student 6 discussed the monocultural attitudes that were displayed at the Black History Program. This is one of the points that Student 6 felt strongly about.

It was very stressful, especially how the minority group handled the things. They weren't forced to attend the Black History Program and the White parents didn't want their children to interact with the program. For them not to be there was disrespectful. It is a part of history and just the title Black History doesn't mean anything. It is actually apart of history. We did sit in class and learn about Abe Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt and everybody else. But very seldom we learn about our heritage.

Summary

The researcher noted that one of the major reasons for the student protest throughout this Louisiana school district is the lack of respect for Black History. It is therefore not surprising that student activists expressed how monocultural attitudes contributed to the controversy surrounding this Black History Program.

Theme 3: Awareness

One of the reasons for the implementation of Black History Programs is that it creates awareness about the history of people of African descent. Therefore, for African American children, the study of Black History is seen as a source of self understanding (Karenga , 1982). Karenga describes it best by saying that Black History is a reflection of people of African descent to reflect on who they are and

what they can do and equally important, what they can become as a result of the past which reveals their possibilities.

The Kawaiida theory (Karenga, 1982) is a major factor in helping one gain awareness of self. The student activists expressed that as a result of these experiences they have become more aware to the realities of life.

Excerpt and Analysis

Student 1 explains how this **Black History Program** and the student protest made her more aware:

Well, the program and all that we have been through, it gave me an awareness, to not be so passive and sit back. And accept what people do to you or say to you. You know, you can always go out and read it for yourself and find out more. It has just made me a stronger person, you know, to deal with things that happened in my life. Now, I could look back at those times and pull something positive from that. You know, it made my will stronger, my determination. I know we may have failed in our efforts to get him back at our school, that didn't take away anything, from what we gained from the experience.

Student 2 explained how this experience has made her more aware by stating the following:

I think I would be kind of narrow minded. I probably wouldn't understand things about Whites and Blacks. Because I would be blind to a lot of the facts that I was taught by my teacher. And, you know, when certain things that happen to me, you know, the few encounters that I had with White people, I would probably would have brushed it off and probably would have thought it is something that just happens. Because, you know, nobody made an issue of it. I guess they were trying to hide us from all the facts that made us understand who we are and why things happen around us.

Student 2 explained more on how she became aware of the realities of the history of African Americans and their present condition:

What made it different was the speaker that we had for this particular program emphasized on us as a Black people and the situation that we are in and we need to stand together. To overcome the obstacles that we were placed in and it wasn't by choice that we were in the United States. And we were struggling because of this and because of that, and it wasn't our fault, but that we can't just say it's not our fault. We have to stand together and to do something about it. But speakers at the past Black History Programs just mainly emphasized on okay it is important to get an education. And they talked about the Black leaders from the past that stood up for civil rights, but they didn't actually explain that they had to go through this or had to go through that, in order to struggle to get it. They just said okay, yes, they were good people and they helped us out that was it.

Student 3 explained that her awareness of things has come by asking more questions. She also stated that she doesn't just let people run over her anymore. This is what Student 3 had to say:

I know how to ask a whole bunch of questions when I need to because in the past I used to just keep my mouth shut and just let certain people just run over me. And now today people look at me, like let her do her thing, she knows what she is doing, she is well prepared. And the time before this experience I used to be just hush and not look for certain things. Let's look, right now there is a football player on trial for murder. I don't know who the women are but I am watching this constantly on T.V. Like, you know, the O.J. Simpson trial, where he was accused of killing Nicole Brown, and I see more and more people are being incarcerated. As I look at this I thought maybe I should become a lawyer because if you don't listen and you don't pay attention, you are in trouble. And that is mostly one of the things that I learned being in that teachers' class and what the speaker was saying at the Black History Program, if you don't pay attention, you are going to be left out.

Student 4 had this to say about how he became more aware:

It made me realize a lot. It made me more open to listening to people and how they feel about Black History. A lot of the issues with the school are political. There is a lot of prejudice and when you see it, and it is actually right up in your face, it is different.

Student 5 explained that this Black History Program was not like the traditional programs. She talked about how this program made her more aware of

things going on around her. These are Student 5's comments about the Black History Program:

Well, this program was different from the traditional Black History Programs. You didn't get the regular traditional talk about Martin Luther King. The speaker talked about things that were going on in the United States, how Black people were, he was teaching us knowledge about ourselves, about what was going on around us. That we should open up our eyes and see what was going on and that was something different from traditional Black History Programs.

Student 6 also indicated that this whole experience has made her more aware.

Here is what Student 6 said:

It made me look at myself and how I treat others. And how others treat me. Whether or not I'm being treated equal. I grew a lot after the program it opened my eyes a lot.

Summary

The student activists saw this experience as something that made them more aware of their realities. It gave them the ability to understand how past events have shaped the current circumstances they face in their everyday life. Much of what the student activists expressed coincides with Kagenga's Kawaita theory. It should also be noted that this experience helped students to see life from an Afrocentric view as espoused by Asante (1988). Vann and Kunjufu (1993) demonstrated how the current curriculum has a Eurocentric value system. This experience for students also coincided with Kincheloe & Steinberg (1997), who noted that critical theory is a very straight forward technique and does not sugarcoat the realities of the African American experience. Since the program, according to the students, was one that interested them and did not sugarcoat historical facts, they became aware of their life

circumstances. This new awareness thus paved the way for them to become empowered.

Theme 4: Empowerment

The works of Freire (1972) discuss how critical pedagogy can empower minority students. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) noted that critical pedagogy is important in improving the lives of oppressed people. The student activists explained how this experience empowered them by giving them a sense of pride and determination.

Another theory that is often associated with the critical theory is the critical incident theory. The critical incident theory explains how an incident can impact the way people view the world. It shapes their behavior and attitudes about certain issues. This school controversy and student protest centered around a Black History Program has helped to shape how the student activists see themselves and the world.

Excerpt and Analysis

Student 1 had very strong feelings about this experience and how it has empowered her. She explained how the experience changed the way she viewed herself, as it gave her more respect for self. Student 1 described the experience by first talking about how the students at the school had territorial fights. Student 1 stated:

Well, by the time that program had come about all of that was put to an end. Because there was a teacher at our school, he was a new teacher, he came straight out of college. And at that time, around 92 or 93 there were territorial fights everyday, I mean 15 to 20 people fighting everyday. But I mean, when

this teacher got there he started to work with the guys who were fighting. And, you know, letting them know that you really don't have anything to be fighting about. And all of that was to be no more, I mean these same guys were at the Black History Program dressed in suits and ties, were from rival communities and they were like walking and talking to each other because they played a major role, a big part in the organization of the Black History Program.

It was the territorial fights that resulted in the students wanting the guest speaker to come from the Nation of Islam.

In this next excerpt, Student 1 describes the reasons for the guest speaker and how she became empowered. Student 1 states:

And that is what led us to wanting to have someone from the Nation of Islam. Because these guys they were on to something, one day they were fighting and the next day they were almost holding hands. They were really feeling close to one another and that was culmination of them being able to tolerate one another. They were becoming friends, they were friends. I think a lot of people took something away from the program and for the most part it was a new self-respect. Those guys who had dressed in the suits and who were from town X and town A who could not get along at the beginning of the year, they were setting an example. Because everybody knew that those guys just couldn't get along and we saw them dressed in ties, suits, and nice shoes. And were standing there with order and discipline. We said, you know, they have something, because any time you can take somebody whose fighting one day and have them cooperating and being friends the next day you have accomplished something. And I think a lot of people took that away from the program. We don't have to be disorderly, you know, we can get along and we can have pride in ourselves and in our school. It doesn't have to be a rukkus all the time.

Student 1 also indicated that she was elated:

I was elated because I was an athlete and before when you went somewhere and you said that you were from this school you almost got laughed at. But when all this started to come about, our school gained more respect. When you said I am from this school, people said, man you better watch out they are tough. They have something going. I was very excited to have anything to do with this program and to be affiliated with this school. Because it wasn't anything to be ashamed of anymore, it was something that we took pride in.

Student 1 felt very strongly about how she was empowered by this whole experience, she discusses this in the following:

Well, it gave me the determination not to just throw my hands up. If it is going to be a fight then we are going to fight, to the end. And we are going to fight until we can't fight anymore. If you believe in something stand behind it, don't just when someone throws the first rock be the first man to duct and run. I mean it's alright to duct as long as you stand back up. It is alright to fall as long as you get up again and don't take things in stride. And say this happened and I am just going to give up. No.

Student 2 explained how the experience has empowered her by stating:

Yes, I am definitely more outspoken about things that I felt strongly about, I look back at Black History in a totally different way than I did before. Because the way we were taught, our Black History was a totally different experience with the teacher in high school and with the Black History Program. I feel that I won't take for granted the history of my ancestors and the leaders that struggled for me to have the rights that I have today.

Student 3 had this to say about how she was empowered:

I see myself more as a leader. And being that I am a mother, I am trying to channel my kids' mind. That she should be a leader, because I was a follower once, it did not work. If you live your life for other people, you are not living your life at all. You live your life for you and that is all that matters.

Student 4 indicated that throughout this experience he felt empowered.

Student 4 explains in detail how he was empowered by the speaker:

I felt empowered because you saw someone who had taken a stand. They knew what they were talking about, he seems well educated. They had to be in order to present those facts. I felt as though I had learned something I had gained something from the total experience. It made a good impression. And that goes back to the stereo types of those students that I saw dressed up in suits and looking neat and presentable. It looked like they had on their Sunday's best. I wouldn't normally see them like that walking around school. And for them to be dressed up and ready for that program, it made others students, younger kids who looked up to them, were like if they can be presentable I can also. It caught your attention, they were acting like young

men that day like more mature men . We realized that the reason we were fighting each other was because we were ignorant and we didn't want to learn from each other. Everyone of us could bring something to the table. And maybe what was going on in my home wasn't going on in somebody else's, but it maybe something that I could learn from that. At one time we weren't seeing, eye to eye, but with the help of that instructor, the teacher, we learned that we could get along, because of that we became good friends. So we learned that being together we were very powerful. What one of us was lacking the other made up for, so we realized that we could voice our opinion to the principal and the school board and we just had to suffer the reperussion. And what we believed was that we had something concrete.

Student 4 explained how his relatives and friends made him feel empowered. He also discussed those White students who participated in the protest:

I remember feeling good about the whole situation. I knew that I was standing up for a cause. I knew I had the support of my grandmother and other family members, my aunts and uncles and even the pastor of the church. It was just good to see all those people there because I didn't feel like I was alone. I remember having the support of the priest and nun. We were happy to have the support of the White students. It showed that the speaker wasn't prejudice if there were White students protesting.

Student 5 explained how she was empowered by this whole experience:

Well, the way the protesting and all the things that happened affected me was that I learned that you don't have to just accept anything. I learned that if you get with a group of people that are commonly together on one thing you can get something done. You don't have to sit around and accept what people give you. Take a stand and get things done. I mean, in my job I ran into a few situations where I was the person, being my age, going through what I have been through, I am the person that took a stand. And said we can do better than this, a lot of the older people just didn't understand because they haven't been through what I have been through. It just made me not fear to take a stand. Cause I already have taken a stand before. If I take a stand I can get something done.

Student 6 described how this experience has empowered her:

I felt good, I actually learned a lot of things. Because he taught me a great deal about things that happened on the plantation. How they did pregnant women, I didn't know all of that, I was actually surprised it was like that. We usually learn about Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks and the civil rights movement, but they don't go into depth about how they were treated during

that time. They stated a few statements, but what he gave was graphic, you could actually see or feel how our people felt. I know that through proper procedure anything can be done. The Black History Program taught me not to let anyone get over one. But the protest, even though everything didn't work out the way we wanted, we still were heard. And it made it much easier for me to know that I spoke my mind, that someone actually listened.

Student 6 explained how this experience affected her at work:

When I am at work and I want something done, and I know its supposed to be done in a certain way, I say we have to do something about this. When management is not doing what they are supposed to be doing. And when we are doing our jobs, we do what they ask us to do and they are not doing what they are supposed to do. So I take a leadership position.

Student 7 discussed how she became empowered as a result of her student activism.

I did learn that students can express themselves and it has helped me in a large way to realize that everything is important. It changed me to realize that you can stand up for something and get your point across. For example, we protested and things were changed. The situation was reevaluated and it turned out to have a good program. I definitely learned that if you can protest in the right manner you can have a good outcome.

Summary

This whole experience for the student activists has empowered them. It has given them a belief that they can accomplish whatever they desire. They also feel that this experience brought out their leadership characteristics.

One of the main goals of education is to bring out the gifts and talents that exist within people. This experience has empowered these former students in their everyday lives, helping them to realize the power and beauty of human potential.

Theme 5: Teachers Who Care

It has been noted that teachers have a dramatic effect on student learning outcomes. When teachers are cognizant of their students' background, this is the first step in the teaching process.

The student protest at Central High School was the result of the transfer of a teacher. Students protested when the teacher who motivated them to achieve their educational goals was transferred from their school.

This protest by the students illustrates that young people want to learn. It also illustrates that they want to change the realities of their condition. What emerged from the researcher's interviews with these students is that they desire teachers who care.

Excerpt and Analysis

This is what Student 1 had to say with regard to how the teacher transfer resulted in student protest:

I'll put it like this: some people didn't like what this teacher was doing to stop these students from fighting. As ironic as it may seem, some people didn't want us to be unified. They wanted us to keep fighting, and keep getting sent home and getting flunked and staying behind and there was always tension around this teacher. Because he was transforming students. Because he was making them do good and have good grades and have pride in themselves. And then after we heard that they transferred the teacher. Now that had something to do with the Black History Program because he was in charge of that. And so they transferred this teacher and I think it was directly related to the Black History Program. Because they didn't want to see Black kids doing well and they transferred this teacher. And that is when a whole riot started. So the after effects of the Black History Program lasted maybe two years over into the transfer of that teacher. And it was always some hush, hush, shoo, shoo, about this teacher. And because he was so compassionate with his students and people were always saying something.

This topic was a very emotional one for Student 1 as she explained how she felt immediately after the transfer of the teacher:

I didn't even want to go to school. If it wasn't for my mom and I was a senior I can honestly say I think I would have dropped out of school. If I didn't have people pushing me. I wasn't the only person that felt like that it was a lot of people that felt like that. To have something just snatched away from you like that something that is so good for no reason. It just devastated myself and all my friends that I was affiliated with because the way I felt about this teacher, I know they felt the same way. And you had no motivation it seemed like, what is the point. Why? Because he was the only one that was teaching us any thing in the first place. You know I have had teachers tell me I am here to get a check, now if you get it that's good, if you don't that is your business. And he wasn't there for a check, he was really sincere and wanted to see that you had gained something from his class and we did, it was on the faces of his students. You could see a new attitude and when they took him away, it was just horrible. I had friends that dropped out of school and hadn't gone back to this day.

Immediately following the transfer of the teacher, Student 1 explained what happened among the students.

Immediately, we began to have petitions signed because our argument at first was if he is so bad, why are you taking him and placing him somewhere else? If he is so horrible why are you taking him and putting him at another school? Why don't you just fire him? If you reason for transferring him is true. So we started to get petitions signed to get him to come back and walked out of class. The school board was like the court they were going to decide if he was going to come back to school and we were protesting in front of the school board, almost every day we were in front of the school board office at least twice a week picketing with signs and were sitting in the school board meetings. Organizing ourselves in case were given the opportunity to say something. We were just protesting and writing letters and trying to get as much media attention as we could to voice our side because what was being told was one side of it.

Student 1 explained some of the personal problems that she had at home as a result of her protest for the teacher to return back to Central High School.

It was just my mom because, you know, my father didn't live with us and at first my mom was telling me you better not get involved with all of that you are fixing to graduate. Just do your work, and as I started to explain to her,

she really didn't know the teacher but when she came to meet him, she said,... I would say mom I'm going to the school board, can I use the car and she would say go ahead. If you need to pick up somebody you can, and normally my mom would tell me if you use my car don't ride nobody else in it but you. And she came to support me because she knew what I was fighting for was worthwhile and I was never the kind of person to follow something that didn't have any kind of meaning. When I showed her that I really felt strongly about this, then she supported me whole heartedly, in my protesting.

Student 1 also explained the emotional and physical stress of the protest and how some of her other family members tried to discourage her from partaking in the protest.

Well, there was a lot of pressure, I had family members telling me what they heard about the teacher. And I should not get involved with that I should just go to school and not be involved with all that. And when you go to class you got your teachers telling you all kinds of things and some friends, I don't consider friends now, but some people were like: protest why, for what? It was a lot of pressure but it didn't seem like it at the time. Now if you looked back at it, it was a lot of strain, emotionally, and physically. We were crying, and holding picket signs, standing outside for three or four hours in the sun. It was definitely a strain but it was worth it.

Finally, Student 1 explained how this teacher impacted her:

As a child I was, I am talking about a young child, I was quiet, to myself, but as I grew older I became more outspoken and even as I grew older around the time of the Black History Program, I grew to be even more outspoken. I was ambitious, I had self confidence, and before, when I was much younger I was embarrassed and I didn't have much self-confidence. But I can't give the Black History Program all the credit because of a lot that came from this teacher. He taught me that I was a young woman and I needed to respect myself in order to get respect. I can remember the times when I would wear my pants off of my behind. Just like some of the guys would, but when he saw you like that, he would come over and explain to you. He would not just say don't do that he would explain to you why and I grew aware of myself. Things that I used to do I didn't do any more because I had a respect for myself and now as a woman every day I can see a lesson that I have learned from this man. You know, just showing me life's little lessons, that you learn, I got a lot of them from him. Now I think that I can do anything that I want to do. You know I don't have any boundaries or limitations unless I set them for myself, it is not anything you can say, you can't do this because you are not smart enough, if I put my mind to it I can.

Student 1 has used this experience as a motivational tool to help her achieve her goals. She plans to one day have the same impact on young people as this teacher had on her. Student 1 also wants to become a teacher, so she can give back to children who grew up like her. However, one of her major goals is to become a school administrator where she feels she can have a greater impact. Currently, Student 1 is one year away from completing a bachelor's degree in social studies Education. She often reflects on her family condition and realizes that she must keep striving to be the first in her family to complete college.

Student 2 explained how she felt about the transfer of the teacher and the impact this teacher had on the students:

Well, the particular teacher they were trying to remove was the only teacher at the school that motivated Black students to really try hard and succeed. And he was the only teacher that taught the students the real background and the struggles that Black people had to go through and the importance of being a strong Black citizen. And I think it really struck a nerve when the students saw they were trying to take him away from us. When he is the only positive teacher that we have in the school to look up to because he was the only one that hit home about being strong Black people. I think they were really offended by and took it serious, took it to heart.

Student 2 also talked about the student protest after the teacher was transferred:

Yes, I know for sure some of the athletes and the student in my class, you know there were really a lot of people who were outspoken and really wanted to get their point across. When the reporters came everybody was willing to say something on behalf of the teacher they spoke so well and so clear because they really felt the importance of getting their point across. They really wanted the teacher to stay at the school, they didn't want to lose what they waited so long to have in the first place.

Student 2 has recently been married and hopes to work one day in the computer technology field. She sees this experience as one that has given her the will to accomplish despite the odds.

Student 3 felt a need to protest the teacher transfer. She felt that this teacher had given her insight. She explained the student protest and her feeling about the teacher:

Well, because they transferred a teacher whom I say had no reason to be transferred in the first place. This teacher I thought , which I was a part of the protest, the teacher brought insight about what I should look forward to in the future. The teacher had in the class guest speakers that came in and talked to us. They also spent time with us as a student body and felt that the teacher should not have been transferred. I was apart of the protest and the media did hear what I had to say.

This is what Student 4 had to say about the transfer of the teacher and the student protest that followed:

The removal of the teacher was what sparked the protest. I can speak on my behalf, the teacher was very beneficial to me, because he pushed me to do things in school that I probably would not have done. Had I not been under his guidance. They wanted to remove that teacher and also there was the controversy when the principal was fired. I was a part of the protest and we were standing in front of the school board with flyers and the school board is on Main Street. They had people who were stopping. And many who joined in the protest. Some even went in to attend the meeting, I think at some point they closed the meeting because they had so many people. They were filled to capacity. There were a lot of people protesting outside. We were also protesting because there used to be fights between students and that teacher had actually brought students together. So we came together from different communities and actually began to appreciate the differences we had and so we decided to come together. And there were also parents. I remember meeting with a prominent Black figure in the community. The parents got together and discussed and some of the students got together. I remember myself being one of them. There were also White students protesting with us. We felt they also some good in the teacher. And also the teacher was well liked by all the students. And he made the hard heads listen. I remember I wrote an article about the protest and about 1/3 of the students were White.

Student 5 explained how this teacher motivated her and other students. When she found out that this teacher was going to be transferred, she felt the need to take part in the protest.

Well, when they transferred the teacher they knew they were taking away something from the students. Because this teacher was a person that really understood the students and he took time out to sit and talk with us and they felt if they took this person away the school would be under control or something. The reason I took part was because I felt it was just plain wrong. Because this teacher taught us real Black History, he wasn't a person that just sat around and took anything. He didn't teach out of the book. He taught us about the world, he brought in the newspaper, he brought in things that were going on currently and that was the best thing for the students. And they took the best thing from the students away.

Student 6 talked about the protest and the demands students requested.

Well, we were very organized, we got together and decided we weren't going to let the teacher be transferred. He had changed a lot of our lives, got a lot of students off of the street. And we didn't feel it was right to take his job away or move him. Because he had done so much for our school. We were told that if we didn't go back to class the police would take us away. I was involved because I felt he was a good teacher. And he was doing things on our behalf. He wasn't doing things to make himself look good, he cared about us and he wanted us to have everything that we could have. Anything was possible, he wanted to make sure that when we got into the world we were ready for it.

Summary

The student activists narrated that the major cause of the student protest was the transfer of the teacher who had organized the Black History Program. The students felt that this teacher had helped them in numerous ways. This demonstrates that teachers do have the power to help change the reality of students. It should be noted that as the students mentioned, genuine relationships are needed to help students achieve their educational goals.

Theme 6: Voice in School Curriculum

The curriculum for most school districts in the U.S. has not changed dramatically. While there have been some changes, very few schools have allowed students the opportunity to have a voice in the curriculum. This has caused students to disregard many of the curricular activities implemented within the schools.

The student activists narrated that the traditional Black History Program did not allow students to have a voice. Students thought that by having a voice in this Black History Program it created a desired learning opportunity. The students' interest and participation illustrated this, since it had not been present in the traditional Black History Programs. Some students also expressed what they wanted policy makers to know about the implementation of Black History Programs.

Excerpt and Analysis

Student 1 talked about what she felt school administrators need to know when implementing a Black History Program into the curriculum.

I would tell them to get input from the students. I mean you, are not having a Black History Program for the teachers. You are having it for the students, that is your whole point in waking up and going to work every day. So that you can make it better for the students to improve their condition. I would definitely tell them to have a relationship with the students and the schools that you govern, don't be the person that's just making the laws and never see the people that it is affecting. Have an active relationship in your school and just remember that you can learn something from the student, don't go there and think that I am the boss and this is the way it is going to be. Because people can open your eyes to a lot of things if you let them and I would suggest take an active role in getting to know the students. These are basically your employers, if the students didn't go to school you don't have a job, and not to say that in a threatening manner. In just an awareness, listen to the students even if it is a D-minus student. If he or she is talking he must

have something to say. And try to refine your students, don't just go to work to collect a check.

Student 2 had this to say to school administrators and board members about

Black History Programs:

I would tell them first off that they can say things that might offend White people but it is not White History Month. It is Black History Month and as long as the speaker is telling the truth and getting a powerful message to the Black kids let them say what it is they feel. If it is going to make a difference in just one kids life then say it regardless of who's watching.

Student 3 had the following advice for school board members and administrators:

I would say to them, you find a good teacher that is going to influence young minds, because I was there, I was a student and the speaker influenced my mind better than any one else at a Black History Program. In the other programs that were in the past you could say that I was going to sleep, but this speaker spoke and I was up and awake. Find somebody that is going to motivate young minds instead of putting them to sleep.

Student 4 explained how he felt about Black History implementation. He

talked about the need for Black History and how he would feel if it was taken out of the curriculum.

Recently at another school they were talking about not having a Black History Program, but just as at that school, we felt that Black History Program was needed. You notice in our American History books there are few Black people that are mentioned and they are scattered. Or they will talk more about slavery. And I know as an African American person that is not all we had as far as history. I think that it is very important to have Black History in the schools, because of what is left out of books. And what people don't include. Because it is not necessary. But history is important for the Black student so they can feel a part of, not just about, slavery. I would become upset if Black History was not there. Because I would feel that we would be at a disadvantage, not being able to have Black History Programs in our schools. I think that it is a time when everyone can gain something and I think everyone gets something out of the programs, if they are structured right, both Black and White students and whatever other races you would have present.

I would say that it is important to be familiar with the school, some people just want to recite poems. It is important to have a quality Black History Program. I guess I would be the thorn in their sides because I would be interested in putting together a Black History Program that has quality. I would also say that it is a waste of time to have students just sing songs for a Black History Program, make it worthwhile for students.

Student 5 had this to say about the implementation of Black History Programs:

I would let the school board know we are in a world of change. We need to get off of that traditional stuff. Our Black kids need to know some today history, the things that are going on today and thing that are going on right around them. I would let them know that we need a Black History Program that is going to teach, instead of something that has already been taught. They need new information, that is what the students are looking for, they want to know something new. They don't want to hear the same old Martin Luther King and Harriet Tubman, that's old. We want something new and that is what a lot of kids are hungering for, that is why a lot of kids don't care about school. They are tired of that old stuff, they want something new. And every time something new comes in they want to kick it out.

Student 5 was very expressive about how she felt toward school board members and administrators with regard to the implementation of Black History.

Student 6 indicated that she felt that if students were given a voice they would be self motivated:

If you put things in students want to learn they may learn things they do not want to learn because they know something is in the curriculum that they want. It would encourage them to do better in the classroom.

Student 7 had a lot to say about the voice that students should have in the curriculum. She begins her narration by first talking about what led to the protest at her school. Student 7 indicated that the protest was a direct result of student non-involvement. The following is student 7's narration of events:

The student body at Central South has always had a Black History Program where every student is allowed to be in the gymnasium. However, this year they decided to split the program into three separate programs and that way

not everyone would be together as a unified student body. In the first program that was held the content was not exactly what the students expected. That included African American students and White American students. Whenever we put on a program in the past it would be a program that would relate the past Black people to current Black people. And this program was not what students expected. Some students became angry about it, at first, and then it turned into a protest. In the past I myself and other students helped to put the program together. This program was put together by a committee of teachers and that caused a conflict. But when students were involved, then naturally we have a keen insight about what the students want. I was Student Council President and I was aware that the program was going to be put on by a certain group of teachers, however, I was unaware that the students felt this strongly about it.

Summary

The student activists narrated that one of the primary reasons for problems associated with the Black History Program is the lack of student input. Student activists feel that administrators and board members should be cognizant of their concerns. When administrators and school board members try to dismiss student needs and demands the result is student protest. The researcher has come to understand through this interview process the need for student voices when implementing a curriculum. If anything the students want to be stakeholders in their educational process. Student activists demanding a voice in the curriculum process is not something new, the question is when will policy makers listen?

Summary of the Six Themes

The six major themes that emerged from this study were misinformation, monocultural attitudes, awareness, teachers who care, and a voice in the school curriculum. These themes emerged from the narration of student activists.

The student activists indicated that the major reason for the controversy around the Black History Program at Central South was a result of misinformation. Activists noted that the controversy began when a few White teachers and students walked out of the Black History Program. Some of the participants noted there was misinformation on the part of students, teachers, and news media. The majority of the student activists believed that some of the White teachers and students took the words of the guest speaker out of context. This misinformation, according to the students, was further carried out by the news media, which one student believed was biased toward White students.

The second theme that emerged from this study was monocultural attitudes. Monocultural attitudes on the part of some White teachers and students resulted in what African American students called disrespect. According to student activists, the walkout by some White teachers and students showed their disrespect for other cultures. One student indicated that this program, unlike other programs, had the "attention of the students, and for teachers to walk out was disrespect". Another student stated that African American students "sit and learn White History and we don't walk out". Perhaps a student who said that some Whites don't see Black History as being a part of history best illustrates the monocultural attitudes.

The third theme that emerged from this study was awareness. Student activists in this study talked about how they became more aware as a result of this Black History Program and student protest. The student activists discussed how they were more inclined to study more, as opposed to just accepting what people told them. The students said this experience has made them more aware of what is going

on around them. This awareness, according to one student, helps her to look at her self and how she treats other people.

The fourth theme that emerged from this study was empowerment. The activists narrated how this experience has given them a sense of empowerment. Student activists mentioned that they are more outspoken and assume leadership roles in their everyday lives. One student who is currently a mother talked about how she moved from the role of a follower to that of a leader. She believes that it is important for her child to understand that there is a time when one must assume leadership responsibilities.

Those students who work indicated that they take leadership positions in their occupations. The college students talked about their ability to achieve any goal they desire. College students also talked about how this has resulted in them having better communication skills. One student said it was just empowering to know that you can express yourself and get positive results.

The fifth theme that emerged from this study was that students want teachers who care about them. The reason for the student protest was a result of the transfer of a teacher whom students felt cared about them. Student activists felt that the transfer of this teacher was unjust and demonstrated the desire of those in power to continue their oppression of African American students. One student stated that not everyone in the school system wanted students to be unified; these are her words: "they wanted us to keep fighting and keep getting sent home and getting flunked out". As a result, when this teacher who had empowered students was transferred, the students demonstrated their new found unity, in the result of a protest. Another

student indicated that this teacher was the only teacher that really motivated Black students to achieve. It should also be noted that after the controversy around the Black History Program, White students began to see the importance of Black History as a result of this teacher. Students were able to understand that there is unity in diversity. One student alluded to this by stating that it was both Black and White students that participated in the student protest. This student felt that the participation of White students demonstrated that they saw some good in this teacher in addition to Black History. The student summed it up by saying that this teacher was well liked by all the students. Student protest at Central High School illustrates that students want teachers who care about them.

The sixth theme that emerged from this study is that students want a voice in the school curriculum. This theme emerged at the close of the interview process, as the activists were very passionate about the need for Black History in the school curriculum. Some of the students had indicated that they wanted an opportunity to voice their opinions to school board members and school administrators. The students expressed that there must be an understanding of the needs of students with regard to the curriculum planning. Activists felt that those needs could best be adhered to, by allowing students to have a voice in the curriculum process. It was also believed by student activists that a voice in the school curriculum would motivate students to master current curriculum.

A voice in the school curriculum was the one thing that an interviewee from an outside school confirmed. The student activist's from an outside school stated that the reason for the protest at her school was a result of not having students involved in

the planning of the Black History Program. When the program did not meet the standards of the students they protested and their demands were met. What followed was a Black History Program planned by students. This program, according to this student, was quite successful, and demonstrates why students should have a voice in the curriculum.

Chapter VI

Discussion, Implication, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find out about the narrative experience of student activists with regard to a Black History Program and student protest in a Louisiana high school. A qualitative study was used to conduct this research. Since the researcher wanted to find out how the student activists experienced this phenomenon, a phenomenological study was used. The researcher used an in-depth interview technique to gather the data. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings, the implications of the study, recommendations for school districts, school administrators, parents, and students. This chapter also includes recommendations for future research, and provides final remarks.

Discussion of Findings

I will now compare the themes found in the in-depth interviews and demonstrate how they relate to the areas within the literature reviewed in Chapter II. This section will be followed by recommendations.

Critical Incident

Tripp (1993) notes that critical incidents are events or situations that mark a significant turning point in ones' life. The critical incident is not viewed as being

dramatic at first, it is seen as a normal event. However, these normal events usually become critical as a result of what was said or written in response to the event.

The findings of this study indicate that the Black History Program that took place at a Louisiana High School was at first seen as a normal event. When the controversy erupted over the Black History Program, causing it to make headline news, the event became a critical incident for the student activists. The students indicated that this program and the events surrounding it made them become aware of the racial attitudes they encountered. They also indicated they were more aware of past events and how those events shaped their lives.

Critical Theory

The term critical theory emerged from the Frankfurt school of thought. This theory is primarily concerned with improving the lives of oppressed people (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). Freire (1972), while working with oppressed minority groups, used the term critical pedagogy to describe teaching methods used to empower minority students. It should also be noted that critical pedagogy is a straight-forward approach to teaching; it does not lend itself to sugarcoating or watering down the realities of everyday life for minority people. Critical theory (pedagogy) is seen as a way to empower students.

This study found that critical pedagogy empowers minority youth. The difference between this Black History Program and the previous Black History Programs was that the speaker used critical pedagogy. The students indicated that the speaker did not sugarcoat the realities of history. One student even said that the

speaker brought to the table some issues that most people were afraid to confront. Students also mentioned that critical pedagogy was used by one of their teachers. A student indicated that the teacher brought in newspapers and current events; another student talked about the teacher bringing in guest speakers. The use of critical pedagogy empowered the student activists in this study. Events associated with the Black History Program and student protest have given the student activists a sense of empowerment. Student activists indicated that they felt empowered, all of these events have given student activists the determination to strive for achievement. They also indicated that they became more outspoken. Initially, the students indicated that they would not speak out about certain issues.

It should also be noted that the sense of empowerment is seen in the every day lives of student activists. Some of these activists indicated that when they are on the job, and something happens that is contrary to what they believe, they speak out against it. Perhaps one of the greatest things that I think student activists gained from this experience is that they understand there is power in unity. When people are united for a common cause they can voice their opinions in a peaceful manner. The sense of empowerment for one student activist was that the student protest transcended ethnicity.

Kawaida Theory

African American scholar Karenga developed the Kawaida theory. Karenga (1982) believes that history is important in helping African Americans to understand present and future possibilities. Essentially, Kawaida theory is designed to help

African Americans get a better understanding of who they are in the context of history. Kawaida theory, according to Karenga, will help African Americans develop a true self-concept.

Research findings indicate that Kawaida theory is important in helping students understand how past events have shaped current conditions. Student activists mentioned under theme awareness how they became cognizant of past events and how those events have shaped the current circumstances of the individual lives of students. One student mentioned that the speaker at this Black History Program noted that the obstacles confronting African Americans today were shaped by past events. Another student indicated that the speaker was teaching African Americans knowledge about “ourselves”.

Controversy Around Black History

In 1926, when Carter G. Woodson implemented the study of Negro History Week, his idea was meant with hostility. What followed was a debate about the value of Negro History for African American children. Opponents of Woodson argued that Negro History Week would divide the country. It was also believed that Negro History would result in the teaching of race, which was something children should not be exposed to. Finally, opponents of Negro History argued that this type of education would be harmful to African American children.

Woodson argued that Negro History would not divide the country as it was already divided. Negro History, according to Woodson, would serve the purpose of helping African Americans understand themselves. It would further help African

Americans to become educated so they could do for themselves. Woodson thought that children should be taught Negro History as they were confronted with the race problem every day.

What has followed, 84 years after the Carter G. Woodson idea of Negro History Week, is the debate about Afrocentricity (Black History) and Multicultural Education. Opponents of Black History and Multicultural Education have mentioned that teaching Black History is a way of teaching mythology. Another recent argument is that Black history will result in the corruption of history. Furthermore it is argued that this will result in the self ghettoization of African Americans. One of the primary reasons of this research project was to examine the controversy that existed as a result of a Black History Program. The Black History Program in a Louisiana school prompted school officials and media attention the day following the program. It was reported that some White teachers and students walked out of the program. As a result of the White teachers and students walking out it was reported that African American students would attack White students.

Research findings from this study indicate that four major themes emerged as a result of the controversy around this Black History Program. Those four themes include misinformation, monocultural attitudes, awareness, and empowerment.

Student activists indicated that much of the controversy around this Black History Program was a result of misinformation. The students indicated that what the speaker said in the program was taken out of context by a few White teachers and students. Student activists indicated that the next day when they arrived at school a contingent of law enforcement and school board officials were present as a result of

misinformation. One student indicated that there were rumors that Black students would jump on White students and that White students would jump on Black students. Other students noted that some White teachers and students did not attend school the next day because of fear they would be attacked. Another student indicated that the media did not portray the events at the Black History Program properly. The misinformation that followed this Black History Program added to the already controversial issue of Black History.

Monocultural attitude was one of the themes that emerged from the controversy surrounding this Black History Program. The student activists noted that the previous year, before the Black History Program, all of the White students checked out of school. Student activists also noted that they endure Eurocentric history throughout the year. Activists felt that the monocultural attitudes by some White teachers and students indicated their disrespect for Black History and Black people. One student felt that if Black History month is the only time that African Americans hear something positive about themselves, then why should White students oppose this day or month? All of the students felt that the monocultural attitudes of White students and teachers was a sign of disrespect.

Awareness was another theme that emerged from the in-depth interviews. The student activists indicated that they became more aware of racial oppression. Students indicated that by becoming aware they were better able to understand the circumstances that existed in their everyday lives. Contrary to opponents of Black History, none of the students indicated that Black History encouraged them to take a

monocultural attitude toward other ethnic groups. One student even pointed out, “I am not a racial person”.

The research findings also suggest that Black History empowers African American students. All of the students indicated that Black History empowered them in some way. The students said they gained self-respect, unity, and developed leadership characteristics. One student even indicated that her grades began to improve. The research findings from this study indicate that Black History is important in the education of African American youth.

Characteristics of Student Activists

Kula (1970) mentioned that student activists come from middle class families. Kenniston (1969), in his study of students who protested Vietnam, noted that student activists saw themselves as unique individuals.

The findings of this research are contrary to the findings of Kula who stated student activists come from middle-class families. All of the student activists in this study indicated that they came from poor families. Most of the student activists in this study came from families whose parents did not complete college. Some of the students stated that their parents only completed high school or grade school. One student mentioned that both parents could not read or write. The information provided by students did not provide any information regarding how the student activists viewed themselves in relationship to Kenniston’s study.

Demands of Student Activists

The literature review noted two major demands of student activists. Those two demands include relevant classroom instruction and teachers who care. Kula (1970) concluded that student activists want a curriculum that is relevant. This relevant curriculum is action-oriented, and allows students to participate in current social issues. In sum, this means that the student activists want a voice in the school curriculum.

Rosenthal and Jacobson (1967) found that students want teachers who care and have high expectations of them. This, according to Rosenthal and Jacobsen, contributes to the self-fulfilling prophecy students.

Research findings from the study indicated that students want a voice in the school curriculum. The findings also indicate that students want teachers who care about them. The themes voice in the school curriculum, and teachers who care, were important factors that contributed to the student protest.

Some of the students indicate that this Black History Program was different because students were more involved with the planning. One of the students activist who was from another school indicated that the protest at her school was a result of students not being involved with the planning of the Black History Program. When the students protested for a different type of Black History Program, administrators then allowed students to make decisions about the type of Black History Program to be implemented. This resulted in a short protest and was followed by a successful Black History Program. In conclusion, student activists gave their advice for school districts, and administrators planning to implement Black History Programs into the

curriculum. In their own voices students indicated that having a relationship between students and school administrators is important.

The cause of the student protest at Central High School was a result of the transfer of the teacher who organized the Black History Program. Student activists indicated that this teacher had helped to ascertain many of their educational goals. Furthermore, the teacher cared about them and helped them to understand each other. The student activists protested when the teacher they felt had made significant changes in their lives was transferred. A student noted that this protest, which occurred a year after the Black History Program, had both Black and White student activists. This demonstrated, according to the students, that all students want teachers who care about them. Other students mentioned that the transfer of this teacher disturbed them. One student noted that many students dropped out of school as a result of the teacher being transferred. In the final analysis, students want teachers who care about them.

Implication of the Study

This study has given the researcher insight into the problems that exist around the implementation of Black History Programs into the curriculum. The study provided information about the reasons for the controversy that surround Black History Programs. It also described how student activists felt about the administrative changes that took place in a Louisiana high school. The researcher is confident that the information from this study could help school districts and school administrators planning to implement Black History Programs into the curriculum.

By being cognizant of the issues around the implementation of Black History Programs into the curriculum school districts and school administrators can have insight about how to make Black History Programs a rewarding experience for all students. This will hopefully put to rest many of the myths and misconceptions about the value and purpose of Black History. This study used detailed narrative information to support its interpretation process. It is believed that this can serve as a detailed dynamic compliment to other studies.

In another context, it is hoped that this dissertation will give insight about student activism with regard to Black History Programs. It could further serve the purpose of examining the impact of a relevant Black History curriculum on the attitudes and achievement level of African American students. The study adds to the literature information about high school student protest and it's impact on student activists.

Overview of Recommendations

This study included the narrative experience of student activists regarding a Black History Program and student protest in a Louisiana high school. The study provided the researcher with information needed to make recommendations for the following: school districts, school administrators, parents, and students.

Recommendations for School Districts

The following are recommendations for school districts planning to implement Black History Programs into the curriculum. School districts should: 1)

develop a policy; 2) require Black History, Multicultural workshops for staff; and 3) initiate a district-wide Black History Program.

A policy should be developed by school districts outlining rules and regulations to be followed by schools when implementing Black History Programs into the curriculum. The rules should not include whom to invite as guest speakers or what type of program to implement. The rules should simply enforce the implementation of Black History Programs and outline time periods when activities should occur. One reason there is a disinterest in Black History Programs is that they are oft times held during the last period of the school day. This suggests that Black History Programs are not important.

Secondly, school districts should have Black History, Multicultural Education workshops. This should begin with school board members and administrators since they ultimately will decide the implementation of Black History, Multicultural Education implementation into the curriculum. This process will be very difficult as it will require board members and administrators to literally be re taught about the history of African Americans/Multiethnic groups, which will hopefully replace Eurocentric dominance in education. The researcher realizes that this process for board members and administrators is equivalent to a man who has robbed you and then gives you directions to the police. However, there should be forces in place to demand board members to participate in these training workshops. The researcher will allude to this more in the community recommendations. School districts should also require all district faculty to attend Black History, Multicultural Education sessions. These sessions should be provided to all employees before the start of the

new school year. These teaching sessions should include a variety of Black History, Multicultural Education specialists. School districts can determine specialists by having community-based discussions and following prominent African American leadership.

Finally, school districts should implement a district-wide Black History Program. The district-wide Black History Program would foster a greater appreciation for Black History. This event should be rotated to various schools within the school district. The researcher believes that this would foster better relationships between various schools and communities. Students would not see themselves as rivals, but as a unified peoples and community. It should be noted that when the researcher suggest unified peoples and communities this is not limited to African Americans. Imagine a unified student populace, transcending race, class, ethnicity, all working for a more equitable society.

Recommendations for School Administrators

This section provides recommendations for school administrators planning to implement Black History Programs into the school curriculum. School administrators should: 1) establish a school policy; 2) provide multicultural staff development education; 3) promote student dialogue; 4) confer with students, and 5) plan Black History Programs in advance.

Administrators should establish a school policy with regard to the implementation of Black History Programs. The policy should begin with a mission

statement from school administrators. It should then be followed by a plan of action, which gives instructions about the implementation of Black History Programs.

Secondly, school districts should provide additional Black History, Multicultural Education for staff. The Black History, Multicultural Education for staff development would reinforce the district-wide education plan. Whereas the district plan may require teachers to meet two to three days prior to the opening of school, the school plan could require meetings once a month. The researcher believes that this would be an effective plan and would not be a fly-by-night plan.

Thirdly, school administrators should set times when students can have dialogue about issues regarding Black History and Multicultural Education. The purpose of dialogue is that it would prepare students for upcoming activities. It also helps students to value diversity among people. Periods of dialogue do not have to interfere with the regular school day. These periods can be held in homeroom before school starts, or during the morning activity schedules. Finally, dialogue would give students the opportunity to discuss the type of Black History Program they would like.

Fourthly, school administrators should confer with students and student advisors to ascertain their ideas about the implementation of Black History Programs. The students indicated that administrators should listen to student concerns. As the students stated, the school is there to provide a service for them, it is not entirely up to the school administrators to decide the type of program that is implemented for a particular school year. One of the themes that emerged from the study was teachers who care. When administrators listen to students, it portrays to students that the

administrator cares about the students needs. It is important to note that when students were involved with the implementation of the Black History Program they were more attentive. When students do not have a stake in Black History Programs they protest in a variety of ways. It is therefore important for school administrators to confer with students and their advisors.

Finally, Black History Programs should not be planned at the last minute. Black History Programs should be planned well in advance of the date that they are going to take place. Careful planning allows for individual creativity to be perfected in preparation for the program. The Black History Program in 1994 at Central High School was carefully planned and this impressed upon the students its importance. Students expressed that they were attentive because they saw young men dressed in suits and ties. Planning is an essential part of making Black History Programs a success.

Recommendations for Parents

This section provides recommendations for parents when implementing Black History/Multicultural programs into the curriculum. Parents should: 1) develop a strong Parent Teacher Organization; 2) become politically active, and 3) Get involved with their children's education.

Parents should develop a strong Parent Teacher Organization. This organization should develop a mission statement as it pertains to Black History. Of course, there may be parents who may not see the need for Black History Programs; however this is why it is important for Parent Teacher Organizations to seek ways to

provide educational training for parents. This awareness will hopefully dispel many of the myths and misconceptions that many parents were taught in school. Parent Teacher Organizations must seek some way to at least have consensus about this issue. If consensus cannot be reached then parents who wish to see Black History Programs implemented into the curriculum should develop their own organization that promotes Black History Programs. This study has indicated that Black History can impact student attitudes about themselves. Therefore, it is imperative that parents push to see its implementation into the curriculum.

Parents must become politically active throughout their communities. They must form a force within the district that can have school board members voted out of office when their demands are not met. This will require economic resources that can be provided by civic organizations such as churches, businesses, etc. Parents should meet with individuals aspiring to be board members and require them to participate in Multicultural Educational workshops once elected. They should also seek to find out about school board candidate's attitudes about Black History/Multicultural Education.

It is important for parents to get involved with their children's education. Many of the students indicated that a teacher at the school would constantly use racial remarks when referring to African American children. This should have been stopped when it first began; however, because parents were not involved with their children's education it resulted in a student being expelled from school. Schools are supposed to nurture the gifts and talents of students. However, for African Americans, school has been a place to destroy their aspirations to achieve. Parents must not sit by and continue to let their children be subjugated to false ideas and

concepts. Being poor and having little education should not be an excuse to get involved with your children's education. Until parents become active in their children's education, those in power will continue to enforce a Eurocentric curriculum.

Recommendations for Students

This section lists recommendations for students when implementing Black History Programs into the curriculum. Students should: 1) develop a strong student government association; 2) continue to demand a voice, and, 3) be prepared to protest.

Students should develop a strong student government organization. A strong student organization will be able to voice the demands of students. The student government association should work to see that students have a voice in the implementation of Black History Programs. The link between administrators, teachers and students is the student government association. Furthermore, a strong student government association will be capable of mobilizing students and parents with regard to the implementation of Black History Programs.

Students should continue to demand a voice in the planning of relevant curriculum. As one student indicated, not all school board members, school administrators, and teachers are concerned with making students better individuals. If students continue to push for Black History Programs, administrators will be forced to listen to these demands. Student voices are important; it is like going to the doctor and not being capable of telling him what ails you. The patient must tell the doctor

what ails him or her in order for the doctor to suggest a possible cure. In the same manner, students should voice their ideas.

Finally, students should be prepared to protest. One of the greatest aspects of American society is the right to protest for rights. Students should familiarize themselves with peaceful protest tactics that may be necessary to use when school districts, administrators and teachers seek to oppress them. Schools have recently witnessed new forms of student protest where students have begun to shoot teachers and fellow schoolmates. It is suggested that students should use Banks (1999) social action approach to solving problems. This would require students to get involved with activities that will “allow them to take personal, social, and civic actions related to the concepts, problems, issues that they have studied”. Students should remember that the school is their servant and they should use the school to gain valuable life experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

This section provides recommendations for future research about the implementation of Black History Programs and student activism. The following recommendations are suggested for future research.

Future research should seek to find out about the attitudes of administrators toward the implementation of Black History Programs into the curriculum. This study would give us an idea about the attitudes of administrators toward Black History/Multicultural Education. The study could employ quantitative and qualitative research methods.

It is also suggested that a future study should look at the impact of Black History on student achievement across a variety of states. The suggested methodology would be a quantitative study. This study would add validity to the argument about the necessity of Black History implementation into the curriculum.

Finally, it is suggested that a future study look at student activism and how students view the current school curriculum. The researcher suggests that this study be a qualitative study as to ascertain how students experience current school curriculum.

Concluding Remarks

The researcher interviewed student activists about their experiences of a Black History Program and student protest. A modified Seidman (1998) interview technique provided the research with the data needed to complete this study. The researcher notes that this research project has taken two years to complete. It first began as a case study, and for this dissertation evolved into a phenomenological study. As the researcher began to put the literature review together he was surprised to see the amount information relevant to this study. When the researcher entered the interview process and began to actually interview students, the emotions at times seemed to send a shock wave through the researcher.

An in-depth interview technique provided the researcher with the opportunity gain valuable information from the participants. Despite the small number of participants, their experience provided the researcher with an abundance of information. The researcher was able to observe how emotions shifted through out

the three phases of the interview process. As the stories began to unfold the researcher at times watched the students eyes swell up with tears. At this point, the researcher would pause and allow the students to continue to narrate their experiences. Some of the students expressed their happiness at being able to tell their stories. It should also be noted that there were periods when the researcher had to restrain his emotion and focus on the job at hand.

This opportunity to study the narrative experiences of student activists has given the researcher and student activists the opportunity to close this chapter of their lives and move on to what lies ahead.

Finally, the great debate over Black History implementation into the curriculum is something the researcher feels should not even be debatable. Opponents of Black History implementation have not provided any information that proves that Black History is not good for African American children or any children for that matter. The researcher would like to know how many of the opponents of Black History have ever taught African American children? Research findings have continued to suggest that Black History can impact student attitudes and achievement. It is the researcher's aspirations to continue to struggle for the implementation of Black History and Multicultural Education implementation into school curriculum. In conclusion, it is the researcher's belief that Black History and Multicultural Education are good for all children.

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