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**BLACK HISTORY MONTH:  
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF A CURRICULUM FOR  
INCREASING THE KNOWLEDGE OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS'  
KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY**

by

Monique Nicole Goodwin

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Services, and Leadership  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in School Psychology  
at  
Rowan University  
May 1, 2015

Thesis Chair: Terri Allen, Ph.D.

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents and daughter. Without their patience, understanding, support, and most of all love, the completion of this work would not have been possible

## **Abstract**

Monique Goodwin

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH:**

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF A CURRICULUM FOR INCREASING  
THE KNOWLEDGE OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF AFRICAN-  
AMERICAN HISTORY**

2014/15

Terri Allen, Ph. D.

Master of Arts in School Psychology

The significance of this current study was to show the importance of Black History being added to the curriculum for elementary students of all ethnicities, but especially with the African-American children. During this study the students were given a pre- and post-test on the Civil Rights Movement for the month of February. The study consisted of 40 students from an upper elementary school located in southern New Jersey. Of the participants 26 were female and 14 were male; there are 4 special needs students and 2 in a reading program called Read 180. All were in the 6th grade with ages ranging from 11-13 years old. The ethnic groups of the children that participated in this study were: 27 African-American, 6 Caucasians, 5 Hispanic, 1 Asian, and 1 Indian child. The students were given a pre-test that consisted of questions about the Civil Rights Movement, which were given at the end of January. Later once the teacher had taught the students about Civil Rights Movement by using videos, PowerPoints, discussions, and worksheet; the students were given the post test at the end of February. The results exhibited from the study were able to show that all students in the study made a great gain in knowledge about the Civil Rights Movement, not just the African-American students.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Statement of Needs

Carter G. Woodson was known for his contribution for African-American history, and through his writings he helped catapult Black History into the national spotlight it now receives. Dr. Woodson is not only the 2<sup>nd</sup> African American to receive a doctorate from Harvard University, but he is also the founder of Black History Month (Logan, 1951). Dr. Carter G. Woodson launched Negro History Week in 1926, chosen in the second week of February between the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, which evolved into Black History Month in 1976 (Logan, 1951). *The Miseducation of the Negro* was published in 1933 which was a well-known book written by Dr. Woodson. In *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Dr. Woodson challenges black people to educate themselves, and not wait to be given opportunities. Woodson believed in the study of Black History that it could be used to counter white racial chauvinism, which was used to rationalize the oppression of black people in America (Logan, 1951). The distortions and deletions in the American historical record as it pertains to race matters, Woodson believed, was detrimental to the health of a nation whose inherent promise is life, liberty and justice for all. Perhaps more importantly, Woodson knew that in a society where black intelligence and moral worth is incessantly demeaned and devalued, studying Black History would serve as a psychological defense shield for African-American students against the assaults of white supremacy (Gonsalves, n.d).

There is a presumption that African-American children know their history, because Black History month exists. Though Dr. Woodson's intentions were for African-

American people to grasp all that they could about their history, it did not evolve into the dream he had planned. Many black children only have the basic knowledge of their history, they do not understand any more than any other ethnic group about their own culture. Many have wondered if a black child's lack of knowledge has caused any harm to their racial identity, while at the same time causing harm to those that are unsympathetic to the struggles that black people have been through.

My current study will show how essential it is for Black History to be taught to all children in all schools, at least once a year. There are some that would argue that it is the parents' responsibility to teach their children about their history. On the other hand another person could argue that U.S. History is taught every year and is a requirement for college, but Black History is not required to be taught on any level. Unfortunately, the only times African-American people are discussed in U.S. History are in a negative light, usually as slaves. The definition of a slave is someone who is legally owned by another person and is forced to work for that person without pay (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.). Any African-American child that reads about slavery is not going to have pride in themselves; instead they would feel the total opposite of pride: anger, sadness, and hopelessness. Dr. Woodson had a vision for young black people and it wasn't for the current state that Black History is in, where only two people, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks receive the most credit for everything that has happened in Black History. Though both of these individuals have made great achievements for African-American people, there are many more African-Americans that have made great strides, also. This is what Dr. Woodson wanted everyone to know when studying Black History.

## **1.2 Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to show the significance of Black History for all children. If more Black History were taught in schools then a greater number of black children would have pride in themselves; possibly causing them to do better academically. At the same time a greater number of other ethnic groups would understand what black people went through, which in turn could make them more compassionate to the struggles that presently affect African-Americans. In this study the researcher will give a group of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students a pretest and posttest on people and events that have taken place during the Civil Rights Movement. This will enable the researcher to see the gain in knowledge that is made while learning about very important events in history and the major people that played a consequential part in this era of history.

## **1.3 Hypothesis**

The expected result of this study is to show that African-American students will surpass the other ethnicities, because they will have a personal connection to the Civil Rights Movement; which in turn will display the importance of Black History in elementary curriculum.

## **1.4 Operational Definitions**

*Negro*: a member of a race of humankind native to Africa and classified according to physical features (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

*Civil Rights Movement*: The Civil Rights Movement was a struggle by African Americans in the mid 1950's to late 1960's to achieve Civil Rights equal to those of whites, including equal opportunity in employment, housing, and education, as

well as the right to vote, the right of equal access to public facilities, and the right to be free of racial discrimination (Civil Rights Movement, 2005)

*NAACP*: organization for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

*Jim Crow Law*: ethnic discrimination especially against blacks by legal enforcement or traditional sanctions (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.)

### **1.5 Assumptions**

It is assumed that all children taking the test have a sufficient reading level needed to take the test and will be motivated to complete the test to their best of their ability.

### **1.6 Limitations**

This study will not include all children around the United States or even all of New Jersey; it will be limited to one school in a suburban school district in New Jersey. This study will be limited to a class of 40 students ranging from the ages of 11-13 years-old, while keeping in mind that some Special Education students will be involved in the study and may struggle with the task being given. Also, given that the students' knowledge will only be assessed via posttest there are limitations. Another limitation to this study is the long term effects after all the students learn about Black History. Unfortunately, the final outcome on whether this lesson will change African-American children's progress pertaining to academics will be unable to be seen.

### **1.7 Summary**

The students in this study knew nothing about the Civil Rights Movement nor did they care about who or why Black History Month was created. Once they realized that Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks were not the only African-American people that

achieved success in helping African-Americans, they could not believe how much they did not know. They were especially surprised that children were a huge part of the Civil Rights Movement. While watching the documentary *The Children's March* they saw that the youngest child to go to jail for protesting was 4 years old (The Children's, 2005). As the students continued to gain knowledge of all the achievements that have made it possible for them to be able to sit in a class together, you could see a change. Many of the Caucasian students were proud that some Caucasian's stood up for the African-American's. While the African-American students continued to make connections to their families and experiences. As the African-American students went home and told their grandparents they found out some interesting facts about their family; some grandparents witnessed some of the mistreatment and some had heard some stories of what happened down south. Through these discussions with their family members they found out things that they didn't know about their families.

This research was originally supposed to expose the lack of effort that is put into Black History in elementary schools, and how this has possibly hindered African-American students from achieving better grades in school. However, due to the lack of diversity of cultures for the research, instead it showed that all cultures could benefit from learning about Black History. By this I mean, the African-American students had a revelation of all they didn't know about their culture, and the other ethnicity were able to understand the struggle that African-Americans had to go through for the simple things in life. As the students continued to discuss their new knowledge they began to make comparisons to present history, and at the same time seem to be more open to other cultures and their differences. Just as the students asked their grandparents about what

they knew about the Civil Rights Movement, they also began to make connections about the fact that they could be friends with whoever they wanted to be. As Dr. Woodson once said, “Cooperation implies equality of the participants in the particular task at hand.” (Woodson, 1933)

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 History

Dr. Carter G. Woodson is regarded as the Father of Black History Month. Dr. Woodson was born to parents who were slaves, and he as a young boy had to work on his family farm. Woodson would not enter into high school until the age of 20, but later would graduate with a Ph. D. in history from Harvard University (Vital signs, 1998). Dr. Woodson published a book in the year of 1861 and went on to cofound the organization called Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) along with other individuals. The goal of the organization was for the advancement of Black History because of this the organization was run by professionals, intellectual school teachers, and many others including black youth. In later years Dr. Woodson would create the first scholarly journal by an African-American, which was called The Journal of Negro History. Through the establishment of the Journal of Negro History (1916) and the Negro History Bulletin (1937), Woodson became involved in the development of a scholars group who expressed commitment to the field and function of African American history (Conyers, 2003). Dr. Woodson wanted African-American's to understand their history and to gain positive knowledge about their history, so he opened his own publishing company. Through his publishing company he would publish a textbook, a magazine and a book that has been criticized by many called the *Mis-Education of the Negro* (Woodson, 1990). Often in the *Mis-Education of the Negro* Woodson would write about how African-American people must not be taught to see themselves through the lens of those who sought/seek to destroy them but through a new lens, not obstructed by mainstream culture (Strong-Leek, n.d.).



An excerpt from *Mis-Education of the Negro*:

The greatest indictment of such education as Negroes have received, however, is that they have thereby learned little as to making a living. . . . Rural Negroes have always known something about agriculture, and in a country where land is abundant they have been able to make some sort of living on the soil. . . . In industry where the competition is keener, however, what the Negro has learned in school has had little bearing on the situation, as pointed out above. (Bassey, 2013, 38).

Not only did Dr. Woodson write his own books he also read many different kinds of book. This was discovered once Emory University was given Dr. Woodson library, they found that in his personal library that he was not reading only African American authors. There are anti-slavery tracts, but also pre-Civil War proslavery tracts. What you see is the extraordinary breadth of his own knowledge and how that informed his understanding of African Americans' place in American history and culture (Emory University, 2004).

Nonetheless, Dr. Woodson's most important achievement will always be Negro History Week, which would later turn into Black History Month. Negro History Week was originally just the second week in February for the birthdays of Frederick Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. He believed strongly in that if he did not implement Negro History Week then African-American's stood in danger of being exterminated out of history (Dagbovie, 2004). Dr. Woodson believed that race prejudice and segregation made people feel that African-Americans had not done anything to contribute to history. He wanted Negro History Week to help African-Americans not only have pride in one's self but to also rid the country of racism. He argued that black history should serve a dual purpose. It should help to shape the character and morality of blacks and at the same time serve as a means with which to establish a rightful black presence on both the

historical and contemporary landscapes (Clark Hine, n.d.). Dr. Woodson knew that by only having the celebration be a week it would be less threatening to Caucasian people. The celebration with each year became bigger and bigger with people advertising events, such as, breakfasts, banquets, speeches, and even lectures just to name a few events.

By 1976 Negro History Week which is now known as Black History Month would be celebrated the whole month of February instead of just the second week in February. President Gerald R. Ford was the first president to officially recognize Black History in 1976, calling upon the public to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history (Staff, 2010).”

## **2.2 Equality**

Before the achievement of the Civil Rights Movement in the south, African-Americans had to abide by the Jim Crow laws. Originally the Mississippi law required railroads (except street railways) to provide separate but equal accommodations for white and colored passengers and required whites and blacks to use separate accommodations as provided (Folmsbee, n.d.). These laws would eventually spread from the railroads to everything in life, such as, diners, fountains, buses, and schools. However, after many protests and a major court case the Jim Crow Laws would be overturned. The organization that led many of the protest and marches was the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). The NAACP is responsible for trying to stop lynching and hate crimes during the 60's, instead they wanted to secure fair legal representation for African-Americans in state courts, and to lobby through the judicial system for equal pay and better conditions in segregated public schools (Preston-

Grimes, 2010) They wanted the same rights when it came to education because the Caucasian schools were in much better conditions than the black schools. For example, the Caucasian schools had heat, better buildings, books, and just all around a better education was provided. African-Americans wanted the same for their children and began many protest and marches to see that this change would come. They also used the legal system to help fight for their rights with the Brown vs. Board of Education cases. Under these cases were five separate cases dealing with public schools inequalities. The cases would be heard by the Supreme Court and they would agree that "Separate but Equal" was actually the opposite, instead it was separate and not equal. The "Separate but Equal" doctrine, which has influenced court decisions and served as legal precedent since 1896, was found to be in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954 (Muller, n.d.). Meaning that every race should be treated the same and have the same rights. Though this change occurred, the NAACP's platform still addressed the need to create greater public awareness of discrimination and to lessen fears of violent attacks that many African-Americans confronted daily in the segregated south. Leaders encouraged members, whenever possible; to bring pressure on local communities to stop widespread racially motivated acts of violence (Anderson, 1988; Grant, 1993; Mangum, 1940). The Supreme Court may have stopped segregation but the damage had already been done with equal education of all races. Many years later African-Americans would continue to struggle as it pertained to academics.

African-American students statically have continued to underwhelm when compared to the other ethnicities. Particularly in the south, black students have far less

access to, and success in, higher education than their white peers, despite two decades of efforts to desegregate the regions colleges (Lederman, 1998). This report came about after they researched 19 southern states, and found that many of the schools were still segregated. With this discovery they then said that though many black students had went on to higher education the number was still not significant enough (Lederman, 1998). On the other hand they noticed that many of the students that did attend colleges preferred to go to schools that were predominantly black. The problem with black students wanting to go to HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) is money; most of these schools are unable to give scholarships because they are in tremendous debt. Some need major repairs amounting to \$755 million combined even so they were only able to receive \$21 million as of 1996 (Conciatore, 2000). Due to lack of funds this causes many black students unable to attend the HBCUs, because the white schools are able to offer more in scholarships. The problem isn't just the fact that colleges are expensive it's also that many black students struggle with academics, as examined by The Journal of Blacks in Higher education found that the percentage of white twelfth-grade students who are below basic proficiency levels in the study of history were 50% compared to the percentage of black twelfth-grade students who are below basic proficiency levels in the study of history were 83% (U.S. Department of Education). In 2008 an article was written and stated that one of the most important ways to help black youth is by examining the ways that self-awareness and group consciousness provide identity affirmation/reinforcement for youth can help them navigate the myriad racial, class, gender, and sexual identities (Sefa Dei, 2007). In order for black youth to become successful they will need to identify themselves with the information being taught. In

Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom, Heather Williams discusses that enslaved and free African Americans identified education as among their highest values, that they organized to educate themselves, and that they collectively crafted an argument for public education as a right (Smith, 2005). Though African-American children as a whole have a difficult time when compared to other ethnicities, it's important to know that black families want their children to be educated. With this the African-American girls have been much more successful than the African-American boys. Alfred Tatum points out that many adolescent African American males do not read because the texts that are available for them to read are not socially and culturally consistent and authentic. In other words, in many classroom contexts African American males often are not presented with opportunities to read texts that reflect their cultural and communal lived experiences and realities (Husband, 2012).

### **2.3 Curriculum**

Racial conflict in higher education mirrors the racism in American society. In order to combat the problem, African-American students must understand its roots (Turner, 1995, 02). Black History should be a part of the curriculum just as American or World history is taught. Proponents of Black History believe that African-American students learning about Black History will promote diversity, develop self-esteem, and correct myths and stereotypes (Pitre & Ray, 2002). Most students who attend public schools are predominantly African-Americans; yet they are taught American and World History, which in turn does not integrate Black History. In two Chicago schools Pai and Adler found that Advocates for compensatory education suggested that the most effective way to help improve African-American student performance is to teach the same values,

beliefs, and skills that the middleclass Caucasian students learn (Pai & Adler, 2001), yet others argued that African-American students achieve better academically when African culture is infused in the curriculum (Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014). There was also another article written by an author who grew up in the city of Philadelphia and recalled that when she was in history class in the 60's her book reflected on blacks this way: "Negro slaves lived on plantations in the South where they picked cotton and took care of their master's house and children. They were a happy and nappy people who loved to dance and sing (Edleman, 2011)." European History was still being taught then, and these sentences were the only thing mentioned in her history book when it pertained to black people. The lack of connection that Edelman felt is what many African-American children feel when attending school. However, other researchers have also expressed other issues plaguing African-American children as: other children in public schools who came from homes characterized by a lack of discipline; inadequate curriculum in public schools (especially the absence of Black Studies); inadequate educational goals, programs, standards, and challenges; schools' lack of effort to build self-esteem of African-American children; overcrowded classrooms; absence of prayer so religious and moral instruction and in the schools; disagreement with school attendance patterns related to zoning and/or busing; lack of individualized attention in the classroom; and teachers' indifference toward student (Jones-Wilson, Arnez, & Asbury, 1992).

Dr. James Harrison is a professor at Oregon University, and as a child he learned that the only way that he would find out about is culture was by educating himself. He read many books and found that from the 1870's to the 1890's there was a lack of knowledge of African-Americans. During his studies he also found that black people

were written out of the history books as a reaction to the Civil War (Sturdivant, 2014). Other African-American people have found this to be true, so they have chosen to search for themselves knowledge about Black History. One person in particular named Mayme Clayton was a librarian when Harry Truman was in the White House, before Black History Month existed. She decided to keep numerous collections of black memorabilia, she has since passed away. Yet she was quoted as saying, “I always had a desire to want to know more about my people. It just snowballed, it just kept going. I have invested every dime that I have, everything that I have, in books for future generations. It may change somebody's life you can never tell (Walker, 2007).”

#### **2.4 Current**

Currently, there is still an argument about whether Black History should or should not be taught in classrooms. Consistent with Dr. Woodson’s mission many educators feel that it is important for African-American children to have a better understanding of their culture, just as Dr. Woodson wanted. The father of Black history, Carter G. Woodson proclaimed that the curriculum prior to Black History Month taught Black children that their “Black skin was a curse” and that they should hold an inferior place to other races in society (King & Brown, 2014). Due to this type of thinking, Dr. Woodson knew that Black History Month was important, so that all children could see the successes that African-American’s has made. Researchers encourage teachers to learn Black history because it is seen as a way to disrupt systemic racism, combat negative social constructions of racialization, develop a positive self-awareness, identify with the African Diaspora, increase academic achievement, help promote social justice and cultural

diversity, and assist in critical thinking skills (Grant, 2011; Karenga, 1993; Merelman, 1993).

Although proponents emphasize the sense of racial harmony highlighted during Black History Month there is recognition of concerns. Critics argue that Black History Month is not being celebrated the way it was intended. For instance, Central Michigan University is touting a concert by Atlanta rapper Ludacris as part of its celebration. Tennessee State University, an HBCU, featured the Miss Nubian Queen Pageant. The Bronx Zoo thought it was a good idea to highlight its animals from Africa during February (Keels, 2006). These are examples of higher institutions misrepresenting Black History Month, but the same can be said for some elementary schools. For instance, in North Carolina an elementary school wanting students to dress in "African American" attire or like a safari African animal (Hillbard, 2012); a Los Angeles elementary school's Black History Month parade featuring Black people such as Dennis Rodman, O.J. Simpson, and Rupaul as quintessential figures of Black history (Zavis, 2010). In Virginia a ninth grade Black student was made to read and perform Tupac and a Langston Hughes' poem, *The Ballad of the Landlord*, and was chastised because according to his teacher, his articulations were not authentically "Black enough" and he was eventually told to speak "Blacker" (Brown, 2012). These may be some extreme examples of how Black History Month has turned into a mockery compared to what Dr. Woodson intended for Black History; though they had good intentions. Yet, the message becomes lost with these types of events. One of the problems is that there is not a set curriculum as of today and in some schools it's not required that Black History Month be acknowledged. It truly depends on the expectations of the administrators when it comes to Black History



Month, which is not the same for American or World History. The relevance of Black History Month (BHM) in schools and society has come under scrutiny by opponents that feel it marginalizes Black history as well as Black people (Franklin, Home, Cruse, Ballard, & Mitchell 1997-1998). Regardless of these problems Black History Month continues to be celebrated in many different fashions; some for the good and others not so much.

## **2.5 Racial Identity and Academic Achievement**

Current literature on African-American achievement highlight ways racial identity can impact academic motivation and engagement (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). If Black History is viewed as important in the formulation of racial identity, the link between racist identity and academic achievement warrants exploration. A common theme across these literatures is the acknowledgement of historical barriers to African-American educational success and the proposition that youth who strongly identify with their racial group will respond to those barriers by developing connections between the self and the academic domain that have implications for their schooling outcomes (Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). Generally, African-American children struggle when compared to other ethnicities with their academics. Reasons cited to explain African-American adolescent academic underachievement are numerous and include psychological factors and processes such as differences in motivation and achievement values (Graham, 1994; Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998) and academic disidentification (Cokley, 2002, Osborne, 1997), dissonance between home and school (Tyler, 2010), poverty and substandard schools in low income areas

(Kozol, 1991; McLaren, 2007; McLoyd, Aikens, & Burton, 2006; Spring, 2008), and cultural factors related to race and identity (Fordham, 1988; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Many have researched and found that poor children are more likely to have lower math and reading skills and have behavioral problems compared with children from wealthier families (Chambers, Abrami, Massue, & Morrison, 1998; Duncan & Seymour, 2000; Isaacs & Magnuson, 2011; Offord, Boyle, & Jones, 1987; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997). With a high percentage of African-Americans living in poverty it exemplifies exactly why many black children struggle with academics. They may come from a one parent household, a crime infested area, and possibly their parents may have a lack of education. Arguably, no other ethnic or racial group has received as much negative press about its educational struggles as African American students (Cokley, 2006).

Another argument with African-Americans has been whether to use Ebonics or not to use Ebonics; Ebonics is “Black English,” or “African American Language.” Some argue that Ebonics, or African American Language, should not be taught in the schools as a substitute for Standard English; rather, African American students should be taught how and when to use Standard English (in formal learning settings), and how and when to “code switch” back to Ebonics when situations require and expect such use (in their home and community settings, during counseling sessions and spontaneous play activity, and in creative works of art such as poetry). While others argue Ebonics is a naturally learned and precise system of communication, especially for urban and rural African Americans; thus, its use should not be devalued, demeaned, ignored, or even discouraged

in situations wherein Standard English may not be the necessary, preferred, or even more effective system of communication (Gopaul-McNicol, 1998).

More African-American would like to go to college, but part of the process for being able to qualify for colleges are how high a student's SAT and ACT scores are along with their GPA. Higher Education is supposed to be the American dream, yet black students score very low on standardized tests. Throughout the history of the SAT and ACT, Black students' average scores have been the lowest among all racial groups. Currently, the national average for Black students on the ACT is 17 (ACT, 2012), compared with 22 for White students, and the national average for Black students on the SAT is 860 (Jaschik, 2013), compared with 1061 for White students. Black students' scores on the SAT and ACT have been relatively flat for the last 20 years, although significant gains have been made in Black students' graduation rates and college-degree attainment (Toldson & McGee, 2014). SAT and ACT because of research and many complaints that the test is bias has decided that as of 2016 to reduce both scores so that the test can meet every ethnicity's cognitive abilities. Researchers have also found that SAT and ACT success does not prove that a student is more successful than any student that did not do so well on these test. When African-American children are compared to each other; there have been some gains especially when it comes to gender.

Presently African-American females have a higher success rate than their male counterparts. There are way more females than males entering into colleges, Black men lag behind their female counterparts and other racial and ethnic groups in key educational outcomes (Harper, 2006; Strayhom, 2010); for example, the number of baccalaureate degrees earned by Black females in 2010 was approximately twice that of Black males

(66% vs. 34%, respectively), a gap not reflected in other racial groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Additional evidence shows that almost 70% of Black men do not complete a college degree within six years, compared with 57% of the overall undergraduate student population (Harper, 2006). For those African-American males that are successful in college studies have shown that it's because of leverage with peers, family members, mentors, and spirituality along their journey to success (Bridges, 2010; Harper, 2006, 2009, 2012; Hébert, 2002; Herndon, 2003; Moore, Madison-Colomore, & Smith, 2003; Museus, 2011; Strayhom, 2008; Williamson, 2010).

The African-American students that have been able to prosper enough in their studies and made it to college have listed feelings of personal acceptance and social fit as important when choosing a college (Nora, 2004). This is especially true for minority students. For example, black students cite race-related reasons such as not wanting to be a minority and having classes that incorporate the black perspective when making a decision about their higher education (Suggs, 1997; Tobolowsky, 2005).

**Chapter 3**  
**Methodology**

**3.1 Participants**

The researcher selected 40 students from an upper elementary school located in southern New Jersey. Of the participants 27 were female and 14 were male. There are 4 special needs students and 2 in a reading program called Read 180. All are in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade ages ranging from 11-13 years old. The classes consist of 27 African-American, 6 Caucasians, 5 Hispanic, 1 Asian, and 1 Indian child.

Table 1

*Ethnicities*

Participants	#
African-American students (4 Special Needs; 2 Read 180 Programs)	27
Caucasian students	6
Hispanic	5
Asian	1
Indian	1

### **3.2 Materials**

The study included a pre- and post test developed by the researcher, and the pre and post test will be the same test. The pre-test will be given at the end of January, and the post will be given at the end of February. There are a total of 20 questions consisting of multiple choice, open-ended, and 1 essay question. The lessons for Black History month will include, discussions, worksheets, videos, and PowerPoint's all materials will involve any important figures and events that occurred during the Civil Rights Movement.

### **3.3 Design**

The experiment used a T-Test. The variables that were used for the study was videos, worksheets, discussions, movies, PowerPoint's, and assessments. The study used the variables to measure significance between each and the participants' understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. It is predicted that the African-American students will perform better than the other ethnicities.

### **3.4 Procedure**

The researcher gave a pre-test at the end of January, and told the students to try their very best to answer all questions. In order to get the students to understand the significance of Black History the study started with a small bit of information about slavery. The slavery portion was to show why racism was stronger in the south. To show how extreme slavery was on African-Americans once slavery was abolished the researcher discussed the Jim Crow Laws and how they came about. After each lesson the students were allowed to ask questions, so that the researcher could guarantee that the students were not confused. As the month of February continued the researcher thought

it was best to use the affects that it had on children, because the children would be surprised by how severe the mistreatment was for African-Americans. One of the children that was discussed was Emmett Till, the researcher discussed history and outcome. Emmett Till was murdered at 14, so the students were able to see a before and after picture of Emmett Till. However, they were asked if they wanted to see the after picture, before showing the picture to the students. The Brown vs. Board of Education was a bit different because it was five cases under one title. The researcher thought it was best to break the students into 5 groups for each case. Once the students were in their groups they had to read about the case and then teach the rest of the class about their specific case. After discussing the cases than the researcher showed the students a documentary on the 4 Little Girls; many of the students were in shock about the incident. The astonishment they felt about the 4 Little Girls made for great discussion with the students. At this point it was time to discuss the Civil Rights Movement, the important people besides Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks. The students were shown multiple documentaries, but the most important was The Children's March. This film helped connect all the pieces for the children. The final piece was the Little Rock Nine, which was about the after effects of the Civil Rights Movement. Again the students had many questions about the children and what happened to them. This prompted some to realize what changes they have in their school today. When the end of February came the researcher gave the students the posttest consisting of the same questions as the pre-test.

## Chapter 4

### Results

The expected result of this study was to show that African-American students will surpass the other ethnicities, because they will have a personal connection to the Civil Rights Movement; which in turn will display the importance of Black History in elementary curriculum. However, there was no evidence to prove that African-American children would perform any better than the other ethnicities. This could not be measured due to a low representation of the other ethnicities. Instead the results showed that all ethnic groups made a significant increase.

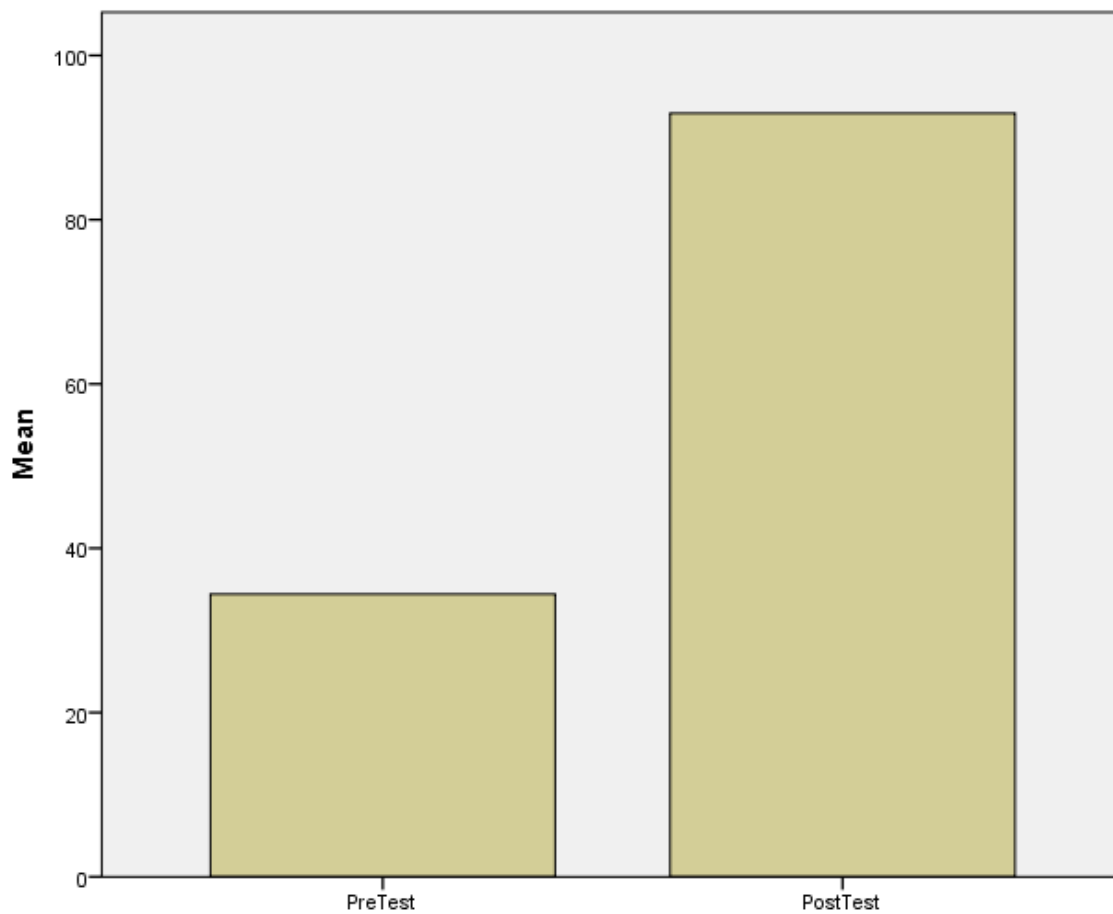


Figure 1. The results of the pre test and post test.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **5.1 Overview of the Study**

At the beginning of this study the students had no prior knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement. They only about to African-Americans, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, and they assumed that these two people were responsible for equality of African-Americans. However, during the course of the study, they learned that many more African-Americans were responsible for equality.

The lesson started with a small introduction about slavery, the researcher felt that the students are too young to go too far with slavery. This helped students obtain a better understanding of how racism began, then the researcher discussed with the students Jim Crow Laws. This helped the students understand how segregation came about, especially in the south. The students were shown a documentary on the Jim Crow Laws, then they were allowed to ask any questions that they desired.

Once the researcher felt that the students had a firm understanding of slavery and the Jim Crow Laws, they then went on to discuss many issues that created the Civil Rights Movement. The students were taught about Emmett Till, a 14 year old boy that was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Supposedly, Emmett Till whistled at a Caucasian lady, causing members of the KKK to come and pull Emmett Till from his uncle's house. They would later find Emmett Till's body in a river. The students were intrigued by this, because it was adults that killed Emmett Till over something simple. The students watched a video about his funeral and saw the picture of him in the casket.

The next lesson was about education, to connect with the students the researcher discussed with the students what is taken for granted. Some things that the students

discussed with the researcher were that most of them do not pick their friends based on color and that they have had teachers of different ethnicities. This discussion helped connect Brown vs. Board of Education, because African-Americans were fighting to be able to have a better education. Under the Brown vs. Board of Education there were five cases, the students were divided into five groups and each group had a case to study. Each case dealt with a child or children in different states fighting to go to better schools “white schools”. These cases introduced the students to Separate but Equal, which in turn they discovered that these cases were not equal. Instead they were unfair to African-Americans.

The researcher continued to discuss the effects it had on children in the south, by discussing the Four Little Girls, The Little Rock Nine, and The Children’s March. At the end of February the researcher assessed the students by giving them the Post Test. The Post Test had the same exact questions as the Pre Test, so that the researcher was able to see if there had been a gain in knowledge with the students.

## **5.2 Integration with Past Literature**

The findings in this study were congruent with other studies that stressed the importance of Black History being taught for all children. Though the study displayed that all ethnicities need Black History, it’s especially major that African-American students understand their history and not just the negative aspects of their history. There was a study done in 2009 with 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, and the study was to show the achievement gap between the African-American and Caucasian students. They wanted to focus on how the achievement gap could be closed. They explained that African-American middle school students narrowed the achievement gap, relative to their white

peers, after they were asked to produce written essays in which they reflected on their personal values, according to a new study (Cavanagh, S. (2009). Many research has shown that when African-American students feel that they belong they are able to become successful in school. One example of this type of study was done with freshman at a college. Can a sense of belonging really help close the achievement gap between minorities and Caucasians? Two Stanford University psychology professors say the answer might be yes after an affirmation exercise among college freshmen helped the Black students' grade point averages jump by nearly a third of a grade. In the exercise, students read essays from upperclassmen that revealed the problems they had adjusting to college. The essays had little impact on White students. The same could not be said of the Black freshmen. By their senior year, 22 percent of the Black students who participated in the exercise were ranked in the top 25 percent of their class. Among those Black students who didn't participate, only 5 percent did that well (Davis, C. D. (2011).

### **5.3 Implications**

In this study the implication showed that there was no difference with ethnicity in learning Black History, but it did show the importance of Black History. The students were excited to learn the information, because they learned why everyone should be treated as equals. Before the pretest the students knew nothing about the Civil Rights Movement or the laws that took place before the Civil Rights Movement changed them. Once the posttest was completed they remembered most if not everything that was discussed. This study did not discuss anything knew that hasn't been researched before, but instead highlighted the importance of Black History.

#### **5.4 Limitations**

The limitation in this study was that there were not enough Caucasian, Indian, Hispanic, and Asian students to compare the results to the African-American students. Another limitation is that the study cannot continue to follow the African-American students to see if by learning Black History they will continue to be successful in their studies. Also, a limitation that was unable to be studied was African-American females compared to males, because there is too small amount of African-American males compared to females in the class.

#### **5.5 Future Directions**

There are a number of suggestions for future research. As previously mentioned this group that was studied was 1 school in Southern New Jersey, so future studies should include students from various regions of New Jersey or even another state. Also, future research could possibly follow the students as they continue on throughout their schooling. Perhaps, future studies could have Black History taught each year to a group of students, especially districts with a high number of African-Americans and then see how many graduate. They can also compare the students who were taught Black History every year to the students whom were not taught Black History every year, and document the outcomes of each group.

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**Appendix**

**Black History Test**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Make sure that the necessary questions are restated. Neatness Matters!!!

1. Who is Carter G. Woodson and why did he think that Black History was important for people to know?

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2. Martin Luther King Jr. was responsible for what?

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3. Why was Rosa Parks arrested?

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4. What right did Medgar Evers want black people to have?

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5. Who is Emmett Till and what was he accused of doing?

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6. Why did the Jim Crow law exist?

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7. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is:

- a. NAWSA
- b. SCLC
- c. NAACP
- d. NACAP

8. What was Ruby Bridges not allowed to do?

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9. What was the purpose of the Civil Rights Movement?

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10. During the Civil Rights Movement, did African-Americans go about protesting in a peaceful way?

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. Where did the Civil Rights Movement take place?

- a. Northern States
- b. Southern States

12. At first, President Kennedy moved slowly on the civil rights issues to avoid:
- Promoting the Freedom Rides
  - Offending the southern Democratic senators
  - Upsetting Martin Luther King, Jr.
  - Embarrassing Soviet leader Khrushchev
13. What years did the Civil Rights Movement take place?
- 1828-1833
  - 1954-1968
  - 1909-1919
  - 1979-1989
14. Which doctrine relating to public education was overturned by the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*?
- Due process but equal
  - “separate but equal”
  - “all deliberate speed”
  - Equal protection of the law
15. Civil rights activists used this technique to force segregated establishments (businesses) to serve African Americans.
- Freedom rides
  - Boycotts
  - Sit-ins
  - The March on Washington
16. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was organized by:
- Young African Americans
  - African American clergyman
  - Pacifists
  - White and black businessmen

17. After Freedom Riders were violently attacked in Alabama, they

- a. Moved the protest to Chicago
- b. Armed themselves for protection
- c. Abandoned the protest
- d. Received federal protection

18. What was the horrible incident that happened to the 4 little girls in Birmingham, Alabama?

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19. What were the children willing to do for the Civil Rights Movement?

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