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1998

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FLORIDA SOCIAL STUDIES LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING AN AFROCENTRIC CURRICULUM

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the Department of Instructional Programs at the University of Central Florida Orlando Florida

Spring Term
1998

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to gain insight into the perceptions Florida's leaders have regarding the inclusion of an Afrocentric curriculum. The leaders chosen for this study were the Florida Council for the Social Studies Board and the Association of Social Studies Supervisors. These leaders were sent a questionnaire that contained 57 statements about social studies curriculum content in a Likert scale format. The results of the survey were reported by using mean scores and frequency distributions.

The Likert survey statements examined respondents' viewpoints with regard to diversity, Afrocentrism, and Eurocentrism. The results of the survey were used to infer the respondents' perceptions regarding the five research questions.

1. What was the perceived importance of considering the diverse nature of an ethnicity in respect to the development of curriculum and instruction?
2. What was the perceived level of interest regarding the incorporation of an Afrocentric perspective into the Social Studies Curriculum?

3. How did the respondents perceive the incorporation of an alternate curriculum maintaining diverse perspectives?

4. Did the respondents believe the social studies curriculum should be altered to cater to the learning styles of ethnic and cultural groups?

5. Was there a perceived need for diverse assessment techniques to gauge the academic success of students from various cultural and ethnic groups?

The mean scores assigned to each research question indicated that the leaders in the social studies agreed that diverse cultures should be included within the mainstream curriculum and that alternative assessment techniques should be used to measure those ideas. However, there was little interest in permitting the ethnicity of the school's population guide curriculum and instruction decisions. Furthermore, the leaders seemed more interested in a multicultural curriculum than a curriculum incorporating only an Afrocentric perspective.
To Mom and Dad
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have completed my degree without the help of many special individuals. I take this time to show my sincere gratitude.

My deepest appreciation and indebtedness to my advisor and chair, Dr. Jeff Cornett, for his willingness to listen and his extraordinary insight.

To Dr. Kysilka for helping me recognize when change was necessary and noticing when it had taken place.

To Dr. Lange for his high expectations and thorough evaluations.

A special thank you to Dr. Beiler and Dr. Lue who took their valuable time to be part of my committee.

To my special co-workers, Freda Miller, Reggie Forbes, and Nina Thompson who helped me endure at work.

To Rose Pacy, for being so wonderful and sweet. I probably would not have graduated without her assistance.

To my husband Jeff, thanks for the love and support.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The intent of this research project was to ascertain Florida Social Studies leaders' perceptions regarding the factors which influence an Afrocentric curriculum and whether it is feasible to consider an Afrocentric curriculum as a viable alternative to a traditional, mainstream social studies curriculum. The impetus for this project was Molefi Asante’s Afrocentricity (1991), the inspiration for which he credits Carter Woodson. For Asante, “centricity” in education is “...locating students within the context of their own cultural references so that they can relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives” (Asante, 1991, p. 171).

Essentially, learning more often takes place when children feel comfortable and familiar with their learning environments and can connect old knowledge with new
information. If Asante is correct in his contention that African-American children are better suited in environments centered in the African heritage, then situating students in foreign environments that may limit their academic success. Students unfamiliar with their surroundings may not be able to make connections from the known to the unknown. Therefore, learning could be jeopardized. Too often, educators are not aware that their students are not making connections and fail to "...accommodate the diverse abilities and interests of a heterogeneous student body" (Cuban, 1989, p. 781).

Schools have the essential obligation of socializing students and preparing them to become effective citizens. Students who are unsuccessful in school, incur the potential risk of not acquiring the skills for a healthy transition into the adult world. Students who do not relate with the school environment have a difficult time connecting to the rest of society. Overwhelmingly, these students become juvenile offenders at a young age (Siegel & Senna, p. 345). Schools need to promote learning for at-risk students by developing diverse learning environments. Educators have the responsibility to revise curricula and create instruction that will motivate all children.
Statement of Problem

This study attempted to determine if Florida’s leaders in the social studies perceptions regarding the inclusion of factors representing an Afrocentric curriculum as a viable alternative to the traditional mainstream curriculum. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions Florida’s leaders in social studies education held regarding the inclusion of issues with an Afrocentric focus into the mainstream social studies curriculum. Five research questions were used to determine the perceptions.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

(1) What was the perceived importance of considering the diverse nature of an ethnicity with respect to the development of curriculum and instruction?
What was the perceived level of interest regarding the incorporation of an Afrocentric perspective into the Social Studies Curriculum?

How did the respondents perceive the incorporation of an alternate curriculum maintaining diverse perspectives?

Did the respondents believe the social studies curriculum should be altered to cater to the learning styles of ethnic and cultural groups?

Was there a perceived need for diverse assessment techniques to gauge the academic success of students from various cultural and ethnic groups?

Population

The survey was mailed to the elected boards who represent Florida’s social studies teachers, administrators, supervisors, directors and professors. These boards are the Florida Council for the Social Studies Board and Florida Social Studies Supervisor’s Association.
Board. The board members occupy many professional assignments in the state of Florida: county curriculum supervisors, principals, university professors, and public school teachers. These individuals are regarded as leaders in their field and have an influence on the social studies curriculum in Florida.

Significance of the Study

The Florida Department of Education report of the "Dropout Rates by Racial Ethnic Category, 1995-1996" showed that 6.63% Florida's African-American students dropped out of school and failed to achieve success academically (Florida Department of Education, 1996). In 53 counties in Florida, dropout rates for African-American students were higher than the county averages. The average dropout rate for Florida in 1995-1996 was 5.02%; however, the dropout rate for African-Americans in Florida was 6.63%. There is some evidence in the literature that African-American students drop out of school because they find the curriculum irrelevant to their lives and beliefs (Epstein, 1992).
Data from this study illuminates the perception social studies educators' hold regarding Afrocentric issues, multicultural and African-American perspectives. Recognizing the perceptions held by leaders in social studies education can help in the curriculum planning process as the social studies curriculum in Florida is examined and redesigned to meet the new Sunshine State Standards and the diverse population of Florida's students.

Limitations

The following limitations were present in the study:

1. The respondents may have attempted to answer the way they felt the researcher would want them to answer. Therefore, the respondents were not informed that the survey attempted to gauge perceptions regarding Afrocentrism. In an attempt to mask the true intent, questions regarding multiculturalism were included.

2. Data were collected from various districts in Florida where board members were employed. Each district had different ethnic and cultural representation. The board
members may have answered the survey with their district cultural and ethnic representation in mind. The attempt of the survey was to gauging the board members individual perceptions, not their perceptions in regard to the needs of their district.

3. The survey instrument was influenced by the National Council for the Social Studies’ “Curriculum Guidelines for Multicultural Education” and was approved by the dissertation committee members, but was not tested on a pilot group.

4. Demographics were solicited at the end of the survey instrument so that data could be analyzed according to various demographic groups. In many cases, the variations in the demographics were insignificant and reflected too much homogeneity to ascertain differences between identified groups.

Design of the Study

The survey was influenced by the “Curriculum Guidelines for Multicultural Education” prepared by the
National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Ethnic Studies. Geneva Gay, Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington, suggested the idea for modifying the survey into a Likert scale (Gay, 1997). The modified survey contains 55 statements with the possibility of five responses: (5) strongly agree; (4) agree; (3) uncertain; (2) disagree; (1) strongly disagree.

The survey was mailed to the board members of the Florida Council for the Social Studies and the Florida Social Studies Supervisors Association. The President of the Florida Council provided an address list for Social Studies. The survey was mailed during the first week in August 1997. The return date was set for September 5, 1997. Florida Council for the Social Studies Board members who did not return the survey were asked to fill out a copy of the survey at a meeting in Orlando on September 10-12, 1997 at the Airport Holiday Inn.

Survey Development

James Banks (1992), director of the Center for Multicultural Education was chosen by Margit McGuire, President of the National Council for the Social Studies, to revise the organization's multicultural curricular
guidelines. Banks' multicultural guidelines (1992) were an adaptation of the 1976 guidelines.

According to Banks (1992), a significant change in America's population had occurred. The ethnic and racial make-up of many schools had also altered significantly. Individuals, who were once classified as a minority, were proportionally greater in numbers in some school districts and had become a majority. In the state of Florida, 43.27% of the overall school population was minorities. In eight school districts: Gadsen, Dade, Jefferson, Madison, Hendry, Hamilton, Broward, and Orange counties, minorities already made up the majority (Hinman, 1997).

Banks (1992) predicted by the year 2020 over half of the students will be of color, and that the ability to provide educational opportunities for these students will require the construction of a new educational paradigm. Banks did acknowledge the attempts schools have made towards the inclusion of multiculturalism, however he believed that additional curricular changes needed to occur.

Banks divided his guidelines into 23 subsections. Each of the subsections represented multicultural goals that schools should strive to achieve. The survey created
for this project was developed from the goals established by Banks' guidelines. The goals served as an outline when formulating the survey statements. In some cases, the goals were reconstructed into survey statements. However, some of the goals were rewritten into statements with the terms multicultural or multiculturalism replaced with Afrocentric and Afrocentrism. Both terms were used in the survey to determine if there was interest in diversity and if so, to what degree. Participants were asked to agree or disagree, using a 5 point Likert scale, for each statement. Each of the 57 survey statements assisted in interpreting the results of the research questions. The survey statements helped determine the respondent's attitude regarding the research questions. (See Appendix A)

Definition of Terms

Afrocentric - "...frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person" (Asante, 1991, p.171).

Curriculum - scope and sequence (As defined by the National Council of the Social Studies – NCSS).

Eurocentric - curriculum that revolves around a Caucasian, European perspective (Asante, 1991, p.171).
Centricity - "...refers to a perspective that involves locating students within the context of their own cultural references so that they can relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives" (Asante, 1991, 171).

Multicultural Education - "...seeks to actualize the idea of e pluribus unum within our nation and to create a society that recognizes and respects the cultures of its diverse people, people united within a framework of overarching democratic values" (Banks, 1992, p.274)

Self-Esteem - determination of self-worth; belief about self (Showers, 1995).

Mainstream - the dominant, accepted thought on a subject (Banks, 1995)

Equity pedagogy - "...teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society" (Banks and Banks, 1995, p.152).

Transformative academic knowledge - interpretations of subject matter that challenge the mainstream academic knowledge (Banks, 1995).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This literature review is divided into two sections. The first section explores the curricular and instructional design of an Afrocentric curriculum and briefly gives insight into two other schools of thought, multiculturalism and Eurocentrism. The second section identifies factors, which influence what students acquire from the established curriculum.

Historical Roots of an Afrocentric Paradigm

A curriculum centered on the contributions and experiences of Africans and African-Americans is not a new concept. Moses (1991) traced the early interest in African-American studies to the African-American scholar Alexander Crummel. Crummel founded the American Negro Academy in 1897. Crummel’s academy explored Western works, however, it was also dedicated to teaching about the “...history of
Africa and the scattered peoples of the African diaspora" (Moses, 1991, p. 82).

Molefi Asante (1991) credited Carter Woodson as the pioneer of Afrocentrism. Woodson graduated from Harvard in the early 1900s, established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1912, and wrote the *Mis-education of the Negro*. Woodson was credited by Asante for his recognition, more than 50 years ago, that something "...[was] severely wrong with the way African-Americans are educated..." (Asante, 1991, p. 170).

Likewise, W.E.B. Du Bois, the first black graduate of Harvard, dedicated much of his life towards the representation and appreciation of the African-American race within the mainstream of American society. In realization of his dream, Du Bois established the Niagara movement, a predecessor of the NAACP, which centered on the experiences and lives of African-Americans. According to Moses (1991), Du Bois was one of the first to encourage an Afrocentric perspective. Asante similarly exalted Du Bois as a pioneer of Afrocentrism. Asante held that Du Bois's Harvard education indoctrinated him with a Eurocentric vision of education, so that he could not fully conceive of the potential of an Afro-centric paradigm. However, Asante credited Du Bois's collective, lifetime accomplishments for
contributing greatly towards the development of a framework for Afrocentric education (Asante, 1988).

The Harm of Multiculturalism

Although one school of thought heralds the positive effects of an Afrocentric curriculum, another defends the need for multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has many interpretations. Numerous educational reformers view a multicultural curriculum as a panacea, a way to correct the disproportion of cultural representation by incorporating various cultural perspectives (Vann and Kunjufu, 1993). Brought to the forefront of education in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, multiculturalism was supposed to facilitate cultural diversity (Comer, Haynes, Hamilton-Lee, 1987/1988).

Yet multiculturalism may in fact, according to critics, be its own worst enemy. In attempts to imbue the classroom with the spirit of diverse cultures, teachers may be trivializing the cultures they so dearly want to represent. Banks (1987) suggested that appreciating a particular culture or individual on a chosen day or week does more harm by “fragmenting” the learning so that students are left with an impression that these individuals or groups are on the outside of society.
For example, teaching about Martin Luther King for a day does not constitute a multicultural curriculum. Greenman and Kimmel referred to the fragmented learning about culture approach as a "tacos and blintzes" model of multicultural education (1995, p. 361). Furthermore, incorporating factual knowledge about various cultures does not mean that a class is multicultural. A truly multicultural classroom would attempt to consider historical situations from various perspectives, allowing students to challenge preconceived assumptions (Hoffman, 1996). However, attaining the ability to do this is quite a feat and would require educators to have an "...increasing intellectual competence" in a multitude of cultures (Gordon, 1992, p. 236).

Further difficulty arises in educating teachers to teach diversity in a multicultural setting. Hoffman (1996) described the "ideological conformity" she observed in a class of graduate students participating in a multicultural lesson. She felt as if these students were, "...programmed to think in exactly the same way, with the same images and same words" (p. 547). Brown and Kysilka (1994), in their observance of student teachers, found that they "...routinely did not apply multicultural or global concepts as frequently as they thought they did" and that "...these individuals
[student teachers] generally failed to understand the implications of multicultural and global issues in their interactions with pupils" (p. 314).

A multicultural curriculum can do more harm than good if the teachers who present the curriculum are not trained properly. Teachers can formulate stereotypes or inadvertently portray a culture as inferior to other cultures. Teachers who present a multicultural curriculum need to represent various cultural and ethnic perspectives with as much equality and respect as possible.

**Opposition to the Eurocentric Perspective**

A Eurocentric curriculum is the traditional, mainstream approach is to the social studies. In many ways the Eurocentric curriculum is in opposition to the Afrocentric curricular approach. A Eurocentric curriculum limits the incorporation of multicultural perspectives and therefore receives much opposition from those who support other culturally centered schools of thought. The persistence by Eurocentric educators on teaching students to analyze information from only a Eurocentric perspective limits understanding to only one viewpoint (Banks, 1987). Critics have indicated that the educational system in America is,
"...locked firmly into a paradigm of Eurocentrism, not only in terms of its focus, but also its discernible heritage, methodologies, and conceptual structure (Churchill, 1995, p. 17). For example, many public school, social studies textbooks, maintain a Eurocentric focus and limit exploration of minorities to a half page summary. Limiting student’s inquiry into the social studies to one cultural perspective, such as the Eurocentric perspective, diminishes the importance of other cultural groups. For Banks, a multicultural perspective is important. However, “When content about African and Asian cultures is incorporated into the curriculum, it is usually viewed within the context of European paradigms” (Banks, 1991/1992, p. 33).

Despite the effort of many multicultural authors, the Eurocentric perspective remains dominant in the public schools (Gordon, 1992). Minority students have been saturated with information taught from a cultural perspective and a learning environment contrary to their own, leading to what Gay (1991) called, "...cultural-classroom discontinuities" (p. 144). Children of various cultural groups require a learning style quite different from the more passive, verbal environment associated with the European model. Children from diverse backgrounds need
diverse methodologies that include, but are not limited to, "...kinetic and tactile stimulation, active involvement, and cooperative social environments" (Gay, p. 147).

In a response to the European tradition of American social studies education, Banks (1995) reported on the increase of historical accounts initiated from those who have been relegated to the "margins of society". These reconstructed interpretations of historical events have begun to seep into the mainstream. History, interpreted from other than the Eurocentric perspective, should, according to Banks, be incorporated within the traditional classroom setting. This transformative history, "...provides a perspective that enriches and deepens mainstream intellectual and popular thought and discourse" (Banks, p. 5).

Additionally, the transformative approach to history will not only change curricular content, but also the means for instruction (Banks, 1995). Textbook reforms of the 1990s emphasize a movement away from the traditional European viewpoint and have been replaced by texts with anti-European dispositions. These new texts are marketed to the inner-city schools and in fact, are quite successful (American Textbook Council, 1994, p. 15). However, as society begins to diminish cultural boundaries, many schools
still fail to address cultural differences and are unyielding to integrative efforts (Delpit, 1992).

The Needs of African-American Children

African-American children in this country have needs that cannot be ignored. A report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education found that in 1983, 40% of all minority youth were functionally illiterate (Comer, Haynes, and Hamilton-Lee, 1987/1988). Boykin (1984) concluded that a substantially large percentage of African-American children will not attain adequate reading skills necessary to be successful in our technologically advanced society. According to Griffin, Thomas, and Curry (1991), "By the time an inner-city black boy steps into his first classroom, he is more likely than his white counterpart to have suffered untreated infections, witnessed violence and experienced hunger or homelessness" (p. 225). According to Hodgkin (1993) "Because these children bring the risks with them on the first day of kindergarten, it becomes a vital job of the schools to overcome these risks" (p. 620). Furthermore, Hodgkin maintained that education should focus great attention upon the students who are most at risk. By
neglecting these children who are at-risk, America has, "...done the damage to ourselves" (Hodgkins, 1993, p. 623).

Although more African-American students are graduating high school, the dropout rate in Florida is still higher than white, non-Hispanic students. The dropout rate for African-Americans students during the 1995-1996 school year was 6.63% and was higher than the failure rate of white, non-Hispanic students, 3.91% (Florida Department of Education, 1996). Furthermore, those who graduate, Gibbs (1989) suggested, may still be illiterate. A significant proportion of African-American teens lack the skills necessary for transition to adulthood (Myers, 1989). In fact, many African-American children are lacking the skills that will make them successful in school (Reglin, 1995). It is disturbing that many African-American children are unsuccessful when, according to Kunjufu (1990), "...[African-American] children, at a very young age have demonstrated a tremendous amount of intelligence only to place last on high school culture tests" (p. 5).

Harris (1992) questioned whether schools have attempted to educate African-American students or prepare them for citizenship since a large number of African-American males fail to adjust to school and to mainstream American society. In the 1989-1990 school year, 50% of students suspended from
United States public schools were African-American males (Holt, 1991/1992). Moreover, 31% of male and female arrests made in the United States in 1993 consisted of African-American offenders (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994). However, the 1997 Census Bureau estimates, that African-Americans only make up 12.7% of the United State’s population (U.S. Census Bureau, 1997).

In an attempt to instruct teachers in the needs of African-American students, Geneva Gay (1985) presented the educational stages of development. These stages were developed to facilitate the needs of ethnic minority youths. Gay indicated the developmental processes, including feelings and emotions taking place at each stage: Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Post-Encounter. According to Gay, minority children are undergoing contrasting ideas of self during development. At each stage, they will see themselves differently in relation to the rest of the world. In some cases, such as during the Pre-Encounter stage, African-American children may reject their own ethnicity and believe they are inferior to Euro-American children. In some cases they may have difficulty associating within the mainstream classroom. However, when the student reaches the Encounter stage, the student could possibly withdraw from all that represents the white world and Euro-American
ideology...” (p. 47). At this stage, the child is now beginning to become aware of the differences between races. Finally, in the Post-Encounter stage the self-esteem and self-concept of the student becomes stronger. In this final stage the individual will be more confident and not dwell as much on the judgment of others. The intent of these stages presented by Gay is to facilitate teachers in developing age appropriate content and instruction methodology for instructing an ethnic minority child (Gay, 1985).

**African-American Perspectives**

Regardless of the classroom environment, it is essential that teachers plan to incorporate African-American perspectives. Teachers need to create environments where students can explore their own beliefs and understand themselves (Britzman, 1992). Students also need environments where teachers understand their students (Kunjufu, 1990). Feagin and Sikes (1994) cautioned that "Black parents who put their children into historically white schools soon become aware of the racial obstacles their children face" (p. 81). An Afrocentric curriculum could provides a curriculum that would “center” the African-American student within a known environment (Asante, 1992.)
An Afrocentric curriculum is a curriculum based upon Nilotic- Egyptian origins of civilization. It would incorporate history of Africa from 3000 B.C., to the present. Watkins’ (1993) example of an Afrocentric curriculum would contain lessons centered around: "... great African civilizations, the golden age of Egypt, African religions, great leaders, lost cities and civilizations, European imperialism and colonialism, slavery and the slave trade, and the African Diaspora" (p. 332). Theorists offer this curricular conception as a way to battle the one sided Eurocentric curriculum that has engulfed the school system for years (Moses, 1991).

African-American students in classrooms, "sit outside the information being presented" (Asante, 1992). To Oyebade (1990), the history of Africa is the history of African-Americans. By studying Africa, African-Americans are connecting to their history. Furthermore, an Afrocentric curriculum, according to Harris (1992), rectifies what scholar’s report as 150 years of destructive misrepresentation of blacks in the American school system.

An Afrocentric curriculum is not multiculturalism. An Afrocentric curriculum embraces the content from an African perspective (Singer, 1994). Tobias supported this political movement to reconstruct the schools. The dominant
Eurocentric curriculum is seen as a barrier to learning for the African-American student (Tobias, 1989; Holt, 1991/1992). According to Reglin (1995), African-American students have trouble making connections with lessons from an Anglo-American perspective. Students need to feel comfortable and secure in their learning environment. To do this, Reglin urged teachers to seek out any concern an African-American student may possess through discourse, surveys, and observations.

Asante's "centrism" would place students of African ancestry at the center of the curriculum. Asante's premise is that content that revolves around Africa and African-Americans and is viewed from an African perspective will make an African-American student feel connected. If the child feels connected then the child will feel empowered. Empowerment makes students feel they are in control (Asante, 1991/1992). Feelings of control improve self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and self-esteem.

An Afrocentric curriculum would view the history of Africans in a more positive viewpoint. It will explore history from the standpoint of Africa (Asante, 1988). Asante's intent is to instill within African-American students' interest and pride in their ancestors. Afrocentrism would teach African-American children ways to
"...achieve, how to learn and...how to respond to other people without resorting to violence or to other types of anti-social behavior" (Fitchue, 1993, p. 38). Consequently, increasing the self-esteem of a student does increase their potential for success (Price, 1992). Not only African-American students would benefit, but students from all races would benefit from learning about African-Americans and their contributions to society (Feagin and Sikes, 1994).

Most students, no matter the environment or community will more likely have a white, female teacher; seventy-two percent of all teachers fit this category (Reglin, 1995). Reglin stated that in order for an African-American student to be successful, they need to feel secure and familiar with the learning environment. Kunjufu (1990) advocated all black, male classrooms with male, black teachers focusing on holistic lesson plans with an Afrocentric focus. He essentially felt that only black men will look at these children in the correct light and see them as children with potential. Teachers from other cultures and races he felt view African-American boys as "at stake" and incapable.
Opposition to an Afrocentric Curriculum

Although those who support an Afrocentric curriculum see it as a solution to many of the problems, academic and social, in the African-American community, critics do not. Opponents to an Afrocentric curriculum such as Diane Ravitch resolve, “It is not the role of the public schools to teach children the customs and folkways of their ethnic or racial group; that is, as it has always been, the role of the family, the church, and the local community” (1991/1992, p. 8). Other opponents add that it is not the responsibility of the school to be concerned with self-esteem (Price, 1992). According to Hillard, many who oppose the “…political and cultural correctness of ‘western culture’ … have taken this position without benefit of a constructive dialogue with a broad base of minority group representatives” and have spoken for an entire ethnic group (Hilliard, 1991/1992, p. 12).

To Ravitch, an Afrocentric curriculum is a form of reverse discrimination, an attempt to disregard the united, common culture established in the United States and taught in history classes. Moreover, an Afrocentric curriculum leads to fears that the new emphasis on race will lead to
greater separation and magnify differences (Bennett, 1992; Schlesinger, 1992; Reyes and Scribner, 1995).

Particularists, Ravitch (1990) claimed, are trying to take over the curriculum. Particularists, according to Ravitch, promote a holistic curriculum based upon a particular cultural heritage. They use the curriculum to raise self-esteem, but do not support the idea of a common culture in the United States. Reyes and Scribner (1995) caution that an Afrocentric curriculum may solve the problem temporarily, but could be an impediment to curing a more serious, enduring problem. Separating cultures creates and perpetuates segregation and prejudice (Ravitch, 1990; Schlesinger, 1992). An Afrocentric curriculum, Schlesinger observes,

"...is an escape from the hard and expensive challenges of our society—the need for safer schools, better teachers, better teaching materials, greater investment in education; the need for stable families that can nourish self-discipline and aspiration; the need for jobs and income that can nourish stable families; the need to stop the ravages of drugs and crime; the need to overcome the racism still lurking in the interstices of American society" (pp. 101-102).
Singer (1993) established a concern with the joining of African-American history with a history of the African continent. Singer believed distortion occurs because "Africa is a continental landmass, not a country, an ethnicity, or a culture. In fact, the continent encompasses hundreds of cultures and peoples with different languages, values, and ways of living" (p. 285). Wortham (1992) insisted that teaching students about people similar to them will not ensure an increase in self-esteem. Furthermore, Wortham's apprehension regarding an Afrocentric curriculum is based upon a fear that focusing learning to a particular ethnic group may alienate students and may keep them from adjusting to society.

Curriculum Contexts

Curriculum tends to be at the center of the debate when various schools of thought deliberate about the needs of the students. However, the curriculum the school attempts to present is altered by various factors. Curriculum is affected by outside and inside influences, some which pertain to school and others which do not. Schubert (1986) contended that "...curriculum does not occur in
isolation” (p. 93). Curriculum is ever changing due to the surrounding environment, political currents, and economic conditions. In exploring the necessity for an Afrocentric perspective, it is important to examine the various influences that affect the education of an African-American student. Schubert’s three areas that impact the schools are: “out-of-school contexts, inside-of-school contexts, and nonschool curricula in students’ lives” (p. 94).

**Out-of-School Contexts**

Schubert (1986) defined out-of-school curricular contexts as external influences such as politics, economics, and values that affect the school and curriculum. These outside influences can alter standardized curriculums between schools and determine the establishment of particular curriculums within a school.

**Equality of Assessment**

Standardized tests are political. They are not developed by educators in the school, but rather are developed by outside influences and administered by the department of education. Minority students overwhelmingly
score lower on standardized tests than white students of European descent (Reyes and Scribner, 1995). According to Gay (1990),

"Segregation of the curriculum, instructional inequities, and discrepancies between the performance of poor and minority students and that of their middle class white peers are not restricted to a few schools, deliberately discriminatory acts, or biased classroom activities. They can and do exist in a wide array of school settings in which students are denied equal access to high-status knowledge and learning opportunities because of biases about their race, gender, nationality, cultural background, or social class" (p. 58).

Teachers have reported on many cases involving discriminatory assessment procedures and assessment problems for minorities and have demanded an end to standardized testing (Olion and Gillis-Olion, 1984). Aiken (1996) maintains that it is a well known fact that "...verbal intelligence tests tend to be somewhat biased towards middle-class Western culture, but efforts to develop tests that are equally fair to different cultures or subcultures have not been very successful" (p. 268). Gay (1997) contends that reported test score increases among minorities are
trivial considering the fact that the academic achievements among minorities in relation to their white, middle class peers are grossly inadequate.

Schools need to explore other means of assessment that are culturally reliable and equitable. Olion and Gillis-Olion (1984) believed teachers should become involved in the assessment of their students and should use a wide variety of assessment techniques. Johnson (1989) found from her research, that a reliable strategy for avoiding test bias was for test developers to explore commonalities across cultures.

Students from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups possess many different learning styles. Assessment should accommodate learning styles that benefit all types of learners. According to Hodgkins (1993), there are multiple intelligences and as well as different ways to learn. Sternberg's (1997) research indicates that students representing various ethnic and racial groups display learning styles that are highly creative. Hodgkins stated, "Teachers could encourage more kids to develop their own individual talent and materials" (1993, p. 22). Sternberg continues to explain, "In a pluralistic society, we cannot afford to have a monolithic conception of intelligence and schooling...the more we teach and assess students based on a
broader set of abilities, the more racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse our achievers will be (Sternberg, p. 23-24). Furthermore, Johnson (1989) maintained that black educators need to engage in research concerning assessment and measurement techniques for black students.

Beliefs about Intelligence

In The Bell Curve, Herrnstein and Murray (1990) examined much of the current debate about the capabilities of individuals of African heritage compared to White European and Asian ancestry. Though I.Q. tests have shown a significant difference between whites and blacks, many scholars refuse to accept that this correlates to inherent capabilities. In The Bell Curve Debate, various authors disagree with the correlation between race and intelligence made by Herrnstein and Murray. Howard Gardner (1994) called the assumptions of Herrnstein and Murray, "scholarly brinkmanship" and concluded that the findings of Herrnstein and Murray are "...too weak to draw the inferences that genes determine an individual's ultimate status in society" (p. 61).

Ultimately many authors in The Bell Curve Debate cite environment as one of the most significant factors determining success (Ryan, 1995; Gardner, 1994; Cole, 1995;
Lane, 1994). Programs geared to help African-American students adjust to public schools are not enough; long term changes need to be made to assure the success of African-American students. According to Ryan (1995), the authors of The Bell Curve maintained that programs such as Head Start are beneficial while the students are in attendance, but when students transfer to regular schools, their I.Q. scores drop. Whereas Ryan contended that The Bell Curve authors accept this argument as a reason to discontinue Head Start, he views it as a reason to continue the program. According to Ryan, environments can improve, but it may take years to occur, which may be too late for the child. He believes, “It may well be that a much more extensive transformation of the child’s environment than Head Start and preschool programs can offer is what is needed to effect lasting changes in intelligence” (p. 19).

Research completed by Campbell and Ramey (1995) indicated gains in academic abilities and reduced failure rates occur when African-American children are placed into an intensive preschool program. In fact, continuing reading programs that followed the student into the regular school environment increased success. Early school programs and follow up programs seem to combat the effects of a poor
environment and contradict many of the theories on race and learning.

**Influence of society and the media**

Unless taught otherwise, African-American children believe the messages they receive about their abilities. Harrison (1995) found that "...African-American children demonstrate racial awareness very early in life and learn the advantages and negative attributes assigned to the different racial groups" (p. 10). Schools need to teach African-American children that they can succeed beyond the negative perceptions of their capabilities. Harrison held that outside influences such as the media and environment contribute to a child's development of a "self-schemata" (p. 11). Self-schemata is the awareness of society's expectations and a child's personal beliefs of what he/she can hope to achieve in life. Harrison maintained that the solution to these traps is to continue research in this area to help children "...expand and elaborate students' possible selves" (p. 15).

"Racialism flows through the media in direct response to the presentation of America's racial experiences" (Berry 1996, p. ix). Negative images in the media are often
blamed for creating poor self-esteem in African-American youth (Murray, Smith, and West, 1989). Gray (1996) cited a CBS report by Bill Moyers in which photo opportunities were taken to show the degradation of black communities; however, the documentary does not support the extent of the visual content. According to Gray "...blacks dominate the visual representations that evoke images of crime, drugs, and social problems, little in the internal logic and organization of the documentary supports this contention" (P. 137). The media has been guilty throughout this century of the negative representation of African-Americans such as the prevalent "Uncle Tom" image (Woodson and Wesley, 1988). The "Uncle Tom" image in the media is represented as a feeble minded African-American with little respect or self-esteem.

Negative messages children acquire become ingrained within them. These negative images, attached to their racial and cultural groups, are difficult to change. African-American children have grown up with messages of "...black intellectual inferiority" (Howard and Hammond, 1985, p. 54). If schools do not help to change these self-images, the student may decline emotionally and academically (Howard and Hammond, 1985; Gay, 1994). A child that believes negative stereotypes depicted in the media may not believe
they have the self-efficacy to achieve academically, and may reject the classroom curriculum. Furthermore, children influenced by the messages of the media may have a difficult time accepting or relating to the classroom curriculum presented to them.

Inside-of-School Contexts

According to Schubert (1986), "Those who live, work, and act in the school environment itself are not mere automatons. They build upon, contest, and exclude, as well as accept values, politics, and economics of the larger society (p. 104)". The curriculum is altered by a school’s political, economic, and social climate.

The Social Studies- Scope and Sequence

Students with a good social studies education have learned about the inequalities suffered by various ethnic groups and have been instilled with necessary skills for correcting societal wrongs. Banks emphasized that teachers are the "...cultural mediators who interpret the mainstream and ethnic cultures to students from diverse cultural groups and help students to understand the desirability and
possibility of social change" (Banks, 1987, p. 539). Banks and Banks (1995) promote "equity pedagogy". Equity pedagogy in their definition is "...teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society" (Banks and Banks, p. 152).

Content within the social studies should not be limited to America's European legacy, but should also incorporate all the other cultures, which helped mold our democratic society (Shane, 1981). Students should be taught various other cultural beliefs, so that they can compare, reassess, affirm, and gain empowerment for their own beliefs (NCSS, 1989).

African culture is significant to the history and development of this nation, because approximately 12.7% of the total population of the country is African-American and should not be overlooked as part of the school curriculum. Students should be taught that Africans were forced to the Americas by the Europeans as early as 1500 and brought to Jamestown before the Pilgrims ever set foot upon North American shores. McKeown and Beck (1991) discovered textbooks that inaccurately portray history as one sided and
neglect to inform students that there is more than one point of view.

**Teachers' values and beliefs**

Teachers play an important role in the development of student values and beliefs. Teachers mold the curriculum when they determine what is important to teach, and establish the level of competency to which they hold their students. Their body language and facial expressions when teaching information, and the undercurrent of values and biases which seep out as they teach (Schubert, 1996). Thus, teachers need to be sensitive to their preconceived notions about the capabilities of African-American children, since those beliefs will influence how they interact with their students. Research (Reglin, 1995; Pelham, 1995) indicates that students will rise to teachers' expectations; therefore teachers need to communicate realistic expectations for all the students they teach. If teachers place low expectations upon students because of ethnicity they will negatively impact them for years (Rist, 1979). Pelham (1995) suggested hiring educators who can better understand and relate with African-American students. Teachers who respect and help African-American students will model caring that can
positively transfer to other African-American students as a demonstration of the teachers intent (Reglin, 1995). Teachers who show interest, concern, and respect usually help motivate students (Miller and Mattson, 1989).

**Hidden Curriculum - Exploration of Diversity**

The social studies classes are an exceptional forum for exploring a multitude of individual perspectives. Gay (1991) believed that students react differently to varied instructional strategies. Teachers should try to understand the variety of responses and reactions culturally diverse students will have to the application of certain learning strategies and methodologies. Students of different cultures may seek out different solutions to the questions posed by the instructor or be interested in particular sections of the assignment based upon their cultural mindset. Students should be encouraged to engage in discourse, which entails personal inquiry. However, an environment that allows free discussion can elicit a number of diverse responses from a multicultural classroom. Importantly, teachers must acknowledge that in some cases, no response from a student is a response and that some students show
their discomfort or acknowledgment through a respectable silence.

Additionally, teachers can use other learning techniques and devises for reaching students of diverse ethnic groups. For example, Maultsby (1996) contended that "Popular music provides and invaluable resource for documenting the complex and diverse nature of contemporary African-American culture" (p. 254). Berry and Looney (1996) indicated that music is a strong communication tool in the African-American community. They maintained that the importance of slave songs and spirituals to African-Americans in the 1800s is as important as rap music is to African-Americans today, a way to express meaning and emotions. Therefore, teachers who are aware of this can utilize music as a tool to communicate and reach their students.

Nonschool Curricula

The nonschool curricula according to Schubert (1986) is the learning that...transpires in nonschool organizations, mass media, peer groups, homes and families, vocations, and avocations (p.107). Since nonschool curricula directly affects the success or failure of a student, this curricula
cannot be overlooked when determining the importance of factors influencing student thinking.

**Empowerment and Self-Esteem**

Students must feel empowered. They need to feel as if what they are learning has significance and purpose in their lives (Dewey, 1938). Kitty Kelly Epstein interviewed African-American youths in order to understand their reasons for dropping out of school. A basic consensus of her research pointed to a feeling of being anonymous and disconnected. In one of Epstein’s interviews, the student reported that she could not make connections with the content of what she learned nor did she know why learning the information was important. A student named Luanna stated:

'You have to associate this with something else that I’m used to or you have to explain it to me until I get it or you have to give me something else that will lead me up to it’ (Epstein, 1992, p. 57).

Teachers should be aware that content is dynamic and cultural diversity lends itself to various interpretations (Longstreet and Shane, 1993). Consequently, individuals
will interpret information differently based upon cultural and ethnic differences. The variance in interpretations is based upon the fragments of the lecture the listener focused on and how the information was internalized.

Students who find relevance in a subject are usually motivated to learn and are more successful. Success in a subject increases interest in that subject and the potential for continued effort in the subject. Failure, however, leads to the rejection of the subject. After students abandon confidence in their abilities to master a subject, it is difficult to motivate them to undertake another attempt at learning the subject (Bloom, 1977). Students usually find success when they are interested in the content and the content is relevant to their own lives (Dewey, 1938).

Cuban (1989) noted that students usually fail when their culture is belittled or ignored. If the content of the curriculum "ignores or degrades" a student's culture, there may be a significant damaging consequence to the student's self-esteem. The student will feel disconnected with the content and may feel neglected. Self-esteem is critical to academic achievement and without it students will not be successful in school (Tiedt and Tiedt (1986); Evans, 1995).
Within the social studies, African-American culture is rarely a focus except when learning about slavery. Constant reminders of slavery and neglect of the positive aspects of African culture can impair the self-esteem of the African-American student. School curriculums should also express the positive influences in African and African-American cultures (Vann and Kunjufu, 1993). Annis (1995) asserted that learning about different cultures diminishes stereotypes and increases respect. Additionally, learning about other cultures can improve self-esteem and promote mutual respect among cultural groups.

Social and economic factors

The conditions for some African-Americans raised in the inner city are quite depressing. Inner city youths have a high percentage rate for adjudication, homicide, drug use and suicide (Gibbs, 1989). Most inner city children are raised in areas depicted as "... [having] substandard housing, chronic unemployment and underemployment, and higher risk for a variety of physical illnesses and disabilities, injuries, socio-emotional maladjustments, and death than most other American youth" (Myers, 1989, p. 141).
The 1995 Census bureau estimated that, 29.3% of African-Americans lived below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 1996). Poverty and the problems inner city adolescents deal with on a daily basis, make curriculum content at school seem meaningless. Students of the inner city who do not have a secure home situation may be too troubled to function their best at school and may require more attention than other students. A stable support system is critical for school success and teachers who can provide that stability when it does not exist anywhere else in a student's life (Taylor, 1991).

Minorities and economically deprived students tend to have high dropout rates, numerous discipline referrals, substantially large number of grade retentions, and representation in low level classes (Gay, 1990). Students who drop out have a greater potential for unemployment (Reglin and Scribner, 1995). In fact, 41% of special education students are African-American, while African-American students make up only 17% of the entire American public school population (Kunjufu, 1990). This fact heightens the importance of a curriculum that can facilitate the development of skills for inner city students to become successful.
Student’s personal needs

The number of minority students who enter the public schools increases every year. Gay (1988) indicated that by the year 2000 minority students will be the majority and teachers will be catering to a new clientele with unique and different circumstances. Gay cautioned teachers that the current approach to curriculum and instruction will not work with diverse student populations. Teachers will need to alter their content and approach to provide students of diverse backgrounds with an adequate and appropriate education. Moreover, Gay (1997) laments the decline of “teachers of color” in the classroom, believing that this decrease significantly hampers attempts to provide diverse role models in the classroom with alternate perspectives.

Banks (1991/1992) concurred when he implored educators to take a new look at their classroom methodology. The increase in minority students establishes distinct ramifications for educators: (1) the obligation to incorporate methods which satisfy various learning styles (Neely and Alm, 1993, p. 32) and (2) the necessity to present content that is relevant to culturally diverse learners (Epstein, 1991, p. 65).
However, Gay (1988) emphasized the importance of equity when developing curriculum for minorities and economically impoverished. Equity means developing the "...appropriate methodologies and materials according to specific group or individual characteristics" (Gay, 1988, p. 328). Gay (1990) maintained that the opportunities for minorities were few and notable inequalities existed within schools in the United States.

In schools, students are rarely presented with diverse beliefs and perspectives. African-American culture, in particular, has suffered in America. History has, "...demeaned its character, denied its existence, and coordinated its destruction..." (Lee, Lomotey and Shujaa, 1990. p. 45). By not allowing students the opportunity to learn and experience alternative cultures, stereotypes and assumptions will continue to exist (Banks, 1991/1992).

According to Delpit (1992, p. 237-238), "...schools place culturally diverse students at risk". In many cases, schools do not know how to adjust learning to suit the minority student. The curriculum and instruction presented by the schools does not coincide with the way in which many minority students learn. Valuable attributes of inner city students are many times overlooked. These students from the inner cities bring to school knowledge and skills they have
learned from their home environment such as: "...spiritual values, racial consciousness, and concepts of community..." (Pongo, 1995, p. 6). However, teachers who are not from the same home setting can disregard these skills as inappropriate and ineffectual. Teachers need to "...redirect their pessimistic focus from what students cannot do to an optimistic view of what youngsters can bring to the table" (Smith and Stevenson, 1992, p. 79). Delpit believed that "...[Many] problems we see exhibited in school by African-American children ...can be traced to this lack of a curriculum in which they can find represented the intellectual achievements of people who look like themselves". (1991, p. 245)

School systems that do not fully comprehend the needs of minority students tend to place minority students in low track classes. Students who do not fit the norm of how a student should "act" may in turn reflect the teacher's rating of classroom performance. Moreover, African-American children display behaviors that teachers of another culture may not understand and immediately see as defiance (Taylor, 1991). Students who are constantly "in trouble" are in many cases labeled as learning disabled or having low abilities. These children may actualize the expectations offered by these labels and achieve only what is expected of them.
Summary

Many African-American children are at-risk. Their key to success is education. Supporters from the two schools of thought that back an Afrocentric or multicultural curriculum are at the forefront of today's educational issues to make sure that African-American children receive the educational opportunities they need. Each of these curricular designs, Afrocentric and multicultural, provides some insight into the efforts to help culturally diverse children become successful.

Asante's Afrocentric curriculum provides insight into one theory designed to providing a better education for African-American students. An Afrocentric curriculum, though controversial, does provide a glimpse into the reality that many African-American students face on a daily basis. The inequalities that African-American students face stretch from inequalities in school to inequalities in the community. Whether or not Asante's Afrocentric curriculum is the solution, it does bring the problem of inequality to the forefront for discussion.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This study attempted to determine the perceptions of Florida's leaders in the social studies toward an Afrocentric curriculum as a viable alternative to the traditional, Eurocentric curriculum. Additionally, the data was used to determine the extent content plays in the success of African-American students. Finally, an analysis of the participants' overall interest in diversity was completed by incorporating the Afrocentric data and the multicultural data together to determine whether there is a progression away from the traditional, mainstream curriculum and an inclination towards a curriculum that concentrates on the inclusion of various perspectives.
The survey instrument evolved with Banks' _Multicultural Guidelines_ (1992) in mind. The survey statements were a rewording of the goals outlined by Banks' guidelines. There are statements written for each goal, in some cases up to three statements for each goal. Each survey statement related to a different level of commitment regarding curriculum and diversity. Furthermore, each survey statement correlated with a research question, to gain better insight into the attitudes of the respondents with regards to the research questions.

Fifty-seven statements pertaining to Afrocentrism and Multiculturalism were included in a Likert scale. The statements attempted to determine the social studies leaders' interest in an Afrocentric curriculum. Each of the survey statements were organized, clustered, and attached to a research question (Bryman, 1988). The mean scores of the survey instrument statements and the survey statement clusters were calculated using SPSS for Windows 95. The mean scores were used to ascertain the respondents' attitudes with regards to the research questions. The mean scores for all of the statement clusters are presented in
Chapter 4. A frequency distribution was completed for each survey statement to determine the range of responses and the soundness of each question. Furthermore, the mean scores of the five research questions were compared and interpreted.

A Likert scale was used to assess perceptions and opinions. Kubiszyn and Borich, proclaim this method as "...one of the most widely used methods of attitude assessment" (1987). The survey allowed five responses: (5) strongly agree; (4) agree; (3) uncertain; (2) disagree; (1) strongly disagree. A mean score of 3 or better was noted as a positive response, anything below 3 was assumed to be a negative response (Kubiszyn and Borich, 1987). The research was designed to assess the respondents' perceptions regarding the following research questions:

(1) What was the perceived importance of considering the diverse nature of an ethnicity in respect to the development of curriculum and instruction?

(2) What was the perceived level of interest regarding the incorporation of an Afrocentric perspective into the Social Studies Curriculum?
(3) How did the respondents perceive the incorporation of alternate curriculums maintaining diverse perspectives?

(4) Did the respondents believe the social studies curriculum should be altered to cater to the learning styles of ethnic and cultural groups?

(5) Was there a perceived need for diverse assessment techniques to gauge the academic success of students from various cultural and ethnic groups?

Population

The population of this study consisted of the membership of the Florida Council for the Social Studies Board and the Florida Supervisors of Social Studies Board. These members were regarded as leaders in the social studies field and their decisions on standards and procedures helped guide the social studies curriculum in Florida. The individuals on these boards reflected diverse teaching experiences, various ethnic groups, and diversified regions. They held a number of positions within
the state of Florida: supervisor, teacher, professor, adjunct professor, program specialist, and administrator. Most had been classroom teachers. Since members on the committee represent much diversity in ethnicity and years of experience, it was decided that this group would be sufficient in meeting the needs of the research project (Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1985).

The survey was sent to 85 individuals, 46 were returned, for a return rate of 54% (Table 1). Four of the surveys returned were not used in the analysis. One survey was returned unmarked because the board member had retired. Three surveys were disqualified, because the respondents did not respond to all of the questions, thus raising the issue as to internal validity of the results (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993). Forty-six surveys were returned, however since four surveys were disqualified only 42 surveys were used in this analysis. Fourteen members of both boards overlapped membership, however those who overlapped received only one survey and were counted among the number sent to the Florida Council for the Social Studies Board.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number Sent</th>
<th>Number Returned</th>
<th>Return Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Council for the Social Studies Board</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Setting

The research was conducted within the state of Florida. The population surveyed resided in various districts throughout Florida's five regions. Each of the regions was assigned by the Florida Department of Education (1997) and was listed as Florida Reporting Regions. The counties in Florida were assigned to a particular reporting region and they were listed with the return rates in Table 2.
Table 2

Distribution of Returns by Regions (N=46)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number Sent</th>
<th>Number Returned</th>
<th>Return Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panhandle</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Central</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Central</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Reported</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

The survey was mailed to the Florida Council for the Social Studies Board and the Florida Supervisors for Social Studies during the first week in August 1997. The survey instrument included a cover letter which promised privacy and confidentiality and assured the results would be secretly coded and used only for a doctoral dissertation.
Demographic information was also solicited and placed at the end of the survey in order to be less threatening (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982).

Members would be given a second opportunity to complete the survey at a state meeting September 10-12, 1997 in Orlando. However, only the Florida Council for Social Studies Board held a state meeting that weekend. Requests were once again made at the conference for individuals to complete the survey. It was determined upon the return of these surveys that a sufficient number was returned in order to adequately compile the data (N=42).

**Instrument Development**

The survey instrument was influenced by the NCSS Position Statement and Guidelines revised by James Banks in 1989 titled *Curriculum Guidelines for Multicultural Education* (Banks, 1992). The idea of using the position statement as a guideline for writing the survey statements was suggested in a phone conversation with Geneva Gay from the Center for Multicultural Studies, University of Washington (Gay, 1997). The survey follows closely the
order in which Banks' guidelines were written. In order to clarify the beliefs and perceptions of the participants, survey statements were written that correlated to one of the five research questions (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982). The research questions were used to guide and write the survey statements, to ensure the survey would ask the appropriate information. (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982). The statements in the survey instrument also corresponded to each of Banks' multicultural guidelines. The number of survey statements for each guideline and the type of information that was needed to adequately answer the research questions were estimated by performing research prior to the survey development.

The survey instrument included multicultural and Afrocentric statements, as well as general statements pertaining to the role of the social studies. The statements regarding multiculturalism were added so the respondents would not be aware that the study's focus was Afrocentrism, and the researcher would determine the level of interest in diversity in order to answer the research questions.

The survey instrument a Likert scale. The Likert scale included 55 statements intended to assess the beliefs and
perceptions regarding the inclusion of diverse perspectives into the mainstream social studies curriculum. This scale was used to determine the degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. The Likert scale allowed the respondents five choices each assessing varying degrees of intensity: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Uncertain = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1. Five choices were used in accordance with the steps written by Adams and Schvaneveldt which state, it is advisable to use "...an uneven number of item responses to provide a clear midpoint" (1985).

The intent of the survey was to be able to ascertain the leaders' positions in relation to the five research questions. The survey included a number of statements, which corresponded to each research question. The order of the questions went from the general to the specific (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982). The five research questions were written to determine if the Florida's leaders in the social studies consider the curriculum and instruction that an African-American student has received was a determining factor in their educational success.

The survey was not pilot tested. Three committee members reviewed the instrument before it was mailed to the
recipients. All double-barreled statements were modified into one statement addressing one thought (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982). The instrument was limited to four pages, thereby increasing the cooperation rate (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982).

The concurrent reliability of each test question was reviewed once the mean scores of each question were calculated (Creswell, 1994). An item analysis took place in which survey statements, which had scores that were noticeably different than the other scores, were examined to determine if the research statements were poor (Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1985). Furthermore, confidence in the results was increased when the surveys were returned with 42 of them showing a response to all 57-survey statements.
CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

This study attempted to determine the perceptions of Florida's leaders in the social studies toward an Afrocentric curriculum as a viable alternative to the traditional, Eurocentric curriculum. Additionally, the data was used to determine the extent content plays in the success of African-American students. Finally, an analysis of the participants' overall interest in diversity was completed by incorporating the Afrocentric data and multicultural data together to determine whether there is a progression away from the traditional, mainstream curriculum and an inclination towards a curriculum that concentrates on the inclusion of various perspectives.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Fifty-five of the 57 statements corresponded to the research questions. Mean scores for each of the research questions were calculated by examining the statements which corresponded to the research questions. Since not all
respondents answered all questions, unequal Ns were used to calculate the mean scores.

**Analysis of Research Questions**

**Question #1**

(1) What was the perceived importance of considering the diverse nature of an ethnicity in respect to the development of curriculum and instruction?

Survey Statements 1, 6, 19, 20, 25, 33, 34, 37, 40, 50, 52 addressed research question 1.

The mean score of the combined results of these questions for all 42 respondents was 4.06. The scores primarily fluctuated between agree and strongly agree for this cluster of survey instrument statements. Most of the survey statements in this cluster received a favorable response. The frequency distribution is shown in Table 3.
Table 3

Research Question #1

Frequency Distribution (N = 42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>None</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>37</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A 4.10 mean score reflected a high degree of support for the ideas represented in this cluster of questions. Respondents supported the concept of using students' ethnic and cultural heritage when developing a social studies curriculum. Of the 11 questions in this category,
respondents scored the highest on statements 1, 6, 33 shown in Table 4 and lowest on statement 25, 34, 40 shown in Table 5. The statements which received lower scores tended to be more specific and incorporated words such as Afrocentric curriculum and African-American. The statements that were broader had had higher mean scores.

The ranges for the responses, which correspond to the cluster statements for research question 1, were similar. Most of the responses were positively skewed. However, question number 25 did have a higher number of respondents choose uncertain (3). Many of the respondents seemed uncertain when asked if multicultural education could be used as a motivational tool for students.
### Table 4

**Highest Mean Scores for Research Question 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Social studies teachers should be trained to understand the needs of diverse ethnic groups.</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. It is important that the social studies curriculum helps students understand that differences in cultural perspectives can sometimes lead to conflicts in society.</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The social studies curriculum should represent the diverse ethnic groups represented by the school's student population.</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5

**Lowest Mean Scores for Question 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40. The social studies curriculum should reflect upon the potential for African-Americans.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Incorporating multicultural education into the social studies will motivate students.</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. The social studies is responsible for helping students understand that the discrepancy between the Eurocentric and Afrocentric perspectives is a contributing factor in conflicts.</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An analysis of the data showed that teacher training with respect to awareness of cultural diversity received the highest mean score in this cluster. Curiously, statement 33, which asked respondents to determine the importance of teaching students that varying cultural perspectives sometimes lead to conflicts, had a high mean score. However, statement number 34, which had a lower mean scores, was a similar question. Statement 34 stated that the social studies should be responsible for helping students understand that the differences between the Afrocentric and Eurocentric perspectives contributes to conflict.

**Question #2**

(2) What was the perceived level of interest regarding the incorporation of an Afrocentric perspective into the Social Studies Curriculum?

Survey Statement 2,4,5,13,14,17,18,21,24,27,36,38, 39,41,46,47,51 addressed research question 2.
There was limited agreement by the respondents regarding this question. These questions dealt with the direct inclusion of an Afrocentric perspective into the social studies curriculum. The mean of these questions was 3.65. The frequency distribution is shown in Table 6.

The ranges for the responses, which correspond to the cluster statements for research question 2, were varied. Questions 17 and 18 appeared to divide the respondents. Most of the respondents either disagreed or agreed. These questions related directly to the inclusion of content, which referred to the African-American perspective and experience. In many cases when survey statements referred specifically to African-Americans or the Afrocentric perspective the responses were more dispersed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>41</td>
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<td>51</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A 3.65 mean score for the cluster of survey statements indicated that the degree of support for research question # 2 was minimal. The frequency distribution shows that the mode was a score of 4 and the mean score fell slightly below that. These survey statements directly referred to Afrocentrism, Afrocentricity, and African-Americans. Many respondents reported that they endorsed diversity, but had a difficult time narrowing their support to African-Americans. Others answered these questions positively, but implied that they were uncomfortable with the selective nature of the questions. They were not only supportive of the diversity of African-Americans, but other cultures too. Of the 14 questions in this category, respondents averaged the highest on statements 2, 14, 4, 5 shown in Table 7 and lowest on statements 17, 18, 21 shown in Table 8.
Table 7

Highest Mean Scores for Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. The African-American culture should be incorporated into the social studies curriculum, regardless of the school's racial distribution.</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The social studies curriculum should make an effort to educate students about the experiences of African Americans.</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The social studies curriculum should concentrate on developing positive interactions between African-American students and students from other ethnic groups.</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Staff development for social studies teachers should include information regarding the needs of African-American students.</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

Lowest Mean Scores for Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. The social studies curriculum should focus upon the conflicts experienced by African-Americans.</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. The social studies curriculum should compare and contrast the unique nature of the Afrocentric perspective in regard to other ethnic perspectives.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. The social studies curriculum should encourage students to examine content from an Afrocentric perspective.</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statements that had high mean scores referred to the incorporation of content pertaining to African-Americans such as cultural practices, experiences, and historical persons. However, when the statement involved the examination of content from the African-American perspective, the mean score of the survey statement decreased by almost one point. From this it can be inferred that the respondents were more supportive of the inclusion of content that refers to African-American
heritage and culture, and were less supportive of examining content from an Afrocentric perspective.

Question #3

(3) How did the respondents perceive the incorporation of alternate curricula maintaining diverse perspectives?

Survey statements 3, 12, 15, 16, 22, 23, 25, 28, 32, 42, 43, 44 focused on this Research Question.

Upon analysis of the data, it appeared that the respondents had a greater interest in the inclusion of an alternate curriculum with diverse perspectives than a curriculum promoting one perspective. This research question attempted to gauge the interest level pertaining to the inclusion of a diverse curriculum within the mainstream social studies curriculum. The frequency distribution showed that most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with these statements. The survey instrument statements, which refer to research question 3, were general statements about multiculturalism and the
inclusion of multiple perspectives. Afrocentric questions were not included in this cluster of statements. The frequency distribution is shown in Table 9.

The ranges for the responses, which correspond to the cluster statements for research question 3, were similar. Most of the responses were positively skewed. However, Questions 28 appeared to have divergent responses. This question asked respondents if they believe that examining the social studies from an African-American perspective would benefit all students. Once again, survey statements that referred specifically to African-Americans or the Afrocentric perspective seem to have a more diverse response.
Table 9

Research Question #3

Frequency Distribution (N = 42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>None</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>34</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean for this cluster of survey statements was 4.18. This score shows a positive reaction to the inclusion of diverse perspectives into the social studies.
Although this research question is quite broad and does not specify the inclusion of an Afrocentric perspective, it does hint that the respondents were receptive to a diverse social studies curriculum. Of the 12 statements in this category, statements 3, 43, 15 had the highest mean scores (Table 10) and statements 28, 25, 12 had the lowest mean scores (Table 11).

### Table 10

**Highest Mean Scores for Research Question 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. The social studies curriculum should foster positive interactions between students from diverse ethnic groups.</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. The social studies curriculum should help students interpret events from various perspectives.</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Social studies teachers should attempt to help students learn to live together.</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11

Lowest Mean Scores for Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. Examining the social studies from an Afrocentric perspective would be beneficial for all students.</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Incorporating multicultural education into the social studies will motivate students.</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The social studies curriculum should provide students from diverse ethnic groups the opportunity to develop their self-esteem.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Viewing social studies from a number of perspectives was an attractive statement for most respondents as implied by a mean score of 4.74. However, as noted previously, solely viewing the social studies from an Afrocentric perspective received a lower mean score of 3.24 from the respondents.
(4) Did the respondents believe the social studies curriculum should be altered to cater to the learning styles of ethnic and cultural groups?

Survey Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 26, 29, 30, 31, 45, 49, 56, 57, centered on this research question.

There was limited agreement with the statements in the cluster that related to the research question. These survey statements concentrated on the inclusion of various instructional methodologies in an attempt to interact and educate diverse ethnic groups. Accepting the premise that it is essential to adapt a classroom environment to the learning styles of diverse students involves the acceptance of a primary assumption. First the respondents would need to accept that an ethnic group does indeed have a distinct learning style or styles. A slightly above average mean score of 3.34 for the cluster of statement which relate to
research question 4 indicated limited agreement with the research question. The frequency distribution is shown below in table 12.

The ranges for the responses, which correspond to the cluster statements for research question 2, were varied. Questions 8, 10, 29, 30, 31, and 56 had a wide range of responses. Most of these questions asked the respondent to decide whether content should pertain to the ethnicity of the student population or to the Afrocentric perspective. The varied response implies that many of the respondents may be uncomfortable to narrow the curriculum to one or a few selected perspectives.
A 3.34 mean score indicated that the degree of support for the cluster of survey statements was minimal. The frequency distribution indicates that the mode was a score of 4 and the mean score fell slightly below that. The mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12
Frequency Distribution (N = 42)
score of the cluster showed weak support for research question 4. Of the 12 questions in this category, respondents scored the highest on statements 49, 56, 57 shown in Table 13 and lowest on statements 7, 26, 30 shown in Table 14.

Table 13

Highest Mean Scores for Research Question 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49. Cultural representation should be made in the social studies.</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Feedback should be gained from African American instructors regarding the equitable nature of the social studies curriculum.</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Feedback should be gained from African American students regarding the equitable nature of the social studies curriculum.</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14

Lowest Mean Scores for Question 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Social studies teachers should only be concerned with the needs of the cultural groups represented in their student population.</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. A social studies curriculum infused with multiculturalism is beneficial only when the content relates to the culture of the student.</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. The social studies should be examined from the cultural perspectives represented by each school's population.</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This cluster of survey statements for question 4 received a low mean score, 3.34. Most respondents appeared to disagree with the curriculum and instruction of a classroom being ruled by the ethnic representation of the student body. The respondents implied from their responses that ethnicity should not dictate curriculum. Their responses to statements in this cluster implied that the curriculum should be guided by content. Strong agreement exhibited a favorable response to statements supporting a
curriculum maintaining multicultural perspectives regardless of the student population's ethnic distribution.

**Question #5**

(5) Was there a perceived need for diverse assessment techniques to gauge the academic success of students from various cultural and ethnic groups?

Survey Questions 53, 54, 55 corresponded to this research question.

The cluster of statements which refer to research question 5 had a strong mean of 4.77. This mean implies that the respondents strongly agreed to statements regarding the inclusion of alternative assessment techniques such as portfolio assessment, role playing, and grouping to measure student learning. The cluster of survey statements that referred to research question 5 were broad in their content. Therefore, limited information could be gathered from this data. Furthermore, there were only 3 survey statements that were aligned with this research
question, so the reliability of the outcome is weakened. The frequency distribution is shown below in Table 15.

The ranges for the responses, which correspond to the cluster statements for research question 5, were notably similar. Most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. These questions referred to the inclusion of alternative assessment techniques.

Table 15

Research Question #5

Frequency Distribution (N = 42)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
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<td>55</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The attempt to gauge interest in varied modalities and alternative assessment was not as successful as intended. These survey statements implied diversity in assessment and did not specify Afrocentrism. The statement
with the highest mean was 53, 54 (Table 16) and the statement with the lowest mean was 55 (Table 17).

Table 16

Highest Mean Scores for Research Question 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53. The social studies curriculum should include activities allowing for alternative assessment techniques.</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Social studies teachers should use alternative assessment techniques.</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17

Lowest Mean Score for Question 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55. The social studies curriculum should continually be examined to ensure the equality of instruction and assessment.</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

The mean scores assigned to each research question does in fact point to the following conclusion: the leaders in the social studies agree that diverse cultures should be included within the mainstream curriculum and that alternative assessment techniques should be used. However, there is very little interest in permitting the ethnicity of the students' population to guide curriculum and instruction. Furthermore, the leaders seem more interested in a multicultural curriculum than the inclusion of an Afrocentric curriculum.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The data compiled for this study provides evidence for the inclusion of diverse perspectives into the mainstream social studies curriculum. The content of the literature reviewed included the use of an Afrocentric curriculum, multicultural curriculum, and a traditional curriculum. As the literature review was being written, a continuum regarding a Eurocentric, Afrocentric, and multicultural curriculum seemed to develop. On one end was the Eurocentric curriculum, on the other end was the Afrocentric curriculum, and in the middle was the multicultural curriculum.

Afrocentric proponents, such as Molefi Asante (1988), contend that African-American students should be centered within the known environment and taught from a perspective with which the student is familiar. Others, such as James
Banks (1995), hold that equity pedagogy (the equal representation of diverse cultures) is the better approach to teaching the social studies. Finally, Diane Ravitch (1990) represents another school of thought that believes the traditional curriculum is essential for ensuring good citizens. Ravitch contends that the social studies curriculum is not a forum for the adulation of distinctive cultures, but rather a discipline where ideals and beliefs are instilled in order to unite a common American people and to prepare them for citizenship. The data gathered from the survey showed that the statement, which focused on citizenship education and the role of the social studies, received the highest mean score. This question stated, "The social studies curriculum should help students develop the skills necessary to prepare for effective citizenship."

This question had a mean score of 4.93. This implied that the leaders saw citizenship education as very important.

The second segment of the literature review centered on Schubert's "Curriculum Contexts". According to Schubert, a curriculum does not occur by itself; it is influenced by out-of-school influences, nonschool curricula, and the in-school influences (p. 94). Depending
upon the environment in which the instruction takes place, the curriculum fluctuates and alters.

A likert scale survey was sent to the memberships of the Florida Council for the Social Studies Board and the Florida Supervisors for the Social Studies Association. The data collected from this study indicates preference for the inclusion of various cultural and ethnic perspectives into the social studies. The data implies that a curriculum centered on a particular perspective was not desirable for the students. However, the inclusion of Afrocentric perspectives along with other cultural perspectives did gain much more support than a curriculum expressing one perspective. Survey questions relating to multiculturalism had higher mean scores, which would imply that the sample population had a stronger inclination towards multiculturalism than towards Afrocentrism or Eurocentrism.

Implications

The data showed limited support for the inclusion of an Afrocentric perspective, however, an examination of the data showed a strong predominance towards multiculturalism.
The questions on Afrocentrism received lower scores, because a large proportion of the sample group was opposed to teaching content from one cultural perspective. Furthermore, the Florida Council for the Social Studies Board and the Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors who responded strongly disagreed with the social studies curriculum acquiring the responsibility of developing a student's self-esteem.

What does this mean for the social studies? A curriculum that uses cultural and ethnic centricity in order to make students feel good about themselves through accomplishments of others in their heritage, or to use lessons pertaining to a culture to motivate students does not seem likely to receive support by social studies leaders. However, an attempt to promote equity within the social studies curriculum, along with the traditional social studies curriculum, does appear to be the trend that will be supported by social studies leaders.
Opposing Thoughts about Student Success

Afrocentrism may appear like a viable alternative, but according to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (1991) it is not the answer. Schlesinger questions whether self-esteem is not a product of ethnic role models, but perhaps from "...the belief in oneself that springs from achievement, from personal rather than from racial pride" (p. 246). However, Asante (1991) contends that an Afrocentric curriculum can bolster self-esteem and that an Afrocentric curriculum is the first step to a truly multicultural curriculum. Asante (1991) believed that the key to the success African-American students is to center them in their own cultural context at an early age. If African-American students are not given the chance to be "centered" in their culture at an early age, they will continue to fall behind students of white, European decent.

Supporters of a multicultural curriculum such as Banks (1991) believe that human freedom is limited when people are stereotyped by society. Hilliard (1992) maintained that "In a democratic society, all cultural groups must be represented" (p.12). However, a multicultural curriculum would allow students to learn by freeing them from the
limitations set by cultural boundaries and stereotypes. Banks (1988) reported that in order to attain student success for minorities, schools need to be "...sensitive to diverse learning, cognitive, and motivational styles" (453). Likewise, Gay (1990) believed that educational equality can come through curriculum desegregation.

Similarly, supporters of a multicultural curriculum and an Afrocentric curriculum maintained that awareness of cultural and ethnic backgrounds are necessary for student success. In fact Vann and Kunjufu (1993) see so much unity in these two curriculums that they refer to an Afrocentric curriculum as an "Afrocentric, multicultural curriculum" (p.491). However, even though an Afrocentric curriculum and a multicultural curriculum have similarities they are different.

Supporters of a Eurocentric curriculum believe the key to student success is not pride through ethnicity, but the support of a common culture. Ravitch (1990) contended that America's common culture in multicultural in nature because American is a heterogeneous mix of cultures. Furthermore, she maintained that supporters of particularism, those, who prescribe to ethnic separatism, lead people to believe that American culture, "...belongs only to those who are white and
European..." (p.341). Self-esteem according to Ravitch (1990) is "... beyond the content of the curriculum"; it is achieved through reaching a goal (p. 354).

Conclusions

To learn, students need to make connections between the known and the unknown. Content that is pertinent and relevant to the student can motivate learning to take place. Content that relates to earlier knowledge facilitates the learning of new knowledge. Learning takes place when connections are made between prior information and new information.

If connections are important to learning, than Asante's (1991) Afrocentricity does make sense when placed in perspective of known learning environments and cognitive links. It also makes sense that African American students will become motivated within a classroom environment that is in tune with their culture. However, the question is how long will this comfort and motivation last? Does a student's reliance upon outside stimuli to provide motivation lead to failure? Students need to learn to be
motivated from their academic successes. Parents need to help their children understand the importance of education and the benefits of learning.

A multicultural curriculum may be the answer. It is a middle of the road approach that has solid ideas. However, teachers and administrators need to be trained in what exactly a multicultural curriculum encompasses. A classroom is not multicultural if students read a pamphlet on Martin Luther King Jr. one day a year. Multiculturalism is viewing the subject matter from a variety of perspectives. Multiculturalism is being sympathetic to the needs of students and understanding that all students have different needs. Multiculturalism is teachers knowing their students are interpreting their class differently, and trying hard not to offend. Multiculturalism is awareness, awareness to students' struggles and success, no matter their cultural or ethnic heritage.

Students of various cultures can be successful in a regular classroom, as long as the teacher makes an attempt to respect and investigate other cultures besides their own. When a student first enters school they strive to adjust. Supporters of an Afrocentric curriculum, such as Asante (1991), suggest that the only way for a successful
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family members, and the community also need to get involved in helping the children.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future study includes the following:

1. The survey statements needed to be written more clearly. This problem could have been alleviated if the survey had been pilot tested.

2. Many of the respondents wrote back that they would have liked to have room to write comments. They had opinions that could not be expressed in a Likert scale format. A qualitative study with open-ended items would have allowed the respondents to state their beliefs and may have given more insight into the research topic.

3. School systems that are proficient in the inclusion of multicultural curriculums and instruction styles geared toward diverse learners should be investigated to gather
insight into what instructional methodologies are being used.

4. Head-Start type programs should be examined to determine their success in increasing the achievement of ethnically diverse students.

5. Teacher training and recertification courses should be analyzed to determine if teachers and student interns are being sufficiently educated in the needs of diverse learners and are competent in multicultural education.

6. Teachers in Florida should be surveyed to determine their level of multicultural activity in the classroom. This information could be used to coordinate multicultural in-service instruction and to prepare pre-service education students.

7. Further research should focus upon a multicultural curriculum and the various perspectives on the multicultural continuum described in this research to examine the relationship of this theoretical range and actual classroom practice.
Appendix A
Cover Letter
August 1, 1997

Dear Board Member,

For my dissertation I am conducting research on the attitudes the leaders of social studies in Florida possess pertaining to the inclusion of multicultural perspectives in the social studies. Currently, I am a doctoral student under the guidance of Dr. Jeff Cornett at the University of Central Florida. Since both the Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors and the Florida Council for the Social Studies Board have been identified as Florida's leaders in social studies, I am requesting your insights. All responses will remain confidential and reported responses will only be identified by region. Each survey does include an identification number in the right hand corner only to identify which responses have been returned. Please return the attached survey to me at the address included on the stamped envelope by September 5.

Thank you in advance for helping me on my dissertation. Your response to this survey will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Vicki D. Banks
MULTICULTURAL SURVEY

Directions: Please read each statement and circle the number of the response that best reflects your views and opinions.

1. The social studies curriculum should represent the diverse ethnic groups represented by the school's student population.

2. The African American culture should be incorporated into the social studies curriculum, regardless of the school's racial distribution.

3. The social studies curriculum should foster positive interactions between students from diverse ethnic groups.

4. The social studies curriculum should concentrate on developing positive interactions between African American students and students from other ethnic groups.

5. Staff development for social studies teachers should include information regarding the needs of African American students.

6. Social studies teachers should be trained to understand the needs of diverse ethnic groups.

7. Social studies teachers should only be concerned with the needs of the cultural groups represented in their student population.

8. The social studies curriculum should evenly represent the learning styles of diverse ethnic groups.

9. The social studies curriculum should reflect the learning styles represented in a school's student population.

10. African American students have learning styles that the social studies curriculum should accommodate.
11. Developing self-esteem should be the primary goal of the social studies curriculum.

12. The social studies curriculum should provide students from diverse ethnic groups the opportunity to develop their self-esteem.

13. Increasing the self-efficacy of African American students should be a goal of the social studies curriculum.

14. The social studies curriculum should make an effort to educate students about the experiences of African Americans.

15. Social studies teachers should attempt to help students learn to live together.

16. The social studies curriculum should be concerned with having students explore racial conflicts.

17. The social studies curriculum should focus upon the conflicts experienced by African Americans.

18. The social studies curriculum should compare and contrast the unique nature of the Afrocentric perspective in regard to other ethnic perspectives.

19. The perspectives of diverse ethnic groups should be explored in the social studies.

20. The social studies curriculum should promote the values which identify the diversity of today's population.

21. The social studies curriculum should encourage students to examine content from an Afrocentric perspective.

22. Exploring the social studies from a wide variety of perspectives would be beneficial to students.
23. A social studies curriculum that represents multicultural viewpoints promotes self-esteem. 5 4 3 2 1

24. Exploring the social studies from an Afrocentric perspective would be beneficial to the self-esteem of African American students. 5 4 3 2 1

25. Incorporating multicultural education into the social studies will motivate students. 5 4 3 2 1

26. A social studies curriculum infused with multiculturalism is beneficial only when the content relates to the culture of the student. 5 4 3 2 1

27. Incorporating an Afrocentric perspective into the social studies curriculum will motivate African American students. 5 4 3 2 1

28. Examining the social studies from an Afrocentric perspective would be beneficial for all students. 5 4 3 2 1

29. Exploring the social studies from an Afrocentric perspective is beneficial to schools with a predominately African American population. 5 4 3 2 1

30. The social studies should be examined from the cultural perspectives represented by each school's population. 5 4 3 2 1

31. The social studies curriculum should emphasize the potential for success available to today's African American student. 5 4 3 2 1

32. The social studies curriculum is responsible for helping students realize their potential in American society. 5 4 3 2 1
33. It is important that the social studies curriculum helps students understand that differences in cultural perspectives can sometimes lead to conflicts in society.

34. The social studies is responsible for helping students understand that the discrepancy between the Eurocentric and Afrocentric perspectives is a contributing factor in conflicts.

35. The social studies curriculum should help students develop the skills necessary to prepare for effective citizenship.

36. The social studies curriculum for African American students should be predominantly concerned with instilling skills that will enable effective citizenship.

37. The social studies curriculum for African Americans students should include skills necessary for interpersonal and intercultural group interactions.

38. The social studies curriculum should present the Afrocentric view.

39. The social studies curriculum should infuse Afrocentrism within its scope and sequence.

40. The social studies curriculum should reflect upon the potential for African-Americans.

41. Afrocentric issues should be incorporated across the social studies curriculum.

42. The social studies curriculum should address the similarities between ethnic groups.

43. The social studies curriculum should help students interpret events from various perspectives.
44. The social studies curriculum should help students conceptualize the future of ethnic groups in American society.

5 4 3 2 1

45. It is essential that the social studies curriculum is explored from more than a few perspectives.

5 4 3 2 1

46. The Afrocentric perspective is an important perspective from which to examine social studies.

5 4 3 2 1

47. The social studies curriculum should help students speculate on the future for African Americans.

5 4 3 2 1

48. The social studies curriculum should include literature.

5 4 3 2 1

49. Cultural representation should be made in the social studies through the arts.

5 4 3 2 1

50. Literature can be a fair way to represent African Americans in the social studies curriculum.

5 4 3 2 1

51. Art, which represents the Afrocentric perspective, should be included in the social studies curriculum.

5 4 3 2 1

52. The social studies curriculum should include opportunities for students to become involved within the African American community.

5 4 3 2 1

53. The social studies curriculum should include activities allowing for alternative assessment techniques.

5 4 3 2 1

54. Social studies teachers should use alternative assessment techniques.

5 4 3 2 1

55. The social studies curriculum should continually be examined to ensure the equality of instruction and assessment.

5 4 3 2 1
<table>
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<tr>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
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<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
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56. Feedback should be gained from African American students regarding the equitable nature of the social studies curriculum.  
57. Feedback should be gained from African American instructors regarding the equitable nature of the social studies curriculum.

*Adapted from NCSS Multicultural Curriculum Guidelines (1991)*
Region Employed:

Panhandle  
Crown  
East Central  
West Central  
South  

Please fill out the following demographic information:

1. Sex: Male ______  Female______

2. Ethnic Group:
   A. ______ White, non-Hispanic
   B. ______ Hispanic
   C. ______ African American, non-Hispanic
   D. ______ Asian or Pacific islander
   E. ______ Native American or Alaskan native

3. Teaching experience including number of years at each level:
   A. ______ Elementary
   B. ______ Middle/Junior High
   C. ______ High School
   D. ______ Vocational / Adult Education
   E. ______ College or University
   F. ______ Other________________
   G. ______ None

4. Current position including number of years at each position:
   A. ______ Teacher
   B. ______ Administrator
   C. ______ Program Specialist
   D. ______ Full- time Professor
   E. ______ Adjunct Professor
   F. ______ Supervisor
   G. ______ Other________________
REFERENCES


Gay, G. (personal communication, March 1, 1997).


