

A Thesis
entitled
Fifty-Plus Years Later:
Former Students Reflect on the Impact of Learning about the Civil Rights Movement
by
Belinda Wheeler

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Education Degree in Educational Theory and Social Foundations

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An Abstract of
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An action research study was conducted regarding the significance of studying the Civil Rights Movement on the personal development of adults who, as students, had participated in Civil Rights related curriculum. Data were gathered and analyzed utilizing a qualitative phenomenological approach. Ten participants were interviewed as to their views regarding past experiences of learning about the Civil Rights Movement from both high school and outside sources, such as elder family members, involvement in community organizations, and involvement in the TOLEDO EXCEL program for aspiring minority youth. The results suggest that the strong personal impact from learning and being taught about the Civil Rights Movement supports the need for the continuation and expansion of Civil Rights related curricula both in the TOLEDO EXCEL program and in high school coursework.

Maliha, My Muse

The seed that blossomed inside me,
You are the reason for all I create—
And one day I will your Pegasus be,
To carry you to the heights that await.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter One

Introduction

Twenty-one years ago, as an eighth grade student at Jones Junior High School in Toledo Public Schools, Toledo, Ohio, I had the opportunity to become a part of a select group of 50 students who were chosen to participate in a new program to attract minority students to The University of Toledo. Founded in 1989, that program, TOLEDO EXCEL, was and is a scholarship incentive program for students from groups under-represented in higher education. The program concept was derived from discussions between the founder, Helen C. Cooks, and 36 educational and community leaders from public and private schools, the Toledo community and The University of Toledo. The 36 leaders made up—and some of them continue, more than 20 years later, to make up—the University of Toledo Joint Committee (UTJC), an organization that to this day maintains an active advisory role in the EXCEL program.

Origins of TOLEDO EXCEL

Founded in 1985, the UTJC had concerns with the available academic opportunities for minority youth. It was reported that “in the 1980s Black students were under-represented in local universities and while 75 percent of Black high school graduates aspired to post-secondary education, actual admission and retention fell far below that” (*TOLEDO EXCEL: A Success Story*, n.d.). To address this issue, on January 19, 1985, the UTJC held the first Annual Conference for Aspiring Minority Youth. Attendance at the annual conference grew from 210 students and parents in that initial year to over 1,647 students and parents by the conference’s fourth year, 1989. The University and UTJC were interested in creating more programming to attract conference

participants to the campus of The University of Toledo. To take advantage of this interest, and of the overwhelming success of the conference, “Dr. Helen C. Cooks’ proposal for TOLEDO EXCEL was delivered to then President Frank Horton, who agreed that at least 50 minority ninth graders would be accepted annually, and that EXCEL activities/classes would be conducted mainly on the University campus” (*TOLEDO EXCEL: A Success Story*, n.d.). In 1989, the first 50 students selected, including myself, were inducted as EXCEL Group I, the first class of the TOLEDO EXCEL Program.

Today the Annual Conference for Aspiring Minority Youth, in its 27th successful year at The University of Toledo, continues to attract hundreds of parents and students to the University campus each January. There are currently over 1,000 students in the TOLEDO EXCEL “pipeline.” Of EXCEL Groups I – XVII, comprising 721 students, 96 percent of high school participants have enrolled in college; 76 percent have enrolled at UT; and 80 percent of EXCEL scholars overall are college graduates or students matriculating towards college graduation. In June 2010, TOLEDO EXCEL inducted 50 new students into EXCEL Group XXII and graduated EXCEL Group XVIII from high school, of which 38 students will begin their academic careers studying at The University of Toledo in fall 2010. Considerable research has been done during that time, documenting the challenges and successes of the program, and staff members, including myself, have applied much of that research to continuous improvement of the TOLEDO EXCEL program. After working in summer programs as a Team Leader, I began to work as a researcher and have remained on staff in a number of capacities. This thesis is in keeping with this practice of “action research,” that is, the practice of conducting research

with the goal of applying it towards improvement in one's own work or practice.

Author's Experiences in TOLEDO EXCEL

Over the course of my time as a student in the program, EXCEL staff worked with us through our high school years and beyond, into our undergraduate coursework and through university graduation, providing us with guidance, mentoring and many life experiences that I and others may not have had otherwise. I credit the program with providing me with the chance to explore life outside of my environment and assisting me in becoming a more well-rounded individual.

Of the many memories I have of EXCEL, the most significant ones were from the summers we spent studying curriculum designed around various themes and participating in in-depth field studies. Each summer we spent two weeks in classroom instruction on the campus of The University of Toledo studying different topics. After the classroom learning portion, we would participate in a field study taking the theme out into the world. While the curriculum was designed to be different from subjects traditionally being taught in our various high schools, it afforded us opportunities to sharpen and develop skills necessary to becoming successful students, such as reading comprehension, analytical and critical thinking skills, and learning to write well academically.

My first summer in the program, our curriculum theme was "The Aging Process." We spent time in the classroom learning about the aging process in an effort to acknowledge the contributions of our local elderly community and to instill a sense of respect and understanding among us towards the senior population. We visited nursing homes and medical facilities specializing in the care of senior citizens, speaking with and

interviewing various seniors in the Toledo area. It was during that summer that I conducted, edited and transcribed my first interview.

The second-year curriculum was “Our Urban World” through which we learned about the different infrastructures, history, and political and community organizations in urban areas. After our classroom portion, we went (by bus) to Washington D.C. and New York City. It was the first time I had visited either of the big cities, and I often reflect back to things that I learned and experienced on that trip. A framed picture of our EXCEL group standing on the stairs of the U.S. Capital Building with our Congressional Representative, Marcy Kaptur sits on my desk today as a reminder of that summer.

The curriculum theme for my fourth summer in the program was “Human Rights in the Global Community.” We spent two weeks learning about the historical, cultural, educational, and political influences on people in the global community. After our classroom study, we traveled to Mexico City where we studied at Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, learning the history and culture of Mexico. I fondly remember attending daily Spanish classes in Mexico and then attempting to utilize what we had learned in class in the marketplaces of Mexico City.

In 2001, I was given the opportunity to return to the program, but this time, instead of being a student, I would be among the staff working to ensure that current and future students receive the same unique opportunities and life-changing experiences that previous members of EXCEL remember so dearly. It is from this perspective that I look at the TOLEDO EXCEL program as highly successful, and from which I am invested in contributing to its ongoing success, conducting research to investigate the personal, inspirational and educational impact of the program on past and current students.

Nature of the Problem

Every spring the talk around the EXCEL office turns to curriculum planning for the upcoming summer and various summer institutes. What curriculum will be offered? What topics will be included? What curricular changes need to be made? The 2009 discussion was very similar to discussions of past years, different only in the fact that the emphasis was directed primarily at re-evaluating one particular curriculum, the third-year summer "Civil Rights." This new focus was brought about by the director of the program's having overheard students in conversation as they left a previous Civil Rights Seminar. One of them asked, "Slavery is over. Why do we need to know this stuff?" From the director's perspective, the dilemma was to figure out a way to deliver the Civil Rights Curriculum so it would relate to the lives of students today, thereby making its purpose self-explanatory to future participants.

I was selected as the staff member to lead this work. The answer to the student's question seemed very obvious at first, until I tried to put together a meaningful explanation that the students would both understand and accept. I found it wasn't enough to quote the poet and philosopher George Santayana's words, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." I found myself thinking, Why would this be important to a high school student in today's society? What will they get from learning about the Civil Rights Movement? This uncertainty on my part warranted further research into the phenomenon of learning about the Civil Rights Movement in high school. Instead of starting with finding a way to deliver the curriculum differently, I discovered I needed to go deeper and ask, How have past participants benefited from the Civil Rights curriculum? My hope was that answering this question would provide guidance for

answering current students' questions.

The TOLEDO EXCEL Civil Rights studies in the past have been extensive and in-depth institutes. Students have traveled down South on field studies to Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia and Tennessee to study the Civil Rights Movement. They have re-enacted the march to Selma, visited historical sites, and met and interviewed participants and leaders in the Movement. EXCEL students have interviewed, among others, several members of the "Little Rock Nine," Congressman John Lewis, Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Dr. Bernice King, daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mrs. Juanita Abernathy. They have had the opportunity to visit and take pictures at the site of Bloody Sunday on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the Tallahatchie River where Emmett Till's body was found, and the Lorraine Hotel, where the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., took place. All of these are commonly taught events, studied or at least mentioned in reference to the Civil Rights Movement in traditional history curricula in many high schools; clearly, however, the pedagogy is different among schools.

In my participation as a student in TOLEDO EXCEL, the Civil Rights field study was the only curriculum that I was unable to experience. My class's year was the very first time EXCEL students traveled down South to study the Civil Rights Movement. While I attended the classroom portion, I was unable to participate in the actual field study which was a trip (by bus) to Memphis, Tennessee, Little Rock, Arkansas, various cities in Mississippi, Montgomery, Alabama and Georgia. After their return, I was told by my peers that I had missed the best trip ever. Often when I have encountered friends who were once EXCEL participants and we have discussed our experiences in the

program, they have returned to that "Down South Trip." They have expressed learning so much more from being in the places that they had read about and speaking with the actual people who were a part of the movement, than from simply sitting in a classroom reading from a text and hearing lectures. One of the experiences mentioned most was an interview with Elizabeth Eckford, a member of the Little Rock Nine. The fact that many years later Eckford still found it very difficult to talk of her experiences as one of the students who integrated Little Rock Central High School gave the students a better perspective as to what she had endured. (Eckford currently is very reluctant to do interviews regarding the Little Rock Nine and her experiences; EXCEL students had the rare experience to interview the Little Rock Nine when Eckford was still willing to participate.) Another aspect of the trip that comes up often is the feeling that the students say they had while standing in front of what was left of the old local grocery store where Emmitt Till allegedly whistled at a white woman, which led to his lynching and drowning in the Tallahatchie River. Many of them say that being there gave them the chills, and that there was an eerie and sad feeling surrounding the remains of the store, as well as a sense of disbelief that the tragedy had happened to a fourteen-year-old boy, to which many of them could relate, as they were all thirteen or fourteen at the time of their participation in the Civil Rights Institute.

Those of my EXCEL peers who traveled down South share a sense of pride and camaraderie from their common experience that I unfortunately was unable to join. They all remember singing the Civil Rights songs on the bus, and those who remember the words, will sing the songs at the mention of the title of their favorites. When they are together, they reflect upon what it was like to visit for the first time the Martin Luther

King Memorial in Atlanta, Georgia, and to see the balcony where he stood when he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. In their excitement in talking about the Institute, they often say to me, “Remember when we went down South and interviewed...?” Then they catch themselves and say, “Oh, I forgot, you didn’t go.” What did I miss by not traveling with the rest of my EXCEL group that summer? What did their participation in the Civil Rights Institute afford them?

My impressions from interactions with peers from that trip have not been my only inspiration for this thesis. As staff member, I have noticed that fellow staff members continuously hold the Civil Rights Curriculum in high esteem. Of all of our original institutes, it is my opinion from having worked on preparing the curriculum for each institute, that the Civil Rights Institute maintains the most importance. In past summers, when the staff has decided to take programs into a different focus area for the summer curriculum, it has always been allowed so long as it did not interfere with the Civil Rights Institute. All of the other curricula have been overhauled to reflect societal and academic changes of the times; however, the Civil Rights Institute remains largely unchanged. EXCEL students currently study the Civil Rights Movement very much as did students of the past. The first week consists of a classroom portion where the main highlights of the movement are discussed, followed by a week of field study related to the movement. When budget permits, students are invited to participate in trips down South to mark the commemoration of anniversaries of such events as the March from Selma to Montgomery, or the integration of Little Rock Central High School. Thus the question remains: Is the Civil Rights Movement really still relevant? Should it be continued as it always has been? With what justification?

The student's comment as overheard by the director, "Slavery is over. Why do we need to know this stuff?" puts us in a position where re-evaluation of our curriculum content is necessary—not only for the benefit of the TOLEDO EXCEL program, but also for the implications that studying the Civil Rights Movement may have in curriculum outside the program as well. Through this research, TOLEDO EXCEL staff will be better equipped to determine the curriculum changes necessary specifically for the EXCEL program and hopefully be able to explain to students, like the one quoted above, why it is necessary to continue to study the Civil Rights Movement. In a more general sense, studying the significance of learning about the Civil Rights Movement may have an impact on current and future curriculum offerings in high schools across the U.S.

Research Question and Significance

This study will attempt to answer the research question: What, if any, is the impact on the personal development of the students who participate in a Civil Rights Curriculum? It is hoped that answering this question will provide the basis for reevaluating the current Civil Rights Curriculum and how it is presented to current students.

In my research of the Civil Rights Movement, I have found that it was difficult to find information on the significance of learning about the Movement. I was able to find many articles and discussions on the importance of the movement itself, such as Roy's (2010) summarization of the importance of the movement as "an era that redesigned the nation's social system and established that discrimination was unjust and would no longer be tolerated in the country, while setting an example for oppressed people everywhere" (Roy, 2010). I also found information related to the importance of specific occurrences of

the movement such as the integration of Little Rock Central High School and the March on Washington, but I was unable to find reports on the importance of the movement from the perspective of the students who participated in the curriculum.

This research is necessary in a broader sense to re-evaluate current history curriculum content being taught around the country. It is important more specifically to ensuring that the TOLEDO EXCEL Program continues to offer a curriculum that is in alignment with the original goals and mission of the program: to stimulate academic success, self-confidence, and social and personal growth in high school students from ethnic and socioeconomic groups underrepresented in institutions of higher education.

Organization of Study

The research begins in chapter 2 with a review of the history of the Movement in the U.S. An outline of the most common events taught and learned about the Movement will be included. I will then examine the high school history curriculum contents of various school districts around the country, along with Civil Rights related curriculum changes that are currently being implemented. Chapter 2 will conclude with the discussion of the limitations of prior studies related to Civil Rights Education. Chapter 3 presents the research design and methods. It will include the rationale for deciding to use a phenomenological approach and qualitative methods. It will be in this chapter that more detail regarding the TOLEDO EXCEL Program and the selection process of the participants will be presented. Chapter 4 will be an analysis of the interview responses from the participants. In this chapter the significance of the Civil Rights Movement will be discussed from the perspective of students who participated in the curriculum. Finally, chapter 5 will offer a summary of the results and conclusions generated from the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Relevant Literature

The purpose of this research is to examine whether or not the study of the Civil Rights Movement remains pertinent to the personal development of students in today's society. The study will attempt to answer the following question: What, if any, is the impact on the personal lives of the students who participated in a Civil Rights Curriculum? This chapter will begin with a brief history of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., and include discussions on the Movement's importance. It will then introduce existing Civil Rights curricula that are currently being taught in various school districts throughout the U.S. The chapter will conclude with some of the limitations of studies related to Civil Rights education.

History of Civil Rights in the U.S.

In January 1865, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery throughout the United States. Part of the amendment reads as follows: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (Maltz, 1990, p. 20). With this amendment came no mention of a guarantee of rights to freed slaves. Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts proposed restating the amendment to read: "All persons are equal before the law, so that no person can hold another as slave; and the Congress shall have power to make all laws necessary and proper to carry this declaration into effect everywhere within the United States and the jurisdiction thereof" (The US Constitution, 2010). Without a formal vote the proposed change was rejected. According to Maltz (1990), some politicians did believe that

emancipation would afford all Blacks important basic rights. He noted that others viewed the amendment as just an end to the slave and master relationship with Congress having no power to grant Blacks any other additional rights.

On June 13, 1866, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution was passed by Congress. Section one of the amendment reads: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (The U.S. Constitution, 2010). Even though the Fourteenth Amendment implies equal protection of the laws to all citizens individual states were still allowed the authority to practice racial segregation and the denial of Blacks to function in society as full fledged citizens.

In 1870 the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution was passed and reads as follows: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude” (Berman, 1966, p.2). The Fifteenth Amendment promised the right to vote but it was common practice for Blacks to be intimidated and tricked out of their rights to participate in political matters. Literacy tests, closed registrars and poll taxes were just some of the tactics used to keep Blacks from voting. According to Berman (1966) despite the Fifteenth Amendment, in 1959 only 25 percent of all eligible Blacks were registered to vote, and in half of Mississippi’s counties not even one percent of Blacks could vote. The right to vote was strictly a right only for White men in the South.

The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution ended slavery, promised equal protection of the laws to U.S. citizens, and granted the right to vote to Black males. Congress used the authority provided by the amendments to enact the nation's first Civil Rights Laws (Dierenfield, 2004, p. 7). The Civil Rights Act of 1866 made it illegal to deprive a person of his Civil Rights regardless of race, color, or previous servitude (Loevy, 1997, p. 4). Other laws regarding Civil Rights were enacted by Congress in 1870, 1871 and 1875. As stated by Loevy (1997) the laws were designed to protect Black Americans from white-dominated governments from the South, and to prevent the South from undoing the work of the Civil War.

Although slavery was abolished and laws were in place, inequality and racism was still a major part of everyday life for Blacks. The South, and specifically Mississippi, was known for vigilante groups of White citizens such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) who murdered and maimed thousands of Blacks. These groups of Whites used violence and terror to intimidate Blacks so that they would not seek out racial equality with Whites. In 1892, a Black person was lynched every forty hours in the United States (Miller, 2001, p. 3). In August 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year-old boy from Chicago, Illinois, was shot, beaten and drowned in the Tallahatchie River with a 70-pound cotton gin fan tied around his neck with barbed wired. He was being "taught a lesson" for allegedly whistling at a White girl in a grocery store in Money, Mississippi (Dierenfield, 2004, p. 26). Emmett's mother insisted on an open casket at his funeral so that the world could bear witness to what had happened to her son. The Till murder marked the first time White men were charged with murdering a Black man in Mississippi. According to Dierenfield (2004) the horrific murder of Emmett Till helped to expose the evil of lynching and sparked the

emerging Civil Rights Movement.

It was also the South that instituted the Black Codes or Jim Crow Laws which were a part of a racial caste system enacted in 1876. According to the Jim Crow doctrine, racial segregation was the mandate in all public facilities. This excluded Blacks from doing things such as attending white schools, marrying Whites, testifying in court and owning property. Whites would refer to adult Black men as “boy” and would never use proper titles, such as Mr. or Sir. Black women were referred to as “girl” and “auntie” instead of a proper Ms. or Mrs. Black people were also expected to clear the sidewalk and walk in the gutter or street when passing Whites. Signs that read “colored” and “white” were prominently displayed all over the South.

Jim Crow operated on the ideal of a “separate but equal” status for Black citizens. Things were, more often than not, separate and very unequal. Blacks were subjected to inadequate school systems, deplorable housing conditions and were essentially separated from White citizens from birth to death. Jim Crow remained intact until 1965, when the law was overturned by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

With the passing of the above mentioned amendments to the Constitution and new laws enacted by congress, Blacks were free, at least on paper. Even though slavery had been abolished, Blacks were still being prohibited from engaging in basic freedoms afforded to all U.S. citizens. Laws were not being enforced and individual States reserved the right to enact their own laws concerning the social status of Blacks. Segregation practices of the South served as constant reminders to Blacks of their positions as second-class citizens in the U.S. These societal discrepancies and the unjust treatment against Blacks began to stir a desire for social reformation amongst those being oppressed and

began the foundation of the Civil Rights Movement.

Popular Key Events in Civil Rights Movement History

For the purposes of this paper, the timeline of the modern day Civil Rights Movement will begin with the ideals of Booker T. Washington. Washington was a former slave who advised Blacks not to campaign for equality but instead accept their status in society as second-class citizens. He also urged Whites to accept Blacks as allies in stimulating the South's economy (Dierenfield, 2004, p. 13). Washington suggested that blacks needed to be separated from whites or maintain a certain respect if they wanted to survive in the South (Miller, 2001, p. 3). Other Black leaders disagreed with Washington's approach and one of his biggest critics, W.E.B. Dubois challenged him in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dubois later went on, in 1909, to assist in founding the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The NAACP was an important civil rights organization and essential to the Civil Rights Movement. The organization challenged segregation and discrimination practices and advocated for racial reform. In Topeka, Kansas the local NAACP fought against a retraction of the municipal law that "prohibited state universities, colleges, public schools, inns, hotels, or vehicles of public transportation" from discriminating on the "basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude (Van, 2008, p. 101)." The NAACP is credited with challenging the constitutionality of school segregation in the historical 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, and was also fundamental in the legendary Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama.

It is necessary to understand the function and the role of important organizations such as the NAACP when studying about the Civil Rights Movement. It was organizations such as this that were behind the initiation of many of the key events associated with the Movement. Often times it was at the discretion of the NAACP that certain societal injustices were challenged. People like Rosa Parks, and events like the landmark case of *Brown v. the Board* had the support of the NAACP, which meant legal representation and the use of other resources deemed necessary to work towards societal change.

Key events of the Civil Rights Movement from 1955-1968 include: *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954; Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955-1956; Desegregating Little Rock, 1957; Sit-ins and Freedom Rides, 1961; March on Washington, 1963; and Selma and the Voting Rights Act, 1965. Brief descriptions of the events have been included below in chronological order.

Brown v. Board of Education. In this historical case the original “separate but equal” doctrine upheld by the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case of 1896 was overruled and determined unconstitutional. The United States Supreme Court ordered the integration of schools. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court decided that educating Black students in separate public schools apart from White students was in fact unconstitutional. It was the order of the court that segregation be phased out over time with deliberate speed.

Montgomery Bus Boycott. On December 1, 1955, a seamstress named Rosa Parks refused to give her seat on a bus to a White passenger. After Rosa Parks (who is often referred to as the mother of the Civil Rights Movement) refused to give up her seat, she was arrested and charged with violating a local ordinance. Fifty African American

leaders along with the NAACP gathered and organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott to protest the segregation of the races on public buses (BookRags Staff, 2010). The boycott lasted 381 days reducing bus revenue by 80 percent, with approximately 90 percent of African Americans participating in the bus boycotts (Chafe, 1995, p. 147).

Desegregating Little Rock. In 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas, in hopes of integrating the school, nine African American students (Known as the “Little Rock Nine”) had been chosen to attend Little Rock Central High School. The Governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus ordered the National Guard to deny entry into the school for the nine students. After an injunction from President Dwight Eisenhower the National Guard was ordered to return to their barracks and the 101st Airborne Division was deployed to protect the Little Rock Nine. The students were able to attend school but were subject to harassment from angry whites who formed mobs outside the school and white students who attended the school. Only one of the Little Rock Nine went on to graduate from Central, and the next school year the school was shut down by the Little Rock School System. It was common practice in the South for schools to shut down rather than be integrated with Black students.

Sit-ins and Freedom Rides. Students in Greensboro, North Carolina; Nashville, Tennessee; and Atlanta, Georgia, orchestrated “sit-ins” at lunch counters in local stores to protest segregation. The sit-ins brought national attention to the movement in 1960. Students would dress professionally and sit quietly at the lunch counters occupying seats meant exclusively for white patrons. They would often times be physically removed from the establishment. The “sit-in” became more widespread and was used to protest segregation practices in other facilities such as libraries, theaters, museums, etc. The

students who led the sit-ins also formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

Some SNCC activists participated in bus rides through the South in an attempt to desegregate bus terminals and seating patterns. These rides were known as Freedom Rides. The Freedom Rides were met by apprehension in the South. One bus was firebombed and others were met by mob violence and police arrests. The Freedom Riders eventually won sympathy and support forcing the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to issue a new desegregation order.

March on Washington. Originally, a march on Washington, D.C., was planned in 1941 to protest employment discrimination in the defense industries. It was called off when Executive Order 8802, which barred racial discrimination and created an agency to oversee compliance with the order, was issued by the Roosevelt Administration. Later in 1962, a second march was organized through a collaborative effort among the major Civil Rights organizations, the more progressive wing of the labor movement and other liberal organizations. The March had six official goals: “meaningful Civil Rights laws, a massive federal works program, full and fair employment, decent housing, the right to vote, and adequate integrated education” (BookRags Staff, 2010). It was at this March, in front of approximately more than 200,000 demonstrators in front of the Lincoln Memorial, that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

Selma and the Voting Rights Act. In 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King organized a drive in Selma, Alabama, to enfranchise the Black population that had been denied the right to vote (Herbers, 1970, p. 14). King led several marches in Selma, and was arrested

alongside 250 other demonstrators. Demonstrators often-times were met with police brutality. In what became known as bloody Sunday, 600 people with intentions to march 54 miles from Selma to the state capital, were stopped at the Edmund Pettus Bridge by State troopers and local police. The peaceful demonstrators were attacked and beaten with billy clubs, rubber tubes wrapped in barbed wire, bull whips and tear gas. The demonstrators had only made it six blocks before they were driven back into Selma. Two weeks later the demonstrators got a court order which permitted them to make the march. As the marches and violence caught national attention, President Lyndon Johnson gave an address to Congress in support of a voting rights bill. On August 6, 1965, Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, putting an end to the use of literacy tests and poll taxes. The act authorized the federal regulation of Voter Registration. Finally Blacks had secured the right to vote.

The events collectively represent what is commonly taught and known about the history of the Civil Rights Movement. Referencing general public knowledge regarding the Movement, most individuals will be familiar with these events. I have included this section as a point of reference so that the reader will have an understanding of the history of the Civil Rights Movement as it is discussed in this paper. Next we will take a look at some trends in curriculum regarding the inclusion and teaching of African American history.

Development of Civil Rights Curriculum

Development of what can be recognized as the Civil Rights Curriculum predates the Civil Rights Movement itself, as it was in part a lack of access to African American history—along, of course, with institutional discriminations that affected employment,

housing, and education—that prompted Civil Rights activists to take action. Thus in this section, development of awareness of African American history will precede discussion of curriculum specifically about the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.

Negro History Week. According to Brown (2010), “It was commonly presumed that black people had little history besides the subjugation of slavery” (Brown, 2010). In the late nineteenth century, efforts were being made to reconstruct African American history. These efforts were led in part by Dr. Carter G. Woodson who is also known as the “Father of Black History.” Woodson, the son of slaves, earned Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from the University of Chicago and went on to become the second African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University. He began his work promoting African American history by routinely teaching public school students in the Washington, D.C. area and at Howard University. After realizing the lack of information regarding Black history and the accomplishments of Blacks, Dr. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) in 1915. The Association is now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) (Brown, 2010). In 1916 led by Woodson the ASNLH established the *Journal of Negro History* and the *Negro History Bulletin* in 1937, as research and publication outlets for Black scholars. According to Scott, “Woodson believed that publishing scientific history would transform race relations by dispelling the wide-spread falsehoods about the achievements of Africans and peoples of African descent.” It was his hope that others would draw upon the research and works done by him and other Black intellectuals published in the *Journal* (Scott, 2010).

In late summer Chicago in 1915, inspired by the response generated by the

national celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of emancipation, Woodson and the ASNLH decided they would take on the task of creating and distributing knowledge about black history. In February 1926, they announced the launch of Negro History Week. February was chosen to commemorate the birthdays of Frederick Douglas and Abraham Lincoln, two Americans that Woodson felt had played major roles in the shaping of Black history (Scott, 2010).

During the 1920s Black history was pushed to the forefront by the expanding middle class of Black Americans and the migration of Blacks from the South to the larger cities in the North. The term “New Negro” was coined in reference to the new sense of racial pride and consciousness of Blacks. This consciousness led to the launch of Black history clubs and teachers seeking out new material to teach their students. It also began the commercialization of Black history. Publishers who had ignored Black history and topics in the past, quickly began marketing books regarding Black interests to exploit the rising growth in new demand. People began to produce Black history materials without standards or structure, and Woodson continuously struggled to validate and promote Black history materials and programs that he deemed were legitimate, worthy of the many people whose experiences had created the history (Scott, 2010). According to Scott it was Woodson’s intention for Negro History Week to be replaced with the study of Black history during the year and the week in February to be used to highlight what was learned throughout the year. He looked forward to a time when the annual celebration would no longer be necessary.

Even before Woodson’s death the transition from Negro History Week to Black History Month had begun. In the 1940s, West Virginia began celebrating Black History

Month and in the mid 1960s, Chicago began the month long celebration as well. By the end of the 1960s, Black History Month began to rapidly replace Negro History Week. In 1976, the ASNLH institutionalized the shift from Negro History Week to the month long Black History Month celebration.

Freedom Schools. In 1964, forty-one Freedom Schools were opened in the state of Mississippi. The schools were alternative free schools for African Americans and were primarily housed in churches and houses in the South. The development of the schools was derived from the 1964 Civil Rights effort that focused on Voter Registration drives and educating Mississippi students for social change known as Freedom Summer (Emery, 2010). The purpose of the schools was both political and educational. Teachers, who were normally volunteers, would teach elementary and high school students to be active advocates for social change and encourage them to participate in the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement. Leadership, traditional academics, and a socially relevant curriculum also were taught to the students.

African American Studies. At the same time, programs and departments in African American Studies were beginning to be shaped at a few U.S. colleges and universities. The *U.S. History Encyclopedia* defines African American Studies as:

an inter/multidisciplinary field that analyzes and treats the past and present culture, achievements, characteristics, and issues of people of African descent in North America, the diaspora, and Africa. The challenges the sociohistorical and cultural content and definition of western ideology. African-American studies argues for a multicultural interpretation of the Western hemisphere rather than a Eurocentric one. (U.S. History Encyclopedia, 2010)

African American Studies departments are a direct product of the social movements of the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s and 1970s programs and departments of African American Studies were implemented in many universities. This was brought about by protest from the students and faculty at various universities to establish Black Studies Programs. In San Francisco at San Francisco State, there was a five-month strike by students and supporters for Black Studies. In February 1968, the first Black Studies Program was coordinated and a proposal for the first Department of Black Studies at that university was written.

Looking closer to the site of this study, in Ohio following the protest of 250 Black students in April 1969, against the exclusion of Black Studies curriculum, the administration at Ohio University (OU) in Athens, Ohio, made a written commitment for a Black Studies Institute on the campus. The Center for Afro-American Studies was established as a college at OU on April 25, 1969, the same day as the protest. The center encompassed two distinct areas: Resources and Supportive Services and the Afro-American Studies Institute. The center was accountable for the academic and degree program, while responsibility for academic and personal counseling and support programs for majors and minors fell under the resources and supportive services unit (Ohio University, 2010). The center is now known as the Department of African American Studies at OU. According to the Ohio University website, “The center had been designated as an important part of a growing effort to correct the trend in higher education that ignored the Black experience.”

Protest also occurred here on the campus of The University of Toledo. Monday,

May 4, 1970, following a shooting on the campus of Kent State, in Kent, Ohio, University of Toledo officials met and requested a voluntary three-day moratorium in remembrance of the four victims of the shooting. This moratorium included workshops that could be attended by students and faculty members and classes were not cancelled, but made optional for the duration of the moratorium so that those who so chose, could attend the workshops. Later that same month two African American students were killed at Jackson State College in Jackson, Mississippi, under the same circumstances. When after four days there was no response on the part of The University of Toledo, the Black Student Union (BSU) organized a protest (History of BSU at UT, 1970). As a part of the protest, University Hall was barricaded for five hours during which classes were stopped. The demonstration was staged by the BSU due to the University's response to the deaths of the two Mississippi students, and in anticipation of the response of the University to other demands. The BSU also requested:

1. \$200,000 for a Black Studies Program manned and directed by Blacks.
2. The hiring of a full-time coordinator of Black Studies.
3. First priority placed on the hiring of Black professors in each department.
4. By the fall of 1970, a Black student enrollment which is commensurate with the population of Blacks in the city of Toledo.
5. A minimum of three (3) Black graduate students in every department
(History of BSU at UT, 1970).

Barricades were removed when it was announced by the University that \$219,000 would be allocated to meet the costs of the demands made by the BSU. A three-day optional moratorium also was announced to be in effect. In an effort to implement the

first demand of the BSU which was instituting a Black Studies Program, a committee was put together by the University to assist with the development of the program. Members of that committee included, among others, the chair, who was one of the original members of the UT Joint Committee, and student member Helen C. Cooks, TOLEDO EXCEL program founder (History of BSU at UT, 1970).

The above section serves as a review of some of the tactics used by people to educate themselves and others regarding the history of African Americans. In the next section curriculum changes as instituted by the State and federal governments will be discussed. It also will be in this section that we will see some of the new Civil Rights Curriculum changes being introduced around the country.

Recent Curriculum Changes. President George Bush in 1989 called an education summit to find solutions to an apparent “national education crisis” which had been exposed in the report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education entitled *A Nation at Risk* (Symcox, 2002, p. 9). Among the outcomes of the meeting was the expressed need for the establishment of national achievement standards in history. In 1992, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the U.S. Department of Education, the National History Standards Project began. It was the goal of the project to develop and publish standards for teaching both American and world history. The project which was “under development for thirty-two months, was the product of a national forum in which ultimately hundreds of educators pored over, disputed, revised, and refined numerous drafts ”(Symcox, 2002, p. 97). The twenty-nine-member National Council for History Standards served as the gatekeeper of the development of the standards. Although the standards were developed through a

collaboration of input from teachers, historians, education specialists and others directly involved in the teaching of history, the project was met with resistance regarding the chosen historical contributions and events covered by the curriculum. It was said that the document was riddled with extravagant multiculturalism and was simply a politically correct version of the American past (Appleby, 2010). In 1995, the published National Standards for History was condemned by the Senate. Currently, in the U.S. History Standards for grades 5-12, there is an era entitled Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877) but there is no mention of specific study of the Civil Rights Movement (National Center for History in the Schools, 2010).

Although the study of the Civil Rights Movement is addressed in the academic standards for social studies in the State of Ohio, there is no specific unit dedicated entirely to the study of Civil Rights. According to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) web site for academic standards and benchmarks, some aspects of the Civil Rights Movement fall under the broader topics of Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities, Government, and People in Societies. While the Movement and its legislation is addressed in the Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities Standard, other important aspects of the movement such as the historical court cases of Plessy v. Ferguson and Brown v. Board of Education are addressed in the Government Standard while the discussion of the NAACP is addressed in the People in Societies Standard. The standards were not meant as a requirement as to which courses are to be offered or to limit the courses, districts may offer in their social studies programs but to act as guidelines. Three units of social studies credit are required for high school graduation, including a half unit in American History and a half unit of credit in American Government (ODE, 2009).

Currently, there are revisions underway for both the science and social studies curricula in Ohio, by the ODE. The proposed revisions to the social studies curriculum are being reviewed and the proposal is in its second draft (ODE, 2009). A review of the proposed changes, as posted on the Ohio Department of Education website reveals some of the new topics being considered for inclusion in the new high school social studies course syllabi. They include The Cold War (1941-1991), United States and the Post-Cold War (1991-Present), and Globalization (1991-Present). Under a newly proposed subject entitled Economics and Financial Literacy are the topics of Global Economy, Government and the Economy, Credit and Debt, Saving and Investing, and Financial Responsibility and Money Management. Under yet another subject area, Contemporary World is the topic of Civil and Human Rights which explores the challenges to civil rights and human rights throughout the world. There is no distinct or specific reference to the historical Civil Rights Movement in the curriculum revisions or drafts (ODE, 2009).

History Curriculum Developments. In recent years, biting critiques of the content of what is taught about the Civil Rights Movement have emerged. “Many public schools pay tribute, for example, to the history of Civil Rights by introducing children to a set of lesson plans about the struggles of the past while steering clear of any reference to the struggles of a comparable order that remain before their generation now” (Kozol, 2007, p. 75). Kozol goes on to say that “typically these lesson plans rely upon heroic stories about children in the South during the 1950s and early 1960s who had the courage to walk into previously all-white schools, overcame their own anxieties and at length achieved what are presented to our students as enduring victories” (Kozol, 2007, p. 75).

This type of watered-down curriculum and references to the Civil Rights

Movement is a disservice to the students who are being taught and the leaders, activist and actual participants who struggled and gave their lives to implement change during the Movement. It is my opinion that Civil Rights is many times taught from the perspective that the many evils of American society during slavery and the Civil Rights Movement have been eradicated and is a matter of distant history. Rather than teaching students that the past is ever present in many aspects of their lives today and will inevitably shape their future. Students are being taught to memorize events and leaders without being given the opportunity to truly relate or make a valid connection with the people and events of the movement. A successful history curriculum should teach students to make the connections between historical events of the past and today's experience. Bruner (1991) suggests the process of "non-specific transfer" which implies that skills and topics should be taught within the broader structural frameworks of the disciplines so that students will be able to transfer what they have learned when they encounter new information. In this way knowledge is usable beyond the context in which it is first learned (Bruner, 1991, p. 11).

According to Grant and Sleeter (1989), there are five approaches to multicultural teaching. For the purposes of this research their fourth approach is the most relevant. This approach they have entitled the "Multicultural Approach." Under this approach, "all students must have equal opportunity for education, and teachers must work deliberately and consistently to implement equal opportunities. All students learn that there is no "one right way" to be "American." This is important to note because it is the foundation for which educational standards should be established. More school systems should be making an effort to ensure that all students are receiving the same level of education.

Contributions made by persons of other ethnicities are just as important as others and deserve the same amount of recognition. No student should feel left out or isolated by the exclusion of their historical framework. With this being said, there have been some positive changes regarding the inclusion of multicultural education.

For example, in Mississippi, State Senate Bill 2718 which was passed in 2006 called for the State to make human rights and Civil Rights education part of the current K-12 curriculum. The bill also called for the creation of the Mississippi Civil Rights Education Commission (MCREC) to assist with the development of the curriculum. On May 15, 2009, the Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE) State board approved the new 2010 "Mississippi U.S. History: Post-Reconstruction to Present" framework (MDE, 2010).

Limitations of Prior Studies Related to Civil Rights Education

In researching for this project, I found there to be a lot missing regarding the significance of studying about the Civil Rights Movement. While I found an overwhelming amount of information on the significance of specific events and occurrences of the Movement, there was difficulty finding research that had interpreted the significance of the study on the individual personally. Hopefully this project will serve as groundwork for others to read about the Movement's significance from the perspective of the former students.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Some educators and historians have argued that the coverage of the Civil Rights Movement in history curriculums of today is minimal at best and leaves out the importance and significance of the movement. Others would argue that coverage of the movement is adequate and no longer necessary as many of the underlying issues of inequality and racism are no longer relative issues of our modern-day society. This study attempts to examine the significance, if any, of learning about the Civil Rights Movement on the personal development of students who have participated in curriculum structured around or directly related to the Civil Rights Movement by asking those students to reflect on their experience with the curriculum and pedagogy, and the impact it has had in their adult lives.

Research Design and Methods

According to Denscombe (1998), qualitative and quantitative research cannot be taken as mutually exclusive of one another. “In the realm of social research, things may not fall discreetly into one category or another, but may have certain characteristics and/or assumptions that are shared by both methods.” Denscombe shares three reasons for this occurrence:

1. In practice, the approaches are not mutually exclusive. Social researchers rarely, if ever, rely on one approach to the exclusion of the other. Good research tends to use parts of both approaches, and the difference lies in the degree to which the research is based in one camp or the other.
2. In theory, the distinction is too simplistic. The assumptions associated with the two approaches are frequently shared, frequently overlap and basically do not fall on either side of a clear dividing line.

3. Strictly speaking, the distinction between ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ relates to the treatment of data, rather than the research methods as such (Denscombe, 1998, p. 173).

As referenced by Denscombe (1998), in choosing to clarify distinctly between qualitative and quantitative research there will be and should be instances in which characteristics of both methods are present in one study. Quantitative research refers to the systematic empirical investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and their relationships. The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses pertaining to phenomena (Hopkins, 2010). Variables can be identified and relationships measured and the purpose is to create generalizations, predictions and causal explanations. The primary focus of the researcher in quantitative research is to observe and measure and the primary unit of analysis in quantitative research is numbers (Glesne, 1992, p. 6).

Qualitative research in comparison is the examination, analysis and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships, including classifications of types of phenomena and entities, in a manner that does not involve mathematical models (Schwandt, 2007, p. 247). In a qualitative study the research tends to be associated with words as the unit of analysis (Denscombe, 1998, p. 174). This description can be directly related to the research being conducted in this study in that the verbal responses given by interviewed participants will be analyzed. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), qualitative research is a holistic approach with goals to understand: 1. human behavior in natural settings, 2. a phenomenon from the perspective of the research participant and 3. meanings people give to their experiences (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 19). It

attempts to do this by using what are known as naturalistic methods such as interviewing, observation, ethnography, participant observation and focus groups. The purpose of the qualitative approach is to contextualize, interpret, and understand perspectives. In accordance with the definition and description of qualitative research this study will utilize the interviewing method to analyze the experiences and perspectives of former students and the meaning they have given to their experiences.

This study seeks to understand the perspectives of former high school students who have participated in a Civil Rights-related curriculum. Some of interviewees were not participants of the EXCEL program. They will share their experiences and views from what was taught regarding the Movement in high school and any other outside arenas. EXCEL students will reflect upon their learning experiences from curriculum taught both in high school and the EXCEL program. The intention is to show a comparison of the curriculum being offered by the EXCEL program and traditional teaching. Information regarding their learning experiences will be gathered through semi-structured interviews and interpreted for the significance, if any, the curriculum has had on their personal development. The focus of the research will be people's views and perspectives thus enforcing the decision to implement a qualitative approach. The information collected is subjective in nature and consists of individuals' interpretation of events. For these reasons, I have chosen to utilize qualitative methods for the purpose of this research.

The design of the study is specifically phenomenological, as it involves analysis and interpretation of individuals' life experiences according the meaning that they themselves give those experiences. According to Schwandt (2007), phenomenology attempts to

identify and describe the subjective experiences of respondents (Schwandt, 2007, p. 248). According to Patton (2002), phenomenological approaches seek to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience: “how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). This approach ordinarily involves interviews with people who have experienced the phenomenon of interest (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 19).

Study Setting

Toledo, Ohio, according to the US Census data 2000, is the fourth largest city in the State of Ohio in terms of people. It is located in Lucas County in northwest Ohio and borders the state of Michigan. In 2000, the city had a population of over 300,000 people. The ethnicity breakdown of the three largest populations in the city is as follows: White 72 percent, Black or African American 25 percent, and Hispanic or Latino 6 percent (US Census Bureau, 2000).

Toledo Public Schools (TPS) is the fourth largest public school system in the State of Ohio. The school system includes a total of 54 schools including: 38 elementary, 7 middle, and 9 high schools. The ethnicity breakdown of TPS student population is White 69.8 percent, Black 23.4 percent, and Hispanic 5.4 percent (Toledo Public Schools, 2010). According to Svoboda, in an article written in the Toledo Blade in 2002, TPS’ teachers and students were increasingly becoming more demographically distant, referring to the trend of the increasing number of white teachers in comparison to the increasing enrollment rate of male minority students in TPS (Svoboda, 2002). During the 2000-2001 school year, TPS teaching staff went from 84 percent to 86 percent white and from 75 percent to 79 percent female. The district saw an increase in female white

teachers and higher enrollment rates of male minority students. This trend caused a stir among Board of Education members. Some members stated that the implications of this trend would be seen in the communication between students and teachers, parental involvement and discipline policies and practices. For the purposes of this research, it may have significant implications on the curriculum subject matter being taught in the schools.

Within this setting, the specific site for this research is the TOLEDO EXCEL scholarship incentive program at The University of Toledo for high school students from ethnic groups underrepresented in higher education. It was founded by Helen C. Cooks, Ph.D. a now retired Associate Professor at The University of Toledo. Helen Cooks for 20 years served as Director of the TOLEDO EXCEL program and Assistant Vice President of the Office of EXCELlence Programs (OEP) at The University of Toledo. The OEP includes programs geared towards students under-represented in higher education such as Upward Bound, TRIO Student Support Services, and the University's former GEAR UP Program. Even after her retirement in 2007, Dr. Cooks continues to have an active role in the program, serving as a consultant and continuing to participate actively as a member of the Joint Committee. Originally, Dr. Cooks saw a need to assist students who had traditionally "fallen through the cracks" academically. According to Dr. Cooks, as stated during an interview for the UT 2003 President's Report to the Community, "At-risk students were getting some attention. So were the gifted students. But you had this B group that no one was giving attention to. We saw potential there." Cooks, with the support of community and several University of Toledo faculty members, prepared an EXCEL draft proposal and delivered it to former University of Toledo President Frank

Horton. In 1989, 50 rising high school freshmen with a B average from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education became UT's first TOLEDO EXCEL class, Group I.

After that first year, President Horton agreed that each year thereafter, at least 50 students would be inducted into the EXCEL program. It also was established at that time that once a student successfully completed all EXCEL program requirements, a scholarship covering full tuition, general fees and a monetary book allowance would be awarded each semester for study at The University of Toledo. Currently the TOLEDO EXCEL Program continues to award all eligible program participants with scholarships covering full tuition, general fees and a book allowance. Unfortunately in recent years, due to the dismal economy, budget cuts and restructuring at The University of Toledo has caused EXCEL to lose some scholarship funding. Fortunately the loss did not impact upon the program's ability to fulfill its monetary commitment to the students and a new class of EXCEL students continues to be inducted yearly.

Participant selection criteria for EXCEL includes being a student in the eighth grade at a junior or middle school within the city of Toledo, scoring proficient or above on all standardized tests, and meeting minimum GPA requirements of 3.0. If a student is eligible, counselors at their respective schools give him/her an EXCEL application to complete. In addition to the application, students are required to complete an essay on why they would like to attend college. Once the recruitment period ends all students who have completed applications and are confirmed eligible for participation are invited to attend an EXCEL orientation. The orientation is designed to familiarize the student with the services offered by the program along with informing them of what is expected of

them as EXCEL students. At least one parent is required to attend the orientation with the student in order to ensure that both parents and students understand what their commitments would be if chosen to participate in the program. Once the parent and student have completed orientation and have decided that the program is something they would like to pursue, they are offered interview appointments. All student interviews are led by members of the EXCEL staff or UT Joint Committee. Final selection of the 50 students is determined by the Program Director and the EXCEL staff with recommendations from the Joint Committee (TOLEDO EXCEL, 2010).

Program requirements remain unchanged today and include the student's maintaining a 3.0 cumulative GPA in all high school course work, earning at least 25 community service hours per year, and participation in at least 85 percent of all TOLEDO EXCEL programming and activities. TOLEDO EXCEL programming today includes academic retreats, senior-year planning, career series, and tutoring, etc. Saturday School, The Annual Conference for Aspiring Minority Youth, and yearly Summer Institutes are also required programs for participants and make up a significant part of the EXCEL experience (*TOLEDO EXCEL: A Success Story*, n.d.).

Saturday School is structured to supplement the student high school math and science curriculums. Each fall and spring, classes are offered on Saturday mornings on the campus of The University of Toledo. Classes are normally facilitated by Toledo area high school teachers and/or UT professors selected by the EXCEL staff. EXCEL participants are required to attend Saturday School classes for their freshman and sophomore years where they learn new math and science concepts, to familiarize themselves with concepts they may or may not have been taught previously in their high

school classroom, as well as receive tutoring and assistance with homework, as needed (TOLEDO EXCEL, 2010).

The Annual Conference for Aspiring Minority Youth is a conference held each year in January on the campus of The University of Toledo to highlight important educational and community issues. Each year letters are sent to underrepresented students in the Toledo area in grades 7-12 and their parents. Attendance at the conference has grown from hundreds in the late 1980s when the conference was first introduced to thousands attending the event. It is now a well-established reputable part of the Toledo community and the UT campus just as the TOLEDO EXCEL Program is. The conference consists of a morning keynote speaker and afternoon breakout sessions and workshops for students, parents, and educators.

One important component of EXCEL participation is the annual summer institutes. Students attend a total of four two-week summer institutes over the course of their participation in the program. One institute is attended for each year of high school plus an optional one during the summer transitioning from high school to attending The University. For attending each year students receive 15 points which over the course of the student's EXCEL high school journey accounts for 60 points out of the possible 100 points that a student can accumulate. As mentioned earlier, it is a requirement that each EXCEL student participate in at least 85 percent of EXCEL programming to be eligible to receive their scholarship (TOLEDO EXCEL, 2010).

Later in the study readers will have the opportunity to hear directly from TOLEDO EXCEL students who have studied a Civil Rights Curriculum and more specifically the Civil Rights Summer Institute. Their perspectives will be analyzed in

chapter four to help determine whether or not EXCEL and other educational institutions are going in the right direction with the continued inclusion or addition of curriculum on the Civil Rights Movement. Now that the setting has been introduced the next section will focus on the participants of the study.

Participant Population and Selection Process

A total of ten participants were interviewed for this study. Half of the participants were selected based on their participation in TOLEDO EXCEL and the program's Civil Rights component. Members were selected from EXCEL groups I – V which pertain to the program induction years of 1990 – 1997, in which time the program offered an extension Civil Rights Curriculum yearly during each summer. Total members selected from this population were five and selection was based on their participation in the EXCEL summer Civil Rights Institute. Those five participants were African American, both males and females ranging in age from 30 – 35 years old. The remaining five participants selected were chosen from a population outside of EXCEL. This population was chosen from graduates of the various Toledo Public High Schools (TPS). They share similar demographic and educational characteristics such as graduation from high school and a relative age range as the EXCEL group but did not participate in a similar Civil Rights Institute.

For the purposes of completion of the Master's thesis, the population selected was a part of a convenience sample. All participants are persons known to me personally through working at EXCEL, The University of Toledo and/or from residing in Toledo, Ohio. Half of the participants (5) chosen for the study were selected from former EXCEL students by their participation in the TOLEDO EXCEL program and their

corresponding Civil Rights Institute between the years of 1990 – 1997. EXCEL participants were chosen from students who reside here in Toledo and remain in touch with the program and were willing to assist me with the research. The remaining five participants were chosen according to their graduation from high school in the city of Toledo and being among those of the age range of 30 - 35. Outside participants were selected from acquaintances known to me from living and working in the Toledo area that were willing to participate in the research.

Participants were chosen as a part of a convenience sample and while there was no targeting of specific populations for interview participants, they were chosen from EXCEL which is a program that targets students from groups underrepresented in higher education including African, Appalachian, Asian, Hispanic and Native Americans. Given that the purpose of the research is to examine the existing curriculum being offered by the EXCEL program this is an appropriate representation of the population being served. This decision was made based on the in-depth Civil Rights Curriculum offered by the program, access to the necessary data and participants and the lack of an alternative comparable setting.

Data Collection and Analysis

Initially all participants were approached verbally as to their interest in participating in the study. Those interested in going further and participating in an interview were given a consent letter to take with them to read over and sign. (Specifically, participants had 24 hours to read over the consent letter and determine whether or not they would participate.) Once the consent letter was signed and returned, interview dates and times were scheduled with the participants at their convenience.

Interviews involved two one-hour semi-structured interviews in which each participant was interviewed separately. Unless the location was changed by the participant, most interviews took place in the TOLEDO EXCEL office on the campus of The University of Toledo and were audio-recorded. Two interviews took place in a classroom at Snyder Memorial also on UT's campus. Data from the interviews was then collected, transcribed, analyzed and recorded with all identifying characteristics of the participants involved removed. Pseudonyms and coding was used in place of factual names and identifiers. All participants and information will remain confidential. Following common phenomenological research procedures, the data was analyzed by focusing on the participants' descriptions of their specific experiences, and the meaning they make of those experiences in terms of their personal development.

Limitations of the Research

For the purposes of this research, the impact or significance of learning about the Civil Rights Movement will be examined by learning from the perspective of former students who have studied a Civil Rights Curriculum in Toledo, Ohio. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), it is not the purpose in qualitative research to transfer or generalize a qualitative study's results to other settings and populations. "The researcher can refer to the original theoretical framework to show how data collection and analysis will be guided by concepts and models. Then, those who design research within those same parameters can determine whether the cases described can be generalized for new research and transferred to other settings (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 252)." With this being said, generalizability and transferability of this study to other settings and populations may be problematic. Limitations for this study include limiting the topic of

Civil Rights to refer to the African American Movement in the U.S. For the purposes of this research, there was no attempt made to study or interpret the significance of other Civil Rights genres such as women's rights, gay/lesbian rights, immigrant rights, etc., or the general topic of civil rights as a whole on student perspectives. Participant selection limiting participants to African Americans is a limitation; however, this also allowed the opportunity for in-depth research regarding the program and its participants and may emphasize a need for additional comparable programming.

Trustworthiness Features

According to Glesne (1992), "an important part in demonstrating trustworthiness of your data is to realize the limitations of your study and to acknowledge your own biases and subjectivity (Glesne, 1992, p. 147)." In accordance with this statement in the above section limitations of this research have been discussed. Throughout this project it has been mentioned that I am currently employed by the TOLEDO EXCEL program and was once a student participant in the program. This fact is a direct representation of my subjectivity in the research. Even though I would like for the program to be perceived as successful, it is more important that the student perspective is considered in matters that concern what services and curriculum will be offered to future students of the program. Also as an African American, there is inherently some subjectivity in the subject matter of the research itself. As a way to address the issues of subjectivity and to ensure validity and credibility of the data, I have utilized the concepts of prolonged engagement and member checks as defined by Marshall and Rossman (2011): prolonged engagement refers to the researcher being in the setting for a long period of time and member checks as sharing data and interpretations with participants (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 40).

Through my participation in EXCEL as a student and employee for over 12 years and residing in Toledo, Ohio, for over 18 adult years, I am familiar with the setting chosen for this research. Also I have shared my interpretations with some of the participants of this study for their feedback and verification. In addition ethical and human subjects training have been completed, helping to ensure that ethical data collection and analyzing practices were implemented.

Summary

This research is a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach to understand experiences and the meaning given to those experiences by former students who have studied various Civil Rights Curriculums in high school. Looking back from their position as young adults learning about Civil Rights they reflect upon the impact it has had on their lives currently. The next chapter presents, some of those experiences—directly from the perspective of those students who are now adults looking back at what they learned in high school and in EXCEL, and the impact it has had on their personal development.

Chapter Four

Results

The purpose of this research was to examine whether or not the study of the Civil Rights Movement remained pertinent to the personal development of students in today's society. The study attempted to answer the following questions: What if any is the impact on the personal lives of the students who participated in a Civil Rights Curriculum?

Demographic Information

Ten former high school students from the Toledo, Ohio, area participated in the research by being interviewed regarding their participation in Civil Rights related curriculum while attending high school. Fifty percent of the respondents were female and fifty percent were male. All of the interviewees identified themselves as African American, between the ages of 30-35. The median participant was a 32-year-old African American male or female. The interview questions consisted of five main questions with three to six sub-questions associated with each. The interviews were all semi-structured, meaning all participants were asked the same questions but some follow-up was necessary to certain responses.

Question 1: What do you remember learning about the Civil Rights Movement including key events?

When discussing this question with the participant the lead, sub-question was where did you first learn about the Civil Rights Movement? In designing the interview questions, it was my intention that we would first begin with their high school experiences. It wasn't until after the first three interviews that I had realized that I had made the earlier presumption that the Civil Rights Movement was being covered to some extent in the high school history curriculum. Those earlier interviews confirmed that I was wrong in my assumption and recollection of covering material regarding the Civil Rights Movement myself in high school. It was actually the unit on slavery that was taught during American History. All participants confirmed that there was no structured inclusion or course taught regarding the Civil Rights Movement that they were enrolled in during high school. All participants did acknowledge receiving some information regarding the movement during Black History Month at their respective high schools. When discussing this coverage, it was the consensus of the participants that the information was basic and always covered the same people and events. Two respondents even made the exact same quotes during their interviews when asked what they learned regarding the movement in high school. Their responses were "Martin Luther King had a dream, Rosa Parks wouldn't get off the bus and Malcolm X was a bad man." All respondents had remembered the Bus Boycott, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., the desegregation of the schools, and Voter Registration as some of the key events taught regarding the movement.

When asked about the event that was most significant to the interviewee, their

responses varied due to their personal convictions. One respondent who chose to be referred to as Aleecia said that the event that was most significant to her was the integration of the schools. She said this was important to her because “she takes a lot of pride in her education...and that was the first opportunity we (African Americans) were allowed to flourish academically.” Another respondent who has been coded as Nita shared Aleecia’s view of the desegregation of the school system. She too said this was the event that was most significant to her because it provided students with the chance for the first time to attend school with other races and allowed Blacks to attend schools with more qualified teachers and better resources. CJ, another respondent said that the event that was most important to him was Voter Registration. When asked why voter registration his response was simply “If you have no vote, you have no voice.” Raquel was impressed by the involvement of the youth in the movement and specifically the “sit-ins” She said that “A lot of times the youth of today is shunned and the fact that they were the driving force behind the movement, stands out to me.”

Both groups of participants, when asked the key events of the movement, could summarize the events most commonly taught regarding the Civil Rights Movement. Specifically mentioning those events highlighted from Chapter 2: The Bus Boycott, March on Washington, Voter Registration, etc. The EXCEL respondents appeared to have a more thorough understanding of the events. For example, when referencing any one particular event, EXCEL students were able to provide more information and details than the non-EXCEL participants. They could refer back to the names and specific places regarding the movement while the non-EXCEL participants could only provide a general summary of what they remembered from what they had been told took place took place.

Question 2: How do you remember being taught about the Civil Rights Movement in high school?

In summarizing the responses from the participants, it has already been established that the Civil Rights Movement was not a structured part of the high school curriculum of the interviewees. It was instead approached mainly during the month of February when the schools participated in the annual Black History month activities. Methods used to facilitate the instruction of the movement included videos, books, films, Black History Programs, and lectures. One video in particular was mentioned more than once that video being *Eyes on the Prize*, as a way of introducing the participants to the Movement. There was no mention by any of the respondents of field trips directly related to the Movement being offered by the high schools.

In contrast the EXCEL participants talked in-depth about field studies that involved traveling to the Southern States. They spoke of what it felt like to be in the company of notable Civil Rights Activists such as the Reverend Jesse Jackson and Coretta Scott King standing on the Edmund Pettus Bridge re-enacting the March from Selma to Montgomery, while the non-EXCEL participants could only reflect upon traditional classroom instruction methods. It was apparent that the use of nontraditional instructional methods had significance on the understanding and retention of the material.

Question 3: In what other arenas besides school were you exposed to learning about the Civil Rights Movement?

Three respondents were from families that included educators and said that this was their initial introduction to studying about the Civil Rights Movement. Those respondents that did not have an educator as a family member, did have senior family

members and parents that would share stories from their own experiences and speak with them regarding events and people of the Movement. One respondent, Chris, was also involved in a community organization that taught about the Civil Rights Movement during Black History Month. Another respondent, Renée, remembers learning about the Movement by reading about the activists and leaders in books at the library and watching documentaries on television.

It was with this question that the participants involved in the EXCEL program spoke regarding their experiences of being taught in a Civil Rights Curriculum. Aleecia reflected back upon taking the EXCEL field study to Arkansas and Tennessee studying about the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School. In her own words, “the experience meant more because we were able to stand on the actual landmarks and talk to the people who were actually involved in the integration of Central High School instead of just reading about it from a book.” She stated that it was through that trip that she was able to really understand the meaning of “segregation.” Nita spoke about all the research and hard work that her EXCEL class had to do in preparation for their Civil Rights field study. She also spoke about interviewing many activists that were involved in the Movement that are not necessarily mentioned in conjunction with the Movement. Even though she could not recollect the name of the gentleman, she fondly remembers meeting the man who had written many of the freedom songs and then taught her group a few of them. Another respondent, Mea, provided details on her experience re-enacting the March from Selma to Montgomery during her EXCEL participation, “Actually walking those 54 miles with other leaders behind Coretta Scott King, Reverend Abernathy, Reverend Jesse Jackson, and Al Sharpton, being in the midst of those people had a

significant impact on me because it made them not so much as figureheads as it made them more; it made the movement more real to me.”

Both participants, those who were in EXCEL and those who were not, agreed that what they learned outside of the classroom regarding the Civil Rights Movement was more in-depth and inclusive than what was being addressed by their high schools. The utilization of other techniques of instruction such as the re-enactments, interviews, and research in addition to the traditional videos, books and lectures played a role in the participants’ overall understanding of the Movement.

Question 4: What is the present impact on your life of having learned about the Movement in high school?

This question perhaps was the most important one for this study as it speaks directly to the research question that this project was designed to learn. When analyzing the responses from this question it is here where one could notice subtle differences in the responses from the two populations of participants, EXCEL and non-EXCEL members. Up to this point in the interview, they were very similar in their responses with no significant differences. One noticeable difference was that the responses of non-EXCEL members were all structured along the lines of appreciation. They were grateful for the things that many people today take for granted from the smaller things such as being able to sit wherever they want on a bus to the larger things such as having the right to vote. EXCEL participant responses were more proactive. They spoke of becoming active in youth groups and Black Student Union organizations in college, of doing work in their communities with students of color, and getting more involved in political issues. Four out of five EXCEL respondents explained that they are currently very active in their

communities and politics; and they attribute this to knowing about the struggles of the Movement. This is compared to two out of five of the respondents who had not participated in the EXCEL Civil Rights curriculum. Another difference between the two populations was that the EXCEL participants spoke a lot about the pride of knowing from where they came, and about being better people by knowing their history. This can be best represented by a quote from one respondent, BJ, who said “We come from good stock.” There was more of a sense of self-pride within that group that was not as noticeable from the non-EXCEL participants. Lastly, EXCEL participants that were parents (two of the five participants) said that what they have learned regarding the Movement has had some affect on the way that they raise their children. They said it has made them more aware of the importance of teaching them about African American history and the Civil Rights Movement, and of the sacrifices made by others so that their lives could be better. They also spoke of taking their children to African American Museums and other educational venues to teach them about their history. Four of the five non-EXCEL participants were parents, with three participants responding that what they had learned regarding the Movement had no affect on the way they raised their children.

There were zero responses that the Civil Rights curriculum had a negative or no impact at all on them personally. Although, one respondent said he was angered by what he had learned about the Civil Rights Movement regarding the treatment of African Americans by Whites and still harbors some resentment as a response to this.

In summary, all participants agreed that there was personal significance in having learned about the Movement in high school. Some of the specific responses from the non-EXCEL participants included having an appreciation of what others had to go through

during the Movement to ensure the freedoms that exist today. They also spoke of not wanting to take everyday-things for granted, and being grateful for what others endured in order to fight for equality and social reform. Responses between the two groups differed in that the EXCEL respondents had the tendency to speak more regarding community and political activism and wanting to teach the next generation including their own children of their historical inheritance.

Question 5: What are some of your personal feelings and opinions regarding studying the Civil Rights Movement?

This was the last question of the interview and it was interesting to analyze how the responses differed among the two groups of participants. The first sub-question was: “In your opinion what (if any) is the personal significance of learning about the Civil Rights Movement?” The non-EXCEL participants’ responses to this question were more general and so we will begin the analysis with their comments. Two of them reverted to their original statements regarding being appreciative of current freedoms and one said that it was the framework upon which she guided some of her decision-making. The last respondent stated that “it is necessary to see where you came from in order to appreciate where you are now and to appreciate the sacrifices that it took to get you where you are now.” EXCEL participant responses regarding personal significance can be summarized into three categories. One is social responsibility in which two respondents spoke about having a sense of responsibility to take what they have learned and share it with others. They also spoke about the notion of “each one teach one” in an effort to ensure that each generation continues to be better than the one before it and the notion of not forgetting where you come from. The second category is social consciousness in that two other

respondents spoke in regards to the fact that the Civil Rights Movement was not just about African Americans but the civil liberties of people in general. It was mentioned that the methods used by Civil Rights activist were the same ones that were later used to establish gay and lesbian rights and the Civil Rights for other people as well. The third category is social awareness in that one respondent spoke about the importance of recognizing and being aware of the Civil Rights Movement's influence on shaping the culture of today's generation.

When asked whether or not the Civil Rights Movement should be taught in high school, and it's relevance today, all respondents were in agreement that it should be included. They also agreed upon that it should be taught as an elective course by qualified instructors with a background in African American studies. Participants felt that Black History Month coverage alone was not enough for students to grasp the complexity of the Movement. Speaking to the relevance of the Movement today non-EXCEL participants tended to respond that African American students needed to know their history in order to fully understand the implications that presently affect them and to appreciate how far African Americans have come thus far. EXCEL participants looked at the relevance as being more general in that it is not just about African Americans, but American History in general; and without it, students do not get a complete or accurate historical representation.

Discussion and Summary of Results

Many of the responses to the interview questions were very similar, whether the participant had been involved with EXCEL or not. One reason for this might be that even though, as stated by the respondents, they had received very little instruction regarding

the Civil Rights Movement at their respective high schools, EXCEL and non EXCEL participants alike were taught about the Movement via other outlets such as family members and other community programming. Another explanation might be that because all of the respondents were African American, they may have shared some of the same views and beliefs regarding the significance of African American History.

Differences among the responses of the groups were a matter of interpretation based on the experiences of the individuals. It is my opinion that the EXCEL participants, because of their more structured and extensive Civil Rights curriculum, may have been more knowledgeable about the Civil Rights Movement than the other group and therefore, took different approaches to responding to the questions. Overall, it can be concluded that from the perspective of the interview participants, the Civil Rights Movement is personally significant and relevant enough to be taught to future generations.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The final chapter of this project restates the research question and summarizes the study. Next, an analysis of the results as well as implications for the TOLEDO EXCEL Program will be presented. The chapter will conclude with suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine whether or not the study of the Civil Rights Movement remained pertinent to the personal development of students in today's society. The study attempted to answer the following question: What if any is the impact on the personal lives of the students who participated in a Civil Rights Curriculum? This question was asked with the purpose of laying a foundation for further consideration as to how study of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. might or might not still be relevant to high school students today.

Data were collected and analyzed from interviews with ten participants. Half of the participants were also members of the TOLEDO EXCEL Program, a scholarship incentive program at The University of Toledo that offers its students an intensive two-week curriculum designed around the Civil Rights Movement. The other half of the participants referred to what they were taught regarding the Civil Rights Movement primarily in high school and from outside sources such as family members and community resources.

Analysis of the Results

Overall, participation in a Civil Rights Curriculum was shown to have some significance in the personal development of the participants involved in this study. Both the EXCEL participants and the non-EXCEL participants acknowledged that they had benefited personally from their knowledge of the Movement. From the differences in the responses given by the EXCEL participants in comparison to the non-EXCEL participants, it can be concluded that the more structured and in-depth the Civil Rights Curriculum experience, the more of an impact it had on the participant. Participants also agreed that the Civil Rights Movement is relative to students of today and should be taught as part of an elective course in high school. It was determined that the Movement includes too much information to be condensed into a couple of paragraphs in a text book or during the period of Black History Month. It was suggested that qualified instructors be hired to instruct the course, to ensure that the students' experience would be meaningful. Some of the personal characteristics that the participants attribute to their knowledge of the Movement include being more socially conscious and aware, more active in their communities and more willing to assist others. The impact of having learned about the Movement can be seen in some of the participants by the way that they raise their children and in others by their choices in employment and community activities.

Implications for the TOLEDO EXCEL Program

In the introduction of this study, it was explained that another aspect of this research was to determine what direction the TOLEDO EXCEL staff should pursue in planning for future summer institutes, specifically, whether or not the Civil Rights

Institute should be continued with its traditional curriculum, continued with a revised curriculum, or discontinued. After hearing from the perspective of former students who have participated in Civil Rights curriculum and more specifically the EXCEL Civil Rights Institute it can be concluded that the Civil Rights Curriculum should be kept in place, but with minor revisions. This should be done because analysis of the responses from all participants suggests that the Civil Rights Movement does have significance to the personal development of those who participate in such a curriculum, influencing areas such as community involvement, political awareness and individual personal growth. Suggested changes would include utilizing some of the responses from the study participants on relevance of the Movement to current generations into the structure of the institute so that students are better able to make this connection. Emphasizing the relationship and influence of the Civil Rights Movement to the structure of society as it exists today.

Suggestions for Further Research

To obtain a stronger understanding of the significance of learning about the Civil Rights Movement on the personal development of participants, it may be beneficial to conduct a larger study. In a larger study the population of participants will be larger as well as their responses. The population would be more diverse and may even include persons who have very little to no knowledge regarding the Civil Rights Movement. Alternatives to this study design may include selecting students that have had little knowledge regarding the Civil Rights Movement and then providing them with instruction on the Civil Rights Movement and record what impact the change has, if any, on the participants. This may give a new perspective on whether or not study of the

Movement has any impact on personal development.

Furthermore, the current study focused on how past high school students, some EXCEL and some not, saw the impact of their high school experience, looking back as adults. As mentioned in implications, this is useful for revising and reframing the Civil Rights Curriculum in EXCEL—and perhaps in other venues—to make the potential relevance of the study clearer to current students. However, further research should include interviews with current high school students to study their perspectives regarding the relevance of the Civil Rights Movement today.

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