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**BLACK STUDIES IN THE SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM
POSITION AND OPINIONS**

by

Paul A. Filter

A DISSERTATION

**Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
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For the Degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Secondary Education**

**Under the Supervision of
Professor Ward Sybouts**

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TITLE

BLACK STUDIES IN THE SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES

CURRICULUM - POSITION AND OPINIONS

BY

PAUL A. FILTER

APPROVED

DATE

WARD SYBOUTS

July 21, 1970

WILLIS MORELAND

July 21, 1970

JOHN LUX

July 21, 1970

DEWAINA ALCORN

July 21, 1970

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

GRADUATE COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1918 American educators rejected the Committee of Ten's concept of a classical education for the select few who would matriculate to college as a basis for secondary school curriculum. At that time they embraced the concept of an equal and relevant education for all Americans. The National Commission of the Reorganization of Secondary Schools in that year stated,

Education in the United States should be guided by a clear conception of the meaning of democracy. It is the ideal of democracy that the individual and society may find fulfillment each in the other.¹

This was a bold new concept still accepted in only a few areas in the world. Implementing such a program in our society of pluralities and subcultures was recognized by this same committee as the only way unity could be achieved.

In some countries a common heredity, a strong centralized government, and an established religion contribute to social solidarity. In America racial stocks are widely diversified, various forms of social heredity come into conflict, differing religious beliefs do not always make for unification, and the members of different vocations often fail to recognize the interests that they have in common with others. The school is the only agency that may be controlled definitely and consciously by our democracy for the purpose of unifying its people.²

¹Commission of the Reorganization of Secondary Education, Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, Bureau of Education Bulletin 1918, No. 35 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), p. 9.

²Ibid., p. 22.

One curriculum area which is considered important in the accomplishment of this goal is social studies. Through the social studies American youth could be inculcated not only with the ideal of the democratic way of life, but understanding that these freedoms were paid for dearly, and are maintained only with constant vigilance. They could be taught to look with pride on their heritage, and America's contribution to mankind's progress.

In recent years it has been brought forcibly to our attention that this ideal of American education has not been met. Secondary social studies have been western-oriented and rather than allowing all Americans to find fulfillment, have been oriented to fill the needs of the majority while, to some extent, ignoring the nation's many minority groups.

The price our nation is paying and will continue to pay for this neglect has been dramatically shown by riots and other civil disturbances. The Kerner report which investigated causes of the riots of 1967 reported, "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white - separate and unequal."³

That education must assume part of the responsibility for this neglect is evident from this statement from the Kerner report:

In this last summer's disorders (1967) we have seen the consequences of racial isolation at all levels, and of attitudes

³U. S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 1.

toward race, on both sides, produced by three centuries of myth, ignorance and bias.⁴

Among recommendations from the Kerner report were: "Recognition of the history, culture, and contribution of minority groups to American civilization in the textbooks, and curriculum of all schools."⁵

The fact that education, particularly social studies, has been remiss in its duties is apparent. However, the Kerner report states that education may still help avert this tragedy, "This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement can be reversed. Choice is possible."⁶

It would seem choice is not only a possibility but mandatory if the dream of American democracy is to continue. Within the educational system, particularly the social studies, emphasis can be placed upon recognition of the contributions of minority groups.

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to discover the current position of Black Studies in the social studies curriculum of secondary schools in the North Central Association. More specifically, the research attempted to determine when Black Studies were adopted, why they were, or were not adopted, the nature of the program and what secondary

⁴Ibid., p. 243.

⁵Ibid., p. 248.

⁶Ibid., p. 1.

social studies teachers believe should be the position of Black Studies in the curriculum. The opinions of secondary social studies teachers towards Black Studies were also examined.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the sake of clarity, certain terms used in the Statement of the Problem required definition. These terms were as follows:

Black studies. A high school social studies course or part of a course of study dealing with the history and culture of Black Americans.

Secondary schools. Include grades ten, eleven, and twelve in public schools.

Secondary social studies department heads. Teachers designated by their principals as being in charge of the social studies department in that particular school.

North Central Association. Includes the states of Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Schools with a Black population. Schools in which Blacks made up 10 per cent or more of the student body.

III. PROCEDURE

Review of literature. In recent years much has been written concerning Black Studies. The literature reviewed in this study pertained to curriculum in Black Studies. Through necessity the researcher relied a great deal on periodicals, pamphlets, and government publications.

Sample. A list of secondary schools, with an enrollment of more than one thousand students, and the names of the principals of those schools was obtained from the North Central Association quarterly. A sample of three hundred six schools was selected by random sampling from this list. Lists of secondary social studies department heads were then obtained from the principals of those schools. This sample of three hundred six served as respondents to the survey instrument.

Instrument. The instrument, a questionnaire, in addition to other items, sought to answer questions pertaining to demographic distribution, teacher training, experience and level of involvement in social studies. Items for the instrument were selected after reviewing the literature, questionnaires of a similar nature, and consulting with authorities in the field.

A pilot test among Lincoln secondary social studies teachers, and graduate students at the University of Nebraska was made prior to the administration of the instrument.

Copies of the survey instrument accompanied by a cover letter and a stamped, self-addressed envelope, were distributed to the respondents. Prior to the deadline, a follow-up letter was sent to those respondents who had not returned the instrument. A diary-log was maintained, and returns were analyzed according to date to determine if late returns were representative.

Analysis of Data. Upon completion by the respondents, data from the instrument were tabulated to determine frequencies. A descriptive analysis was employed to determine the extent and nature of Black Studies in schools of the sample.

The sample was divided into the following categories:

1. Schools from metropolitan areas.
2. Schools from non-metropolitan areas.
3. Schools with a Black population.
4. Schools without a Black population.

The questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

1. The position of Black Studies in the curriculum.
2. When Black Studies were adopted.
3. Why Black Studies were adopted, or why Black Studies were not adopted.
4. The nature of the Black Studies program.
5. What secondary social studies department heads feel the position of Black Studies should be in the curriculum.
6. Opinions of secondary social studies department heads toward the Black Studies.

7. Materials used by secondary social studies departments in
Black Studies.

The following comparisons were made of each of the sections of
the questionnaire:

1. Schools from metropolitan areas.
2. Schools from non-metropolitan areas.
3. Schools with a Black population.
4. Schools without a Black population.

IV. ORIGIN OF THE STUDY

The civil upheaval wracking our nation is of great concern to
all American citizens. As educators we should be particularly con-
cerned with inequality and injustices in our society. A democratic
society cannot exist if its rights and freedoms are denied to any part
of its peoples.

Having spent four years teaching at Pittsburg, California, in
a school in which the majority of the student population were from
low socio-economic and minority groups the researcher had a special
concern for the problems of the minorities, particularly the Black
Americans and Mexican-Americans. As football coach at Pittsburg High
School, through the unique and close relationship of player-coach,
the researcher became cognizant of the hopes and frustrations of these
young men.

V. ASSUMPTIONS

Through the evaluation of responses to a questionnaire it was possible to determine the current status of Black Studies in secondary social studies curriculum. It was possible to determine what secondary social studies teachers think the status of Black Studies should be. It was also possible to determine the opinions of secondary social studies teachers towards Black Studies as measured by a questionnaire. It was further assumed the sample in this research was characteristic of secondary social studies teachers in the North Central Association.

VI. QUESTIONS ANSWERED

1. What per cent of schools in the North Central Association with an enrollment of one thousand or more students had Black Studies programs in the secondary school curriculum?
2. Has the Black Studies program been included in the secondary social studies curriculum in schools in the North Central Association in recent years?
3. What were the reasons Black Studies were, or were not, adopted in the secondary social studies curriculum?
4. What was the nature of the Black Studies program in the curriculum?
5. What per cent of secondary social studies teachers were of the opinion that the Black Studies program in their curriculum was not adequate?

6. What were the opinions of secondary social studies teachers regarding the scope and nature of Black Studies?

VII. SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

This investigation proposed to determine the present position of Black Studies in the secondary social studies curriculum, and the length of time Black Studies have been in existence. It proposed to ascertain why Black Studies were or were not included in the curriculum, what pressures or considerations prompted the adoption or rejection of the program. Whether it was integrated throughout an existing course, was a separate segregated course, or a particular day or days, in which the entire school participates was also to be investigated. In addition, the investigation proposed to discover what secondary social studies teachers believe the proper position of Black Studies should be in the curriculum.

To understand the possibility of the success or failure of a Black Studies program, teacher opinions must be considered. This investigation proposed to determine the opinions of secondary social studies teachers toward Black Studies. This research was not concerned with an evaluation of the curriculum or opinions of teachers in the current program. It was concerned only with a description of Black Studies and the opinions of secondary social studies teachers in schools in the North Central Association with an enrollment of over one thousand students.

VIII. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

If we are to avoid the polarization of the races referred to in the Kerner report, education, and particularly the social studies, must provide each student in America the opportunity to understand and respect the contributions and culture of those Americans from a different racial or cultural background than his own.

To truly understand the Black culture, a student should live in an area where a large concentration of Black Americans exist and come in frequent contact with them. As many states in the North Central Association contain large segments of Blacks only in metropolitan areas, few students in the non-metropolitan areas have personal contact with the Black culture. It then follows that students from non-metropolitan areas must gain a considerable part of their knowledge of Black culture from the schools. Therefore, it is extremely important that the secondary schools provide an ample Black Studies program in their curriculum. This objective will be difficult to achieve unless the instructor is knowledgeable and unbiased toward that culture.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo,
Little Turk or Japanese,
Oh don't you wish that you were me.¹

The world has shrunk since these works were penned by Robert Louis Stevenson many years ago, but not the feeling behind them. To accomplish the task of making our nation truly a land of freedom and equality, the school and the curriculum must not resist change, but be resilient. It must teach students to live with other races. We cannot be like the actor in the Broadway play who said, "Stop the World - I want to get off!," nor can we expect society to reverse history to a more comfortable decade.²

Evidence is abundant in the literature of the need for Black Studies to be included in the social studies curriculum. Saylor stated, "The maximum development of each individual, within the framework of the common welfare is the essence of democracy and, hence, of schooling."³ To allow this maximum development of each individual

¹John Jarolimek, "Social Studies Education: The Elementary School," Social Education, 33:429, April, 1969.

²Edward G. Olsen, "What Shall We Teach About Race and Racism?" Pennsylvania School Journal, 117:90, October, 1968.

³J. Galen Saylor and William M. Alexander, Curriculum Planning for Modern Schools (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston Inc., 1966), p. 47.

there must be a common meeting ground of understanding, and mutual respect between the two races. To accomplish this goal, both races must be willing to reject old stereotypes, and prejudices, and accept new concepts. One way to acquire this respect and flexibility is through Black Studies. The importance of this ability to change, and live with others was emphasized by Whitney M. Young Jr., executive director of the National Urban League who said, "Any child who grows up today uncomfortable with diversity is in trouble, you don't shut other people out any more - you shut yourself in."⁴ The concept of adjusting to meet society's needs is not new. Abraham Lincoln said:

The dogma of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise to the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save the country.⁵

Harvey B. Scribner, Vermont Commissioner of Education puts it in modern vernacular, "Write it as it is. Learn it as it is. Let American History be a true document of our growth. I could not ask for more."⁶

The literature indicates American education has not met the challenge of Commissioner Scribner, and is at least partially responsible for the low self-esteem on the part of Blacks and the poor

⁴Olsen, op. cit., pp. 90-91, (cited in).

⁵DeVere E. Pentony, "The Case for Black Studies," The Atlantic, 223:89, April, 1969.

⁶"Minorities," School and Society, 97:76, February, 1969.