

THE POLITICIZATION OF THE 1619 PROJECT—THE NECESSITY FOR
TRANSFORMATIVE CURRICULA WITHIN SOCIAL STUDIES

by

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ABSTRACT

ANTOINETTE MARIE LINDA ROCHESTER. The Politicization of *The 1619 Project*—
The Necessity for Transformative Curricula in Social Studies.
(Under the direction of DR. TINA L. HEAFNER)

In August 2019, *The New York Times* published what was said to be a “controversial” journalistic take on African American and American history. Written by Nikole Hannah-Jones, an awardee of the Pulitzer Prize and a MacArthur Genius Award, and her fellow journalists at *The New York Times*, *The 1619 Project* was intentionally published on the 400th anniversary of the arrival in Virginia of the first ships arriving in Virginia with enslaved Africans aboard (*The New York Times*, 2019). Although it has become one center of the United States political debate and rhetoric, the intent of *The 1619 Project* was not to further politicize the United States educational system. Rather, the intention was to present a compelling counternarrative to American history, but more importantly, African American history (*The New York Times*, 2019). However, because education within the United States is a politicized system, the work of Nikole Hannah-Jones and her colleagues has magnified the growing disconnect between a history of honest racial representation and its alignment with formal curriculum, standards, and education policy.

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate how the formal social studies curriculum can become politicized by political actors and media. *The New York Times*’s *The 1619 Project* serves as a contemporary illustration of these dynamics. Through a multi-method approach using archival data and the *Transcript: Ezra Klein Interviews Ta-Nehisi Coates and Nikole Hannah-Jones*, the intent and media influence of *The 1619 Project* was examined situating the study within the theoretical frame of critical policy

analysis using grounded theory methods to be analyzed through BlackCrit (Birk & Mills, 2015; Charmaz, 1996; Diem et al., 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; King, 2018; Young & Diem, 2018). Based on the themes developed the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* was to center American history around the history and experiences of African Americans. Additionally, *The 1619 Project* became politicized because it openly questions whether liberties are *intentionally* denied to African Americans.

Keywords: African American, *The 1619 Project*, representation, anti-Blackness, politics, political affiliation, education, Nikole Hannah-Jones, *The New York Times*, “controversial”

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Robert: My only brother. We are two years apart, and there are few memories I can think of from childhood until I went to undergrad college that you are not a part of. I am so proud of all you have accomplished, primarily because you never gave up on yourself, Rob. Thank you for being an example of what perseverance looks like and for showing me what integrity means in day-to-day life.

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DEDICATION

Without question, I dedicate my dissertation to my amazing and loving nieces and nephew. When I first realized my passion for education, it was a generalized concern for the educational experiences of Black youth. But then, as with many things, it became personal. It all started when my niece Aaliyah Channel began kindergarten in 2012 and has continued as my niece Ava Alexandria and nephew Amir Thomas Kevin are now in kindergarten and Pre-K. I have an individual relationship with each of you and want to let you know how important you are to me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRT	Critical Race Theory
SBOE	State Board of Education
LEAs	local education agencies
POC	People of Color
CLS	Critical Legal Studies
Common Core	Common Core State Standards
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
NAEP	National Assessment of Education Progress
NAGB	National Assessment Governing Board
BlackCrit	Black Critical Theory
IRB	Institutional Review Board
NC DPI	North Carolina Department of Public Information
SBM	School Board Meetings
SB	School Board

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

According to former President Lyndon B. Johnson, “The answer for all our national problems comes down to one single word: education” (Schultz, 2019, p. 97). Education and access to education within the United States have been used as a method to address racial discrimination as well as propel ideologies (Anderson, 1988). While all students in the United States are granted the opportunity to receive an education, education disparities and curricula difference remain present within public K-12 education (Anyon, 2005; Bell, 2004). Furthermore, because education is a state issue versus a federal issue, states can either limit or advance specific content within their educational standards and curriculum (Mantel, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). Moreover, because education is state governed, each state constitution can have diverse educational provisions (Parker, 2016).

Nonetheless, universally students cannot be denied education or educational access based on their race, gender, religion, or other factors. However, historically, that has not always been the case (Parker, 2016). For example, throughout history, women, individuals of lower socioeconomic status (SES), Africans American, and Indigenous people have been denied education based on their gender, income, and/or race (Wilder, 2014). Additionally, often times, once marginalized groups were granted access to education (Kober et al., 2020), the access did not align with the curriculum (Ware & Ware, 2012; Winslow, 2013). Instead, the curricula were segregated by race, class, and gender leading to a new form of stratified curricula and education system (Ware & Ware, 2012; Winslow, 2013).

Traditionally, then, and now, social studies standards and curricula are not racially focused; meaning, if race is addressed, it is done in a limited context (Howard, 2003). This approach has been and continues to be very problematic, specifically for African Americans, because race and racial dynamics are greatly embedded into America's identity and history (Howard, 2003; King, 2014; King & Brown, 2014). Within recent years, racial tensions have increased, and various minority groups have encountered hardships, which they have attributed to their racial identity and/or sexual orientation (Keller, 2020). Moreover, the role and centering of race within the public school curriculum have become the center of a growing and continuous educational and political debate (Ansley, 2021).

Originally, Critical Race Theory (CRT) was a legal theory developed by scholars Derrick Bell, Patricia Williams, Mari Matsuda, Charles Lawrence, and Richard Delgado in the 1970s "to understand the complex condominia of law, racial ideology, and political power" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. 27) in American society. Initially, CRT was not an educational theory until scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate IV (1995) addressed the intersectionality between the tenets of CRT and America's educational system and practices, which some scholars argue continues to remain present. CRT in education indicates that the current educational system of the United States contains anti-Blackness sentiments, property ownership is used as a method to identify and reaffirm SES, and specific language is used to identify Black, Brown, and white¹ students (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995).

¹ All "w" in "white" is lowercase. Due to the nature of this dissertation and the continued oppression of Black narratives, I have chosen not to capitalized white.

Within recent years, some states have chosen to include and/or use CRT as a framework to revise their curriculum, which has led to a vast political debate regarding the explicit inclusion of CRT in public education (Ansley, 2021). However, CRT historically has not been taught nor explicitly incorporated within public education standards or curricula (Sawchuk, 2021). This is not to be confused with the notion that race has or is not taught nor included in standards and/or curriculum. Rather, it means CRT in education is larger than having discussions on race. CRT in education encompasses the dismantling of discriminative racial ideologies directed towards People of Color (POC) that impacts educational research and practices (Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). Moreover, because race continues to be a contentious topic within the United States, the debate relating to the inclusion of CRT has resurfaced an ongoing discussion about what should and should not be allowed within school curriculum (Ansley, 2021).

Scholars have critiqued the narrow accounting of American history and have attempted to include the lives, experiences, and perspectives of Americans who were marginalized by the orthodox version found in many textbooks (King et al., 2012). The efforts by many scholars of color and their white intellectual allies have been met with mixed success. However, in the last decade, instead of the reform of American history through broadening gender, class, and racial representation being embraced as a necessary corrective to the historical record and official curriculum, reform and greater representation have become the centerpiece of political debate about what parts of American history should be acknowledged, whose voice should be included, and more

importantly, who has the authority to write and/or define American history (Mackaman, 2019; Serwer, 2019).

This set of issues became prominent in public discourse when *The New York Times Magazine* published *The 1619 Project* on the 400th anniversary of enslaved African's arrival in Virginia (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Mackaman, 2019). *The 1619 Project* recenters American history around the experiences of African Americans as well as identifying the misalignment between what it means to be white and American versus Black and American (Hannah-Jones, 2019). Additionally, *The 1619 Project* takes the stance that much of America's identity is attributed to African American culture, and African Americans historically have and continue to experience mistreatment, which the journalist authors accredit to race (Hannah-Jones, 2019).

Since its publication, *The 1619 Project* has encountered both pushback and acceptance; some states have explicitly stated it will not be included within their state curriculum, while other states have readily included it within their curriculum (Ansley, 2021; Levine, 2021; Riley, 2020). Much of the argument against the inclusion of *The 1619 Project* within the state curriculum is an extension of the CRT, and some historians have stated that *The 1619 Project* is an inaccurate depiction of American history (Harris, 2019; Kaufman, 2019; Sandefur, 2020). The counterargument to this claim is the intent of *The 1619 Project* was not to discuss American history from the perspective of historians whose epistemological worldviews align with postpositivist ideology (Fox, 2008; Hannah-Jones, 2019; Shaver, 1992). Postpositivists have the deterministic philosophy that cause (probably) determines effects or outcomes (Fox, 2008; Shaver, 1992). Problems studied reflect the need to identify and assess the cause(s) that influence

outcomes. Postpositivism is a traditional approach to studying the past in which the research explains and describes phenomena objectively (Fox, 2008; Shaver, 1992).

However, *The 1619 Project* is meant to discuss the gaps in American history from the perspective of African Americans, which aligns with a transformative epistemological worldview (Banks, 1995; Hannah-Jones, 2019). Transformative views align with critical theorists and center research with an action agenda to help marginalized people (Banks, 1995; Mertens, 2015; Rubin, 2019). A transformative worldview argues postpositivist assumptions imposed structural law and theories that do not fit marginalized individuals in our society or issues of power and social justice, discrimination, and oppression that need to be addressed (Banks, 1995; Mertens, 2015; Rubin, 2019). Thus, *The 1619 Project* serves as a contemporary illustration of transformative perspectives as well as a liberatory curriculum (Freire, 1972, 1975).

Statement of Problem

Traditionally, education in the United States has a *Eurocentric* focus that overtly neglects to acknowledge the experiences, history, and accomplishments of any racial and ethnic group in the United States other than white (King, 2014; King & Brown, 2014). Likewise, when the experiences, history, and accomplishments of non-white racial and ethnic groups are presented in the curriculum, they have a deficit undertone (Brown & Au, 2014). Emerging in the 1970's, multicultural education, an extension of ethnic studies (Banks, 1975; Hu-DeHart, 1993; Lowy, 1995; Sleeter, 2011), developed as an inclusive curricular narrative that sought to diversify K-12 curriculum. Although ethnic studies and multicultural education can be found within most states' standards and/or curricula, their inclusion is dependent upon state policy. Also, since education policies

are the responsibility of each state, there is no national curriculum or mandate requiring the inclusion of ethnic studies and/or multicultural education, making the curriculum vulnerable to political agendas and differing regional priorities (Mantel, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). Thus, the extent of ethnic studies and/or multicultural education varies nationally. For example, Arizona, South Dakota, Oregon, and Montana require students between grades 2-4 to be able to identify tribal territory lines, the characteristics associated with their respective tribal groups, and the locations of reservations within their states (Warner, 2015). Whereas in Texas, the State Boards of Education (SBOE) passed legislation that now requires the inclusion of Mexican American history in schools (Yoo et al., 2020). Yet, African American history, which is a part of American history (Hannah Jones, 2019), continues to see failed efforts to be recognized on a large scale for its uniqueness and role in the American story.

King (2017) found that 13 states² created legislation requiring the inclusion of African American history as a part of their public school curriculum, creating a point of analysis to compare and critique the influence of African American history curriculum. While the overall intent of including African American history in these various states' public school curricula vary based on the governing body, meaning if there is an oversight committee to monitor the successful implementation of said legislation (King, 2017), the fact that some states have formalized expectations for the inclusion of African Americans into classroom instruction itself is telling. Although SBOE and local education agencies (LEAs) are the main governing bodies that assist in deciding state standards and curricula, the explicit permitting of African American history indicated that

² Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Mississippi, Rhode Island, California, Colorado, Michigan, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington (King, 2017)

these 13 states not only recognize African Americans have their own history within America but also that students should readily have access to learn said history explicitly. Specifically, to effectively convey African American history requires the acknowledgment by the society at large that African Americans were mistreated by white America specifically because of their race (Brown & Au, 2014; King & Simmons, 2018). This acknowledgment also means confronting a history of slavery, oppression, and racism in the United States.

In August 2019, *The New York Times* published *The 1619 Project* commemorating the 400th anniversary of the first slave ships arriving in Virginia (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Harris, 2020; Mackaman, 2019). Unlike other historical documents discussing African American history, *The 1619 Project* was developed by Pulitzer Prize awardee and MacArthur Genius Award Nikole Hannah-Jones with her fellow *New York Times* journalists who embarked on intentionally discussing American history by emphasizing the premise and centrality of race in the United States. More importantly, the project was designed to emphasize the omission of African American history, the experiences of African Americans, and the contributions African Americans made to the formation of the United States (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Harris, 2020; Morel, 2020). Yet, *The 1619 Project*, which has similar sentiments to the legislation passed by 13 states but with greater intentionality and a “controversial”³ approach to African American and American history, has encountered resistance (Harris, 2020; Mackaman, 2019; Serwer, 2019). Thus, the project has become a politicalized debate as to whose perspective of African American and American history is historically accurate, who is allowed to

³ “Controversial” will be placed in parentheses throughout the dissertation to emphasize and affirm this underlying question: “Who” and for “whom” states *The 1619 Project* is “controversial”?

“write” said history, and who is responsible for indirectly readdressing the politicization of school curricula, specifically within the discipline of social studies (Harris 2020; Mackaman, 2019; Serwer, 2019).

Therefore, the problem addressed within this study is how and why *The New York Times’s 1619 Project* became politicized by political actors and media and how *The 1619 Project* is a contemporary illustration of the politicization of formal social studies curriculum.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this multi-method approach study is to investigate how and why *The New York Times’s 1619 Project* became politicized by political actors and media and how *The 1619 Project* is a contemporary illustration of the politicization of formal social studies curriculum. Currently, how the history and experiences of African Americans are being taught in the United States does not encourage inquisition from a non-Eurocentric perspective nor thoroughly discuss the role of race in the United States. Although not written by historians, Nikole Hannah-Jones and her fellow journalists embarked on a journey to critically address what and how American history is defined while refusing to omit and diminish the ugly sides of American history that are often ignored based on the notion that the United States is a post-racial society.

There is a great need for students to learn the history of formerly enslaved African Americans, more importantly, how this history has contributed to the overall history of the United States. Therefore, while *The 1619 Project* is one of many examples of a counternarrative that can be included within school curriculum, the deliberate dismissal and contentious debate of its perspectives echos anti-Blackness sentiments and policies in

education. The learning of African American history, especially for African American students, grants them the ability to form a greater sense of identity which the omission of one's history loses. Consequently, before students can be supported in formulating a thorough perception of American history, they must first be allowed the opportunity to challenge the dominant narratives within a deficit history (King, 2014) that historians frequently present concerning African American and American history.

For the multi-method study on *The 1619 Project*, the following research questions were developed.

1. What is *The 1619 Project*?
 - a. What is the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*?
 - b. Based on its *intent*, why has *The 1619 Project* become politicalized?
2. What is the rhetorical, political debate associated with (around) *The 1619 Project*?
 - a. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*'s authors?
 - b. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* for other stakeholders, such as opponents/critics of *The 1619 Project*?

Significance of Study

The significance of this study lies in the intersectionality of politics, race, and education curriculum. Within this study, the role and influence of politics on what is deemed a “controversial” take on social studies curriculum was analyzed to further understand the spill-over effect of political ideology on education (i.e., what students are

or are not exposed to within the classroom). Thus, practitioners and LEAs can greatly benefit from the investigation of *The 1619 Project* in further depth.

Practitioners are deemed as the gatekeepers between education policies and the formal curriculum (Adler, 2008). Therefore, ensuring practitioners are aware of and incorporate diverse counternarratives helps encourage critical thinking skills frequently desired within social studies as a discipline. Specifically, because the discipline of social studies emphasizes the use of primary and secondary sources, *The 1619 Project* provides practitioners with alternative sourcing material that many often state either that they have limited access to or do not know about. Likewise, using counternarratives to teach American history grants students the ability to foster and understand the importance of citizenship. Through practitioners exposing students to counternarratives, the liberation found within that curriculum ideally can lead to students having a greater sense of self-identity, which assists in the fostering of citizenship within American society.

LEAs assist in the governance and development of educational standards and curricula. Thus, through investigation of the politicization of *The 1619 Project*, the impact and level of influence political actors have in education, holistically, is shown. Hence, LEAs and those alike will be able to use this study to conceptualize how anti-Blackness perspectives are present within social studies curriculum and, overall, education reform. Additionally, this study can be used to further discussions on patterns and possibly predict future patterns in relation to “controversial” curriculums found within education reform. Moreover, this study has the potential to reaffirm patterns that align with specific political ideologies and result in having an impact on education reform, specifically towards historically marginalized communities.

Lastly, contentious and/or “controversial” topics and debates are a part of the political process and can be viewed as necessary components for reform (positive or negative) to occur. Consequently, this study is significant because *The 1619 Project* was part of an already present contentious debate race in America, which is frequently referred to as culture wars (Nash & Dunn, 1995); it supports the need for diverse voices and perspectives to be a part of education reform as well as educational research. Additionally, *The 1619 Project* provides further evidence of the political and racialized undercurrent education and can assist in explaining its historical importance and impact. Thus, this study has the potential to assist in reevaluating and redefining the role of counternarratives within education.

Delimitations

There are important delimitations of this study that must be addressed. One major limitation of this study is the research on *The 1619 Project* occurred as discussions and changes on the project were happening in real time. Thus, while the findings of the study are as current as possible, political and curriculum decisions primarily made regarding *The 1619 Project* are continuously occurring. Likewise, because *The 1619 Project* was originally published in roughly the last two years, scholarship on the effects of its incorporation or lack thereof in school curriculum has yet to be fully seen.

Assumptions

There are three key assumptions within this study. The first assumption of this study is public K-12 education standards govern the curriculum. In other words, although state policymakers, SBOE, and LEAs are the governing bodies that create public K-12 education standards, the standards themselves are meant to oversee the school

curriculum, not the policymakers or LEAs. The second assumption within this study is that formal curriculum will be reflected in the received curriculum. Moreover, an additional assumption is that practitioners make a conscious effort to thoroughly deliver the content within each respective school year. The third assumption is the terms “United States history” and “American history” can be used interchangeably because in some states, such as North Carolina, American history is the legislated name of the course that teaches United States history (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

Definitions of Terms

- anti-Blackness: The ideology that “Blackness” is a threat to American society; Black people and their history are inferior to Eurocentric American history and the history of other People of Color in the United States; the limited progress of African American history in education, educational standards, and curriculum is intentional because Black progression inherently results in the progression of *all* People of Color (Dumas & ross, 2016; Grant et al., 2021)
- African American: Individuals who are descendants of enslaved Africans who inhabited the United States (Adams, 2020)
- Colonizers: Individuals or groups of people, traditionally of European descent, who forcefully and wrongfully invade land or territories that belong to or were populated by the indigenous people of that area (Calderon, 2014)
- Decolonization: The process in which formerly colonized land and people liberate themselves from their oppressor(s) (Calderon, 2014)

- Multiculturalism: The presence and inclusion of racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse groups' experiences and voices in one distinct space, (i.e., school standards and curriculum) (Hu De-Hart, 1993)
- Controversial: Relating to controversy, "a discussion marked especially by the expression of opposing views" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., para. 1)
- Liberation in education: Curriculum that allows those traditionally oppressed and ignored to gain control or power over the curriculum to create an educational experience that promotes *positive* change for the oppressed group (Freire, 1972, 1975); *The 1619 Project* is a liberation curriculum.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

Beginning with an introduction, this dissertation provided preliminary information as to what this study aims to address as well as its necessity. Following is the review of the literature discussing the role of the federal government in education, historians' approaches to history, social studies curricula, and the importance of race within social studies curricula which is reflected in *The 1619 Project*. Next, the dissertation presents the multi-method research analysis of *The 1619 Project*. Few studies have examined *The 1619 Project* from the vantage point of its purpose and *intent* as well as the politicization, debate, and media influence. The dissertation concludes with findings relating to the politicization of *The 1619 Project* and how that has impacted its incorporation and backlash in formal school curricula. Ultimately, this research seeks to give more clarity as to why *The 1619 Project* and similar work are necessary for ensuring African American history is included within public school curriculum.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Before exploring how and why *The New York Times's 1619 Project* became politicized by political actors and media and how the project is a contemporary illustration of the politicization of formal social studies curriculum, it is necessary to address the various components that intersect to establish the required foundational knowledge to understand the politicization of *The 1619 Project*. *The 1619 Project* has become more than the journalistic interpretation of African American and American history. Instead, it has transformed into a contentious debate surrounding history primarily because historically, the United States government has contributed to either encouraging or limiting the acknowledgment of the experiences of African Americans in the United States.

Presently, there is an ongoing CRT debate arising in social studies curricula and instruction across the nation. While *The 1619 Project* can be considered part of the CRT corrective to any heretofore incomplete historical understanding of the role of African Americans in the creation and founding of the United States, some participants in the debate reduce CRT to *The 1619 Project*. They also conflate Nicole Hannah-Jones with CRT and *The 1619 Project*. While this study acknowledges the links among *The 1619 Project*, CRT, and Nikole Hannah-Jones, the focus of this dissertation is why and how *The 1619 Project* became politicized. Notably, even though it has little influence on most secondary school social studies curricula, all the attention given to it by critics has spotlighted *The 1619 Project* and likely inspired many people to investigate why it is so controversial.

Within K-12 education, *The 1619 Project* addresses topics that are taught within the discipline of social studies. Consequently, it is crucial to discuss the current condition of social studies curriculum, the creation and inclusion of ethnic studies and multicultural education, African American history, and the emergence of alternative curriculums to recognize why Nikole Hannah-Jones and her colleagues felt the need to write a counternarrative to the traditional social studies curriculum. Additionally, although education is left to the responsibility of the states, the involvement of the federal government in education does occur. Thus, it is important to address the level of influence the federal government has on social studies curricula. Likewise, *The 1619 Project* exemplifies journalism as a history curriculum. However, historians approach history differently (Becher, 1989; Champion, 2007; Sandwell, 2005). Therefore, to understand the criticism of some historians, their perspectives must be acknowledged when investigating the politicization of *The 1619 Project*.

Race, Education, and State Education Policies

James Banks (1995) and others across social science disciplines have concluded that American history exposes race as a socially constructed system used to create differentiation between ethnic groups and formulate a hierarchical system of superiority-based race. In the United States, white people and their ancestry are viewed as the “American identity,” and all POC are viewed as “other” (Omi & Winant, 1994). Therefore, if race is not intentionally addressed, the teachings of American history will never dismantle racial dominance because it is formulated from a Eurocentric perspective (Brown & Brown, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2003), which bears the following questions: what does it mean to be American? If the United States is truly a diverse space, should

not its historical teaching reflect the contributions of the various racial and ethnic groups that were either enslaved and/or migrated to the United States? Should students not receive the opportunity to learn about their ancestors' contributions in America, even if it then amplifies moments where the actions of the country were not honorable?

Although the United States is not the only nation that teaches its history curricula that advance ideas of racial superiority of some groups (Dei & Lordan, 2016; King, 2014), the United States continues to create curricula and curricula standards that incompletely examine American history (King, 2014). More directly, the diversity of the United States is not always celebrated and showcased in public schools, and the majority of education policies do not take a proactive role in encouraging the acknowledgment of the cultural diversity present in the United States representation and the positive effect of inclusion on student development and growth is rarely discussed (Allen et al., 2013). Consequently, a dichotomy of curriculum insiders and curriculum outsiders is present within American history, curricula standards, and inclusive efforts within multiculturalism.

Currently, the public K-12 curriculum in the United States does not uniformly include the various contributions of non-white racial/ethnic groups holistically. The idea of re-shifting public school curricula is not new; various states have developed different initiatives to include the history of non-whites into their school's standards and curriculum, especially the history and achievements of African Americans, to force change that would not occur otherwise (King, 2014). The inclusion of African American history in public school curriculum has great effects on how students not only perceive themselves but also display the intentionality needed to create successful education

policy reform. New York, Mississippi, Rhode Island, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, and Arkansas have passed laws requiring the integration of African American history into their school curriculum under an oversight committee (King, 2017). Whereas California, Colorado, Michigan, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Washington have passed a similar law, though these states do not have an oversight committee to oversee the curriculum (King, 2017).

State legislation directly regulates state educational practices, whereas federal education legislation and policies set national precedents (e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), *No Child Left Behind*, and *Race to the Top*). States are expected to follow or resist often with financial costs (Pelsue, 2017). Organizations such as the Educating for American Democracy (EAD) advocate and create learning approaches for teaching civics and history to refute the singular narrative found within history, foster civil discourse and authentic civic engagement, and inform self-government necessary for safeguarding principles of democracy and citizenship (Educating for American Democracy, 2021). Reapproaching how students learn and understand civics in conjunction with history allows them the opportunity to reevaluate what it means to be an active and civically responsible citizen. Still, what does that mean for African American history? Nationally, before *The 1619 Project*, slow to minimal traction occurred supporting the inclusion of African American history, as previously shown through the number of states that have legislation insisting on its inclusion in their standards and curriculum. Thus, the overt backlash *The 1619 Project* is receiving leads one to wonder if the issue with *The 1619 Project* is because the information within it is not “accurate” or

because it directly reevaluates how the history and experiences of African Americans in the United States are taught and addressed.

Who Writes History?: Epistemological Worldviews of Postpositivist and Transformative

Epistemology refers to any given theory of knowledge (Audi, 2011). Specifically, epistemologies interconnect knowledge with justification or evidence (Audi, 2011).

There are various epistemological approaches; however, depending upon a researcher's perspective and/or disciplinary training, specific epistemological worldviews are encouraged (Mertens, 2015); this is particularly true for historians (Shaver, 1992).

Traditionally, the epistemological worldviews of historians align with postpositivists (Shaver, 1992). Postpositivists aim for objectivity but recognize that *full* objectivity is unattainable (Shaver, 1992). Likewise, postpositivists strive to explain causal relationships while situating their argument in evidence (Brownell, 2014); without evidence, creditability, or confidence, their argument cannot be gained (Brownell, 2014). Thus, historians strive to stay close to evidence, hence, omitting the gap.

The journalistic approach of *The 1619 Project* does not align with the epistemological worldviews of postpositivists; it embodies transformative epistemological worldviews. Compared to postpositivists, transformative epistemological worldviews aim to investigate the experiences of historically marginalized communities and individuals (Banks, 1995; Mertens, 2015; Rubin, 2019). Additionally, within education, transformative, critical scholars believe knowledge is biased and replicates power and social dynamics within society (Banks, 1995). Hence, *The 1619 Project* is

situated as a transformative view of African American and American history in many ways.

Nevertheless, some historians struggle to accept the various counternarratives found within *The 1619 Project*. Although *full* objectivity is impossible within historical inquisition, evidence to support claims within *The 1619 Project* is considered limited (Harris, 2019; Kaufman, 2019; Sandefur, 2020). However, said critique is situated in the epistemological worldviews of postpositivism, which Hannah-Jones and her fellow journalist colleagues conveyed they are not historians (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Holt, 2020), yet they contend the voices of African Americans have been silenced in conventional historical narratives. Power and the production of history are not devoid of the other; anti-Blackness is perpetuated in racialized history archives and in the power of predominately white historical guilds (Trouillot, 1995). Therefore, is the postpositivist worldview the correct method to write African American and American history when said history is silenced? Or, when writing the history of historically marginalized communities, does it need to consider transformative worldviews which critically deconstruct systems of power?

Historians' Approaches to History

Becher (1989) defined the academic discipline of history as "...the study of people in time: its subject matter could embrace anything that impinges on human society" (p. 264). Expanding on Becher's (1989) definition of history as a discipline, Sandwell (2005) conveyed the common belief amongst history practitioners as to what history is: "...history is a story about people, events, and trends that constitutes a strong and linear nationalist narrative of progress from the past to the present and future" (p. 9).

Being that history entails studying people and their stories in specific times and/or during events, the role of historians then becomes probing and examining the past to analytically reconstruct history (Sandwell, 2005). To properly undertake this task, historians seek to retell history from a postpositivist epistemological worldview (Becher, 1989; Champion, 2007; Fox, 2008; Sandwell, 2005; Shaver, 1992).

Dalton and Charnigo (2004) studied 278 historians and their information sources and concluded that between 260-275 (95-99%) of historians said books, journal articles, manuscripts, archives, and special collections are important sources for research. Within historical research, historians strive to use primary sources (Drake, 1986), and written documents are recognized and remain to be the main source of information for historians (Tilly, 1990). Being that historians have the autonomy to formulate their questions of inquiry, the need for critically discovering and unpacking events of the past requires historians to not only recognize the repression of voices in history but also understand how repression of voices impacts sources and their own inquisition (Champion 2007; Tilly, 1990). Consequently, being a historian entails educating “the mind of the reader,” which cannot be done without trusting the historian and their sources which are governed or constrained by national or private archives (that have a purpose on their own) (Champion, 2007, p. 175). Alongside historians stating books, journal articles, manuscripts, archives, and special collections as important sources for research, Dalton and Charnigo (2004) found that 201 (72%) of historians identify newspapers as an important source for research. Newspapers are central to journalism (Weaver & Willnat, 2016). Thus, the inclusion of newspapers in historical inquiry presents a gap filler. Specifically, newspapers provide direct insight into the thoughts of individuals in any

given time period. However, because newspapers contain inherent subjectivity, the perspective and background knowledge of the journalist and the journalist's perspective is necessary to adequately put the information obtained in the proper context (e.g., Yellow Journalism) (Angmo, 2020; Lavoinnie, 1994).

In the 1960s, the term “radical historians” was coined to identify historians who were then considered Marxists and had transformative worldviews (Fox, 2008; Shaver, 1992; Wiener, 1989). Many of these historians participated in the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-war movement. Consequently, Marxist ideologies shaped their work around class and ideology relations (Wiener, 1989). Alongside the various contributing factors of the 1960s that led historians to reconsider their approach to history, a key characteristic of historians who were considered radical is their recognition of “consensus history” (Wiener, 1989, p. 434). Consensus history is when historians focus on the positive values and history of American society, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, while omitting conflict, racial disparities, and class war in American history; history as American exceptionalism is a story of progress (Wiener, 1989). Because historians strive to remain objective, the intentional omission of conflict, race, class, etc., counters true objectivity, yet it can be argued the over-emphasis on said issues removes objectivity as well. Moreover, centering or making the central focus of inquiry a particular group directly challenges objectivity.

The 1619 Project centers on the experiences of African Americans in the United States. Therefore, it puts historians as well as SBOE, LEAs, and policymakers in a distinct position to accept it as a counternarrative that can be used to support historical inquisition within K-12 curriculum, discredit its value based on authors’

biases/perspective, and/or recognize it as a contemporary illustration of the politicization of process with social studies curriculum. Since historians use newspapers as a part of their source collection and journalists use newspapers as a method to disseminate their work, both fields are indisputably connected. Thus, is the underlying issue with *The 1619 Project* that it mimics the ideals and approaches of radical historians (liberation in the curriculum) and challenges America's identity or that *The 1619 Project* has become a component of "policy" and curriculum?

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Its Place in Education

Developed in the 1970s from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) inability to critically identify and address institutional racism within the United States legal system, CRT is a body of legal scholarship, now about a decade old, a majority of whose members are both existentially people of color and ideologically committed to the struggle against racism, particularly as institutionalized in and by law. Those critical race theorists who are white are usually cognizant. (Bell, 1995, p. 898)

The founding legal scholars of CRT are Derrick Bell, Patricia Williams, Mari Matsuda, Charles Lawrence, and Richard Delgado (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Notably, scholar Derrick Bell is viewed as the "Father of CRT," and scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw and Cheryl Harris became influential in unpacking the realm of *intersectionality* found within CRT and have contributed greatly to modern-day CRT scholarship (Dixson & Anderson, 2018).

CRT contains five tenets,

- (1) racism is normal, not unusual in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic 2000: xvi);

- (2) white supremacy and whiteness as property are foundational to U.S. legal practices and the system itself;
- (3) the deconstruction of racism and any negative impact it has on individuals of color can only be undone through interest convergence;
- (4) the notion of colorblindness is counterproductive to achieving racial emancipation and that it is only removed through interest convergence which benefits whites primarily (Sleeter, 2017);
- (5) the incorporation and use of counternarratives and storytelling grants People of Color to tell their experiences and perspectives on racism and “being racially minoritized” (Rollock & Gillborn, 2011, p. 2).

In practice or as a methodology, CRT uses counternarratives, storytelling, and metaphors to directly challenge dominant narratives regarding the experiences of African Americans in the United States that race influences or impacts (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Anderson, 2018). However, when developed, CRT solely focused on the experiences of African Americans, which in turn neglected to unveil the experiences of other historically marginalized communities, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous Americans (Tate IV, 1997). Additionally, because CRT is a legal scholarship, its tenets were not directly associated with education until 1995 (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995), which is how it has become a part of the ongoing debate regarding its inclusion within education.

In 1995, Gloria Ladson-Billings, “the Mother of Critical Race Theory in Education,” and William Tate IV bridged the scholarship of CRT into education. Specifically, Ladson-Billings and Tate IV (1995) presented the use of CRT to analyze

inequities (the lack of rigorous curriculum and more) in public education when serving African American students. Schools with a high percentage of African American students receive limited opportunities to take honor courses, gifted programs, etc. Additionally, CRT in education indicates terms such as “suburban” and “urban” are used to identify or establish the status and reputation of areas and to racially identify the students (i.e., if a student is African American, Latinx, Asian, white, etc. in each school) (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). Therefore, as an educational theory, CRT contextualizes the experiences African American students encounter while obtaining an education. Moreover, it explores how institutional racism within education and education policies maintains the status quo of white students being deemed more deserving than African American students resulting in adverse educational outcomes and experiences for African American youth (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995).

Since *The 1619 Project* centers the United States' history around the experiences of African Americans, it has been associated with CRT in education (Holt, 2020; Murphy, 2021). However, CRT in education is frequently misrepresented, and instead of the legal scholarship being distinguished from its educational application, aligning *The 1619 Project* directly to CRT does both CRT and *The 1619 Project* a disservice. CRT in education does not simply entail incorporating a magazine (i.e., *The 1619 Project*) into the curriculum, and the curriculum becomes CRT. Instead, CRT in education is a *perspective* that then influences how one approaches diverse aspects of education. Thus, CRT in education encourages the use of diverse resources (i.e., *The 1619 Project*) to support the inclusion of counternarratives, storytelling, and metaphors to directly

challenge dominant narratives surrounding the experiences of African Americans in U. S. history.

Social Studies Curricula

In the United States, the federal government has passed various educational policies to support school funding, increase students' academic performance, and improve teacher accountability. Yet, none of the legislation explicitly provides guidance and/or requirements for school standards outside of being associated with standardization purposes; this is especially true for social studies. Frequently the terms "standards" and "curriculum" are used interchangeably; however, "standards" and "curriculum" have two distinct purposes within education (Squires et al., 2005). Standards provide an outline and foundation components, or knowledge students are to learn within each grade level (Squires et al., 2005), whereas the curriculum consists of various components that are based on standards (Squires et al., 2005). First, the formal curriculum is the curricular standards set by the state; next, the implemented curriculum, which is what teachers present in the classroom with various degrees of efficacy and substantive coverage; lastly, is the received curriculum which is what students *actually* learn (Squires et al., 2005). Thus, while standards hold an important role in promoting inclusion within classroom instruction, the curricula practitioners use within classroom instruction hold a more influential role in promoting inclusion. Additionally, unlike standards, curriculums are developed by districts (Squires et al., 2005), which allows for minimal to vast variations amongst districts within curriculum designs (Squires et al., 2005).

Social Studies as a discipline aims to foster citizenship, assist in the development of human relations, and advance knowledge to promote a democratic and socially just

society (Ross, 2020). Although its position in American society continues to be argued, race and the role of race, historically, is a part of America's identity (Howard, 2003; Omi & Winant, 1994). Yet, the incorporation of race continues to be limited and/or omitted, especially within the field of social studies holistically (Howard, 2003), even though various scholars and historians have shown it to be both historically necessary and accurate to support historical inquiry within classrooms (Francis, 2014). Additionally, because districts develop their curricula, race, a topic that already experiences minimal discussion in social studies, can be oversimplified or viewed as a “controversial” discussion that is then avoided to prevent backlash (Ansley, 2021; Howard, 2003). This approach, avoiding race-focused discussion within social studies, is commonly known as “divisive concepts” (Ansley, 2021).

Presently, “divisive concepts” within social studies entail the inclusion of CRT and *The 1619 Project*; both recenter the role of race in American history, yet both are distinctly different in their purpose and approach (Ansley, 2021). Nonetheless, they have become examples of how racially inclusive curricula can be viewed as “threatening” when it goes against the traditional narratives told within history (Ansley, 2021; Nash & Dunn, 1995), so much so that states such as Alabama, Maine, Florida, Michigan, and Texas have had open debates and passed legislation restricting the inclusion of “divisive concepts” in classroom instruction (Ansley, 2021). Thus, the two large issues become who/what determines what are “controversial” and “divisive concepts,” and the racial identity of “who” is a determinant of how said terms are perceived. Therefore, depending on one's perspective, *The 1619 Project* can be an example of what can be used within the curriculum to fill in racialized curricula gaps. Moreover, the restriction of its inclusion

can be seen as a part of a larger “culture war” within the discipline of social studies (Nash & Dunn, 1995); “culture war” refers to the framing of events around the United States from a particular vantage point that results in conversations surrounding race as “controversial,” emphasizing the following question: Where does race fall in school curricula?

North Carolina Social Studies Standards and Curriculum: A Case Study

Currently, 42 states, including the District of Columbia, have adopted Common Core (Common Core) State Standards (United States Census Bureau, 2021); Alaska, Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Indiana, Florida, South Carolina, and Virginia have chosen not to adopt these standards (United States Census Bureau, 2021). Additionally, Common Core does not explicitly address history/social studies, but rather the literacy standards can and are to be integrated into history/social studies (National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History, 2013). Beginning in Grade 6, the Common Core for history/social studies are grouped together in the following grade format: Grades 6-8, Grades 9-10, and Grades 11-12. Within each, the use of primary and secondary sources are foundational components of student learning.

Similarly, within each, the use and purpose of primary and secondary sources are meant to support historical inquiry. For example, in Grades 6-8, students are to learn how to “Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally)” (“Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects,” 2010. In Grades 9-10, students

are to learn how to “Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.” In Grades 11-12, students are to learn how to “Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence” (“Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects,” 2010). Thus, as written, the Common Core Standards for history/social studies aim to prepare and encourage students to contextualize history while recognizing differing perspectives on the same/similar events. Although frequently presented as such, history/social studies is not a singular narrative but rather a synthesis of narratives that, if not overseen, can overemphasize the dominant narrative.

In April 2019, discussions began to arise in North Carolina’s SBOE meetings regarding revisions to their state’s social studies standards and curriculum (“Public Schools of North Carolina,” 2021), which the Thomas B. Fordham Institute’s *The State of State Standards for Civics and U.S. History in 2021* report amplified (Stern et al., 2021). Within Fordham Institute’s state-by-state evaluation on Civics and U.S. History standards, North Carolina was among the 20 states that were identified as “inadequate” for civic standards receiving only three out of a possible 10 points resulting in the scoring of a D- (Stern et al., 2021). Critiques of North Carolina’s civic standards consisted of being “too broad, vague, or poorly worded to provide useful guidance to educators, and the manner in which they are organized is unhelpful” (Stoops, 2021, p. 1). Similarly, North Carolina’s newly adopted history standards scored poorly as well. It received two out of the possible 10 points earning an F; critiques from Fordham Institute relating to the

newly adopted standards were, “North Carolina’s U.S. History standards provide inadequate guidance for school districts and teachers, due to a near total absence of specific content” (Stoops, 2021, p. 2). The critiques on North Carolina’s history standards explicitly present a provocative notion because the latter standard was central to a then-ongoing debate regarding the *intent* of the social studies standards and the intentional omission of particular language within said standards. Thus, the three terms “refined” were systemic racism, gender identity, and systemic discrimination to racism, identity, and discrimination (Granados, 2021a,b; NCPDI, 2021).

Within North Carolina, the SBOE only approves the standards and leaves curriculum development and supplementary material selection to LEAs or charters (“Public Schools of North Carolina,” 2021). Although collaboration from educators, LEAs, and public feedback is gathered during the development and/or revision of state K-12 standards, the SBOE in North Carolina makes the ultimate decisions as to what is or is not included within state standards. Thus, the removal of the terms *systemic* and *gender* was the decision of the board, regardless of if it was or was not a direct reflection of public response. However, this is not to be wrongly interpreted as the entire SBOE in North Carolina was for the removal of said term. On the contrary, the removal of *systemic* before racism and discrimination led to critical debates regarding the authenticity of race-related discussions and discriminatory practices found past and present within United States history.

The debate that occurred surrounding the relevance and use of *systemic* amongst SBOE officials in North Carolina is one example of how racism and discriminatory practices are either denied or refuted as lacking relevance in education and, ultimately

society. The reasoning behind said omission varies, but a continuous argument presented is that stating racism and discrimination is *systemic* infers that racism and discrimination are embedded into America's identity, echoing sentiments of *The 1619 Project*.

Moreover, because racism and discrimination encompass racial hierarchy, those at "the top" are inherently given greater privilege and access in comparison to their counterparts. Argumentatively, according to CRT (Bell, 1987, 1992; Tate IV, 1997), within American society white people are the group who have a higher racial hierarchy enabling them to have white privilege (Kendall, 2013). Additionally, due to their privilege, white people are pacified and granted the ability to dismiss, ignore, or refute aspects of society that do not serve them without consequence (DiAngelo, 2018; Kendall, 2013). Therefore, the removal of *systemic* from North Carolina's social studies standards permits white students to not acknowledge the historical impact of racism and discrimination towards People of Color. Likewise, it promotes the notion that the comfort of white students is more important than those of Students of Color; better to not address *systemic* racism and discrimination if it is going to make white students feel unwarranted guilt.

The Incorporation of Diversity in Social Studies

Despite its challenges, the discipline of social studies has been intentionally expanding its sphere of study dating back to the 1960s during the emergence of ethnic studies (Farber, 1994). Yet, one of the shortcomings of ethnic studies is that it often includes multicultural education. Moreover, although race can be discussed within ethnic studies, the depths of racial discussion can be limited (Banks, 1975; Sacramento, 2019). Hence, instead of students receiving an in-depth racially conscious curriculum, students

are left with a general awareness of the racial experiences of diverse POC, depending on the district (Squires, 2004)

Ethnic Studies

The 1960s was a decade of great reform and progression within United States policy and formation (Farber, 1994). Various events, such as the Civil Rights Movement and active protest against the war in Vietnam, created a policy window resulting in advocacy coalitions having the opportunity to create monumental reform (Farber, 1994). A policy window is formed when a policy problem, possible solution(s), and political actors are in *perfect* alignment resulting in reform occurring (Anderson, 2015; Birkland, 2011; Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Historically, the state of California has and continues to be a beacon of change and progress for educational policies and racial progress; this can presently be seen through its various legislation for LGBTQ+ curriculum (Camicia & Zhu, 2019; Cruz & Bailey, 2017; Hu-DeHart, 1993). Forming as grassroots organizations, three college campuses in California, San Francisco State University, Berkeley, and Santa Barbara, are known as the birthplace of ethnic studies (Hu-DeHart, 1993; Lowy, 1995; Sleeter, 2011). Ethnic studies aimed to reshape curriculum to be more racially and ethnically inclusive (Lowy, 1995; Sleeter, 2011). Specifically, the University of California, San Diego defined ethnic studies as,

Focusing on immigration, slavery, and confinement, those three processes that combined to create in the United States a nation of nations, Ethnic Studies intensively examines the histories, languages and cultures of America's racial and ethnic groups in and of themselves, their relationships to each other, and particularly, in structural contexts of power. (Hu-DeHart, 1993, p. 52)

Through its emphasis on race and ethnicity, ethnic studies highlight race and ethnicity as central to American history. Furthermore, curricula should reflect citizens and actively dismantle Eurocentric ideologies through access, relevance, and community (ARC) (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). Access refers to *access* to quality education, relevance refers to *relevant* or education connected to the experiences of historically marginalized communities being taught within the curriculum, and community refers to *community* advocacy and involvement being present (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014).

Banks (1975) indicated that ethnic studies courses should not be added to traditional curriculum courses but rather courses of their own. Moreover, one of the great challenges with ethnic studies is there is no universal definition of what constitutes an adequate ethnic studies course (Banks, 1975). Because ethnic studies can be all-encompassing of any non-white ethnic group, it often takes the identity of being coined multiculturalism courses (Sacramento, 2019). Additionally, Banks (1975) stated that ethnic studies courses are less likely to be available in predominately white schools outside of being offered as electives because course availability and selection are often a reflection of its student population.

African American history is frequently taught in conjunction with white, Eurocentric American history and/or other historically marginalized communities' history (i.e., Latinx or Indigenous history) (Sleeter, n.d.). Although African Americans, Latinx, and Indigenous communities fought simultaneously against oppression in the United States, teaching their history and experiences as one creates an air of competition between historically marginalized communities from the premise of aiming to show who has the worst experience in the United States (Santiago, 2013). Thus, scholarship shows

how ethnic studies are taught not only deepens the already prevalent knowledge gap of historically marginalized communities' history but, more importantly, the role of African American history is the gatekeeper that allows all history to be taught (Lowy, 1995). Meaning when space and opportunity are adequately provided for African American history to be authentically taught, then all other histories can be taught, or the liberation of African Americans and their history grants the liberation of all historically marginalized people and histories (Lowy, 1995). Nevertheless, although scholarship shows the benefit of African American history, minimal direction is given on *how* it should adequately be included creating a growing place of silence and omission.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education promotes a transformative curriculum that makes oppression transparent (Banks, 1995). Likewise, emphasizing previous scholarship, Aldana and Byrd (2015) conveyed multicultural curriculum was grounded in confronting the disparities African Americans and fellow Students of Color encountered in education. Yet, as time progressed, multicultural education became an overarching term for educational activities that encouraged diversity without critically analyzing or probing structural racism (Aldana & Byrd, 2015). Anderson and Metzger (2011) conducted a study on Michigan, Virginia, New Jersey, and South Carolina's United States history social studies standards. From their research, they concluded that overall, these four states' standards are written in a vague manner which can easily yield biases. Additionally, the way the standards are worded can elude a monolithic interpretation of history, which depending on the state, frames historical events from a particular perspective (Anderson & Metzger, 2011).

In *The Illusion of Inclusion: A Critical Race Theory Textual Analysis of Race and Standards* (2012), Vasquez Heilig et al. conducted a text analysis on Texas' social studies standards. Based on their research, they concluded that while Texas presents itself as increasing accountability measures to promote equity in testing, and curricula development, its standards create a false and misleading narrative, and race and racism are inaccurately shown within classroom instruction (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2012). Thus, an illusion of inclusion is formulated based on the standards' language versus its implementation. Illusion of inclusion refers to the notion of education reform being more inclusive in its approaches, standards, and curriculum based on race, cultural differences, etc. (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2012). However, this approach frequently results in the status quo maintaining dominance because the knowledge provided in standards and curriculum are limited and crafted in a manner that distorts versus retells history from the perspective of the same communities it intended to represent (Rochester & Heafner, 2021). The illusion of racial inclusion within standards is not isolated to Texas' standards. It is an ongoing phenomenon within social studies standards aimed at dismissing historically marginalized groups (Sleeter, 2002).

African American History in Social Studies Curricula

Even though diverse research has been conducted on the incorporation of African American history in public school curricula, many, if not all research, have yielded the same to closely similar conclusions. African American history is still lacking in school curriculum, and when it is included, it is from a limited, skewed, deficit perspective (Brown & Au, 2014; King & Simmons, 2018). This is not to imply progress has not been made, but rather, more needs to be done, and the progress that has been made has

occurred at a significantly slower rate than other marginalized groups or has been met with resistance or backlash.

James Baldwin, a famous African American poet, novelist, and activist, conveyed that to teach white American history, African American history must be taught because the two are interwoven (Banks, 1990). The continuous omission and neglect of acknowledgment regarding the role of African Americans and their history in the United States limit the depth authentic standards inclusion and curriculum can reach. More explicitly, the United States is not, nor will it ever be a homogenous society. There are various racial and ethnic groups that have contributed greatly to the formation of the United States, who are continuously deemed as subservient based on their race and/or ethnic identification, which is a fundamental part of America's historical formation.

As the creator of Negro Week, which led to Black History Month (King, 2014; King & Brown, 2014), Carter G. Woodson, the father of multicultural curriculum (King, 2014; King & Brown, 2014), played one of the most influential roles in showcasing the importance of why African American history and perspective need to be included in public school curriculum. Through his scholarship and formation of Black History Month, Woodson designed a method of instruction showing how a comprehensive, inclusive curriculum can be developed. Yet, King et al. (2010) conveyed the successes Woodson experienced in developing Black History Month cannot be attributed to himself alone. Instead, the support Woodson received from the African American community allowed him to unpack African American history in a manner that permitted its *acceptance* to openly be a part of American society (King et al., 2010).

Epstein (1998) conducted a research study with African American and white students to explore their perceptions of the current United States history class. Findings revealed race and one's racial identification influenced how one understood various historical events, which historical figures they were able to identify, and the history of the United States in its entirety. She concluded African American students not only had a greater awareness of American history in comparison to white students, but when a teacher's creditability, meaning how truthful students perceived their teacher to be, was investigated, African American students indicated it was dependent upon the practitioner's race and the perspective in which the practitioner taught the history course content (Epstein, 1998). Additionally, when white students were asked to identify three of the most important people and events in United States history based on a list provided, white students had a limited recognition of African American historical figures and minimal acknowledgment of events promoting the advancement of African Americans. Moreover, white students viewed practitioners, along with classroom material (i.e., textbooks), to accurately relay history whereas African American students challenged the authenticity of these sources' historical narratives (Epstein, 1998). This particular finding from Epstein (1998) displayed how embedded Eurocentric ideologies and teaching are intricately connected to students' understanding of history.

As shown, history is written and taught from a white perspective. Thus, if one's history and perspective are viewed to be the dominant and *correct* narrative, there would never be a need to question it. Alongside highlighting the vantage point and the misrepresentation of historical dominance of white people, Epstein (1998) indicated that white students view historical events relayed in textbooks as sole events of the past.

Furthermore, she inherently showed that while *all* students are expected to understand United States history holistically, only particular historical figures and events are emphasized and remembered by white students. Specifically, Epstein (1998) found African American students had a well-rounded understanding of American history that included knowing African American leaders and events associated with the progression of African Americans in the United States, whereas white students had little to no knowledge of said events or people. Their narrow views of history were not only culturally derived but also revealed their privilege of not knowing, lack of questioning, and blind acceptance of the dominant narrative. Additionally, these and the findings for Black students also yield identity and affinity filters of information.

These troubling conclusions echo the ideologies found within Black critical patriotism (Busey & Walker, 2017), which articulates patriotism is what one says in relation to their country and in one's actions in association to their country. Thus, by white students being only able to identify certain portions of United States history in conjunction with African American students only being taught about particular African American figures and events in public K-12, a form of indoctrinating "pride in our nation's racial progress" (Busey & Walker, 2017, p. 2) is encouraged along with creating a notion that only African Americans who are viewed as patriots are worth teaching.

The term patriotism takes on different meanings depending on who is defining it. Primoratz (2013) defined patriotism as encompassing one's affect for their country, active concern for the well-being of the country, and willingness to make sacrifices for the good of their country. Historically, African Americans have shown their patriotism through military involvement. The *Richmond Planet* newspaper, founded by former

enslaved African Americans in Richmond, Virginia, said during WWI, “Colored folks should be patriotic. Do not let us be chargeable with being disloyal to the flag” (Williams, 2011). In 1941, famous African American author and poet Richard Wright said,

I pledge my loyalty and allegiance, without mental reservation or evasions, to America. I shall through my writing seek to rally the Negro people to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Administration in a solid national front to wage war until victory is won. (Gilmore, 2002)

Although African Americans have been oppressed in the United States, they have always been willing to fight for their nation, which has been used as a method to further the indoctrinating of racial progress, even when it is limited. This vantage point has continued and is presently echoed in the term and sentiments of “uplift-suasion,” a term Kendi (2019) coined which means African Americans can teach white people not to be racist by exhibiting exceptional behavior.

Conducting a critical curriculum text analysis, Brown and Au (2014) explored the master narratives regarding histories of race and curriculum in schools. The master narrative is the perpetuation of whiteness and silence within the curriculum. Silence is defined as “an act of power where a corpus of knowledge is imposed on a historical narrative” (Brown & Au, 2014, p. 373) and whiteness is defined as “both the presence and dominance of white skin privilege and as an overarching social construct that implicitly normalizes numerous social contexts (e.g., family, beauty, housing, etc.) including the official school curriculum” (p. 373). Similarly, the master narrative

according to Alridge (2006) referred “to a dominant and overarching theme or template that presents the literature, history, or culture of a society” (p. 681).

Brown and Au (2014) found that the contributions of non-white scholars were rare and continue to be neglected in curriculum development and studies. More explicitly, even though progress has been made in incorporating topics such as politics, culture, and various viewpoints, communities of color are still omitted, leaving the master narrative to still be dominated by Eurocentric perspectives. Moreover, Brown and Au (2014) indicated that when the historical contributions of non-white scholars are included within curriculum development and studies, they are from a limited and skewed viewpoint. Brown and Au (2015), like the conclusions of Epstein (1998) and Busey and Walker (2017), conveyed that only certain African Americans in history are acknowledged.

One aspect of African American history that continues to be a point of emphasis is slavery (Warren & Coles, 2020). Warren and Coles (2020) stated the existence of Black people in the United States is marked eternally by the institution of slavery. Additionally, anti-Blackness sentiments are correlated with the institution of slavery (Warren & Coles, 2020). The enslavement of African Americans is frequently where African American history begins in the United States (Berry & Gross, 2020); however, Berry and Gross (2020) indicated that Black women were in the United States or then Mexico long before enslaved Africans arrived in America in 1619. Moreover, these Black women were not slaves but free women who recognized and understood their race was viewed as a threat to their counterparts’ existence in the United States (Berry & Gross, 2020). Nonetheless, Lozenski (2017) indicated although slavery is continuously a central point for African American history inclusion, African American history in its entirety is

typically divided into four timeframes. These timeframes are first, the mid-nineteenth century (slavery statutes and antiliteracy laws), second, the Reconstruction Era, third, post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and lastly the present or the early 21st century. Key components of each time period are anti-Blackness and white dominance (Warren & Coles, 2020).

Traditionally, scholarship on African American history focuses on the omission of said history as well as how it can be included within school curriculum. Sotiropoulos (2017), however, approached the inclusion of African American history in relation to the election of President Barack Obama. The election of President Barack Obama was historic in various ways, one being that he was the United States' first biracial president, whose father was a native of Kenya, African, and whose mother was from Kansas (Coates, 2017). Married to an African American woman who is a descendant of enslaved African Americans (Swarns, 2012), the election of President Obama gave minorities, specifically African Americans, hope that a new day and era was on the rise for African Americans. While this expectation may have appeared overly hopeful, it was only natural for African Americans and other People of Color to hope for greater representation throughout the United States society. In *Teaching Black History after Obama* (Sotiropoulos, 2017), the author described the influence of President Obama on the teaching of African American history in school curricula and this historical first's prelude to the rise of President Donald Trump's presidency. Sotiropoulos (2017) found that while there was an increase in "public representation of America's slave past" (p. 123), cinema continued to decentralize African American history as a fundamental part of United States history, which is a key premise of *The 1619 Project*, which centers African

American history in United States history. Yet, Sotiropoulos (2017) indicated that when practitioners intentionally incorporated deep historical aspects of African American history (i.e., the transatlantic slave trade, the American Revolution, and what it meant for enslaved African Americans), African American and white students not only were more openly engaged with instructors and classmates but there was an increased willingness to openly recognize the inaccuracies found within the current teaching of United States and African American history.

King (2016) emphasized that when African American history is taught more accurately and holistically within classroom instruction, it can be used as a method to teach racial justice or racial literacy. Racial literacy entails having a deep awareness of racism within society, how it presents itself when reading documents, and provides space for People of Color to voice their experiences (Rogers & Mosley, 2008). Through racial literacy, racial justice is gained because it provides a space for People of Color to be acknowledged. Within his study, King (2016) investigated the method by which four pre-service social studies instructors interpreted and taught race using Black history. Based on CRT, racial literacy consists of three components. First, race and racism are not stationary, but instead continuously evolving. Second, attention must be placed on institutions and systems versus individuals to limit racial progression. Third, intersectionality between race, gender, class, etc., solidifies how dominance is found within various aspects of society (King, 2016). Therefore, because social studies as a discipline aims to foster citizenship, the use of racial literacy to see how pre-service teachers teach race and Black history granted participants of the study the opportunity to incorporate informed pedagogical practices. By developing a Black history reader where

race and racism were explored based on historical events, King (2016) was able to document a deep necessity for practitioners to have the proper tools and skillsets to teach African American history. Using racially inclusive supporting material, the pre-service teachers facilitated classroom discussions in which the traditional, Eurocentric narrative was overtly challenged.

Thornhill (2016) conducted a study where Black students' racial socialization was analyzed to understand how it is shaped by their learning experience of African American history in school. To complete this study, Thornhill (2016) chose to interview Black college students versus high school students to increase the likelihood of transparency and found that Black college students described discussions on African American history to be "okay," "accurate," and "nothing to complain about" (p. 1134). However, Thornhill (2016) found these responses to be "problematic" because of how these students described wrongful scholarship of African American history. Thornhill (2016) identified through student interviews that when African American history was taught in school, a significant emphasis was placed on racial progress, the omission of African American political and cultural involvement, the omission of the level of oppression African Americans experienced by white Europeans, etc. However, students placed fault on instructional constraints (i.e., teachers not having enough time to teach African American history because they needed to focus on standardized test preparation, textbook limitations), expectations of teachers, which in turn, resulted in them viewing the courses in a *positive* manner (Thornhill, 2016).

Racial Identity

Within various forums (Schwartz & Mandefro, 2017), Nikole Hannah-Jones has discussed the role of racial identity in her life. Specifically, she has spoken of the impacts of being biracial amongst her white family members versus her African American family members (Schwartz & Mandefro, 2017), as well as the adolescent effects of being unable to trace her African lineage (Hannah-Jones, 2019). Thus, while *The 1619 Project* does not directly address the impact racial identity has on students' academic experience, it is an example of how students' racial identity can support and further curricular agency.

Beginning with Carter G. Woodson in the 1930s to Black scholars during the Civil Rights Era, many have worked tirelessly to reconstruct the narrative and imagery surrounding racial theories placed on African Americans (Brown, 2010), which has continued to be a point of research for current scholars such as Bettina L. Love (2019). In *The Miseducation of the Negro* (1933), Woodson stated,

to handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching. It kills one's aspirations and dooms him to vagabondage and crime. It is strange, then that the friends of truth and the promoters of freedom have not risen up against the present propaganda in the schools and crushed it. This crusade is much more important than the anti-lynching movement, because there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom. (p. 2)

In *A Seat at the Table: African American Youth's Perceptions of K-12 Education*

(Anderson, 2018), The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) relayed that roughly one-third of African American students feel their race can limit their opportunities in life.

Additionally, it stated that African American students have a deep understanding and awareness of the negative racial stereotypes and biases associated with their race and academic performance (Anderson, 2018). Langer-Osuna and Nasir (2016) conducted an in-depth analysis of literature on race, culture, and identity in education in hopes of obtaining a cohesive understanding of the intersectionality of these categories in relation to education outcomes. Within their scholarship, they reiterated that even if students attended an urban school and were placed on a higher academic track, they “developed positive racial identity linked to African American history” (Langer-Osuna & Nasir, 2016, p. 734). Additionally, Langer-Osuna and Nasir (2016) echoed establishing a curriculum focused on students’ cultural upbringing yielded positive outcomes in relation to their racial identity. Furthermore, classroom material along with resources are key components to shaping students’ racial identity, which was like the findings of King’s (2016) scholarship (Langer-Osuna & Nasir, 2016).

To further understand racial identity in students, Marie (2016) conducted a research study focused on how the racial identity development of African American students and Black Studies courses, entitled *Racial Identity Development of African American Students in Relation to Black Studies Courses*. Within her study, she explored why African American students chose to enroll or not enroll in Black Studies. Marie’s scholarship concluded African American students have a strong racial identity, yielding positive academic outcomes and assisting them in knowing how to navigate in “racially challenging environments” (Marie, 2016, p. 64). Likewise, to support African American students’ success, greater positive representation needs to be incorporated within school curriculum because research continues to show it impacts students’ academic outcomes.

Thus, her inquiry on Black Studies courses conveyed those students who were Black Studies minors were more agentic and liberated. More importantly, African American studies engendered a form of liberation from Eurocentric ideologies and embraced their Blackness to a higher degree.

Aldana and Byrd (2015) examined race and ethnicity within African American students and, similar to Langer-Osuna and Nasir (2016) and Marie (2016), found that schools have the ability to impact students' attitudes toward their identity, race, and ethnic background through course curriculum. Likewise, while it is not explicitly stated as the purpose of school, schooling is used as a method to socialize youth which was an indirect effect of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Therefore, Aldana and Byrd's (2015) findings relating to the impact schools have on identity, race, and ethnicity is evidence of the socialization that occurs within schools and the necessity for school curriculum to not only have racial awareness but to also offer courses center race, which is determined by SBOE, policymakers, and LEAs.

The Policy Process and Politicization of Social Studies

Traditionally, policy reform occurs in increments, but depending upon the social and political conditions, an issue can gain traction requiring the development of an agenda to be immediate (Kingdon, 2011). Due to this situation, advocates and coalitions of any given reform must remain vigilant because a policy window can unexpectedly open, resulting in possible missed opportunities to rally and/or advocate for desired change (Kingdon, 2011). For the policy process to occur, a policy window must open, which requires the three policy streams: public problem, proposed solution/policy, and politics, to join to begin the policy process (Anderson, 2015; Birkland, 2011; Kingdon,

2011; Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Generally, the policy process consists of six steps. First, an issue emerges, causing a public problem; second, a policy agenda is formed; third, various political actors develop a policy formulation with possible solutions; fourth, the policy and solution are selected; fifth, the policy is implemented, concluding, in the policy being evaluated (Anderson, 2015; Birkland, 2011; Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

In the United States, the history of education policy is unique in the context that education access was not granted to *all* citizens in the United States at the founding of the nation (Wilder, 2014). Therefore, from its formation, education policies have aimed to serve a distinct population (Kober et al., 2020). However, it has been over 244 years since the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776 (Architect of the Capitol, n.d.). Thus, the barriers in education policies should not persist if the democratic principles of the Declaration of Independence are to be fulfilled. Nonetheless, because the policy process is intricate, elected officials or policymakers can determine what and how fast progression occurs in education. This is not to say public opinions do not matter, but rather, depending on whose voice is considered, the majority regulates what type of reform and when reform occurs (Anderson, 2015; Birkland, 2011; Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

Even though governance of the educational system and related policies are intentionally left to the states to decide (Mantel, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a) and within recent years, there has been a steady increase in racial, gender, and age diversity of representatives within Congress, white people, overall continue to hold a great deal of power within the governance structure (Schaeffer, 2021). Likewise, while a progressive and transformative educational agenda benefits white students just as much

as it benefits POC, the current system and power dynamics within education benefit white people greatly (DiAngelo, 2018). Additionally, for said reform to occur and have long-lasting outcomes, it requires collective support, which often only occurs when a policy window forms (Anderson, 2015; Birkland, 2011; Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Yet, too often, the influence of politicians (e.g., seniority, committee membership, leadership, and political party affiliation) are neglected to be discussed constructively because these factors are deemed as an isolated versus universal implication. Equally, the inclusion of African American history directly challenges Eurocentric historical teachings and perspectives, which can be perceived as excluding versus including students.

Politicization of Social Studies Curricula

The influence of the federal government on curriculum is undeniable. Various federal policies have caused the standardization of education, greater control over graduation requirements by states, the elevation of state standards to govern content and skills taught in each subject area, and greater regulation of curriculum and teacher practice. Likewise, legislation tethered funding to accountability and student learning outcomes, which have been measured through standardized assessments. Amidst this era of increased federal influence over education, social studies consistently remained outside of the scope of federal policies and were left to state-level governance. In No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and even the war on poverty, social studies were not part of the federal mandates on education other than its inclusion in National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) testing (NAEP, 2021; Sharp, 2021; The White House, n.d.). Social studies, however, was not named within

NAEP legislation. It was included only because the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) chose to do so.

Excessive federal involvement in education, more specifically, curricular decisions, can stifle student growth and content exposure. Curricular empowerment can be gained when diverse perspectives and content are presented. However, the federal government has and continues to ignore social studies within federal education mandates; Common Core Standards do not emphasize or include social studies. With or without Common Core Standards in education, standards moderate curriculum, and because social studies standards and curriculum have not been the main focus of the federal government, ensuring it is inclusive as well as accurately representing the history of the United States becomes the responsibility of each SBOE under the guidance of the State Departments of Public Instruction (National Association of State Boards of Education, n.d.). Thus, if states' legislatures do not find the need to incorporate or require diverse courses (courses that focus on diverse histories or People of Color), the likelihood of these courses being offered is minimal; a distinct example of this is only thirteen states require the inclusion of African American history courses.

Interestingly, *The 1619 Project* has provoked discussion on the federal level regarding whether African American history should be taught in schools and from what perspective, further igniting the cultural war around social studies curriculum (Stanton, 2021). On November 2, 2020, President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 13958: Establishing the President's Advisory 1776 Commission (E.O. 13958 of Nov 2, 2020). Whereas Trump's previous executive order was a response to reducing and backtracking federal involvement in public education, Executive Order 13958 was a direct response to

The New York Times's The 1619 Project (E.O. 13958 of Nov 2, 2020; Hess, 2021).

Aiming to refute the perspective of its work, the 1776 Commission through *The 1776 Report* promoted a “patriotic education” (E.O. 13958 of Nov 2, 2020; Hess, 2021) using federal agenda and power to drive standards as well as what is perceived to be acceptable curriculum (Hess, 2021). In addition, the 1776 Commission restricted the inclusion of CRT in public education (Mahdawi, 2020). Deviating from the aforementioned federal education policy, Trump’s executive orders shifted away from equity in education and student learning and resembled pre-Civil Rights legislation. Moreover, federal policies acted to counter state and LEA authority to select curricula.

Before *The 1619 Project*, there has never been an education-focused executive order (1776 Commission) to counteract the inclusion of journalistic work in the school curriculum, therefore, making *The 1619 Project* noteworthy. Additionally, because of the federal government's direct response to the project, five states passed and 22 are considering legislation surrounding divisive concepts (Map: Where Critical Race Theory Is Under Attack, 2021).

Emergence of Alternative Curriculums

Within recent years, like the increase in more racially inclusive standards, there has been a slow but present emergence of alternative curriculums. Founded in 2008, the Zinn Education Project is based on the book, *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn (The Zinn Education Project, 2021). The intentions of the Zinn Education Project are to present and engage students with more diverse, historically accurate, and difficult aspects of American history (The Zinn Education Project, 2021). Containing resources and a variety of reading material based on different reading levels, the Zinn

Education Project aims to empower students, but more importantly, to assist and challenge practitioners to incorporate alternative perspectives of American history into their classroom instruction (The Zinn Education Project, 2021). Likewise, the Zinn Education Project's repositions are centered on history and use a multicultural approach to promote this curricular aim (The Zinn Education Project, 2021). Like the Zinn Education Project, Native Knowledge 360 ° encompasses an alternative method and approach to Indigenous history and culture in the United States grounded in primary sources and Indigenous perspectives (Native Knowledge 360°: Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2021). Indigenous history especially, is stricken with false narratives and stereotypes that can trivialize and mock the experiences and oppression Indigenous populations encountered at the hands of European colonizers (Native Knowledge 360°: Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2021). Native Knowledge 360° centers Indigenous voices and elevates the importance of Native history and Native people's global contributions. Thus, Native Knowledge 360° embarks on providing not only lesson resources for practitioners' use but also student resources that include webinars and field trips (Native Knowledge 360°: Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2021). Native Knowledge 360° frees the Indigenous narrative from the constraints of a Eurocentric curriculum. Like Native Knowledge 360°, *The 1619 Project* represents the most recent effort to create a liberation curriculum for African Americans.

The 1619 Project

As holistic, multicultural representations of historically marginalized populations continue to arise in discussion and greater resources develop, African American history

resources and alternative curricula lagged behind the Zinn Education Project and Native Knowledge 360° in widespread use until *The 1619 Project*. Like its counterparts, *The 1619 Project* developed from frustration regarding the misrepresentation of African American history and experiences within American history (Hannah-Jones, 2019). However, unlike fellow counternarrative or alternative curriculums, *The 1619 Project* has been a politicalized debate regarding *who* can write African American history that is used within classroom instruction (Harris, 2020; Mackaman, 2019; Serwer, 2019), whose perspective of African American and American history is valid and worth openly acknowledging (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Holt, 2020), and who should determine what curriculum deserves instructional space in K-12 schooling (Hess, 2021; Holt, 2020; Gaudiano, 2020b).

In August 2019, *The New York Times* published 10 essays, images, and resources to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first slave ships arriving on American soil (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Morel, 2020). Written by award-winning Pulitzer journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones and her fellow journalist colleagues, *The 1619 Project* discussed African American and American history from what has been coined as a historically inaccurate perspective (Harris, 2019; Kaufman, 2019; Sandefur, 2020). The overall intent of *The 1619 Project*, however, was not to present African American and American history from the vantage point of historians, but instead, challenge the omission of race within historical events and present authentic human experience while repositioning the role of race in American history (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Holt, 2020). Likewise, *The 1619 Project* took the stance that the liberation of African Americans has a spillover effect for every aspect of American society, meaning whenever the United States gets closer to the ideals

of true equity and equality for all, it is likely due to the struggles and resistance of African Americans because the experiences of African Americans are foundational to America (Memmi, 2000).

Opposition Towards The 1619 Project

The leading author of *The 1619 Project*, Nikole Hannah-Jones, is an African American woman (Hannah-Jones, n.d.). Her father served in the United States military, and following the publication of *The 1619 Project*, she discussed his experiences and how patriotism deeply impacted and shaped her views on the role of race in America (Hannah-Jones, 2019). Further, in her opening essay, she conveys an America where certain aspects of American society being avoided—America’s legacy commitment to anti-Blackness (The New York Times, 2019). Additionally, unapologetically, Nikole Hannah-Jones, suggested that African Americans do not receive enough credit for their role in their own resistance (The New York Times, 2019). In 2020, in response to *The 1619 Project*, the Trump administration sponsored the 1776 Commission that produced *The 1776 Report* (Cohen, 2020; E.O. 13958 of Nov 2, 2020). This report, prepared by politically conservative scholars, doubled down on America’s traditional heritage curriculum, downplaying the role of slavery and race in the nation’s history in favor of themes of liberty and capitalism. According to VanSledright (2002), heritage teaching subjects students to a single historical narrative, modified to “create a sense of pleasure and joy in being who we are” (p. 11) while nurturing patriotic ideologies. Therefore, the political battle between *The 1619 Project* and *The 1776 Report* represents only the most recent battle in the ongoing history wars (Barton, 2012).

Both *The 1619 Project* and *The 1776 Report* have been criticized by academic historians for distorting history to promote a political agenda; both publications suggest that *a* story of American history is *the* story (VanSledright & Limón, 2006). By focusing on heritage and counter-heritage rather than historical inquiry, students have limited exposure to historical inquiry using rigorous methods of questioning, weighing evidence, and understanding contexts before passing judgment (VanSledright, 2002). Nonetheless, as a method to ensure schools do not include *The 1619 Project* within their state standards, state politicians threaten to reduce K-12 and college funding tied to the inclusion of *The 1619 Project* (Levine, 2021; Rodriguez, 2021); these states include Arkansas, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, and South Dakota (Levine, 2021). However, South Dakota withdrew its proposed legislation associated with the inclusion of *The 1619 Project*.

Countering this approach, various schools and districts within other states embraced *The 1619 Project* and the resources associated with it for teaching United States history; these include California, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Washington D.C. (Riley, 2020). Interestingly, many of the states that are openly opposed to *The 1619 Project* are considered politically right or conservative, versus those in favor are considered politically left or liberal (Vestal et al., 2021). The political right has stated that *The 1619 Project* is propaganda and a part of the progressive agenda, whereas the political left views the refusal of its incorporation as another example of the political right dismissing the dark side of American history (Levine, 2021; Riley, 2020).

The 1619 Project and Nikole Hannah-Jones

Although the opening essay by Nikole Hannah-Jones has received the most media and political attention, *The 1619 Project* consists of 10 essays:

1. "America Wasn't a Democracy Until Black Americans Made It One" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
2. "American Capitalism Is Brutal. You Can Trace That to the Plantation" by Matthew Desmond
3. "Why Doesn't America Have Universal Healthcare? One Word: Race" by Jeneen Interlandi
4. "How Segregation Caused Your Traffic Jam" by Kevin Kruse
5. "What the Reactionary Politics of 2019 Owe to the Politics of Slavery" by Jamelle Bouie
6. "How False Beliefs in Physical Racial Difference Still Live in Medicine Today" by Linda Villarosa
7. "Why Is Everyone Always Stealing Black Music?" by Wesley Morris
8. "The Barbaric History of Sugar in America" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad
9. "Why American Prisons Owe Their Cruelty to Slavery" by Bryan Stevenson
10. "How America's Vast Racial Wealth Gap Grew: By Plunder" by Trymaine Lee (The New York Times, 2019)

As their titles suggest, each journalist discusses issues in the United States that directly impact and affect African Americans from what can be argued as a presentism perspective (Armitage, 2020; The New York Times, 2019). Presentism interprets history or events from the past from a present-day vantage point, meaning, contextualization of

historical events is not of focus (Armitage, 2020). While the historical inaccuracy of *The 1619 Project* is argued as its biggest shortcoming, the opposition being shown towards its inclusion in classroom instruction indicates the pushback is greater than that (Stripling, 2021). American history as it is taught is historically incomplete and inaccurate (King, 2014), which is why it is often coined as being “whitewashed.” Thus, rather than acknowledging the perspectives found within *The 1619 Project*, being that it consists of ten essays, images, and other resources (e.g., poems), only the opening essay has been targeted to discredit its work in its entirety (Harris, 2020).

Nikole Hannah-Jones and her colleagues never presented themselves as historians; they made it readily clear that *The 1619 Project* is intended to provide a more complete outlook on the role of African Americans in building the United States and all the institutions found within it (Hannah-Jones, 2019). Nonetheless, the pushback showcases the unspoken and ongoing contentious debate regarding *who* narrates social studies curriculum and who controls the curricula narrative in K-12 schooling. Is it political actors? Is it historians? Is it journalists? Essentially, *The 1619 Project* provides a counterspace for understanding African American and American history through an alternative take on resistance and race. Likewise, *The 1619 Project* shows that resistance is the essence of understanding racism in the United States and the origin of narratives within American history is shaped by resistance.

Due to its “controversial” take on American history, *The 1619 Project* has received both positive and negative media coverage. Nikole Hannah-Jones, an alumna of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Journalism and Media, was offered a tenure position in the department in which she was a graduate (Moore, 2021;

Stripling, 2021). However, in May 2021, Nikole Hannah-Jones was denied tenure for this position with minimal explanation (Moore, 2021; Stripling, 2021). Although universities can define and redefine what constitutes a tenure offering, the rationale given for Nikole Hannah-Jones was publicly questioned (Moore, 2021; Stripling, 2021). The university's Board of Trustees stated the denial of Nikole Hannah-Jones's tenure position was based strictly on her nonacademic background relating to her career path (Stripling, 2021).

While there is merit to the Board of Trustees' argument and/or concern, when Nikole Hannah-Jones was offered the position, her nonacademic background was already known. Consequently, questions surfaced challenging if the denial of said position was based on the media and political attention for *The 1619 Project* or a racialized action (Stripling, 2021). This led to a larger issue and question: Are the educational system, standards, and curriculum more politicized than they are thought to be? Or is this the politicization of *The 1619 Project*, a policy window that is bringing to light existing structures that were already politicized?

In June 2021, Nikole Hannah-Jones was granted tenure through a 9-4 vote by the Board of Trustees (Ellis, 2021). On July 6, 2021, Nikole Hannah-Jones announced on CBS This Morning that she decided to turn down the tenure position at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and instead accepted a faculty position at Howard University, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) located in Washington D.C. which would allow her the opportunity to create the Center for Journalism and Democracy at Howard (Novak, 2021). In her press release, declining a position at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Hannah-Jones said,

I have tried to repay the university by mentoring and supporting students through the organization I co-founded—the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting—and by regularly visiting the campus to give talks and meet with students. And so, a few years ago when Dean Susan King first raised the possibility of my coming to teach at the university, I was deeply honored. As a full-time journalist at *The New York Times* who had no intention of leaving the profession, I told her I could not consider it...Our country was undergoing a racial reckoning, and she talked about the moment we are in and how important it was for the upcoming generation of journalists to have the knowledge, training, historical understanding, and depth of reporting to cover the changing country and its challenges. She told me that Carolina was undergoing a racial reckoning of its own, that its leadership was committed to real change, and that she felt I could play an important role in this effort.

My tenure package was then submitted to the university's Promotion and Tenure committee, which also overwhelmingly approved my application for tenure. My tenure package was then to be presented for a vote by the Board of Trustees in November so that I could start teaching at the university in January 2021. The day of the Trustees' meeting, we waited for word, but heard nothing. The next day, we learned that my tenure application had been pulled but received no explanation as to why. The same thing happened again in January. Both the university's Chancellor and its Provost refused to fully explain why my tenure package had

failed twice to come to a vote or exactly what transpired. The rest of this story has been well documented in the press.

I cannot imagine working at and advancing a school named for a man who lobbied against me, who used his wealth to influence the hires and ideology of the journalism school, who ignored my 20 years of journalism experience, all of my credentials, all of my work, because he believed that a project that centered Black Americans equaled the denigration of white Americans. (Hannah-Jones, 2021, para. 5, 8, & 16)

If the intent of social studies is to foster citizenship and address the issues of society, why then does *The 1619 Project* pose such a threat to formal social studies curricula? The privileges associated with whiteness in the United States, past and present, entail anti-Blackness ideologies. Therefore, if the aim of the United States is to be a post-racial society, then does the inclusion of *The 1619 Project* in social studies curriculum challenge said approach? One of the many rationales as to why *The 1619 Project* has gained traction is because it pushes the discussion of race forward while magnifying the lack of recognition of race, specifically for African Americans, within standards, curriculum, and educational resources in a manner that embodies their resistance, strength, and contributions to American society. Thus, the rapid introduction of *The 1619 Project* in schools displays the need and desire practitioners, school administrators, and districts have to approach a more honest history.

Critical Theories to Examine *The 1619 Project*

Critical policy analysis stresses the racialization of education reform policies and the roles power, privilege, and knowledge play in determining policy development (Diem et al., 2014; Young & Diem, 2018). Hence, the political backlash associated with *The 1619 Project* indicates the need for policy approaches to be considered. Likewise, Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit) identifies anti-Blackness as a humanistic experience all Black people encounter while addressing the problematic approaches of multiculturalism in education (Dumas & ross, 2016; King, 2018). *The 1619 Project* shifts the focus of American history and centers the experiences of African Americans and commands its inclusion. Lastly, the foundational component of racism and its place in America's educational system requires an understanding and awareness of CRT (Bell, 1987, 1992; Tate IV, 1997). Thus, situating *The 1619 Project* in the theoretical frame of critical policy analysis using grounded theory methods to be analyzed using BlackCrit intersects major components within the politicization of *The 1619 Project*; racial disparities in education reform, policy language, and anti-Blackness in education.

Critical Policy Analysis

Critical policy analysis approaches education reform from a vastly different perspective than traditional policy research (Diem et al., 2014; Young & Diem, 2018). Traditional policy research contains distinct steps: “planning, adopting, implementation, examination, and/or evaluating educational changes or reform” (Diem et al., 2014, p. 1070) under the belief that change and reform can be organized and regulated. In contrast, critical policy analysis is based on the idea that there is a complex correlation in education and society (Young & Diem, 2018). Critical policy analysis identifies the

presence of a dominant and subordinate group within society which results in differing education reform outcomes (Apple, 2019). Moreover, critical policy analysis recognizes the role political actors have in the policy formation process, specifically related to education reform (Diem et al., 2014). Critical policy analysis consists of five approaches:

- (1) attention is often given to the difference between policy rhetoric and practiced reality;
- (2) concern focuses on the policy, its roots, and its development;
- (3) concern is with the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge (Anyon, 1980; Foucault, 1972; Levinson et al., 2009) and the creation of “winners” and “losers;”
- (4) the effect a given policy has on relationships of inequality and privilege (Bernal, 2005; McLaren & Giarelli, 1995; Riddell, 2005); and
- (5) many critical policy scholars are interested in members of non-dominant groups who resist processes of domination and oppression (Anderson, 1989; Gillborn, 2005; McLaren & Giarelli, 1995) and who engage in activism and use of participatory methods to employ agency within schools.

Using qualitative and quantitative research, critical policy analysis aims to answer the complexities present in the system and environment of policy implementation and change (Diem et al., 2014). In the realm of education, critical policy analysis strives to understand structural disparities by identifying who benefits, what decision advances which racial group, and why it yields said outcome while considering the privilege and oppression of traditionally marginalized communities (Apple, 2019; Stevens, 2003). The recognition of education reform in historically marginalized communities is a key

attribute of critical policy analysis; thus, policy and the implications of policy reform transcend the basic policy process in which it is often categorized.

Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit)

Dumas and ross (2016) stated unlike CRT, BlackCrit contains *ideas* versus *tenets* which are fixed thoughts. Therefore, the interpretation of BlackCrit has greater fluidity but clearer formulations. Nonetheless, using the principles of CRT, BlackCrit aims to further debunk the embedment of anti-Blackness sentiments in American society and their role in furthering racist ideas in institutional practices (Dumas & ross, 2016; King, 2018). BlackCrit consists of three ideas:

- (1) anti-Blackness is endemic to, and is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life (Dumas & ross, 2016);
- (2) Blackness exists in tension with the neoliberal-multicultural imagination; and
- (3) BlackCrit should create space for Black liberatory fantasy, and resist a revisionist history that supports dangerous majoritarian stories that disappear whites from a history of racial dominance. (Leonardo, 2004)

Under BlackCrit one learns anti-Blackness encompasses more than anti-Blackness principles in the context of racism, but rather, anti-Blackness is a broad relationship between Black people and humanity (Dumas & ross, 2016). Additionally, even though multiculturalism is used as a tool to promote and advance cultural diversity, Black people are harmed greatly under this approach, meaning, other People of Color are often allowed to advance, but Black people are repeatedly left in dismal positions even as others advance. The issues Black people encounter are then believed to be self-inflicted (Dumas

& ross, 2016). Additionally, the basis of comparison for multiculturalism is at the expense of Black people (Dumas & ross, 2016), leading BlackCrit scholars to conclude, for anti-Blackness to be removed from society, a large systematic change must occur (Dumas & ross, 2016). BlackCrit can easily be applied to education without the need of expanding its ideas. In education, BlackCrit indicates the infrastructure of education reinforces inequities prevalent within the distribution of resources amongst historically marginalized communities and students (Dumas & ross, 2016). Likewise, when teaching African American history is it necessary to teach it independently while acknowledging the historical context of said history (King, 2018). Lastly, anti-Blackness and whiteness are noticeable vantage points in which African American history is taught (King, 2018).

Critical Race Theory in Education (CRT)

Crenshaw et al. (1995) stated CRT seeks “to understand the complex condominia of law, racial ideology, and political power” (p. 27). Therefore, the foundational purpose of CRT is to analyze the intersectionality within race, law, and power, which leads to privilege (Bell, 1987, 1992; Tate IV, 1997). CRT consists of five tenets:

- (1) racism is normal, not unusual in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic 2000: xvi);
- (2) that white supremacy and whiteness as property are foundational to U.S. legal practices and the system itself;
- (3) the deconstruction of racism and any negative impact it has on individuals of color can only be undone through interest convergence;

- (4) that the notion of colorblindness is counterproductive to achieving racial emancipation and that it is only removed through interest convergence which benefits whites primarily (Sleeter, 2017);
- (5) the incorporation and use of counternarratives and storytelling grants People of Color to tell their experiences and perspectives on racism and “being racially minoritized.” (Rollock & Gillborn, 2011, p. 2)

From CRT, one learns that race and racism are embedded within America’s laws and property ownership while furthering white supremacist ideologies. Anti-Blackness views are engraved in America’s identity, and the law has and is used as an avenue to further and solidify anti-Blackness. While CRT emphasized race and racism within America’s legal system, CRT neglected to discuss how said views impact America’s educational system, leading scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV (1995) to expand CRT to education. Ladson-Billings and Tate IV (1995) emphasized that property ownership, as well as poverty in conjunction with America’s racialized system, maintains and upholds racism found in education. For instance, property ownership reflects one’s SES. Therefore, depending on whether a child’s parents own property and where the property is located indicates their SES which determines the school(s) the child attends and decides what resources he or she is exposed to. Additionally, terms or words such as “urban,” “suburban,” and “rural” are used as methods to identify the race and poverty levels of students (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). Frequently, the word “urban” is used to represent Black and Brown students, whereas “suburban” is used to represent white students (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). Consequently, a racialized educational system is formed using white supremacy and wealth as its baseline. However, even with

its expansion to education, scholars continued to feel CRT lacked the depth of analysis necessary to unpack anti-Blackness ideologies, resulting in the development of Black Critical Theory.

Conclusion

Real history contains the voices and experiences of all people, regardless of their race, skin, creed, religion, and/or sexual orientation. While it is difficult to include every aspect of history relating to all people in the United States, history curriculum and instruction within the United States continues to perpetuate a singular, dominant perspective. Hence, the lives and experiences of historically marginalized communities are often omitted, repressed, or taught from a vantage point that benefits the larger narrative, which in turn dismisses their identity and contributions to American history. Within education, the federal government since its inception, relegates authority to determine standards and curriculum to the states. Yet, as the debates surrounding *The 1619 Project* magnify, it remains to be seen if states will maintain this autonomy without federal intervention. African Americans and African American history have continuously been addressed halfheartedly and more recently met with derision. Thus, if the formal curriculum does not change from within, then the change will come in the form of alternative curricula. *The 1619 Project* is one example of this type of change and pressure to change from the outside

The importance of *The 1619 Project* embodies the need for African Americans and their history to be seen outside the racialized curricula found within American history. Since *The 1619 Project* has become politicized, its purpose and intent have become overshadowed by politics and the media. Situated in critical policy analysis, how

and why *The New York Times*'s *The 1619 Project* became politicized by political actors and media and how *The 1619 Project* is a contemporary illustration of the politicization of formal social studies curriculum will be investigated using a multi-method approach. Chapter Three will present and summarize the methodology, instrumentation, dataset collection, and basis of analysis used within this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The problem addressed within this study is how and why *The New York Times*'s *The 1619 Project* became politicized by political actors and media and how *The 1619 Project* is a contemporary illustration of the politicization of formal social studies curriculum. This research study used a multi-method approach to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1983, 1990, 1996; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Seawright, 2016; Stemler, 2000). The research questions of formulate to support inquisition within the study are:

1. What is *The 1619 Project*?
 - a. What is the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*?
 - b. Based on its *intent*, why has *The 1619 Project* become politicized?
2. What is the rhetorical, political debate associated (around) *The 1619 Project*?
 - a. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*'s authors?
 - b. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* of other stakeholders, such as opponents /critics of *The 1619 Project*?

Chapter Three presents the research design employed within the study. Archival or secondary public data, which includes an interview Nikole Hannah-Jones did with Ezra Klein at the *New York Times*, were used to answer the research questions developed

by the researcher. The inclusion of the interview with Nikole Hannah-Jones or the use of archival data did not require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Conclusively, the analysis procedures of the study are discussed, and this chapter closes with the researcher's positionality, limitations, and final arguments.

Research Design

Multi-method research design combines evaluation techniques and data collection methods from two or more methodologies (Seawright, 2016). However, multi-method research designs do not require the combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods to address a research question, whereas mixed-method research consists of a combination of research design components (Mertens, 2015; Seawright, 2016). Additionally, within multi-method research, conceptual frameworks, descriptions, and evaluations of policy analysis can readily be applied (Seawright, 2016). The reason being multi-method approaches allows the evaluation of policies or policy analysis to explore components and interactions that would be ignored using traditional, experimental approaches (Louis, 1982). Moreover, it grants researchers the ability to obtain findings prior to the conclusion of a study, (e.g., the inclusions of interviews) (qualitative research method) can yield findings before data is gathered from a survey (quantitative research method) (Louis, 1982). Thus, by quantitative methods using descriptive statistics, the researcher can look for frequencies to support qualitative findings addressing questions 2, 2a, and 2b. Further, the use of qualitative methods will be applied through grounded theory methods in research questions 1, 1a, 1b, 1, 2, 2a, and 2b.

Grounded theory methods, developed by Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser (1967), presented a new way of applying theory to data. Specifically, with grounded theory methods, a researcher can develop a new theory from the data collected versus applying an existing theory to interpret collected data. Likewise, grounded theory methods allow a researcher the ability to analyze the data while it is still being collected. Thus, a researcher can adjust their data collection approach and questions; this is primarily useful when conducting qualitative research methods (Strauss & Glaser, 1967). Following its development, grounded theory methods have been expounded on by Strauss and Glaser individually, as well as by other scholars, Kathy Charmaz and Juliet Corbin to better conceptualize grounded theory as a methodological approach rather than techniques and approaches (Saldaña, 2013, p.51). For this study, the researcher applied Charmaz's (1996) grounded theory methodology which applies the foundational premises of grounded theory but is more specific in its application to create a conceptual framework to inductively analyze the data. Moreover, the grounded theory methods used within the study focused on words, terms, and ideas associated with education, curriculum, legislation, divisive language, etc. Thus, the following four grounded theory methods from Charmaz (1996) governed the data collection process and analysis for *The 1619 Project*.

- (1) Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of research;
- (2) Creation of analytic codes and categories developed from data, not from preconceived hypotheses;
- (3) The development of middle-range theories to explain behaviour and processes;

(4) Memo-making, that is, writing analytic notes to explicate and fill out categories. (Charmaz, 1996, p. 28)

In addition, based on the findings of the qualitative data and quantifiable information regarding *The 1619 Project*, (e.g., frequency of- articles published), the language (words) used within the articles, and the frequency distribution of (spikes in) publications on said project, frequency statistics were produced (Franzese & Iuliano, 2018). The frequency statistics establish foundation information on any given topic (Franzese & Iuliano, 2018), and its relevance to the study is it assisted in laying out or categorizing and contextualizing themes formulated.

Subsequently, the basis of this study required a multi-method research approach to effectively address the abductive and transferability of findings. To ensure the reliability of the findings, for the qualitative research methods, the researcher utilized triangulation to verify the reliability and validity of the results (Mertens, 2015). This was done by using diverse archival data sources.

Data Collection

Similar data collection methods were used for both the qualitative and quantitative elements of this study. Given that the study emphasized understanding the motives and consequences of the politicization of *The 1619 Project*, the researcher used online newspaper articles from one local news outlet, four national news outlets, and *The 1776 Report* (E.O. 13958 of Nov 2, 2020). For each news outlet (source), the researcher examined the following characteristics: accuracy, objectivity, relevance, and authority (Jefferson, n.d.). Additionally, the researcher verified the credibility and positionality of the publication using the media literacy technique of lateral reading (Wineburg &

McGrew, 2019). However, Riech (2010) indicated determining the creditably and authority of information is a subjective process. Therefore, focusing on creditability and authority (i.e., the venting of information) (Jefferson, n.d.), *10 Journalism Brands Where You Find Real Facts Rather Than Alternative Facts* (Glader, 2017), and the notion that the closer to the upper center triangle of “*The Media Bias Chart*” (Ad Fontes Media Inc., 2019) (See Figure 1 in Appendix D) the more reliable the content. Likewise, the researcher applied the assumption that the news content in the most extreme left and right-leaning newspaper outlets reflects the dialogue found within filter bubbles and echo chambers (Abisheva et al., 2016; Bruns, 2019, Dubois & Blank, 2018) respectively to each political party. Moreover, the researcher also assumed based on the news content, any content presented was influenced by the most extreme left or right-leaning outlets, which dictates the level of coverage. Thus, intentionally focusing on political and ideological lean, the following national print news outlets were selected:

1. *The New York Times* (baseline)
2. *The Washington Post* (liberal)
3. *Christian Science Monitor* (moderate)
4. *Wall Street Journal* (conservative)

Alongside the list, the researcher chose one local newspaper outlet, *The Charlotte Observer*, in North Carolina, to include in the archival newspaper data analysis. This decision was based on the proximity of the news outlet to the researcher’s university and the regional and state perspective it affords in documenting North Carolina and Charlotte’s viewpoints on *The 1619 project*. Equally, *The 1776 Report* (E.O. 13958 of Nov 2, 2020) was produced in direct response to *The 1619 Project*. Therefore, it is

imperative to include it within the study because it provides valuable insight into the stance of opponents/critics of *The 1619 Project*.

From the selected five newspaper outlets, the researcher used the search engine on the websites and searched the “*1619 Project*” using stratified sampling (Sharma, 2017) that transitioned to stratified purposeful sampling (Suri, 2011) from November 2021 to December 2021. Stratified sampling entails dividing a population into smaller groups (strata) to conduct a sampling (Sharma, 2017). In comparison, stratified purposeful sampling consists of sampling within the sample of the population that was stratified based on characteristics, similar units of comparison, events, etc. (Suri, 2011). Stratified purposeful sampling was conducted during the first grounded theory data gathering and analysis step, and although objectivity was a key component to the data collection process, the researcher included opinion pieces. The inclusion of opinion pieces allowed the researcher to capture media portrayals that support, oppose, or are indifferent towards *The 1619 Project*, which was necessary to answer research question two. Conclusively, the publication dates for articles selected for the data sample spanned from August 1, 2019, to October 31, 2021.

Lastly, the researcher used the *Transcript: Ezra Klein Interviews Ta-Nehisi Coates and Nikole Hannah-Jones* interview (Klein, 2021) to support answering both research questions. The purpose of incorporating the interview was to analyze how Nikole Hannah-Jones discussed *The 1619 Project* and the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*. This, along with an analysis of *The 1619 Project* itself provided foundational information on whether the politicization of *The 1619 Project* was warranted and why the politicization occurred from the author’s perspective and experience.

Data Analysis and Procedures

For each research question, a specific data analysis and procedure were conducted.

R.Q. 1: What is *The 1619 Project*?

- a. What is the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*?
- b. Based on its *intent*, why has *The 1619 Project* become politicalized?

Research question one and its sub-questions is a qualitative question that used *The New York Times's The 1619 Project* magazine, *The 1776 Report*, and *Transcript: Ezra Klein Interviews Ta-Nehisi Coates and Nikole Hannah-Jones*. Based on *The New York Times* article, *The 1776 Report*, and transcript, the researcher applied grounded theory methods to formulate baseline information on the language used, and possible intent was used to guide, support, and/or challenge the findings gathered in research question two.

R.Q. 2: What is the rhetorical, political debate associated (around) *The 1619 Project*?

- a. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*?
- b. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the intent of *The 1619 Project* for other stakeholders, such as opponents /critics of *The 1619 Project*?

Research question two and its sub-questions entail qualitative and quantitative approaches. Additionally, to illustrate the politicization of the social studies curriculum, a case of North Carolina's 2021 social studies curriculum is presented. To begin, the researcher used *The Charlotte Observer*, *The New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *The 1776 Report* to unpack the rhetorical and political debate surrounding *The 1619 Project*. Specifically, *The 1619*

Project and *The 1776 Report* provided a baseline for answering research question two and its sub-questions which were established when answering research question(s) one. Thus, the researcher used *The Charlotte Observer*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* to conduct a stratified sampling that shifted to stratified purposeful sampling at a key point in the media timeline to reduce and/or eliminate repetition in findings.

From the news outlets selected, equal distribution in publications of articles on *The 1619 Project* was not found. Hence, for the initial data collection, the researcher collected *all* the articles on *The 1619 Project* using the search engine feature from August 1, 2019, to October 31, 2021; this was estimated to be approximately 300 articles. Following this finding, a general descriptive statistic, such as word and name frequencies, was created to identify the preliminary information. From these 300 articles, the researcher began implementing grounded theory methods *within* the sources. This process consisted of three analysis and coding cycles to answer each respective research and sub-question in number two, which was a blended process. Meaning when identifying the rhetorical and political debate associated (around) *The 1619 Project*, the accuracy and inaccuracy of the media portrayals will inherently be shown in the study findings. However, within the coding cycles, the researcher intentionally addressed each question.

Cycle one began with identifying the language used, general descriptions (patterns within sources), and accuracy and inaccuracy within the rhetorical and political debate associated (around) *The 1619 Project*. Next, cycle two distinguished stakeholders, perspective (e.g., 5 Ws—who, what, where, when, and why), general descriptions, and

concluded with accuracy and inaccuracy within stakeholders' perspectives. Subsequently, the researcher conducted stratified purposeful sampling *across* sources; this was cycle three and utilized grounded theory methods. The intent of cycle three was to conduct a systematic comparison of the debate and media representation of *The 1619 Project* across the news outlets including what specifically is being debated (e.g., what is being debated), why it is being debated, and how it is being debated. Therefore, within cycle three, the researcher aimed to include all opinions or editorials and randomly select a minimum of 15 articles in total from each outlet. The rationale for choosing 15 articles was based on preliminary findings; the researcher concluded all the news outlets of interest had a minimum of 15 articles on *The 1619 Project* excluding the *Christian Science Monitor* which ensured all the sources had balanced representation within the study analyses.

Within the stratified purposeful sampling, "buckets of time" formed to create spans of time defined by the presence of "spikes." For this study, the term "spikes" was defined as an increase in the number of articles published related to *The 1619 Project* as well as representing a rise in curricula tension, an increase in discussion related to "contentious" curricula, or narratives which were shown through the increased use of specific, patterned language. Thus, based on the "buckets of time," the researcher was able to determine if 15 articles could be collected from each outlet. Additionally, during the presence of "spikes," the researcher increased article selection across sources by increments of five but did not exceed 25 articles within one source. Likewise, all opinion or editorial articles were used across sources regardless of the "buckets of time;" this was

due to the limited number of opinion or editorial articles. To conclude, a frequency statistic was produced to identify themes and categories developed.

For the case study on the politicization of social studies curriculum in North Carolina, the researcher included data dating from August 1, 2019 to October 31, 2021; the rationale for this choice was to ensure the data remained consistent. However, this did not imply discussion or evidence of the politicization of social studies curriculum was not present prior. The following sources were used for the case study: 2020 and 2021 SBOE meetings and meeting minutes, the 2021 NC DPI *Draft 4* presentation on standards (North Carolina Department of Public Information, n.d.), and *The Charlotte Observer*. Therefore, the following SBOE meetings and minutes used were: June 4, 2020; July 8, 2020; January 6, 2021; January 27, 2021; February 3, 2021; June 2-3, 2021; June 17, 2021; and July 8, 2021⁴. These meeting dates were selected because during these meetings included explicit discussions on the adaption of new social studies standards. Moreover, the entire meetings were not included, but rather the content within discussions and minutes that specifically related to social studies standards and curriculum. This was an intentional choice by the researcher to include only relevant content specific to this study.

Similar to research questions one and two, the researcher used grounded theory methods to investigate, categorize, and theme the language used when discussing the adoption of new social studies standards, the presence of politically charged rhetoric or language during discussions, and evidence of the outcomes from SBOE decisions within

⁴ The time parameters for the SBOE meetings are as follows: June 4, 2020- 1:57:40 to 2:55:40; July 8, 2020 (Part II)- 49:25 to 1:40:19; January 6, 2021- 53:13 to 2:06:40; January 27, 2021- 5:15 to 1:38:29; February 3, 2021- 41:40 to 2:10:02; June 2, 2021- 19:36 to 58:51; June 3, 2021 (Par III)- 5:00 to 6:39; June 17, 2021- 27:05 to 50:06; July 8, 2021- 1:57:40 to 2:17:30 and 2:31:41 to 2:42:04.

NC DPI *Draft 4* presentation. Moreover, to further examine the adoption of new social studies standards in NC, the researcher included news articles from *The Charlotte Observer* specifically related to the adoption of the new standards to identify the narrative developed to display how the policy debate occurs in relation to a specific curriculum. To conclude, the case study aims to detect whether there are similarities and/or differences between the language used surrounding the debate of *The 1619 Project* and transforming social studies standards in NC and the role politics hold in said process.

Researcher Positionality

When conducting research, it is important and necessary to identify any potential biases the researcher may have which can influence the findings or lens of analysis. I, the primary researcher, identify as a Black American. I am a second generation in the United States; my parents emigrated from Saint Elizabeth, Jamaica in the 1970s and 1980s. Growing up in a predominantly white town in Connecticut, I experienced limited representation within my public K-12 education experience; this experience included never having a Black and/or African American teacher or an academic course on African American history until I attended college. Given that I experienced immense racial isolation, I chose to attend Hampton University, an HBCU located in Hampton, Virginia.

The 1619 Project, from my perspective, is a necessary counternarrative to my own lived experiences. Throughout my K-12 education, when African American history was taught, we only learned about certain African American figures, and the perspective in which we learned American and African American was not inclusive of counternarratives. Thus, while *The 1619 Project* should not be the sole curriculum used within the historical inquisition and the learning of American and African American

history in schools, it is important enough to be included. Diverse perspectives are necessary within historical teaching. Moreover, I believe it is important to highlight how embedded African Americans are in the United States' identity, which I believe *The 1619 Project* displays.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the politicization of *The 1619 Project*, not to examine CRT and the debate surrounding its incorporation into public education. However, the *1619 Project* has become interwoven with the CRT debate. Therefore, although CRT is connected to *The 1619 Project*, it will not be the focus of analysis but should not be wrongly interpreted as not being of importance or relevance. Additionally, although the data sources (e.g., newspaper outlets) selected are accurate representations of media portrayals, they represent a specific sector of the media and do not capture the role and/or influence of social media. Therefore, the media used does not fully represent the debate within the media surrounding *The 1619 Project*. Likewise, because there are inherent limitations based on the news outlets, the extreme or overtly politically charged rhetoric is excluded under the premise that these said perspectives would streamline upward to middle-ground news outlets found within the center (See Figure 1 in Appendix D). Conclusively, the utilization of purposeful sampling may not fully represent debates during periods of spikes due to the unequal distribution of articles. Furthermore, due to unequal distribution of opinion and/or editorial articles, within periods of spikes over-representation of said articles may occur.

Conclusion

Within this chapter, the research study design and methods of analysis have been identified. To ensure the two research questions were addressed, a multi-method research design was conducted. Likewise, the collection of data ended in October 2021, and data analysis concluded in September 2022. In Chapter Four, the results will be presented, followed by Chapter Five, which will be a discussion and interpretation of the findings. The last chapter will offer the study's conclusion.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to investigate and unveil the politicization of *The 1619 Project*. Moreover, the study investigated how the formal social studies curriculum can become politicized by political actors and media and how *The New York Times's The 1619 Project* serves as a contemporary illustration of these dynamics. Using a multi-method study approach, *The New York Times's The 1619 Project* magazine, *The 1776 Report*, *Transcript: Ezra Klein Interviews Ta-Nehisi Coates and Nikole Hannah-Jones*, *The Charlotte Observer*, *The New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* were utilized to address the following research questions:

1. What is *The 1619 Project*?
 - a. What is the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*?
 - b. Based on the *intent*, why has *The 1619 Project* become politicized?
2. What is the rhetorical, political debate associated with (around) *The 1619 Project*?
 - a. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project's* author?
 - b. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* for other stakeholders, such as opponents/critics of *The 1619 Project*?

Within this chapter, the findings of the study are presented to address each respective question.

The 1619 Project

To answer the initial and foundational research question of the study, “What is *The 1619 Project*,” *The New York Times’s 1619 Project* magazine was used. As discussed in Chapter Two, *The 1619 Project* encompasses 10 essays along with contemporary poetry to reflect the experiences and history of African Americans in the United States. Focusing specifically on *The 1619 Project’s* 10 essays, each essay spoke to specific plights present within the African American community that the various authors associated to and/or with the ramification of slavery in the United States. Thus, to understand the first research question, each essay was read as a separate entity to support the larger narrative of *The 1619 Project* (See Appendix A). Moreover, through unpacking each essay separately, the latter questions associated with the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* could be answered holistically.

Essay One: “America Wasn’t a Democracy Until Black Americans Made It One” by Nikole Hannah-Jones

In the opening essay of *The 1619 Project*, leading author Nikole Hannah-Jones, an investigative journalist, incorporated counternarratives to generate a “new” origin story of the United States. Emphasizing the date when the first enslaved ship arrived in the United States, 1619, Nikole Hannah-Jones positioned America’s identity under the premise that the “founding” of the United States did not begin until enslaved Africans arrived because it was the labor of enslaved Africans that built the United States. To support this notion, she chose to incorporate her childhood experiences along with her paternal parent’s family origin to convey the problematic race relations amongst African

Americans and American ideals, (e.g., democracy is obtainable and given to all) (Hannah-Jones, 2019).

Nikole Hannah-Jones made it a point to state that her father was in the military and proud to be American, which she alluded to through him ensuring the “flag always flew pristine” (Hannah-Jones, 2019, p. 16). Yet, the level of pride and love he felt for his country she felt was not returned; when he was discharged, he was only able to find labor jobs in service work. Like many African Americans during the 1940s, her father’s family migrated from the South, Mississippi specifically, with the hope that the North would provide a safer and better (i.e., equitable) life. However, she conveyed that equity could not then nor now be achieved without African Americans in the United States because slavery has inherently shaped and continues to determine the present-day experiences of African Americans. More explicitly, because of slavery, racial views and interactions past and present are based on the institution of slavery. To further stress said point, Nikole Hannah-Jones took the stance that the American Revolution was fought because the United States wanted to maintain the institution of slavery, whereas Great Britain had chosen to abolish it (Hannah-Jones, 2019).

Consequently, from her stance, America’s Founding Fathers were bigots who, in turn, crafted the Declaration of Independence to reflect said ideals; African Americans were meant to be enslaved because they were the backbone and source of the United States’ economy. Thus, instead of 1776, the year when the Declaration of Independence was signed, be a date of celebration to signify *all* citizens are given the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (Hannah-Jones, 2019), it instead cemented African Americans’ place and role within American society, unequal to white Americans.

Nonetheless, without African Americans during and after enslavement, Nikole Hannah-Jones indicated the United States would cease to exist, which alludes to an underlying point of her essay: what does democracy look like for African Americans in the United States? Moreover, what will it take for white America to acknowledge or openly recognize the contributions of African Americans to forming the United States?

To conclude her essay, Nikole Hannah-Jones retold a childhood story of having to write about and draw the flag of her ancestors. Being unable to identify her ancestral origin because she is the descendant of enslaved Africans brought to the United States, she randomly picked an African country. Reflecting on this act, she stated if she knew what she knows now, she would have drawn the American flag signifying a monumental stance. Although the enslaved Africans were wrongfully captured and brought to the United States, the United States became their and their descendants' country of origin. Thus, the enslaved Africans and their generations to follow have the right to claim the United States; this is their new origin story. Moreover, because of their endless desire and resilience to achieve the same democracy white Americans were given readily, the United States became democratic (Hannah-Jones, 2019). The other essays are discussed in Appendix A.

What is *The 1619 Project*?

Each essay within *The 1619 Project* identifies an aspect of being African American in the United States, moreover, how the experiences African Americans encounter which are frequently negative are linked to anti-Blackness sentiments and/or anti-Blackness ideologies rooted in America's identity. Thus, aiming to establish how African Americans are the center of America's identity and history, each author

conveyed what it means to be African American in the United States from past to present. Therefore, *The 1619 Project* is a sensationalized, provocative journalist approach and conceptualization of American history driven to show a correlation between the past and present, more specifically, how the treatment and/or mistreatment of African Americans reflects the origins of the first arrival of enslaved Africans in 1619. Consequently, Nikole Hannah-Jones said in an interview with Ezra Klein on July 30, 2021, “what *The 1619 Project* does it actually displaces white from the center of American greatness and places Black people there,” making African Americans the “center of the American story” (p. 5).

The Intent of *The 1619 Project*

The 1619 Project is a journalistic approach to how history works and the conceptualization of American history that starts the origin story of the United States in 1619 versus 1776 when the Declaration of Independence was signed. Therefore, based on that premise, the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* is to directly, provocatively challenge, and evoke emotions to inspire action for change towards the perceived narrative of American history; that the United States is a “pure nation” and “things that happened in the past that make it hard” (Klein, 2021, p. 5) for African Americans presently needs to be acknowledged if the United States is to live up to the ideals it presents it holds true.

Nikole Hannah-Jones stated in her interview with Ezra Klein that there is a connection between writing (journalism) and a functional democracy; a journalist’s job is to “inform the public” and “hold powerful people to account is critical to have a functioning democracy” (p. 2). Moreover, “the press is the firewall of democracy” (i.e., guardians of democracy), and “journalism is rising to the occasion as it needs to be” (pp.

2-3). Further, Nikole Hannah-Jones stated, "...the entire reason *The 1619 Project* had to exist in the first place is that we have been willfully opposed to grappling with who we are as a country" (p. 5). Thus, the overarching *intent* of *The 1619 Project* is to dismantle the belief that anti-Blackness sentiments and/or ideologies are not embedded into the United States' identity. This is done by presenting the historical experiences of African Americans (i.e., highway development, the prison system, land ownership, the medical system, etc.). Additionally, instead of said oppression being recognized, African Americans continue to be denied access to true democracy in America when they (enslaved and free African Americans) are the foundation of or built the United States. Concluding Nikole Hannah-Jones states America's "whole idea about democracy actually comes from Black resistance" (Klein, 2021, p. 5).

An additional *intent* of *The 1619 Project* is to raise awareness of the omission of the African American perspectives within American history when it does not support the dominant, *Eurocentric* narrative and/or (in)directly challenges America's "white" identity. An example of the latter stance is essay seven, written by Wesley Morris, "Why Is Everyone Always Stealing Black Music?" The American music scene is internationally acclaimed, and specific genres of music are viewed as "American," meaning the sound originated in America; the singers are American, and depending upon the rhythm, tone, and lyrics, the race of the singer could be identified. However, Wesley Morris stated without African Americans, there would be no "American music" scene or genre because what is identified as American music which is inherently credited to white Americans was created by African Americans. Thus, the musical identity that is coined as (silent

word “white” before) American is the musical identity of African Americans who are still without credit.

A final and subtle underlying *intent* of *The 1619 Project* is to “tell the truth” about individuals, events, and accounts of American history and policies regardless of one’s support for or against them. Stating to Ezra Klein (2021), Nikole Hannah-Jones said,

No one is responsible for what our ancestors did before us... None of us are responsible for what our ancestors did. But we are responsible for what we do now. And we do have the ability to build a country that is different, that is not held hostage to the past. (pp. 7-8)

The underlying *intent* of telling “the truth” about American history is the cornerstone of the politicization of *The 1619 Project*, specifically because “the truth” *The 1619 Project* aims to tell can be argued as a subjective interpretation. Consequently, because *The 1619 Project* challenges one’s understanding of American history, the creditability or “truthfulness” was and continues to be politically questioned with the support of historians. More discussion on the intent of *The 1619 Project* is in Appendix B.

Why Has the *Intent* of *The 1619 Project* Become Politicalized?

In *The 1619 Project*, Nikole Hannah-Jones and her colleagues presented that the United States’ identity is centered around whiteness. Moreover, when American history is centered around Blackness, remnants of slavocracy can be found, or as Nikole Hannah-Jones stated, “we can’t purge slavocracy from the American story” (Klein, 2021, p. 6). Thus, the politicization of *The 1619 Project* lies in the fact it directly challenges the ideals of democracy in the United States, past and present. Moreover, it puts into question whether the United States is truly as democratic as it presents itself by calling out

injustice within different federal and social systems using race as the fundamental rationale for the cause. Since Blackness is negatively perceived in the United States (anti-Blackness), a leading factor why African Americans were and remain to be treated unjustly is based simply on the color of their skin. These sentiments Nikole Hannah-Jones conveyed during her interview with Ezra Klein, specifically in the context as to why *The 1619 Project* is experiencing enormous push-back in public K-12 schools. Nikole Hannah-Jones stated,

If you look at the laws that are being passed, the argument isn't that we can't teach this because these are not factually accurate. What they're saying is that if we teach these to kids, our kids might think we are a racist nation. So think about what that is saying. That if we teach the true history of our country, if we teach these facts, then the logical conclusion that our children will come to is that we are fundamentally a racist nation. And so we cannot teach those facts.

And then you see this intense backlash against *The 1619 Project*, this creation of this fake controversy around critical race theory and this massive push back against teaching a more accurate reflection of our history that unsettles this narrative of American exceptionalism and forces us to confront what we were actually built upon, which is that America would be unrecognizable without chattel slavery. That's where this push-back is coming from. (p. 6)

The 1619 Project, from Nikole Hannah-Jones's stance, encourages students to put into question how he or she views the United States in relation to the role of race in American history from diverse perspectives while considering do the negative impacts on said role remain present today. Race remains to be a "controversial" topic in the United States,

especially in education. Hence, to directly discuss American history centered around race, a school curriculum was developed based on *The 1619 Project*. The first narrative states that what is known and accepted to be American history is untrue. The second narrative is the social studies curriculum needs to change to include said narratives and those alike. Lastly, but most importantly, it raises the question of “What is an ‘acceptable’ social studies curriculum in K-12 education.”

Education and politics have always been intertwined. Consequently, the question *The 1619 Project* raises through its politicization, what is an “acceptable” social studies curriculum in K-12 education, has provoked political responses because politics and political thinking influence education, more importantly, curriculum. Thus, the interpretations of American history from *The 1619 Project* and the opposing view of *The 1776 Report* have formulated a dichotomous political debate surrounding “acceptable” social studies curriculum (See Table 1); liberals or Democrats support *The 1619 Project* versus conservatives or Republicans support *The 1776 Report*.

Table 1

Key Points in Dichotomous Political Debate Surrounding the Intent of *The 1619 Project*

Pro The 1619 Project (Liberal)	Against <i>The 1619 Project</i> (Conservative)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages to openly “acknowledge” and teach in social studies curriculum the <i>hypocrisy</i> of the nation’s Founding Fathers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages teaching students to feel “<i>ashamed</i>” of the nation’s Founding Fathers

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- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States' founding and identity were based on the enslavement of African Americans in 1619 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The signing of the Declaration of Independence (DOI) in 1776 is the United States' identity because "<i>what is</i>" America without the DOI |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A necessary inclusion of African American experiences within American history | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaponizing American history to "promote" a racially motivated narrative with political and economic intentions at the <i>detriment</i> of students |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A "<i>collective</i>," Black voice or pluralistic approach to American history | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A singular approach to American history |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately attributes the role of race in conjunction with the plights of African Americans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccurately placing fault for African American plight on race versus individual choice(s) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion or God is mentioned to emphasize the hypocrisy of people/historical events in relation to Christianity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglects to embody the Christian values of the United States |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates how democracy is seen in the United States towards African Americans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrongfully critiques democracy in the United States towards African Americans |
-

Although published during former President Donald Trump’s presidency, Nikole Hannah-Jones stated *The 1619 Project* had nothing to do with him but recognized the impact of *The 1619 Project* was greater under his presidency based on the legacy he created for himself (Klein, 2021, p. 9). Some view former President Donald Trump as having problematic political and social ideologies and during his presidency, social justice issues and race relations in the United States erupted. Subsequently, the publishing of *The 1619 Project* evoked an immediate response from him and fellow Republicans (i.e., *The 1776 Report*). Unlike *The 1619 Project*, *The 1776 Report* does not center American history around Blackness or whiteness (i.e., race is a personal and emotional experience). Instead, American history in *The 1776 Report* centers on the ideals of democracy and patriotism (i.e., attributes of society in pursuit of American ideals) (See Table 14 in Appendix B). Thus, from the political stance of Republicans, an “acceptable” social studies curriculum entails instilling patriotic views, patriotism, or a sense of belonging associated with the state; this stance can be (mis)interpreted as directly critiquing United States history means one is “disloyal” or “not proud” to be an American. This raises the point of whether or not American patriotism requires one to deny or dismiss the United States as a pluralistic society? *The 1619 Project* indicates there are two United States: the United States for white America and the United States for POC, specifically for African Americans. Through the various essays and poems, each author aimed to show a portion of the African Americans’ experience in the United States. However, in order to understand the perspective of the authors, one must recognize the United States as a pluralistic society.

The placement of democracy in education has been put into question and challenged by *The 1619 Project*. In addition, the purpose of the federal government in education was challenged by *The 1619 Project*. Education remains to be a state-governed entity, but under what conditions does the federal government have the right to intervene and control education and essentially curriculum, or should that remain a “state issue”? Based on each political party’s response to *The 1619 Project*, conservatives deem political involvement in education as a national governing necessity when the social studies curriculum begins to explicitly connect past and present race relations as systemic, and the creditability of the source can be contested. On the other hand, liberals do not deem political involvement when said topics are addressed and accuse conservatives of intentionally omitting unfavorable perspectives of American history.

Yet conclusively, the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* does not align fully with the politicization of *The 1619 Project*. Like education, *The 1619 Project* seeks to transform society. However, the politicization of *The 1619 Project* displays the legacy of curricular warfare and whose vision will dominate the larger cultural future of the social studies curriculum. Education is a means to transform society, and the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* is to place African Americans at the center of American history. Nikole Hannah-Jones stated she wanted to become a journalist to “fight on behalf of those who don’t wield power in this country” (Klein, 2021, p. 3). Through *The 1619 Project*, Nikole Hannah-Jones and her colleagues exercised said power to examine how the United States has failed at providing democracy to African Americans.

What is the Rhetorical, Political Debate Associated (Around) *The 1619 Project*?⁵

According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, Black journalists were given “an unprecedented platform to share how America looks through their eyes” (Sappenfield, 2019, para. 6) through the publication of *The 1619 Project*. The rhetorical and political debate associated with *The 1619 Project* is a dichotomous debate. Both political parties are debating the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* while aiming to address how the said project can positively or negatively influence the school curriculum. More importantly, the dichotomous debate is driven by determining whose perspective on the role of race within America’s identity is accurate based on “history,”⁶ The opposition to *The 1619 Project* is not opposition to African American history. Instead, it is opposition to centering slavery, thus putting to question the domestic and international legacy of the United States. Due to this, conservatives have taken the stance that *The 1619 Project* is an attempt to weaponize history with legislative aims; in comparison, liberals have taken the stance that *The 1619 Project* is a ground-breaking counter-narrative to American history that a group of Black intellectuals, consisting primarily of journalists but including attorneys and academic scholars, were bold enough to tackle. And because of their work, the lasting legacy of slavery in America is being brought to the forefront, resulting in a more “truthful” narrative of American history. Consequently, based on the dichotomous rhetorical and political debate associated with *The 1619 Project*, the

⁵ The terms “right-leaning”, conservative, and Republicans are used interchangeably in reference to the GOP. The terms “left-leaning”, liberal, and Democrats are used interchangeably in reference to the Democratic Political Party.

⁶ The word “history” is in quotes, because based on one’s perspective, “history” takes on different interpretations.

following themes were created (For more information on the themes, See Table 18 in Appendix C).

Unsurprisingly, neither side of the political debate fully understood the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* because of the misinformation published by each side's politically leaning newspapers. Political identity has become a reflection of social justice values, and part of its purpose now is it defines one's stance on racial progression in America and history. Moreover, depending on one's political identification, individuals will either "support" the narrative or perspective regarding the legacy of slavery and its impact on African Americans or not. The rationale behind this statement is based on the two politically charged newspapers, the *Wall Street Journal* as conservative and *The Washington Post* as liberal, which solely understood *The 1619 Project* from either vantage point. Within the dichotomous political debate, the underlying critical question raised by both sides was, "who has the authority the write public K-12 social studies curriculum?" Or, more directly, do journalists have the *authority* to write, change, and/or challenge public K-12 social studies curriculum? Because depending on "who" is writing, "history" determines how and what is told. Moreover, should the perspective of Black journalists, scholars, and lawyers on U.S. History be deemed as a trustworthy and accurate representation of U. S. history? Based on the frequency of these unspoken questions and inferences of attempts to undermine the project's credibility, the theme of advocacy journalism and authority to prompt change was created to justify authority by revealing the silencing of narratives.

Another component of the dichotomous rhetorical political debate was whether U.S. History should have a singular or pluralistic approach resulting in the theme of

singular versus pluralistic U.S. History. Because the dichotomous political debate became so contentious, it revamped the longstanding social studies curriculum debate (i.e., the culture war(s)). Arguments associated with components of the culture war became so prevalent that culture war(s) became a theme. Self-defined as a *rise* in, or an example of, a *controversial* topic being discussed within America that causes or results in division,” the theme of culture war(s) further means to “*intentionally* disrupts the ‘overt’ (for those with white privilege) harmonious conditions of society.” Therefore, because culture war(s) prompts intentional reflection, CRT and its place in public K-12 social studies curriculum and education arose as a theme. Even though CRT became a theme, a key finding was that CRT was inaccurately being represented in *all* newspaper outlets outside of the *Christian Science Monitor*. Because CRT was wrongly misunderstood, the dichotomous rhetorical political debate associated with *The 1619 Project* followed the same path, meaning, instead of being seen as a method or example of how CRT ideologies can be incorporated into social studies curriculum and education, it was viewed as the *definition* of CRT, which it is not. Nonetheless, because *The 1619 Project* was mistaken as CRT, it raised the noticeable point: does democracy in curriculum exist in education, and at whose expense? Can racially centered conversations occur in the social studies curriculum that directly challenges the dominant narrative taught? Should race-centered conversations in the social studies curriculum “cater” to patriotic ideologies of America’s identity? How these questions were answered was based heavily upon the political lean of the news outlet.

Race is undeniably a part of the history of the United States and is inherently embedded within the United States' identity. However, whether it has had lasting

ramifications on the experiences of African Americans remains questionable for some. If one takes the epistemological worldviews of postpositivist historians and scholars, which conservative-leaning politicians gravitate towards, while evidence can *infer* the ramifications of slavery and Blackness had negative impacts on African Americans, there is limited historical evidence supporting the said claim. Furthermore, from their vantage point, not every part of America's identity and history is racially motivated; race did and has not defined America. Comparatively, if one takes the epistemological worldviews of transformative historians and scholars, which liberal-leaning politicians gravitate towards because of what Blackness represents in American society, there are unspoken limitations and treatment given towards African Americans which are systemically interwoven in America's approach to democracy.

The Rhetorical, Political Debate From NYT, CSM, and CO Perspective

Within the research, *The New York Times* was the baseline, the *Christian Science Monitor* was moderate, and *The Charlotte Observer* was the local insight on the political narrative for unveiling the rhetorical, political debate associated (around) *The 1619 Project*. Being that *The New York Times* is the publisher of *The 1619 Project*, most of the articles they published were in favor of the project. Therefore, as expected, *The 1619 Project* became a theme defined as “the project as is. Either portions of the essay, selected essays, or the project in its entirety. Typically, news outlets and media are responding to the opening essay by Nikole Hannah-Jones.” An essential part of the theme of *The 1619 Project* is that often, *The New York Times* was responding, countering, and supporting the opening essay; the other essays, although contentious, did not encounter the same political uproar until reparations entered the conversation. Undoubtedly, *The*

1619 Project is more than its opening essay, and to capture when *The New York Times* discussed the project indirectly, the theme of *The 1619 Project* supporting content was created. On the same note, because there remained to be a clear misunderstanding of what the project was, a lot of content was often wrongly associated with the project and resulting in the theme “unrelated” being created.

The New York Times made a conscious effort to address criticism and published an amended version of *The 1619 Project*, addressing some of the historically controversial points made in the original print (Silverstein, 2020). However, even when addressing criticism, *The New York Times* made a point to emphasize why the project was necessary. Although much of the language used within *The 1619 Project* can be deemed politically charged, Jake Silverstein, the Editor-in-Chief at *The New York Times*, conveyed it was being wrongly interpreted as such. From *The New York Times*’s vantage point, *The 1619 Project* is a journalistic approach to U.S. History centered around Blackness and the experience and role African Americans hold in America’s identity. Therefore, the necessity of *The 1619 Project* lies in the fact that it was first published on the 400th Anniversary of the first arrival of slave ships on American shores. Secondly, it repositioned the role or placement of slavery, that “Blackness” in America’s history was a foundational component in shaping democracy and America’s overall identity (i.e., through music, economic structure, highway development, etc.). Also, as stated by Nikole Hannah-Jones:

The 1619 Project is first and foremost an invitation to reframe how the country discusses the role and history of its black citizens. ‘As much as I hope white readers will read it and have their minds blown, I hope that black people will read

it, and feel a sense of ownership over this country and a sense of pride in our resilience,' Ms. Hannah-Jones said. 'I hope to reframe the way we see ourselves in America (as cited in Gyarkye, 2019, para.14).

Over time, *The New York Times*'s interpretation of the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* changed, but the change in interpretation was never explained, expounded, or acknowledged by the outlet. Nevertheless, one component that remained consistent was *The New York Times* interconnecting CRT and *The 1619 Project* while misrepresenting CRT in education. This was an example of how this misrepresentation could be seen through the response to the "culture-war brawl" (Trip & Goldstein, 2021, p.1) by the Republican Party. *The New York Times* defined CRT as

a graduate school framework that has found its way into K-12 public education. The concept argues that historical patterns of racism are ingrained in law and other modern institutions, and that the legacies of slavery, segregation and Jim Crow still create an uneven playing field for Black people and other people of color. (Trip & Goldstein, 2021, para.3)

As stated previously, CRT entails the inclusion of counternarratives and counter experiences, which can be argued as being an essential part of social studies and U.S. History. While the desire to redefine whose vantage point of U.S. History is the dominant narrative, highly esteemed historical scholars such as James McPherson, Sean Wilentz, Leslie M. Harris, Allen C. Guelzo, James Grossman, Matthew Karp, Philip W. Magress, Jane Kamensky, and Annette Gordon-Reed were vocal in their concerns of the racial claims, correlations, or inferences being made in *The 1619 Project*. Unquestionably, *The 1619 Project's* authors aimed to correlate or infer the political and social divide in

present-day to the “sins of the Forefathers” of the United States. Based on the magnitude of the claim, it became a leading talking point amongst politicians on either side.

Refusing to shy away from the controversy or backpaddle on the project, *The New York Times* made a visible effort to name Republican politicians who publicly spoke out against *The 1619 Project’s* claims, including Senator Mitch McConnell, Senator Tom Cotton, Senator Thom Tillis, Senator John Cornyn, and Representative Tom Cole (Bendix, 2020; Hulse, 2021). While the purpose of naming the various Republicans who opposed the project was to provide a direct rebuttal, it also addresses a point seen throughout the entire analysis. To undermine the integrity of an argument or information, using the perspective of an expert provides creditability. Additionally, naming individuals whom the general population is familiar with raises the stakes of where limited creditability should or should not be placed.

As the first newspaper analyzed, the themes in *The New York Times* were limited. Nonetheless, from *The New York Times*, the theme of democracy in curriculum formed and became a central argument to Republican rebuttals across *all* newspaper outlets, so much so, democracy in curriculum had one of the highest frequencies of 30 times throughout the entire analysis. As per its definition, the researcher created the theme democracy in curriculum which “encompasses the impact, positive or negative, of having CRT and *The 1619 Project* into social studies curriculum and education overall. Who has the power of choice, diversity, and inclusion of diverse voices/perspectives in education.” Many Republican politicians questioned whether Nikole Hannah-Jones or any of the project’s contributing authors were qualified or questioned the level of creditability of the project’s racial claims based on their occupations. Hence, an underlying component

within all the themes is the idea or notion of “authority.” Who has the authority to determine what version of U.S. History is spread domestically and, ultimately, internationally? Additionally, which political party, Republican or Democrat, represents the voices of the true patriots or American people?

Unlike *The New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor* was able to contextualize and accurately articulate what CRT represents, making it essentially the most neutral and accurate of all the outlets the *Christian Science Monitor* stated:

Basic tenets of critical race theory include the premises that racism is “ordinary, not aberrational,” that it “is difficult to address or cure because it is not acknowledged,” and that “race and races are products of social thought and relations,” according to Professor Delgado’s book, co-written by Jean Stefancic. Critical race theorists are frustrated with principles such as colorblindness and believe “only aggressive, color-conscious efforts to change the way things are will do much to ameliorate misery.” (Sheasley, 2021, para. 20)

In simpler terms, “...critical race theory, [is] a decades-old idea that considers the ways race and racism influence American politics, culture, and law” (Sheasley, 2021, para. 2). Similarly to *The New York Times*, the *Christian Science Monitor* claimed CRT had reignited the culture war found within the school curriculum. Additionally, from the *Christian Science Monitor's* perspective, *The 1619 Project* is a “journalistic effort to rethink slavery’s role in America’s founding” (Sheasley, 2021, para. 14). Thus, when understanding the rhetorical and political debate associated (around) *The 1619 Project*, the *Christian Science Monitor* was the only news outlet that was able to articulate the

dichotomous debate occurring most objectively. From their stance, the debate occurring was based on,

those in favor of the new laws want more restrictions as classroom discussions and hastily implemented anti-racist lesson plans have taken hold in the past year. Those opposed say statehouse rules could have a chilling effect on conversation about racism and race in schools just when it is needed most. (Sheasley, 2021, para. 6)

The *Christian Science Monitor* displayed a clear understanding that although *The 1619 Project* and CRT are interconnected, they are not the same. However, because of today's political climate, *The 1619 Project's* perceived *intent* became linked to political party identity and political talking points. Hence, much of the (un)spoken political language in the project has evoked a national political response.

Many of the articles published in the *Christian Science Monitor* were in favor of CRT and the “*true intent*” of *The 1619 Project*. However, the *Christian Science Monitor* did not shy away from acknowledging that the *intent* of the project, according to *The New York Times*, changed over time. And rather than bombard readers with criticism or praise for the project, the *Christian Science Monitor* replied solely on the perspective of historian James Grossman. Subsequently, the *Christian Science Monitor* was able to acknowledge without disregarding each side's opposing views that “there is pain and reckoning in the narrative of black America” (Sappenfield, 2019, para. 7). Due to this, the themes of advocacy journalism and American democracy develop to accurately contextualize and relay the role of journalism in American society. But recognizing a key factor of democracy and what makes America unique is citizens' right to openly critique

and question their government. Consequently, if the African American experience or narrative is to be heard, there must be a willingness to experience discomfort.

Conclusively, *The Charlotte Observer* did not display a clear political stance for or against *The 1619 Project*. However, many of the articles published in the newspaper were reprints from conservative-leaning newspaper outlets such as the *Chicago Tribune*. Using a reprint from the *Chicago Tribune*, *The Charlotte Observer* defined *The 1619 Project* as, “...to reframe the country’s history, understanding 1619 as our true founding, and placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are” (Kass, 2019, para. 7). Similarly to *The New York Times*, *The Charlotte Observer* cited historian James McPherson, Republican politicians Senator Tom Cotton and Senator Thom Tillis, and *The New York Times*’s editor Jake Silverstein when presenting perspectives on the project and CRT. In comparison to *The New York Times* and *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Charlotte Observer* focused specifically on the present and future implications the inclusion of *The 1619 Project* would have on the social studies curriculum. From *The Charlotte Observer*’s stance, the aim of *The 1619 Project* is to influence race focus content and language in social studies, raising this fundamental question: should race-related discussions occur in the K-12 curriculum? Because race and race talk in education was a main area of interest within the outlet, the themes of race and political “wokeness” in education, formed and ultimately summarized the fundamental argument of the entire debate.

The Role of Language

The New York Times

Language became a rhetorical weapon and tool used simultaneously to conflate *The 1619 Project* and CRT. Each newspaper outlet used specific words and/or language to describe CRT and *The 1619 Project*, which were many times geared towards the political lean of their intended readers. Since *The New York Times* published the project, the language they chose to use held a different level of importance because it partially molded the path of the discussion.

When describing or discussing *The 1619 Project*, *The New York Times* stated,

- “...much of the criticism stems from a disagreement with the project’s alternate view of American history” (Silverstein, 2020).
- “...that the goal of the project is to get readers to consider 1619 as the nation’s birth year” (Silverstein, 2020).
- “This project is an origin story. It is not pretending to be *the* origin story” (Pierre-Antoine, 2020a).
- “Our founding ideals of liberty and equality were false when they were written. For generations, black Americans have fought to make them true” (Hannah-Jones, 2019)
- “...wanted readers to understand that the magazine articles were intended to be the beginning of a conversation and that she hoped these forums incorporating a variety of voices would stimulate more dialogue” (Pierre-Antoine, 2020b, para. 5).

Although the dates of these quotes vary from within *The New York Times*, it showed that although the relayed *intent* of *The 1619 Project* changed over time, *The New York Times* reaffirmed continuously that *The 1619 Project* was an indirect subjective, provocative journalism versus historical journalism. That the leading author, “Nikole Hannah-Jones, is an investigative journalist for the New York Times Magazine” (Klein, 2021, para. 1). Therefore, while it could be argued that *The New York Times* intentionally published provocative journalism to gain headline attention, *The New York Times* can also rightfully claim and remind its opponents that the project never claimed to be historical journalism.

Table 2

Top 5 Frequent Words in The New York Times-The 1619 Project Articles

Word	Count
People	733
Black	582
American	487
History	450
Slavery	444

Comparably, when *The New York Times* discussed CRT, it rarely discussed CRT from its theoretical lens. Instead, *The New York Times* focused on the politicization of the topic and would illuminate its impact on education and the discussion of race in the larger society. *The New York Times* stated,

- “...these laws (anti-CRT legislation) threaten the basic purpose of a historical education in a liberal democracy” (Foster et al., 2021).

- “The debate over how to teach children about race and racial history has reached a curious juncture, in which it’s becoming hard to tell what the argument is about” (Douthat, 2021).
- “...conservatives began using “critical race theory” as an umbrella term for educational strategies they oppose, progressives began insisting that C.R.T. is either academic and irrelevant (just high-level graduate school stuff) or anodyne and uncontroversial (just a way of saying we should teach kids about slavery and racism)” (Douthat, 2021, para. 2).

Table 3

Top 5 Frequent Words in The New York Times-CRT Articles

Word	Count
Race	234
Racism	149
Students	133
School	124
History	123

Christian Science Monitor

Remaining aligned with its objectivity, the *Christian Science Monitor* captured the essence of the debate surrounding *The 1619 Project*. Specifically, when discussing *The 1619 Project*, the *Christian Science Monitor* used words such as,

- “Cultural awareness” (Sappenfield, 2019).
- “Culturally responsive teaching” (Sappenfield, 2019).

- “How intimately interwoven the country is with slavery legacy” (Sappenfield, 2019).
- “Widespread focus on Black history” (Hanes, 2020, para. 10).

In comparison, when identifying why the said debate has become controversial, the *Christian Science Monitor* used language such as,

- “Influence the teaching of U.S. history” (Monitor's Editorial Board, 2020).
- “How to teach United States history” (Monitor's Editorial Board, 2020).
- “Founding Fathers are “liars” who didn’t believe in the values they touted” (Adams, 2021).
- “Left-wing myth.” (Sheasley, 2021).

Likewise, unlike other newspaper outlets, the *Christian Science Monitor* did not include any specific language directed toward CRT. Speaking to the outlet's understanding of the two, *The 1619 Project* and CRT were discussed as two different entities.

Table 4

Top 5 Frequent Words in Christian Science Monitor- The 1619 Project Articles

Word	Count
Americans	17
Black	15
Slavery	15
Reparations	13
History	12

Table 5

Top 5 Frequent Words in Christian Science Monitor-CRT Articles

Word	Count
"Says"	37
History	35
Race	34
Black	27
Critical	22

The Charlotte Observer

As stated previously, the political stance of *The Charlotte Observer* remained unclear overall. However, much presented within *The Charlotte Observer* was negative and positive, sensationalized dichotomous and irreconcilable sides. When adhering to its larger conservative base, *The Charlotte Observer* described *The 1619 Project* as,

- “Absurd” (Will, 2021a).
- “US history is all about racism” (Will, 2021a).
- “Fake news and alternative facts” (Will, 2021c).
- “Overwhelming liberal bent” (Kass, 2019).
- “Racially divisive and revisionist account of history that threatens the integrity of the Union” (Murphy, 2021).
- “Promoting ideological and misleading depictions of our nation’s history (Murphy, 2021).
- “Indoctrination in far-left socialist teaching that emphasizes America’s shortcomings over the exceptional achievements of this country (Demillo, 2021).
- “Inclusive” is obviously a synonym for “progressive” (Will, 2021a, para. 5).

Comparatively, when appealing to its liberal-leaning readers, although not as frequently the language used regarding *The 1619 Project* was,

- “Embraces and encourages progressive viewpoints and perspectives” (Will, 2021a).
- “Inclusive” (Solomon, 2019).
- “It’s not about reframing American history-it’s about revealing it” (Solomon, 2019).
- “Our country is now, finally, beginning to engage in a debate-a debate about what America truly is, who it belongs to, and what it out to be” (Solomon, 2019).

The language used to discuss CRT included,

- “Decade-old concept” (Tagami et al., 2019).
- “Self-censorship” (Will, 2021d).
- “Anti-racism movement” (Will, 2021d).
- “Toxic perspective-silence is violence” (Will, 2021d).
- “Equity policy” (Keung Hui, 2021).
- “Most frequently cited example of CRT is *The 1619 Project*” (Keung Hui, 2021).

Table 6

Top 5 Frequent Words in The Charlotte Observer-The 1619 Project Articles

Word	Count
News	59
UNC	57
Jones (OR) Hannah	50 (OR) 49

School	38
Project	35

Table 7*Top 5 Frequent Words in The Charlotte Observer-CRT Articles*

Word	Count
Race	22
Critical	14
Theory	12
"Say"	9
View	9

How Do The Media Portrayals of The 1619 Project Accurately or Inaccurately Represent the intent of The 1619 Project?⁷

Per *The Washington Post*, a liberal-leaning newspaper outlet, *The 1619 Project* has caused a political debate regarding the integrity of democracy in the United States (Attiah, 2021). Although *The Washington Post* displayed visible support for *The 1619 Project*, it remained critical of its perspective. Thus, *The Washington Post* attempted to ensure their readers understood that retelling American history differs depending on who is telling the history. Therefore, based on the individual(s) perspective, their stance on democracy in the United States will differ. An example of this is the newspaper published a quote from Walter Hussman Jr., a white donor at UNC's Hussman School of Journalism and Media perspective on the project, who stated, "...did not give enough

⁷ The points of view presented do not reflect the ideological perspectives of *all* liberals. But rather, the readers of *The Washington Post*.

credit to White people who fought for liberation” (Attiah, 2021, para. 6). Additionally, *The Washington Post* alluded race relations continue to be a challenging topic to navigate in society, which must be considered when contextualizing *The 1619 Project*.

Having said that, as with *The New York Times* and *The Charlotte Observer*, *The Washington Post* showed a misinterpretation of what CRT is or how CRT presents itself in education, which influences how *The 1619 Project’s intent* was understood. CRT and CRT in education embody different components, as Ladson-Billings (1995, 1998) explicitly illustrated. As stated in Chapter 3,

CRT contextualizes the experiences African American students encounter while obtaining an education. Moreover, how institutional racism within education and education policies maintains the status quo of white students being deemed more deserving than African American students resulting in adverse educational outcomes and experiences for African American youth. (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995)

Referencing the same historians as *The New York Times* and *The Charlotte Observer*, *The Washington Post* included the perspectives of Gordon Wood, Barbara Fields, and James Oakes for historical insights, journalist Walter Hussman, and Representative Tom Cole to present the politicization of the project. Ultimately, *The Washington Post* defined the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* as “an attempt to tell the story of slavery and its lasting effect on American political, economic and social structures” (Gerson, 2019, para. 1); “...the *New York Times’s 1619 Project* and other efforts to center slavery and the role of racism in the American story” (Stanford, 2021, para. 7). Undoubtedly, *The 1619 Project* centers the United States' history around slavery. Further, while the said *intent* is accurate in the

context that *The 1619 Project* does aim to illuminate “the story of slavery, etc.,” *The 1619 Project* strives to accomplish so much more. One is to show how African American culture *is* America’s identity. Strikingly, this point was missed, and as the researcher, it was unclear whether it was missed because of pure unawareness or if the headlining, provocative claim regarding slavery and the Founding Fathers overshadowed the argument. Therefore, because identity and the (un)spoken historical emphasis place racial hierarchy in American society, the theme of membership developed.

In the United States, membership presents itself in many ways. From racial groups to political parties to socioeconomic status, membership can be found in all capacities. In *The 1619 Project*, membership was examined, and argumentatively, *The Washington Post* was the main outlet that understood its relevance but fell short of unpacking the depth of its meaning. As a theme, membership was defined as “[Evaluates] placement in the society of POC, specifically African Americans. Related to ‘political party agenda’ & ‘national debate’ themes.” Historically, African American membership in American society has been challenged. Thus, although never directly stated as such, *The 1619 Project* challenged how African Americans have been denied membership. In *The Washington Post*, the role of membership was inferred, but there was no explicit acknowledgment in association with race. Instead, *The Washington Post* pushed narratives surrounding membership relating to identity politics without clearly or ever defining identity politics.

The Role of Language

When looking at the language used by *The Washington Post* to discuss *The 1619 Project* and CRT, the outlet strived to remind its readers of America’s ideals while

acknowledging that the United States *may* have fallen short. For example, *The Washington Post* used language such as,

- “Freedom has always been at the center of the American political order” (Pompeo, 2020).
- “... ‘*The 1619 Project*’ in touting the importance of teaching about the consequence of slavery” (Will, 2020).
- “...it is the story of a radical principle-the principle of human equality-introduced into a deeply unjust society” (Gerson, 2019).

Within the same vain, *The Washington Post* held minimal restraint when critiquing the project using language such as,

- “...trust evaporates when journalistic entities embrace political projects” (Will, 2020).
- “Liberal agenda...Marxist-based philosophy...conspiracy theory” (Milbank, 2021).
- “*1619 Project* is a prime example of leftist ideological overreach” (Gerson, 2019).
- “...the *NYTimes*’s debunked *1619 Project*, this is an effort to dimmish the great figures of history and place slavery at the center of every story” (Stanford, 2021).

Similarly, it presented CRT to its readers as a

- “Progressive preoccupations...neoliberal corporations” (Will, 2021b).
- “Un-American propaganda” (Emba, 2021).
- “Objections to CRT are an emotional defense against unwanted change, not an intellectual disagreement” (Emba, 2021).

Table 8

Top 5 Frequent Words in The Washington Post-The 1619 Project Articles

Word	Count
States	39
American	36
Slavery	36
United	35
Rights	32

Table 9

Top 5 Frequent Words in The Washington Post-CRT Articles

Word	Count
Race	37
States	30
History	26
Critical	25
United	24

How do the Media Portrayals of The 1619 Project Accurately or Inaccurately Represent the intent of The 1619 Project for Other Stakeholders, such as Opponents and Critics of The 1619 Project?⁸

According to articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, a conservative-leaning newspaper outlet, *The 1619 Project* inaccurately presented the role of race in U.S. History (Kaufman, 2019). To support this stance, the *Wall Street Journal* presented

⁸ The points of view presented do not reflect the ideological perspectives of *all* conservatives. But rather, the readers of the *Wall Street Journal*.

counter-narratives to the project written by Black, politically conservative-leaning scholars who attacked the “victim mentality” the project represents for many conservatives (Woodson, 2019). Moreover, articles in the *Wall Street Journal* continuously emphasized speculated misuse of historical events to present a desired narrative (Kaufman, 2019). A vital issue conservative politicians had with *The 1619 Project* is the belief it intentionally ignored the vetting of information; this perspective is aimed at the opening essay in particular. As stated in the opening essay, Nikole Hannah-Jones claimed the “real” or “truthful” reason the American Revolution was fought was that the colonists, which included Thomas Jefferson, a Founding Father of the United States, did not want to end slavery. Interestingly, the same highly acclaimed scholars cited by *The New York Times* as historical critics of the project were the same historical scholars used by the *Wall Street Journal* to discredit its value and accuracy; these names included Phillip Magness, James McPherson, Sean Wilentz, and Allen C. Guelzo (Eberstadt, 2020; Guelzo, 2020; Kaufman, 2019; Riley, 2020) (See Table 10). According to historians Phillip Magness, James McPherson, Sean Wilentz, and Allen C. Guelzo, slavery was not a component or a deciding factor in whether the American Revolution was to be fought (Eberstadt, 2020; Guelzo, 2020; Kaufman, 2019; Riley, 2021). While none of them refute that slavery was still occurring in the United States then, they believe there is not enough *historical evidence* to support Nikole Hannah-Jones’s claim. Moreover, said historians emphasized many spoke with Nikole Hannah-Jones before the publishing of the project regarding the “misuse” of historical events. From their vantage point, there are no primary sources to back the claim and in response, Nikole Hannah-Jones has said she never presented herself as a historian, nor has she ever claimed to be

one. Instead, she emphasized that she is an investigative journalist and is presenting history centering on the experiences of African Americans in the framing of the United States.

The creditability of *The 1619 Project* was a reoccurring element as to why conservative politicians and media refuted it. Therefore, the theme of history became essential to the conservative perspective. Furthermore, conservative-leaning politicians and media viewed *The 1619 Project* as an attempt to weaponize history with a leftist agenda. Specifically, many speculate that *The 1619 Project* used race to form and/or support a political coalition geared towards the political left or Democrats, who present themselves as more racially empathetic. Like the theme of history, this stance displayed the reality various historically marginalized communities encounter versus American ideals. Thus, to better recognize the impact of the theme of American ideals versus American reality, two additional themes, propaganda and political party agenda, were developed. The theme of propaganda was defined using the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition and was used solely by the conservative-leaning politicians and media claiming *The 1619 Project* aimed to push leftist political propaganda in education. Alongside *The 1619 Project* having social justice implications for society at large, it also was an attempt, from their perspective, to incorporate social justice ideologies into the public K-12 social studies curriculum, resulting in a more “progressive” education curriculum geared toward dismantling America’s identity. This said perspective caused the development of the theme of political party agenda because verbiage of “propaganda” fueled identity politics.

Robert Woodson, a former civil rights activist and former resident fellow at American Enterprise Foundation for Public Policy Research, and the most sought

commentator for the Black conservative perspective at the *Wall Street Journal*, was the first to use the term “identity politics” concerning *The 1619 Project* (Woodson, 2020). Identity politics, from Woodson’s stance, is a “grievance-based” political identity (Woodson, 2020, para. 8). Or as Gonzalez stated, “...identity politics. The concept that the country should be divided into aggrieved categories based on race, national origin or sex—now a core tenet of the Democratic Party...” (Gonzalez, 2020, para. 1). The distinction between how Republicans and Democrats approached race became a factor and inherently defined *The 1619 Project*, according to the media. The theme of the political party agenda is not a standalone theme. Instead, it works in conjunction with themes of national debate. Moreover, to acknowledge the plurality within the Black perspective, which only the *Wall Street Journal* took time to address, the theme amplified “political” compliance versus “political” disruption” developed.

The theme of the national debate is defined as “a larger societal discussion(s) is/are occurring regarding citizenship, equity, & equality in the U.S. towards POC. *The 1619 Project* fall under “issues” within education.” Or simply, *The 1619 Project* reflects a national issue or concern in the United States that is a part of the national political debate or an extension of the culture war(s), another theme. Further, as per defined by the researcher, “political” compliance versus “political” disruption means “[evaluate] how Black progression should be approached within society. MLK vs. Malcolm X approach to social/societal reform” similarly is the political party divide within the African American community. Specifically, within the Black community, their approach and belief toward the historical and “lived Black experience” is a combative topic that causes continuous debate for African Americans based on political party identification. Hence, the inclusion

of Robert Woodson's perspective as a Black conservative was intentionally and rightfully done by conservative media.

A point *The New York Times* neglected to acknowledge or emphasize is that Blackness in the United States is not a monolithic experience. Moreover, not all African Americans believe African Americans still experience systemic oppression. Thus, instead of focusing on racial progress, *The 1619 Project* aimed to insinuate that African Americans remain oppressed based on the historical origins of Blacks coming to America from Woodson and fellow (Black) conservatives' perspectives. Woodson has remained firm in his stance against the *1619 Project* resulting in him creating *1776 Unites* (1776unites.org/) (Riley, 2021). The website includes articles from prominent Black, conservative scholars who refute the promotion in *The 1619 Project* while gravitating toward the narrative of African Americans' need to rise above their circumstances. Similar to *The 1619 Project*, *1776 Unites* sells a provocative stance, aiming to evoke an emotional, racial focus debate that calls for action. Yet, the said argument, while valid, misrepresents the *intent* and *purpose* of *The 1619 Project* and results in an imperative theme developed singular vs. pluralistic U.S. History.

The theme singular versus pluralistic U.S. History was defined as “[contextualizing] differences in interpretation of U.S. History; aiming to address whether there is one or one (+) takes on U.S. History. Directly related to theme “history.” As stated according to its leading author, *The 1619 Project's intent* was to generate dialogue. Created based on the frequency of misrepresentation of the project's *intent*, dialogue from the thematic stance emphasized journalists' autonomy to publish work aimed at sensationalizing and/or raising awareness on an issue they deem important.

However, because *The 1619 Project* addressed societal shortcomings centered around Blackness, dialogue echoed the thematic values of advocacy journalism and prompted the development of the theme of authority to prompt a change in education. Consequently, all these themes work simultaneously with the theme of singular versus pluralistic U.S. History. On the surface, the journalistic integrity of Nikole Hannah-Jones was questioned. However, an underlying question being asked was whether there are one (singular) or multiple (pluralistic) perspectives or interpretations of U.S. History.

The theme authority to prompt change is defined as “[investigate] *who* can prompt change; specifically, *identify* them & career path/position that justifies their authority to be a (*noteworthy*) voice for reform to occur & be accepted. Directly related to themes “history,” “advocacy journalism,” and “national debate.” Moreover, authority to prompt change is a concept that, whether openly acknowledged as such by *The New York Times*, *The 1619 Project* had a clear desired curricular impact which could be seen through copies of the project to schools and creating *The 1619 Project Curriculum* (Pulitzer Center, n.d.). The role of race and racially conscious history within U.S. History served only one purpose for conservatives: division. Therefore, the incorporation of the project encourages racial division, emplaces guilt on white students for being white, and fabricates the notion white privilege exists.

In response, conservative politicians and media have encouraged and created legislation to prevent the inclusion of CRT and/or *The 1619 Project* in the public K-12 school curriculum in various politically red states. Furthermore, to maintain curricular control, conservative politicians have connected state education funding to the inclusion of CRT and/or *The 1619 Project* in the public K-12 school curriculum (See Table 9).

More explicitly, funding can be given or denied if CRT or *The 1619 Project* is incorporated into public education (Brazile, 2021) (See Table 19 in Appendix C). Legislation such as this can be seen as a form of intimidation aimed at practitioners. Therefore, if practitioners include or refuse to include CRT or the project in their classroom lessons, their job could be at risk, reemphasizing how practitioners are the gatekeepers between policy and curriculum, and more importantly, the role of teacher autonomy.

The Role of Language

Similar to other news outlets analyzed, the use of language became a rhetorical weapon and tool to conflate *The 1619 Project* and CRT. Through the *Wall Street Journal's* deliberate word choice selections, conservatives were able to reaffirm themselves as individuals who "... cherish the founding vision and values of our nation" (Woodson, 2019, para. 3). Conversely, although the language used within *The 1619 Project* was intentionally selected, the *Wall Street Journal* and conservative politicians are just as much guilty of mimicking the same method to further their own political agenda and perspective concerning the project. For instance, when describing *The 1619 Project*, the *Wall Street Journal* called it,

- "Anti-American propaganda" (Riley, 2020a).
- "...moral crusade" (Riley, 2021).
- "...weaponizing of history" (McClay, 2019).
- "...cult of intersectionality" (McClay, 2019).
- "*1619 Project* is aimed at legitimizing the politics of the Democratic Party and at "dividing workers" by race" (Kaufman, 2019).

- “...racist propaganda” (Morrow, 2021).
- “...waved away those objections as differences of “interpretation and intention, not fact” (Guelzo, 2020).
- “Selling points; seeks to market their *1619 Project Curriculum*” (Guelzo, 2020).
- “...that blacks are perpetual victims of white racism” (Woodson, 2020).
- “...simple minded approach to a complicated subject” (Riley, 2021).

Similarly, the *Wall Street Journal* described CRT as,

- “...woke racism” (Riley, 2021).
- “...social-justice boot camps” (Riley, 2021).
- “...it’s about blaming your problems on other people-based on their race...” (Riley, 2021).
- “...racially divisive, anti-American dogma” (Riley, 2020b).
- “Critical race theory attributes social inequities to racial power structures” (Riley, 2020b).

Table 10

Top 5 Frequent Words in Wall Street Journal-The 1619 Project Articles

Word	Count
Rights	91
American	88
Project	82
History	76
Black	74

Table 11*Top 5 Frequent Words in Wall Street Journal-CRT Articles*

Word	Count
Race	69
Critical	49
Theory	42
School	39
Black	36

North Carolina Social Studies Standards Case Study⁹

An exemplary and relevant debate that echoed the impact of the politicization of *The 1619 Project* and is also a contemporary illustration of the politicization of formal social studies curriculum are the events that occurred during the adoption of the current social studies standards in North Carolina. Supporting much of what the literature discussed regarding the incorporation of race in the social studies curriculum along with the themes that were created during the newspaper analysis, the passionate deliberation that occurred between various members at the School Board Meetings (SBM) is rooted in the culture wars or political “wokeness” in education. Moreover, the language used within the literal and theme developed national debate regarding race, education, and the distinct word choice of the two dichotomous political parties was frequently integrated by specific SB members. Thus, while the SB members were debating on the *type* of language and examples used in the newly adopted North Carolina social studies

⁹ Not all the committee members will be called out by name, but many are. There was no personal bias in my selection of who is mentioned; it was heavily dependent upon the content of what was discussed during the School Board Meeting.

standards, they were also putting forth their political stance and perspective on the larger national discussion occurring in conjunction with the adoption of social studies standards (See Table 25 in Appendix C).

School Board Meeting, June 4, 2020

Similar to the pattern in the newspaper outlets surrounding the politicization of *The 1619 Project*, the SBM did not initially start off contentious towards the adoption of the new social studies standards. Moreover, as one of the less politically charged SBM, *The Charlotte Observer* did not release any articles following this meeting. Based on the data selection timeframe, the first SBM that discussed the standards was on June 4, 2020, and holistically, the discussion echoed the use of censorship in education. Moreover, how the omission and/or use of specific language can prompt students to make accurate or inaccurate conclusions regarding the United States. Additionally, the day-to-day implementation of standards and the documents created to support teachers to do that effectively were discussed.

Opening each social studies standard SBM the same, the NC DPI reminded SB members of the four steps (feedback, research-informed, improvement-oriented, and process-driven) (NC DPI, 2020) used to develop said standards. The importance of this is twofold; first, it reaffirms that there is a clear, structured format to develop and adopt social studies standards; secondly, it affirms their creditability. Continuously throughout the SBM, the educational and career backgrounds of board members were stated as a way of distinguishing their knowledge for reliable sources on social studies-related topics. Consequently, the importance of *sound reliability* was not only vital but heavily

determined the level of trustworthiness towards the standards themselves, signaling the theme of authority to prompt change.

As SB members' comments showed, a growing concern that carried throughout all the meetings analyzed was the day-to-day implementation of the created social studies standards. Specifically, they were concerned if teachers would know how to interpret the standards accurately, what resource they would use (if not clearly directed), and more importantly if something was left out of the standards, would teachers still see it as something of importance to cover in class or not? School Board member and the 2019 Wells Fargo North Carolina Principal of the Year Matthew Bristow-Smith was the first to mention this concern during June 4th meeting and stated that the exclusion of terms such as *Slavery*, *Women's Suffrage*, *Industrial Revolution*, *World War I*, *Civil Rights*, and *immigration* was a result of the standards and sub-standards being too broad and leaving too much to interpretation. Additionally, Smith addressed that teachers' voices must be central when vetting terms if the new standards were to be effective. Another SB member inquired whether the standards had to be implemented in the upcoming school year due to teacher work overload and the preparation needed to roll out the standards. In response, NC DPI stated that the standards were meant to be a framework and reemphasized the distinct role of the state and LEAs (See Figure 2 in Appendix D) in relation to the implementation of the standards and development of the actual curriculum.

Returning to Smith's point, Dr. James Ford restated the importance of his fellow board member's comments by presenting the SB with a metaphor regarding history. Dr. Ford likened history to "taking a group picture" and expounded how society has omitted the Black experience or engaged in anti-Blackness sentiment; to further support his

stance, he used HBO *The Watchmen* series as an example showcasing the theme CRT. Subsequently, Dr. Ford's relayed the standards are a tangible way of displaying if "we" (North Carolinians) are racist or white supremacist...etc., concluding that the standards reflect North Carolinians' mindset, good, bad, or indifferent. However, Dr. Ford challenged the notion of aiming to promote goodness within North Carolina's social studies standards and questioned how the word *race* was not included, but *involuntary migration* was. Stating that as is, the standards are biased and illuminate the exclusion of Black history and experiences (i.e., Black Wall Street, redlining, wealth gap, and political systems). Concluding with the standards should *not* be called diverse because they lack perspective, supporting the theme of American ideals vs. American reality.

Vice Chairman Alan Duncan then took a different approach to the discussion on the standards. Compared to his other SB members, Vice Chairman Duncan began his critique of the standards based on the importance of fact-based history and using the *fictional* "historical story" of George Washington and the cherry tree as an example, displaying the themes of history and singular versus pluralistic U.S. History. Then, Vice Chairman Duncan conveyed that independent judgment could conflict with others' views of historical events; in other words, historical fact versus historical interpretation and hopes for a consensus stance of *accurate* American history to be reached. Concluding the comments from SB members was Dr. Olivia Oxendine, a woman of Indigenous descent. Throughout all the SBM on North Carolina's social studies standards, Dr. Oxendine remained vocal on the contextualization, perspective, and inclusion of Indigenous history. Thus, during June 4th's meeting, Dr. Oxendine relayed the challenges in teaching Indigenous history and questioned who represented the Indigenous perspective on the

standard development committee and the importance of providing a prelude or pretext before presenting students with any content material displaying the themes of democracy in curriculum and history. After Dr. Oxendine's comments, NC DPI had the chance to provide final comments, in which they reiterated the importance of teachers' autonomy to build off the standards as developed.

The primary debate in this SBM focused on the following themes: authority to prompt change, American ideals versus American reality, history, singular versus pluralistic U.S. History, and democracy in curriculum. Within the newspaper outlets analyzed, these themes were most prevalent in *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *The Charlotte Observer*.

School Board Meeting, July 8, 2020 (Part II)

Unlike the SBM in June, the July 8th SBM is when the debate regarding politicization began to gradually rise. Additionally, compared to the SBM on June 4, 2020, *The Charlotte Observer* published an article titled, *NC Education Leaders Call for More Diverse History Standards* (Keung Huion, 2020) on July 5, 2020. Thus, before the SBM, members had the chance to read a mixture of public outcry and support towards the standards. Opening the meeting in the same manner, NC DPI indicated they received a lot of public opinions, comments, and questions on the standards since their previous discussion on June 4th. Following, when shared with their student feedback group, the newly developed standards received positive feedback as many students indicated the previous standards lacked representation, presenting the themes of CRT, democracy in curriculum, history, national debate, culture war(s), political “wokeness” in education, and authority to prompt change. After acknowledging student feedback, NC DPI

thoroughly explained and provided a visual of the difference between what is considered the standard versus the curriculum (See Figure 2 in Appendix D). From their stance, a standard is what “we” (educators) want students to know and be able to do; the example given was to run a 5K by the end of the year. Whereas the curriculum is *how* students get to a given goal or the high-quality delivery system to support the achievement of the goal, the example given was to do a 5K prep program. Ultimately emphasizing for the first time the power and role of LEA in the final say of the curriculum. The fact that the NC DPI found it necessary to explain the differences between the standard and curriculum explicitly indicated a clear misunderstanding of the differences between the two and their purpose in education.

Following, NC DPI opened the floor for SB members to speak. SB member Dr. Ford addressed again his concern with the standards leaving too much for teacher interpretation on *how* to present historical events and diverse experiences. This led Dr. Ford to urge the SB to delay the approval and intentionally reevaluate the standards “even more so with equity in mind,” showing the theme of American democracy. Dr. Oxendine expressed her concerns, which were directly related to the opening definitions of standards versus curriculum. It was at this time Dr. Oxendine reminded all (by stating) her career background as presently a Professor (at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke) and formerly a Social Studies teacher, so she is “well familiar with standards and curriculum;” highlighting the theme authority to prompt change. From there, she began to critique what standards are, from her perspective-setting, a benchmark for mastery of achievement, and once standards are loaded with topics, they are no longer standards. Instead, the standards are being reshaped in curricula goals. Thus, from her

stance, the standard presented during July 8th meeting reflected curricula goals, and to correct the said error, the standards should be presented as grade-level themes. Furthering, she directly questioned NC DPI, *who is at* the decision-making table, regarding which historical events are included in the standards, specifically for Indigenous history, and possibly delaying the approval of the standards. Again, this re-echoed the earlier theme of authority to prompt change. To address Dr. Oxendine's concerns, NC DPI stated that delaying the approval of the standards would likely have policy implications based on the language of previous legislation passed changing the required social studies course in North Carolina. However, NC DPI did not openly oppose delaying the standards, mentioning the obvious challenges but stating it could be beneficial.

The primary debate in this SBM focused on the following themes: authority to prompt change, CRT, American democracy, democracy in curriculum, history, national debate, culture war(s), and political “wokeness” in education. Within the newspaper outlets analyzed, these themes were most prevalent in *The New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Charlotte Observer*.

School Board Meeting, January 6, 2021

As with all things, allowing time to pass can have a positive or negative effect on a situation. As time progressed, the discussion surrounding the approval of the North Carolina social studies standards became a clear replication of what was occurring on the national level around the inclusion of race-based discussions in public schools. Opening the SBM with a clear request to the SB to adopt the standards, NC DPI provided a

detailed description of the diverse collaborative work and input they received from NC educators on the standards. Next, they retold the differences between standards and curriculum while emphasizing the aim to support critical thinking and growth skills. Distinctively, within said points, NC DPI restated the various educational groups/committees the standards went through before they were presented to the SB, introducing the theme of authority to prompt change. NC DPI acknowledged the various feedback they received on the standards and addressed as many as they could. And to answer Dr. Oxendine's direct question of *who* is making the decisions for Indigenous history, NC DPI conveyed they solicited input from the Native American Association.

Once the floor was open for comments, Dr. Oxendine voiced her still-present concerns surrounding *how* Indigenous history and identity within the United States and North Carolina were going to be presented. Next, Dr. Oxendine stated that students should feel empowered and be engaged thinkers. The themes of history, authority to prompt change, singular vs. pluralistic U.S. History, and culture wars were present in this conversation. Similarly, SB member Amy White indicated worry about students' experiencing or feeling "guilt" based on the language used for presenting historical events. Thus, requested specific words to be changed to depict the proactive approach America took against inequities within history, directly reflecting the themes of American democracy, American ideals versus American reality, national debate, singular versus pluralistic U.S. History, and culture wars. Subsequently, as they had reminded SB members before, NC DPI stated in response to Dr. Oxendine and White that regardless of what the standards do or do not mention, LEAs have the ultimate and final choice regarding the curriculum.

As feedback from SB members continued, the 2019 Burroughs Wellcome Fund North Carolina Teacher of the Year, Mariah Morris, became a leading voice who openly advocated for the approval of the standards and more significantly, the role of teachers throughout the entire process. From her vantage point, standards in education are the North Star for students, and students should be able to connect with their classroom instruction. To affirm her point, Morris reminded SB members of the positive feedback the newly developed standards received from students and connected those sentiments to the racial and ethnic representation within the standards, closing her point with, “we cannot choose who they (students) are when they come in.”

Unlike his fellow SB members, Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson did not mince his words nor shy away from blatantly addressing the national political climate occurring during the approval of the social studies standards. Lt. Governor Robinson indicated he was not in favor of the standards, explicitly stating the standards presented had “divisive language” and that he did not like it. And rather than separate us into groups, the standards should teach students about the common experiences of Americans nor does he not remember a time when “so-called marginalized groups” were not mentioned in history. During this time, Lt. Governor indicated the period in which he, a Black man, was raised (Civil Rights Era) to signify the inclusion of diverse history during a historically racialized time in American history. Continuing, he unambiguously said that a lot that was being done (to the standards in reference to reforming it) was for political purposes. This signaled the first time that the social studies standards were becoming politicized and that the political and social climate of the nation were influencing the discussion. Although this fact was known and shown by the actions of SB

members, none chose to call out the role of larger national politics or the narrative based on political party identification. Moreover, the perspective of Lt. Governor Robinson echoes that of Black conservatives such as Robert L. Woodson, a *Wall Street Journal* writer, directly displaying the dichotomous debate within the African American community. The themes of democracy in curriculum, American democracy, history, American ideals versus American reality, political party agenda, national debate, singular versus pluralistic U.S. History, culture war(s), political “wokeness” in education, and race were present.

Countering the statements of Lt. Governor Robinson in a more subtle undertone, Dr. Ford urged the SB to recognize the variances in experiences according to different demographic groups. He expounded that within North Carolina public schools, much of the student population are Students of Color. Then Dr. Ford commended the changes that were made to the standards while imploring individuals to think critically about how we define historical truths and critically analyze their sources of information. The themes of race, political “wokeness” in education, membership, authority to prompt change, propaganda, culture war(s), singular versus pluralistic U.S. History, American ideals versus American reality, history, American Democracy, and democracy in curriculum were present.

Vice Chairman Duncan echoed sentiments around the importance of an agreed-upon take on American history, stating social studies had become a battleground for how the United States or citizens of America are presented. To further this argument, Vice Chairman Duncan discussed the complexities of American history using Thomas Jefferson as an example. Some of the points Vice Chairman Duncan made when

discussing Jefferson were that he was one of America's Founding Fathers, a president, and a writer of the Declaration of Independence; he also was a slave owner who had relations with a slave he owned. He said Jefferson was "unquestionably a great man and incredibly important leader in the colonial time of our country..." Following he posed a rhetorical question asking SB members to imagine having to process all the facts regarding Jefferson and creating a framework for historical teaching in schools. The themes of history, singular versus pluralistic U.S. History, and culture war(s) were present.

Dr. Oxendine interjected again, reaffirming her hard reservation for approving the standards from a design perspective, indicating that the content of the standards should be grounded in research, truths, and facts within academics. From there, Chairman Eric Davis gave his thoughts, stating that a distinct uniqueness to social studies is that "shared history is not the same history," symbolizing the themes of CRT, democracy in curriculum, authority to prompt change, and history.

The primary debate in this SBM focused on the following themes: authority to prompt change, American ideals versus American reality, history, singular versus pluralistic U.S. History, national debate, culture war(s), political "wokeness" in education, race, propaganda, membership, and democracy in curriculum. Within the newspaper outlets analyzed, these themes were most prevalent in *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Charlotte Observer*.

School Board Meeting, January 27, 2021

As the first of the two most politically charged SBM surrounding the approval of the new social studies standards, the SBM on January 27th was the additional fuel added

to the growing fire. To capture the growing emotions, *The Charlotte Observer* used the following headline the day after the SBM to catch the attention of their readers, *School Board Members Clash Over Social Studies Standards* (Keung Hui, 2021). As opening points, the hierarchical process of the standard, curriculum, instructional approval, development, and meaning was stated. Voicing that the NC DPI would provide supporting documents for the standards, NC DPI overtly stated that the standards are the *only* document that required approval of the SBOE. To address the growing request of postponing the standards' approval, NC DPI represented the timeline outlined in NC legislation and the state board policy guiding the development process (See Figure 5 in Appendix D). Next, NC DPI explained the purpose and how the definitions in the Glossary were formed (See Figure 4 in Appendix D). Specifically, they indicated that the purpose of the Glossary was not to redefine words that can be found in the common dictionary, such as discrimination, racism, gender, etc., but instead support practitioners to understand or know the *intent* of certain terms within a given social studies standard. NC DPI indicated they received 85% favorable approval of the presented social studies standards and kept the window of receiving feedback open for 103 days. They explained the removal of the terms systemic racism, systemic discrimination, and gender identity, but affirmed that the Glossary could include deeper descriptions to substitute the removal of the said terms. From NC DPI, the themes of authority to prompt change, culture war(s), history, and American democracy were present.

Lt. Governor Robinson was the first SB member to speak during January 27th meeting refusing again to mince his word choice or direct attacks towards his opposing political party. Beginning with systemic racism, systemic discrimination, and gender

identity, the removal of those words did not suffice for him, and he still did not like the standards. After this, he was the first to use the word “tone” as a manner of describing his disdain for the standards. This led to a trickle-down effect because following his use of the word “tone,” this word became the primary word of choice when discussing the standards. Moreover, he overtly stated that the standards were “politically charged” and used the word “leftist” as the standards' agenda. To support his perspective, he indicated to his fellow SB members that he “knows all the code words” and is “politically aware,” concluding he knows what the said word choice(s) led to which he was against. As before, he reminded all his personal experiences of being raised in 1962 and how the complex issues surrounding race helped shape the nation. To end his point, Lt. Governor Robinson questioned the relevance and appropriateness of the standards for elementary students, specifically those in 1st and 2nd grade, vocalizing that he did not believe students in those grades should discuss or focus on race-based content but rather their concerns should be reading, writing, and mathematics. He indicated that the standards as written would not help children succeed in life.

While the delivery of Lt. Governor Robinson lacked poise in some regard, his unapologetic, straightforward approach during the SBM made the politicization of the standards undeniable. Through his word choice and interpretation of the revisions, Lt. Governor Robinson confirmed the role of the media in ones understanding of issues. This was done by using the similar language used by the *Wall Street Journal* and presented the following themes: political party agenda, national debate, propaganda, democracy in curriculum, CRT, membership, and race. Expounding on the similar sentiments of Lt. Governor Robinson, SB member Dr. Olivia Oxendine discussed the removal of

“systemic” in the social studies standards. More specifically, Dr. Oxendine conveyed that merely removing “systemic” before racism or discrimination does not change the *intent* or *implied intent*. Thus, if racism and discrimination are contextualized as having systemic factors or “pivots towards structural racism, “not having the word before it does make a difference. Therefore, she believed it was imperative, especially for students in higher grades, to take away “America the oppressor.” Instead, she believed students’ takeaway should be “America and the kind opportunities” that can be afforded here. Unlike her fellow conservative SB member, Dr. Oxendine presented a key theme through her stance on the use of “systemic” which was the theme of American ideals versus American reality.

In response to both Lt. Governor Robinson and Dr. Olivia Oxendine, NC DPI indicated that the content within the standards would be grade/age appropriate. Further, regarding the tone, NC DPI made a point to emphasize that the standards, which were being refuted and debated by SB members, were made by the teachers in North Carolina, not NC DPI. They reminded that all that has been done has been in accordance with North Carolina State Board policy, and although the tone can be further discussed, a fundamental aim of the standards is to create dialogue. From the NC DPI response, the theme dialogue presented itself as well as the authority to prompt change. In support of the standards, Maureen Stover, the 2020 Burroughs Wellcome North Carolina Teacher of the Year, relayed she was not as fortunate as Lt. Governor Robinson to obtain such an inclusive social studies curriculum or instruction. Moreover, she expressed her gratitude for the community work that it took to create the standards being debated before them. From there, Stover expressed the need for *all* students to have access to an inclusive

social studies curriculum and concluded with the importance of introducing challenging issues at the elementary school level because it builds the necessary foundation for latter grades.

Whereas in other the previous SBM, she remained less vocal, Superintendent Catherine Truitt became a subtle but leading voice in the standard debate. To begin, Superintendent Truitt openly acknowledged the feedback they received from SB members and the public. Next, she explained she understood the rationale behind removing the word “systemic discrimination” and “gender” before identity because there are multiple forms of each. Following, she relayed that the standards before the SB are not guaranteed to be the standardized approach to social studies in the state.

Comparatively, former SB member Todd Chasteen, who later resigned from the SB in part due to how contentious the social studies debate became (Associated Press, 2022), questioned the validity of teacher input NC DPI received. Chasteen asked specifically how many teachers participated in the development of the standard, and NC DPI stated it was 7,000. Upon hearing this, Chasteen affirmed that the 7,000 teacher participants equated to 1/10 or 1% of the total teacher population in North Carolina.

Taking a similar approach as Lt. Governor Robinson, Dr. James Ford questioned the premise behind the removal of the word “systemic” in plain language, indicating that he was “tired” and wished SB members would be more *direct* about what was *actually* occurring. Beginning with the function of a standard (what we want students to know), Dr. Ford stated, “This debate is connected to layers of national revise,” and by name called out *The 1776 Report* indicating the document did not have any citations or bibliography, concluding that both sides (inferred two political parties) were not equal in

evidential claims and that the “debate is about what we do not want students to know.”

The subtext from Dr. Ford’s stance should be stated as such because, from his perspective, the standards are more vague and ambiguous. Challenging the SB to self-examine why they are doing this work and for whom the standards were devised if they received 85% positive feedback. Following Dr. Ford asked whether there is a *real* debate about structural racism in the United States. Next, he raised the point of where and/or when he can state his opinion as an American and followed by telling the SB his ancestral roots in the United States dating back to pre-emancipation America in South Carolina to signify his ancestral claims to the nation. Finally, Dr. Ford mentioned the January 6th Capitol attack, which he did not want SB members or society to overlook. Immediately after speaking, Lt. Governor Robinson entered the standard debate in direct response to Dr. Ford’s stance. Vocally upset and in disagreement with Dr. Ford, Lt. Governor Robinson charged the SB to check previous meeting minutes and records for when *riots*, not protest as they were being called because protest is when signs are held according to Lt. Governor Robinson, occurred in Raleigh, and no one on the SB said nothing. Countless amounts of lawlessness occurred, and rioters were *allowed to* tear up the city with no consequences, he stated. Next, Lt. Governor Robinson raised the point of when his views, as a self-proclaimed conservative Republican be considered as a part of students’ agenda in education. He relayed that the Constitution held back slave owners; it “swashed” the Jim Crow South, essentially, the United States is not racist. This led him to openly state aloud his position as the 1st Black Lt. Governor in the state of North Carolina and asked the SB to reflect on what that means and to remove the “plain as day agenda folks” have in education. From Dr. Ford and Lt. Governor Robinson’s points, the two

competing Black stances on the role in the United States were overly presented. Hence, from their opposing takes, the themes of membership, singular versus pluralist U.S. History, American democracy, political party agenda, and “political” compliance versus “political” disruption presented themselves.

Interjecting to answer Dr. Ford’s question on the reasoning behind removing “systemic” before racism, Superintendent Truitt went through the timeline that resulted in said occurrence, indicating that to ensure full inclusivity, she requested all standards incorporate multiple perspectives, but time did not allow for public comments so it could not be adjusted. However, Superintendent Truitt believed removing the terms did not exclude or limit teacher-classroom discussions. This perspective caused Dr. Ford to interrupt, asking for an explanation of *how* systemic or structural racism was subjective in the validity of occurrence in the United States toward particular groups. He posed the question if they were debating what history has confirmed and shown through documentation that has caused one to conclude as such. Continuing to support her fellow SB member, Mariah Morris echoed Dr. Ford’s view, encouraging members to step out of their political party affiliation and think about the students at the center of the discussion. Moreover, Morris emphasized the importance of students’ critical engagement with the curriculum “beyond any political consensus that can be had.” And that the most patriotic act of the SB is to acknowledge and include diversity in the social studies curriculum. Actions such as this prompt student buy-in and increase their desire to graduate by showing them, “I matter; my teachers want to validate who I am.” This displayed the themes of democracy in curriculum and singular versus pluralist U.S. History.

Holding a similar perspective as in previous SB meetings, Vice Chairman Duncan reminded SB members to think about teachers who were in the middle of the entire debate. He posed the question again as to what the purpose of history is and did the standards give teachers the room to teach history. From Vice Chairman Duncan's stance, history should accomplish two things: first, educate all people about what happened in the past as a method of not repeating mistakes to become a better democracy, and second, direct students to become civically involved, develop character, and not be disengaged. To that point, SB member Amy White asked aloud if the standards fall under the framework of viewing the United States as a great nation and North Carolina as a great state. Providing the specific example of her visit to Cuba, White conveyed that through visiting communist Cuba (she called out as such), she saw various plights due to their government style of choice. However, because the United States is democratic (again, she said as such), democracy grants privilege and opportunity. Thus, it is imperative that the standards do not embody *anti-American* or *anti-capitalist* sentiments which are frequented in media platforms. To conclude, White relayed that when teaching, it should strive to show students the rise and fall of the nation and how many of the greatest successes in the United States had come through fighting adversity. She ended with the point the standards have an agenda of *anti-American*, *anti-capitalism*, and *anti-democracy* and indicated she considers herself to have a "Pollyanna" approach to America's history.

The primary debate in this SBM focused on the following themes: authority to prompt change, American ideals versus American reality, history, singular versus pluralistic U.S. History, national debate, culture war(s), dialogue, race, membership,

CRT, political party agenda, “political” compliance versus “political” disruption and democracy in curriculum. Within the newspaper outlets analyzed, these themes were most prevalent in *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Charlotte Observer*.

School Board Meeting, February 3, 2021

The peak of the politicization debate of the social studies standards in North Carolina SBM was February 3rd, which unapologetically showed how education and politics will always be interconnected, so much so, following the SBM, *The Charlotte Observer* used the following headlines to capture the essence and various perspectives regarding how the SB handled the discussion: *Truitt Should Stand for Teaching True History* (2021); *NC Board Still at Odds Over Social Studies Standards* (Keung Hui, 2021); and *North Carolina Needs to be Honest About History and Race* (Perry, 2021). Continuing with the pattern of previous meetings, the meeting began with reviewing what had been discussed and directed SB members’ attention to the “Refinement of Terms” slide as well as reiterated the purpose of the “Glossary of Terms” (See Figure 3, Figure 4 in Appendix D). Chairman Eric Davis and Superintendent Truitt read two vastly distinct emails from parents, which undoubtedly were politicized in content but accurately portrayed not only the importance of the issue but *how* citizens feel about the said discussion. The first email read by Superintendent Truitt was from an immigrant parent who lived in California when arriving in the United States but had since moved to North Carolina. Embodying similar sentiment of conservative SB members, the parent in the email expressed deep levels of pride in living in America, explained their desire to work hard and achieve the “American dream,” and openly rebuked any notion that the United

States is a racist or evil country. Nevertheless, the parent explicitly articulated there was a growing notion or “accusation that the new standards follow Nicole Hannah-Jones’ ‘fictional’ project, *The 1619 Project*.” Furthermore, the parent noted that even though Nicole Hannah-Jones was a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize Award, the creditability of *The 1619 Project* was openly challenged by historians and fellow Pulitzer Prize recipients. Then the parent acknowledged that although he grew up in what is considered post-racial America in the 1980s, they still experienced racism due to few East Indians being in the United States, saying that they were called names such as “terrorist,” but that did not make them bitter.

Compelling the SB not to whitewash history nor rewrite it, the parent from the first email supported students learning about Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Martin Luther King Jr., and Elijah Cummings (whom they called by name). The parent believed students should unquestionably learn the tremendous good and tremendous evil the nation has overcome through determination, stating the real history of the United States encompasses “freedom, God, and patriotism.” The first email continued by listing the various entities the United States defeated such as socialism, communism, and the “fascism of Hitler” while highlighting that every country has a bloody history within it. The parent concluded that, unlike other countries, the United States *built* its government to not be the ultimate power in its citizens' lives. They disputed the notion of white privilege or CRT (both explicitly stated) and said students need a “sound, basic education.” From the email read by Superintendent Truitt, the following themes of “political” compliance versus “political” disruption, political party agenda, national debate, and CRT were presented.

Immediately after, Chairman Davis read a second email titled, “Hopeful.” Compared to the first email read, the second email expressed enthusiasm toward the new standards, specifically regarding its inclusive nature. Urging the SB to approve the standards, the second email reminded SB members that the United States was built on a system of inequality that has a growing achievement gap. Thus, the new standards are a way to readdress missed opportunities for various students around the state. The second email shared the themes of history and American democracy. Superintendent Truitt agreed that the *tone* of the standards needed revisions. Thus, to better support the goal of the standards and the overall message conveyed, Superintendent Truitt wrote a new preamble. Chairman Davis supported it, but both said they understood the new preamble must be approved by the SB and would be voted on. In comparison to the previous social studies preamble, the preamble created by Superintendent Truitt embodied many of the similar themes to its predecessor when examined by the themes created. However, a key theme was missing (singular versus pluralistic U.S. History) and was replaced by the themes of authority to prompt change and race. Outside of those differences, the themes found in the 2019 and 2021 social studies preamble remained the same (See Figures 6, See Figure 7 in Appendix D).

Before opening the floor to all SB members, fellow SB member Jill Camnitz expressed her thoughts on the debate which she has remained quieter about in comparison to others. Linking her stance to the Founding Fathers, she expressed her support and believed it was necessary for the direct inclusion of “systemic racism” and “gender identity” to prepare for future years. Smith concurred with Camnitz’s views, articulating that while it is acceptable for civil discourse to occur, they should remember

whose perspective the standards are from, (i.e., parents, principals, teachers, and the students/Student Advisor Nate Kolk-Tomberlin). To this point, SB member Dr. Donna Tipton-Rogers relayed her stance as to where the debate surrounding the standards had gone. Beginning with listing her academic credentials, which are an undergraduate and a graduate degree in History, Dr. Tipton-Rogers explained to SB members why the study of history is necessary. First, history ensures great deeds are not forgotten; second, patriotism and another form of civic engagement; third, learn lessons from the present and lastly, to foster personal growth. Thus, history is a study of change, embracing the essence of what makes the nation great. The themes of authority to prompt change, history, and culture war(s) were present. Comparatively, Chairman Davis likened social studies to an illuminative summary of *all* our families' histories into one. Then Chairman Davis further indicated he was encouraged not to look deep into his family history because "he may not like what he finds," being told simply ignore the unpleasanties, but he believed being denied the truth is more upsetting. This is the same approach he believes should be taken with the standards; less focus should be put on the *tone* but on the personal language used to support the theme of history.

Mimicking the same provocative approach as before, Lt. Governor Robinson wholeheartedly objected to the new standards. He opened his remarks by questioning why schools allow Black Lives Matter slogans to be seen or posted, but he could not be a guest speaker at schools. Reiterating he was the 1st Black Lt. Governor of North Carolina who received "3 million votes, more than the president," Lt. Governor Robinson relayed that because of his political views, faculty at a particular school were against him being a guest speaker. He asked, "Is that inclusive? Is silencing my voice inclusive? What are

they scared of?” Believing that the principals, teachers, etc. are afraid of his message, he reminded SB members that with hard work, anything could be accomplished; he is a true patriot and is tired of hearing about inclusion. Specifically, from his vantage point, the conservative voice and perspective have been excluded intentionally; nonprofits can be supported, but patriotism and police cannot. To show his feelings are not isolated, Lt. Governor Robinson conveyed that he had a petition with 27,000 signatures against the approval of the standards, which he concludes as the “only responsible course of action right now.” The themes presented by Lt. Governor Robinson were the authority to prompt change, political party agenda, national debate, membership, political “wokeness” in education, race, history, and American democracy.

Offering an alternative stance, Dr. James Ford began his take during the February 3rd debate by paying homage to the various educators who worked to create the standards being debated. Dr. Ford said the “debate over the standards creates a paradox between inclusion and division.” Reciting the last stanza of the Pledge of Allegiance, Dr. Ford asked the rhetorical question, “How indivisible are we”; he also asked, “How can inclusion be divisive?” Dr. Ford said educators must teach the facts without any biases or political slants; do not indoctrinate them, but instead let them think critically and draw their own conclusions. However, he did acknowledge and understand the counterarguments of how teaching particular truths of non-dominate groups can be perceived as unpatriotic, which acknowledged the counter perspective, something that very few of his fellow SB members did. Nevertheless, he countered his point by imploring the SB to really evaluate what America is like for a POC, specifically African America, using *The Miseducation of the Negro* by Carter G. Woodson, *Other America*

speech by Martin Luther King Jr., and *Let America Be America Again* by Langston Hughes as windows into the African American perspective. Directly responding to Dr. Ford's points, specifically using the poem by Langston Hughes along with Superintendent Truitt's revised preamble, Dr. Oxendine restated her concerns surrounding the Indigenous perspective in the standards. Identifying phrases to dispute within the standards, Dr. Oxendine found it to be problematic that the standards do not elevate the progress the United States has made since the passing of the Civil Rights Amendments (the 14th and 15th). Dr. Oxendine then addressed a political cartoon aimed to depict GOP members on the SB as a part of the Ku Klux Klan¹⁰ because they do not support the approval of the new standards (See Description of Cartoon in Footnote 10). Subsequently, she explained not only how overtly troublesome the cartoon was based on her career, but how deeply hurtful, and disrespectful it was to her as a Lumbee. More explicitly, she told a childhood memory of listening on the radio as the Lumbee Indians chased out the KKK from Robinson County and began to cry at the intentional, hurtful association. Additionally, by teaching leadership courses at the University of North Carolina Pembroke, she addressed first the unsettling task of having to face students after being associated with such an offensive cartoon. Moreover, she stated how the same cartoon could easily be interpreted as either "shut up" or end up in a political cartoon which unquestionably can have long-term effects. The themes shown by Dr. Ford and Dr. Oxendine were American democracy, history, American ideals versus American reality, political party agenda, national debate, propaganda, membership, race, and "political" wokeness in education.

¹⁰ A political cartoon was released on February 2, 2021, of an elephant, the GOP symbol, wearing a Ku Klux Klan outfit showing support against the adoption of "New 'Inclusive' NC Social Studies Standards."

Taking a more politicized stance on the standards, SB member Chasteen presented to the SB sources he felt more accurately portrayed American history. Aligning closely with fellow SB Lt. Governor Robison and Dr. Oxendine, Chasteen referred to the Woodson Center, founded by Robert Woodson, as a more creditable outlet regarding the African American experience and views on U.S. History. He went on to state *1776 Unites*, created by the Woodson Center and the counter website created to oppose *The 1619 Project*, was a resource that should be utilized. Notably, Robert Woodson is the conservative, Black leading voice used by the *Wall Street Journal*, thus, inherently identifying Chasteen's political affiliation. He addressed how imperative it is to teach about the destructive forms of government such as communism, socialism, Marxism, fascism, and totalitarianism, how Americans are humanitarians, the importance and legacy of the Bill of Rights, and Freedom of Speech. Echoing the themes fellow SB displayed, through Chasteen's take the themes of American democracy, history, American ideals vs. American reality, "political" compliance vs. "political" disruption, political party agenda, race, political "wokeness" in education, and national debate presented themselves.

The primary debate in this SBM focused on the following themes: authority to prompt change, American ideals versus American reality, history, singular versus pluralistic U.S. History, national debate, culture war(s), dialogue, race, membership, CRT, political party agenda, "political" compliance versus "political" disruption and democracy in curriculum. Within the newspaper outlets analyzed, these themes were most prevalent in *The New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Charlotte Observer*.

School Board Meeting, June 2, 2021

By June 2nd SB meeting, the highly debated social studies standards had passed for approval. As a not-as-controversial debate as its predecessor, *The Charlotte Observer* published more opinions regarding the newly passed social studies standards following the June 2nd and 3rd meetings. The headlines that expressed the public opinions or the media perspective included were: *What is Critical Race Theory and is it Taught in NC?* (Keung Hui, 2021); *NC House Backs Delay in New Social Studies Standards* (Keung Hui, 2021); *In CMS, Students Want Active Role in How Schools Teach About Racism* (Della Costa, 2021); *Defund K-12 Schools That Teach ‘Misleading’ 1619 Project, Tillis says* (Murphy, 2021); and *NC Shouldn’t Legislate Away our Discomfort with Racism* (Beary, 2021). Nevertheless, the purpose of the remaining meetings was to approve the standards supporting documents. However, upon opening the meeting, NC DPI reminded the SB that the standards were no longer a part of the discussions. Subsequently, NC DPI again reminded SB members they did not create the social studies curriculum, nor are schools required to use the supporting documents created; that decision is left up to LEAs and charters. Once the floor was open for comments, Dr. Oxendine requested clarification of differences between the objectives and formative assessments because, as presented, there appears to be no clear distinction between the two. Further, she asked about the purpose of the Glossary, the definitions used, and where the definitions came from, to which NC DPI indicated they would be more than willing to provide the latter information with Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary.

Repeating similar sentiments as Dr. Oxendine, SB member Amy White asked for Superintendent Truitt to provide a deeper explanation of how the content in the

supporting documents was created. From this, Superintendent Truitt addressed her request to have a greater balance in the representation of historically marginalized communities within the supporting documents. Additionally, the development of all the supporting documents was a continuous back-and-forth process. Following Superintendent Truitt's comments, Dr. Ford straightforwardly asked which historically marginalized group was being overrepresented in the documents to which she answered African American and provided examples. This displayed the themes of history, membership, and political "wokeness" in education.

The primary debate in this SBM focused on the following themes: history, membership, and political "wokeness" in education. Within the newspaper outlets analyzed, these themes were most prevalent in the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Charlotte Observer*.

School Board Meeting, June 3, 2021 (Part III)

This meeting requested to postpone approving the Glossary and other supporting documents. All SB members other than Dr. James Ford and J. Wendell Hall voted no; the motion carried.

School Board Meeting, June 17, 2021

The purpose of the June 17th SB meeting was to continue the discussion on the supporting documents, specifically the Grade 6-12 Unpacking Documents which were to be available to the district in five months. The first SB member to comment was Dr. Oxendine who questioned the selection process for examples used with the documents, using the exclusion of Sandra Day O'Connor from the historical figures listed as an example. In response, Superintendent Truitt stated to ensure no given group or individual

was left out, it was decided to leave it up to the teachers to determine who to specifically include. Still unsatisfied with the said response, Dr. Oxendine repeated a quote from Dr. Ford from a previous meeting that it cannot always be left up to the LEAs to think of issues or every example.

Addressing additional concerns, SB member J. Wendell Hall asked whether teachers would still have the autonomy to discuss discrimination, race, gender, etc., within their classrooms in a deeper context in upper grades after receiving the said questions from his constituents. Answering his question, Superintendent Truitt stated nothing in any of the documents presented before the SB prevents teachers from diving or limits them from exploring a topic. The documents did not dictate the amount of time that should be spent on any given topic; teachers are not limited in their resource selection by the SB, nor are they bound to use any of the documents unless their given school administration says otherwise. Concluding that the specificity of content in the supporting documents are *not* to be determined by SB, that as written in state policy, the SB is only required to direct or assist with the drafting of the standards.

School Board Meeting, July 8, 2021 (Part I)

July 8th, 2021 was the final SB meeting to approve the supporting documents for the newly approved social studies standards. Even though this was the last SB meeting, that did not deter *The Charlotte Observer* from continuing the discussion surrounding the approval of the standards. The following headlines were used: *NC Social Studies Documents Highlight Marginalized Groups* (Keung Hui, 2021); *Social studies Vote Oks Documents, Could Lead to Revisions of New Plan* (Keung Hui, 2021); *Critical Race Theory Fears, Debate Reach CMS Board* (Karlinchak, 2021); and *As Schools Ban*

Critical Race Theory, Some Fear it will Lead to 'Witch Hunts' of Teachers (Keung Hui, 2021).

Recapping the purpose of the previous meeting, NC DPI stated the approval of the unpacking documents had passed and to support teachers in transitioning to new teaching new content, PD opportunities would be provided. To this point, Jill Camnitz addressed the Fordham Report and NC's poor ranking, only to remind SB members that the purpose of that given meeting was not to discuss it beyond acknowledging it was released and a brief recap of results. Reminding SB members of what documents the Fordham Report *actually* reviews, Dr. David Stegall explained the rationale behind the D grade and linked the said grade to NC writing its standards in a conceptual and topical format, whereas other states create their standards differently, yielding different outcomes. From this, only Dr. Oxendine took a moment to express how unsettling NC's poor Fordham Report grade is and if participation is mandatory, to which Dr. Stegall relayed that participation is involuntary. Closing the discussion in its entirety, Superintendent Truitt acknowledged the troublesome content of the Fordham Report and indicated if a change is to occur, standards need to embody pedagogical definitions and not concepts. Further, there needs to be a greater understanding of what local control means.

Summary of School Board Meetings

The SBM in North Carolina displayed a continuation of the culture war within social studies (Ansley, 2021). Moreover, the SBM showed how the media portrayal of *The 1619 Project* influenced SB members and the public perception of the revisions on the social studies standards. Furthermore, much of the language used for or against North Carolina's social studies standards mimicked the language used to discuss *The 1619*

Project; this included the importance of creditability along with emphasis placed on the process by which standards and curriculum are developed (See Chapter 4-Role of Language: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*).

Throughout the entire SBM, the process of how the standards were developed and vetted was brought up within every meeting, signaling an importance being placed on the trustworthiness of the standards, but also on those who partook in their development.

Likewise, the headlines used by *The Charlotte Observer* to relay the events of the SBM showed how the media chose to align itself with a more conservative-learning approach when discussing North Carolina standards. Examples of this can be found in articles published on February 3, 2021; *Truitt Should Stand for Teaching True History* (2021); *NC Board Still at Odds Over Social Studies Standards* (Keung Hui, 2021); *North Carolina Needs to be Honest About History and Race* (Perry, 2021). Thus, although the standards being debated for adoption were not associated with or were the result of the publication of *The 1619 Project*, any discussion on racially inclusive standards, specifically towards African American history, became associated with the project based on the political and media coverage it gained. Furthermore, the role of teacher autonomy and teacher workload arose, but not in the context of granting teachers the power to choose. But rather, if practitioners be *trusted* to teach American history from the perspective that was being debated as the most historically *accurate*.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study in relation to the following research questions: What is *The 1619 Project*? What is the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*? Based on its *intent*, why has *The 1619 Project* become politicalized? What is the rhetorical,

political debate associated with (around) *The 1619 Project*? How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*'s authors? How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* for other stakeholders, such as opponents/critics of *The 1619 Project*?

Analyses conducted on newspaper articles from *The New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Charlotte Observer*, *The Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal* resulted in the development of 20 themes. These themes were *1619 Project*; *1619 Project* Supporting Content; Critical Race Theory; Unrelated; Democracy in Curriculum; Advocacy Journalism; American Democracy; History; American Ideals versus American Reality; Dialogue; "Political" Compliance versus "Political" Disruption; Political Party Agenda; National Debate; Singular versus Pluralistic U.S. History; Culture War(s); Propaganda; Authority to Prompt Change; Membership; Race; Political "Wokeness" in Education. Additionally, within the total articles gathered from each newspaper outlet, the word frequency count was obtained to generate a top-five highest word frequency list. Further, the SBM associated with the revisions of North Carolina's social standards was unpacked to show how the development of standards and curriculum is not immune to political and media influence.

The purpose of this multi-method study is to show how *The 1619 Project* is a contemporary illustration of the politicization of formal social studies curriculum. By distinguishing what *The 1619 Project* is in comparison to its *intent*, the politicization of the project brought a greater understanding of the influence media has on the educational system. In Chapter Five, a discussion and interpretation of the findings

formulated in Chapter Four will be presented along with concluding points associated with the study.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Whether it is good, bad, or indifferent, the discussion surrounding *The 1619 Project* is a direct reflection of how our nation continues to approach the discussion surrounding race. As the researcher, I conclude *The 1619 Project* is a relevant example of how interest convergence can occur within politics and education. Interest convergence, a tenet of CRT, explains how the interest of Black people will solely be accommodated when it converges with the interest of white people. Moreover, *The 1619 Project* is an example of Critical Race Theory (CRT) informed curricula that can change the generational understanding of unsettled issues surrounding what it means to be American. Thus, *The 1619 Project* can provide educators with examples of how transformative social studies curricula can be created to highlight the diverse life experiences of African Americans.

As a nation, the United States continuously strives to present itself as a country that has overcome racial division and that the importance of race in one's everyday life no longer limits their ability to be successful. However, *The 1619 Project* directly contradicts and challenges that notion by recentering race as the cornerstone of America's identity and a determining factor regarding the level of success Black Americans can achieve in American society. It elevates the argument that racial division still exists whether it is acknowledged as such. Simply look at the long-term experiences of being Black in America. However, what makes race-based discussions challenging is race evokes personal and emotional responses or lived experiences that are challenging to dispute.

Thus, when understanding the politicization of *The 1619 Project*, it became apparent the amplification of the media coverage far exceeds the scope of curricular change in K-12 social studies. *The 1619 Project* became politicized because it vocalized a perspective of the national debate surrounding the role of race in America, it revitalized the culture war(s) in social studies on a national scale, and both political parties embraced propaganda to support their party's stance on race. Therefore, even when discussions occurred on *The 1619 Project*, they were frequently talking points on larger societal concerns surrounding race which is why particular themes accounted for zero frequency because their influence could not be distinguished from the content of the project itself (See Table 18 in Appendix C). A point that leading author Nikole Hannah-Jones understood when she stated that although *The 1619 Project* was not intentionally published during former President Donald Trump's presidency, she is aware the legacy of his presidency had some impact on the project's influence and interest (Klein, 2021).

Further, the debate surrounding the inclusion of *The 1619 Project* is about: the validity of said division and whether it should be taught in the social studies curriculum. I argue that *The 1619 Project* is being intermingled and ultimately concealed under CRT (See Table 15 in Appendix C). However, the project does not model what CRT is but rather is an *example* of how the educational theory can be incorporated into education practices (i.e., school curriculum), yielding, transformative curriculum--specifically transformative social studies curriculum.

Summary of the Study

Overview of the Problem

Holistically, the United States has a *Eurocentric* education focus that neglects to intentionally acknowledge the experiences and history of any racial and ethnic group other than white (King, 2014; King & Brown, 2014). Further, when the experiences or history of non-white ethnic or racial groups are included within the school curriculum, it is from a deficit vantage point (Brown & Au, 2014). Although curriculum has been developed to emphasize diversity within the United States, i.e., multicultural education or ethnic studies, frequently the curriculum creates conflict with a sole focus on racial or ethnic groups more than the next (Banks, 1975; Hu-DeHart, 1993; Lowy, 1995; Sleeter, 2011). Presently, there is no mandate that requires the inclusion of multicultural and/or ethnic studies, although a few states have measures to ensure its inclusion (Mantel, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). However, because education is a state issue, states can decide which aspect of multicultural and/or ethnic studies they want to emphasize which then results in particular racial and ethnic groups being excluded. To counter this shortcoming, *The New York Times* published *The 1619 Project* which aimed to showcase how interwoven African American history is within American history and the development of the United States (Hannah Jones, 2019). Due to the provocative journalistic approach leading author Nikole Hannah-Jones and fellow contributors took when presenting the omission of African American history, the African American experience, and the formative contributions made by African Americans within the United States, it became a part of the culture wars occurring in education (Nash & Dunn, 1995). Moreover, because *The 1619 Project* was written by non-historians, it became

politicized by politicians on both sides of the political spectrum as a method to discuss race, the venting of historical information, and the future of school curricula (Harris 2020; Mackaman, 2019; Serwer, 2019).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate how and why *The New York Times's The 1619 Project* became politicized by political actors and media and how *The 1619 Project* is a contemporary illustration of the politicization of formal social studies curriculum. This research focused on the following questions:

1. What is *The 1619 Project*?
 - a. What is the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*?
 - b. Based on its *intent*, why has *The 1619 Project* become politicized?
2. What is the rhetorical, political debate associated with (around) *The 1619 Project*?
 - a. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project's* authors?
 - b. How do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* for other stakeholders, such as opponents/critics of *The 1619 Project*?

Review of Methodology

To conduct the research study on the politicization of *The 1619 Project*, a multi-method approach was used to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data using the grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1983, 1990, 1996; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Seawright, 2016; Stemler, 2000). Archival or secondary public data including an interview Nikole Hannah-Jones did with Ezra Klein from *The New York*

Times were utilized as the data sources. Further, because the interview Nikole Hannah-Jones did with Ezra Klein is archival data, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was not required.

The rationale behind the use of a multi-method research design is it combines evaluation techniques and data collection methods from two or more methodologies but does not require the combination of both to answer a research question (Mertens, 2015; Seawright, 2016). Thus, this allowed for the evaluation of components within policies that would be ignored through traditional experimental methods. Moreover, multi-method research design provides greater autonomy to the research allowing them to gather findings within qualitative data, before findings within quantitative such as, survey results, are concluded (Louis, 1982). Therefore, to answer research questions 2, 2a, and 2b, quantitative methods using descriptive statistics were used. Subsequently, to answer research questions 1, 1a, 1b, 1, 2, and 2a, qualitative methods using grounded theory methods were conducted.

Summary of Major Findings¹¹

As discussed in Chapter 4, the following themes were identified in the research and their frequency of appearance are in parenthesis: *1619 Project* (34); *1619 Project* Supporting Content (23); Critical Race Theory (18); Unrelated (33); Democracy in Curriculum (30); Advocacy Journalism (3); American Democracy (1); History (10); American Ideals versus American Reality (1); Dialogue (1); “Political” Compliance versus “Political” Disruption (2); Political Party Agenda (4); National Debate (0); Singular versus Pluralistic U.S. History (2); Culture War(s) (0); Propaganda (0);

¹¹ Themes are presented in bold to signal their appearance.

Authority to Prompt Change (1); Membership (1); Race (2); Political “Wokeness” in Education (4) (See Table 18 in Appendix C). During the development and analysis of the themes, many of the themes were not fixed or stagnant to one particular newspaper's political lean. However, some themes were more prevalent in inferences of appearances and therefore, became the leading identifier of the newspaper's political lean (See Figure 8 in Appendix D). Thus, it elevated the qualitative over the quantitative findings causing a discourse analysis. Consequently, I had to look into interpretations for implied meanings to contextualize the findings.

Based on the developed themes the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* was to center American history around the history and experiences of African Americans. Thus, *The 1619 Project* became politicized based on its *intent* because it openly questions whether the liberties of democracy in the United States are given to some, while *intentionally* denying it to African Americans at their expense (See Table 12, Table 13 in Appendix B). Therefore, the rhetorical, political debate surrounding *The 1619 Project* is whether the claims found in *The 1619 Project* are historically accurate, if journalists have the authority to prompt the rewriting of American history, and whether the United States has and continues to oppress African Americans. Further, depending on the political lean of a newspaper outlet, the accuracy and/or inaccuracy of the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* varied. Moreover, when given the opportunity to discuss *The 1619 Project*, newspaper outlets were more frequently responding or rebutting fellow media outlets versus *actually* addressing the *intent* of *The 1619 Project*.

Because *The New York Times* is the publisher of the project, they had the autonomy to redefine what the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* was, which they did (See Table

12 in Appendix B). A key critique and finding where *The New York Times* presented the African American community and their experiences as monolithic which indirectly silenced a portion of the Black community. In terms of accuracy, *The Christian Science Monitor* was the only newspaper outlet to correctly present, understand, and contextualize the politicization of *The 1619 Project* accounting for both political party's perspectives. Specifically selected for its neutral stance, *The Christian Science Monitor* used language such as, "pain and reckoning in the narrative of black America" to explain how deeply-rooted the legacy of slavery is within African American's historical identity in the United States. But was also able to understand *The 1619 Project* was a part of a "culture war" and was the first newspaper outlet to use that term when discussing the curricula impact of the project.

In comparison, *The Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *The Charlotte Observer* displayed an intentional, political approach when discussing *The 1619 Project's intent*. *The Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* understood the *intent* of the project was to center American history around African American history. However, the leading cause for the accurate and inaccurate representation of its *intent* by supporters and opponents/critics was based on whether the claims in *The 1619 Project* are true.

Amongst all the newspapers analyzed the *Wall Street Journal*, the conservative-leaning newspaper outlet, was the only outlet to acknowledge the perspective of the Black politically conservative Americans who view race differently than the authors of *The 1619 Project*. Thus, presenting the African American community as a dynamic, intellectual race group who are not monolithic and therefore, have different perspectives on the same issue. The rationale as to why the *Wall Street Journal* made a conscious

effort to include the Black conservative perspective was never explicitly stated, but I infer it was to reinforce creditability, who (whose perspective are we listening to) to prompt change, each political party's agenda, and the role of race within all these components.

A key critique the *Wall Street Journal* had of the project was the premise of its creditability. Hence, magnifying that it directly ignores the perspective of the African American community because it does not align with the project's *intent*, from their perspective provides a valid rationale for the dismal of *The 1619 Project*. Furthermore, challenges the debate on who has the authority to change K-12 social studies education, whose perspective is creditable, i.e., journalist or historians, and whether African American experience systemic racism dating back to the arrival of the first slave ship in 1619 (See Table C17 in Appendix C).

On the other hand, *The Washington Post*, the liberal-leaning newspaper outlet, remained cautious of its *intent* based on the language used to describe it. Identifying that *The 1619 Project* had a "liberal agenda" and "did not give enough credit to white people who fought for liberation", *The Washington Post* recognized the content of the project had racial and political intent. However, they also presented their readers with the perspective that "freedom has always been at the center of the American political order." Therefore, while the information in *The 1619 Project* could be accurate, it highly depends on *who* is telling the information. Additionally, *The Washington Post* acknowledged the role of societal membership and role race holds within that placement, especially for African Americans. Thus, while *The 1619 Project* might have political language interwoven within it, it present or beings dialogue on the impact race has on African Americans experiencing full "access to American democracy."

Consequently, although I can conclude that the politicization of *The 1619 Project* can be attributed to the continued spread of misinformation from both sides, the misrepresentation of information was more prevalent in the *Wall Street Journal*, the conservative-leaning outlet. My reasoning behind this rationale is that although the *Wall Street Journal* was the only newspaper outlet to represent the Black conservative stance, it used that as a springboard to make *The 1619 Project* a political talking point versus addressing the validity of its claims. Which can be supported by the number of articles the *Wall Street Journal* (29) published on *The 1619 Project* versus the other newspaper outlets.

Findings Connected to Theories

Inclusion As Division: Anti-Blackness and The Perpetuation of Black History and Experience Exclusion

During the School Board Meetings (SBM), it was very apparent that the unspoken debate was not about the standards but rather *The 1619 Project*; the email read by Superintendent Truitt confirmed this. Often, intellectual reform within education occurs through a political or national debate (Goldstein, 2015). The second idea of BlackCrit and the notion of how intellectual reform occurs intersected perfectly during North Carolina's SBM on the standards. The second idea in Black Critical Theory (BlackCrit) states, "Blackness exists in tension with the neoliberal-multicultural imagination" (Dumas & ross, 2016; King, 2018). As the researcher, I interpret the second idea of BlackCrit to mean as multiculturalism or ethnic representation rises it will be done in conflict with Blackness. To support my interpretation, I look to the question and debate that occurred during the North Carolina SBM between Dr. James Ford and Dr. Oliva Oxendine.

During February 3rd, 2021, SBM, Dr. Ford relayed that inclusion has become a form of division which raised an important point and prompted a vital question worth asking: why does inclusion cause division? Ethnic Studies was developed in the 1960s to “...intensively examines the histories, languages and cultures of America's racial and ethnic groups in and of themselves, their relationships to each other, and particularly, in structural contexts of power” (Hu-DeHart, 1993, p. 52). But when intentionally included, it encounters pushback because through examining America’s history and the different racial groups, an indirect competition arises about *whose* history should be emphasized more. Moreover, if African American history is to be included in great depth, so should Latinx history, Indigenous history, LGBTQ+ history, etc.

A point which, rightfully so, Dr. Oxendine emphasized by continuously questioning how the inclusion of Indigenous History was presented in the NC social studies standards, who was determining how it was written, and the frequency of representation. The latter point of emphasis by Dr. Oxendine is an additional example of the conflict that arises between multiculturalism and Blackness; if African American history representation increases, so should Indigenous history. Echoing BlackCrit’s second idea, “Blackness exists in tension with the neoliberal-multicultural imagination” (Dumas & ross, 2016; King, 2018),” the intentional emphasis on Blackness creates conflict in multiculturalism because it forces America to look at its reflection circling back to the theme created **American ideal versus American reality**. African Americans were not the only racial or ethnic group to be denied the liberty of democracy. However, what it fails to acknowledge is that there is no hierarchy in oppression, but particular groups, i.e., African Americans, have experienced long-lasting systemic oppression,

which has had generational implications. This leads to an important question: should African Americans continue to show **“political” compliance**, *or* is it time to partake in **“political” disruption**?

Further, the purpose of ethnic studies is to promote equity (Lowy, 1995; Sleeter, 2011). Yet, from the vantage point of *The 1619 Project* authors, equity and democracy continue to be denied to African American primarily due to anti-Blackness sentiments embedded in American society (Hannah-Jones, 2019). However, because other historically marginalized groups are obtaining equity within healthcare, housing policies, and the inclusion of their history and identity in education, it dismisses the Black experience as being creditable. If African Americans were the original oppressed group as *The 1619 Project* indicated, how have they not been able to advance, but others have? This question circles back to Dr. Ford’s point during the SBM, inclusion has become a form of division.

Critical Policy Analysis Determines Curriculum

Instead of *The 1619 Project* being embraced and creating a pathway for transformative educational practices in social studies curriculum, it is showing how critical policy analysis determines the direction of a curriculum. The second research questions of this study were: what is the rhetorical, political debate associated with (around) *The 1619 Project*; how do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project’s* authors; and how do the media portrayals of *The 1619 Project* accurately or inaccurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* for other stakeholders, such as opponents/critics of *The 1619 Project*? Critical policy analysis recognizes the role political actors have in the policy formation process,

specifically related to education reform (Diem et al., 2014). Throughout the entire debate nationally regarding *The 1619 Project* and North Carolina's social studies standards, the role of politics and political actors governed how the discussion occurred. Moreover, the media, (e.g., *The Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*), polarized the discussion based on political party affiliation. In *The New York Times*, the intent changed over time to adapt to how it was being politicized. Nikole Hannah-Jones in 2021 used language such as "responsible," "different," and "telling the truth" when discussing its intent during her interview with Ezra Klein (2021). Comparatively, Jake Silverstein in 2020, the Editor-in-Chief of *The New York Times*, emphasized it as a journalistic approach to American history that centers on Blackness (Silverstein, 2020). Within a year, the emphasis of its *intent* shifted which was directly related to how the media presented, but more importantly, how politicians responded to it.

When published, politicians immediately gravitated to historians' stance on *The 1619 Project* because it aimed to link racism to America's identity, but also showcase the shortcomings found in school curriculum. Thus, the rhetorical political debate that was occurring within the media was an example of social media echo chamber which is defined as, "...when one experiences a biased, tailored media experience that eliminates opposing viewpoints and differing voices" (Cabianca et al., n.d.). Subsequently, a tailored discussion was magnified surrounding how curriculum is developed, and who has the *authority* to create. The **authority to prompt change** was a theme that became the center of entire rhetorical, political debate surrounding *The 1619 Project* and presented itself during North Carolina's SBM. Therefore, inadvertently, the media has become in control of curriculum and education reform. Due to this, even if *The 1619 Project* were to be

included or used in social studies curriculum, it will be watered-down because it not only does it have to compete with the role of political actors and the media but also the tyranny of coverage, i.e., requiring and limited coverage time to teach subject, and multiculturalism (Loewen, 2009).

Critical Race Theory and The 1619 Project

The 1619 Project models how the educational theory of CRT in education can be incorporated if any given state intentionally includes the theoretical framework of CRT in their standards, which none explicitly have. As an educational theory, CRT analyzes the inequities African American students encounter in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995). Moreover, similar to CRT in legal study, CRT in education supports the use of counternarratives to challenge the dominant narrative associated with the experiences of African Americans in the United States (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Anderson, 2018). Thus, *The 1619 Project* is a journalistic approach to American history that focused on centralizing Blackness within American history, it used the tactics of CRT to get its point across. Nikole Hannah-Jones nor *The New York Times* ever claimed the project is CRT. Instead, the emphasis by *The New York Times* is placed on how the project has become a part of a “culture-war brawl” (Trip & Goldstein, 2021, p.1) which is curricula restrictions placed on inclusion within social studies on topics that are deemed “controversial” (Nash & Dunn, 1995). Due to this, the themes of **culture war(s)** and **propaganda** became impossible to isolate from the national debate. Furthermore, because race is deemed a “controversial” topic and the entire premise of *The 1619 Project* is race-focused, it unconsciously became a part of the race war. However,

because of its content, it became conflated under CRT based on the foundational components of what CRT aims to address (See Table 15 in Appendix C).

Yet, *The 1619 Project* presents a distinct opportunity for interest convergence to occur within social studies curriculum. The third and fourth tenets of CRT state, “the deconstruction of racism and any negative impact it has on individuals of color can only be undone through interest convergence” and “that the notion of colorblindness is counterproductive to achieving racial emancipation and that it is only removed through interest convergence which benefits whites primarily (Sleeter, 2017).” Although the content of *The 1619 Project* can be politicized in association with both political party’s stances on race in America, it presents the chance for **dialogue** to occur regarding how to approach the race-based discussion in association to grade/age level. As is, *The 1619 Project* encompasses racially provocative language and content. However, if the historical content solely of each chapter was taken out and used to create or be included in social studies standards, African American representation within American History could increase in the curriculum.

Findings Related to the Interpretations and Literature

Honorable Intentions or Economic Gain: Media Making Curriculum

American history, or any country's history for that matter, is not a singular history and to have that stance eliminates or omits the experiences of the minority group. Comparatively, to say a minority group has monolithic experiences is also inaccurate, however, there is power in numbers and patterns (see Chapter 4, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, Table 7, Table 8, Table 9, Table 10, Table 11). And this is what *The 1619 Project* shows accurately, regardless of the overall *political* intent which was never

acknowledged by *The New York Times*. Therefore, the theme of **singular versus pluralistic U.S. History** captures the impact of perspective and societal status, i.e., being a part of the majority or minority group and one's perspective of American history. Historically, African Americans have been mistreated by the American government, a government that was *intentionally* created to protect its citizens. Now how this historical fact impacts the social studies curriculum becomes an interesting discussion because it is virtually impossible to teach American history without teaching enslavement, emancipation, Jim Crow Laws, etc. Yet, the extent and depth of those discussions differ depending on the state students reside in, and the perspective of the teacher, which is a problem that the distribution of *The 1619 Project* curriculum aimed to address with an economical gain.

It is imperative to recognize no matter how “honorable” the *intent* of *The New York Times* is, it does benefit financially from *The 1619 Project* and the curriculum created in conjunction with the project. To this point, only the *Wall Street Journal* called out the project as such, “selling points; seeks to market their 1619 Project Curriculum” (Guelzo, 2020) which is a valid critique of its intent. As soon as *The 1619 Project* was released, *The 1619 Project Curriculum* was developed and distributed to schools around the nation (Pulitzer Center, n.d.). However, if we remain to have an outwardly politically charged approach to social studies curriculum, transformative social studies curriculum will continue to encounter resistance. *The 1619 Project*, while good in its intentions, reaffirmed why trusting the media should be done with caution. *The 1619 Project* aims to incorporate an advocacy platform in education which depending on one’s perspective can

be deemed as problematic. Nevertheless, that does not take away from the validity of the arguments presented in it.

Trouillot (1995) indicated historical facts are not treated equally. Moreover, to produce history, particular interpretations are selected, and other facts are silenced. Thus, history encompasses the interaction between the past and the present resulting in historical discourse and public memory. The relevance of facts within historical discourse is specific. The production of history and historical discourse are shaped by both academic discourses as well as popular discourse. Thus, the narrators of history are not solely professional historians but include politicians, journalists, and everyday citizens, making *The 1619 Project* a part of how history is narrated. For American history to be accurate, it must include the perspective and experiences of the majority and minority groups because both reside in the United States. However, discussing America's history has its challenges that can be exploited for monetary gain. Consequently, it is necessary to recognize that the production of history can entail more than historical facts but also financial benefits to publishing those facts.

Media as Gatekeeper of Curriculum

Curriculum Debates as Control of Teachers' Work: Are Teachers Really the Gatekeepers of Curriculum or Is the Media? Educators are left at a challenging crossroads. Since teachers are the gatekeepers, they are being questioned, asked, or told what they allow to pass through that very gate without it ever being acknowledged that they are the closest ones to our students. Thus, their input is the most imperative of all. But how do you separate personal feelings and political ideologies from curriculum indoctrination? Is that even possible? Throughout North Carolina's SBM, SB members

continuously debated the placement of political ideology within the development of the then social studies standards. SB member Mariah Morris asked her fellow SB members to step outside of their political party ideologies and solely consider the students well-being. Yielding the conclusion and simple answer is it is not possible to separate one's perspective but allowing and/or including diverse perspectives within the school curriculum, specifically, social studies curriculum, alleviates that. Furthermore, the debates occurring in the SBM are a continuation of the crusade against social studies (Evans, 2006) based on the fact, inclusion and diversity require one to remove themselves, their experiences, and political lean from the center. It requires the awareness that one's perspective is not the only perspective (Aldana & Byrd, 2015).

The 1619 Project is not a "traditional curriculum." Squires et al. (2005) defined curriculum into three categories: formal, implemented, and received. The formal is determined by state standards, implemented is what students are presented using the standards as the guide, and received is what students *actually* learn (Squires et al., 2005). Thus, by definition, the only way *The 1619 Project* can be a "traditional curriculum" is if it were to coincide with the formal curricular standards which are subject to review and approval by the SBOE. Consequently, *The 1619 Project* generates **dialogue**, which is necessary for social studies because constructive and guided dialogue yields critical thinking skills. A skills educator, regardless of their racial identity or political lean, wants students to practice in the classroom. Many state standards are written with skill expectations to yield critical thinking development. A part of the critique and poor grade report North Carolina received by Fordham Report was based on the ineffective way North Carolina's social studies standards are written in correlation to measuring student

outcomes (Stern et al., 2021). Thus, exposing students to content that provides them with the opportunity to intertwine skill expectations with critical thinking benefits them not only in the classroom, but in everyday life—foster citizenship (Ross, 2020).

The Distinguished Differences in Approach to History: Journalist Versus Historians. There continues to be a misconception between the role of journalists versus historians. Historians approach history from a distinct stance, one that conflicts with journalists because objectivity is typically not the role of journalist. Hence, how the work of journalist is interpreted and used should differ from those of historians. However, this does not mean journalists are less credible, because even historians have their biases which can be seen through the sources they use. Nevertheless, the role of journalism continues to be challenged in America. As a nation that believes firmly in the Freedom of Speech, i.e., The First Amendment, journalists have the liberty to state their opinion. However, the authority of their voice or their power to prompt national change or decisions is presently unclear. Angmo (2020) and Lavoigne (1994) conveyed that a journalist's perspective is inherently subjective and sensationalized journalism is a form of "Yellow Journalism." And in many ways, *The 1619 Project* capitalized on its sensationalized journalistic approach to American history in the vein of **advocacy journalism**. Examples of this are Nikole Hannah-Jones stating a journalist's job is to "inform the public" (p. 2), that "the press is the firewall of democracy," and "journalism is rising to the occasion as it needs to be" (as cited in Klein, 2021, pp. 2-3). Yet, it was *purposely* published on the 400th Anniversary of the first slave ship with enslaved Africans arriving in America (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Silverstein, 2020), an anniversary arguably the masses had no idea of. However, lessons of history are taught through

commemorations which is a form of historical production (Trouillot, 1995). Thus, while Nikole Hannah-Jones *did* inform the public of the 400th Anniversary, its delivery was intentional and sensationalized for a purpose, and whether that purpose negates the project's creditability has been a leading argument of its politicization.

The publication of *The 1619 Project* has shown media matters in America and journalism, of any kind, is a form of media. Throughout many of the counterarguments against the projects and even the social studies curriculum standards that were being debated in North Carolina, there is an inherited fear of journalists becoming the voice of **authority to prompt change**, or *the media* deciding social studies curriculum, not school board members or credible education voices. Yet, journalists, politicians, and the public have always been involved in producing history (Trouillot, 1995). Therefore, the debates surrounding the historical relevance and creditability of the authors of *The 1619 Project* are not solely based on the project itself, but rather on the historical memory narrators of history create (Trouillot, 1995). Journalism is subjective and unease arises because there is no way to control what they will or will not say. As Nikole Hannah-Jones stated, journalists “hold powerful people to account is critical to have a functioning democracy” (Klein, 2021, p. 2). Thus, journalists can prompt the need for change, in this case, a change within how American history is taught and presented. However, the placement of **political “wokeness” in education** has yet to reach a consensus among the white majority and/or Black conservatives (Woodson, 2020).

It is openly known Nikole Hannah-Jones and fellow authors dismissed the historical critiques given by historians (Eberstadt, 2020; Guelzo, 2020; Kaufman, 2019; Riley, 2020). However, what has not been addressed is the disciplinary differences

between journalism and history and the role of vetting information (Banks, 1995; Mertens, 2015; Rubin, 2019; Shaver, 1992). Therefore, when the liberal newspaper outlets chose to mention the names of politicians and historians, the aim was to discredit and invalidate their perspectives under the premise that the project was being misunderstood as historical journalism versus **advocacy journalism**. In comparison, when conservative newspaper outlets chose to mention the names of politicians and historians it was to credit and validate the said individual's perspective; unless it is historical journalism, it is a work of fiction (See Table 20, Table 21, Table 22, Table 23 in Appendix C). Further, the role of **race** and the limitations surrounding **race** in America became the center of conservative-leaning newspaper outlets. Comparatively, those for the project and supporters of more racially aware standards view journalists or *the media* as the soundboard for societal concerns that should be addressed in education. Moreover, viewed the use of **race** as a justification for changing how American history is presented.

The discussion on social studies is an indirect component that is rarely called out as such. Rather, the focus falls on the implications regarding the United States's legacy and views towards democracy in relation to race. Moreover, the differences between journalism versus historical journalism has been brought to the forefront because of *The 1619 Project*. Part of the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* was to prompt change and change can only occur through action. Presenting history entails an unspoken privilege where one side is favored over the other as if the other does not exist or matter (Trouillot, 1995). Thus, the media and journalists can prompt historical consciousness toward aspects of history that are silenced, e.g., anti-Blackness narratives in American history surrounding enslavement, and socio-economic status.

However, historians and historical journalists traditionally do not write to prompt “change,” but instead present history from an objective approach. This is in part because the discipline of history constrains historians from expressing political opinions, something journalists are free to extoll. Since the 1940s there has been a crusade against social studies (Evans, 2006), and when compared to other Common Core disciplines, social studies is rightfully unique. Similar to *The 1619 Project*, social studies as an academic discipline entails and requires critical thinking skills making it a battle area of the “American mind.” This can plainly be seen by how exasperated conservative media became over the opening essay “attacking” the legacy of Thomas Jefferson, primarily because it challenges what version of Jefferson we want students and the larger society to be taught and accept. Interestingly, during the North Carolina School Board Meetings, Vice Chairman Duncan brought to the forefront the complexities of Jefferson’s life and how challenging that would be for students to unpack. Yet, what he failed to address is the disservice intentionally omitting historical facts to prompt a singular narrative does to students’ historical understanding of American history.

The Complexity of Blackness in America: What The 1619 Project Media Debates Reveal

The African American experience in the United States is again not monolithic. Frequently, it is thought that *all* Black people experience the same or similar plights, which is a wrong assumption to make. Moreover, an additional assumption is that *all* Black people have a unison stance on teaching the complexities of African American history which *The 1619 Project* itself is guilty of. The *Wall Street Journal* was the only newspaper outlet to capitalize on the dichotomy within the African American community

by intentionally including the perspective of Robert Woodson, the creator of 1776unite, the counter-Black narrative to *The 1619 Project* (Woodson, 2020). Further, through Lt. Governor Mark Robinson's unapologetic, straightforward stance against the implementation of North Carolina's social studies standards, and Dr. James Ford's urging the School Board to openly acknowledge the historical oppression of African Americans within the same standards, the dichotomy within the Black community rose to the forefront in a unique way. Frequently, the dichotomy within the Black community is never openly acknowledged. *The New York Times* made a point to address directly criticism from historians and politicians regarding the project, but there was no evidence of them addressing Robert Woodson directly, who was one of the leading Black conservative voices at the *Wall Street Journal* critiquing *The 1619 Project*. As the researcher, even if I do not agree with Lt. Governor Robinson's perspective, I appreciate his candor because it displayed that Blackness in America cannot be looked at through a singular frame. However, my counterargument to Black conservatives is rooted in how deeply embedded anti-Blackness can be found within our society and thus, in our educational system.

Additionally, another example of a monolithic perspective being placed in the Black community is the differences associated with the meaning of the American flag discussed by Nikole Hannah-Jones in the opening essay (Hannah-Jones, 2019). For Nikole Hannah-Jones's father and others in his generation, especially veterans, the American flag embodied patriotism and the right to **membership**, e.g., the incorporation of Army veteran Isaac Woodard illustrated that (Hannah-Jones, 2019). In comparison, for Nikole Hannah-Jones, the American flag represents division and exclusion. This

distinction on meaning differences was an opportunity neglected to be discussed in-depth by Nikole Hannah-Jones primarily because presently, African Americans who display patriotic beliefs are deemed as naïve or in denial of the Black experience. Nevertheless, the diversity being shown throughout media portrayals of the African American community mirrors the complexities of what Blackness in America represents today. Moreover, the generational differences in elevating voices mirror those of leaders of the Civil Rights Era and their parents. To avoid discussions of race and/or to ban *The 1619 Project* is to silence expanding narratives of the Black experience in a changing democratic republic.

The 1619 Project Provocatively Positions Anti-Blackness as Endemic in American History

The first idea of BlackCrit states, “anti-Blackness is endemic to, and is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life” (Dumas & ross, 2016). Comparatively, the first tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT) states, “racism is normal, not unusual in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic 2000: xvi). Therefore, by incorporating BlackCrit and CRT together it can be concluded that because racism is normalized in America, anti-Blackness is inevitable. Thus, unless America takes a proactive stance against anti-Blackness sentiments, which is the vantage point we see in everyday life, e.g., arguments presented in *The 1619 Project*, then racism will continue because that is a component of American history and its identity. This said racism can also be seen through the historical experiences of Indigenous and Latinx communities in the United States, not only African Americans. For example, Dr. Olivia Oxendine discussed during North Carolina’s SBM listening to the radio as a child and

hearing news of Lumbee Indians facing off against the KKK and being successful. The story shared by Dr. Oxendine echoed the theme of history because when the history of the KKK is taught or discussed, the emphasis is placed on racism toward African Americans. Subsequently, this is one of the key reasons Dr. Olivia Oxendine found the political cartoon created depicting GOP members as Klan members hurtful (See Footnote 10 in Chapter 4).

However, what makes African Americans' experience different is unlike other racial groups, there is a continuous denial of its occurrence holistically. Therefore, when a curriculum is created, if anti-Blackness sentiments are not addressed prior to or during its development, it will inadvertently promote said ideologies. Thus, if social studies curriculum does not aim to critically contextualize what Blackness has represented in the United States from past to present, it will be anti-Black, even if multiculturalism is included aligning with the analyzed intent of *The 1619 Project*. State curriculums are not isolated from national issues. For example, when analyzing articles in the Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post, it was undeniable that what was being discussed in relation to the project was a part of the larger national debate on race. Consequently, the theme of national debate arose, along with culture war(s) and propaganda because it was so heavily presented yet could never be solely isolated as the sole theme found within an article. Therefore, it was a part of the unspoken or underlying current of the politicization of *The 1619 Project*. Nevertheless, state curriculums reflect regional perspectives and national concerns. Social studies as an academic discipline is the memory of America, it reminds us of our past but also teaches that history is continuous. School board member Dr. Donna Tipton-Rogers made a point to address this when defining why the study of

history occurs to ensure deeds are not forgotten, instill patriotism, and provide lessons for the present. Thus, everyone in the United States is a part of living history. Yet, the concept of memory law which is defined as, “state-approved interpretations of crucial historical events and promote certain narratives about the past” (Council of Europe, 2018) appears to be rising in the United States.

A clear example of this is the counternarrative to *The 1619 Project*, *The 1776 Report*, and the growing lean towards “patriotic education” and the intentional removal of American democracy, a theme that emphasizes the ability to openly express concerns regarding inequity. Before *The 1776 Report*, there has never been an Executive Order created to respond to journalists, and to Dr. Ford’s point, *The 1776 Report* had a clear political party agenda (E.O. 13958 of Nov 2, 2020; Hess, 2021). The Wall Street Journal, the conservative-leaning newspaper outlet during the analysis, aimed to remind its readers of what being an American consists of, and to challenge those values puts into question one’s allegiance to the United States. Additionally, it shows how fear can be used as a political maneuver to control or manipulate public opinion on the future of American history and school curriculum. Trouillot (1995) indicates power determine what is recorded in history, and thus, what is remembered. There will always be competing narratives within the media and sources, whether that be newspaper articles or projects published through newspapers, which can be used as a political maneuver. Politicians are re-elected officials and school board members are re-elected officials. Both are going to align with their political constituents based on how the media and public forums portray how their base feels to ensure re-election.

Conclusion

The 1619 Project as an Example of Liberatory Social Studies Curriculum

The 1619 Project accomplished its goal of starting a much-needed dialogue in education and curriculum development based on the media attention it received from the different newspaper outlets analyzed. Liberation in school curriculum is vital for Black students because what one is taught from their youth impacts how they see themselves in the world. As someone who did not experience that within their K-12 experience, it took me attending a Historically Black College/University for me to feel said liberation and it was not from the K-12 curriculum. But rather being in a space where I knew I was valued and celebrated which in part is part of the purpose of *The 1619 Project*. In the opening essay of *The 1619 Project*, Nikole Hannah-Jones stated she wishes she knew the personal significance of the flag and the lineage it represented for her and her fellow African Americans (Hannah-Jones, 2019). Therefore, it would not take attending a Historically Black College/University for Black students to feel celebrated and liberated within education because that would already be incorporated into their K-12 curriculum.

Nonetheless, because of how politicized *The 1619 Project* has become, I cannot confidently conclude that African American History will impact the U.S. History curriculum within social studies based on the propaganda language used to describe the project. For example, the Wall Street Journal described *The 1619 Project* as “grievance-based,” “anti-American propaganda,” and “racist propaganda” (Morrow, 2021; Riley, 2020; Woodson, 2020). In comparison, The Washington Post described *The 1619 Project* as a “liberal agenda...Marxist-based philosophy...conspiracy theory” and “1619 Project is a prime example of leftist ideological overreach” (Gerson, 2019; Milbank, 2021). However, neither outlet acknowledged that they themselves are partaking in propaganda.

Thus, it was challenging to distinguish whether what was being published in newspaper outlets was solely the opinion of the author or a method of incorporating propaganda within journalism. It was beyond prevalent in every article read in the Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post but hard to distinguish whether this is what journalism has become or if political propaganda was occurring.

Therefore, depending on the state, African American history will either become an elective or as in North Carolina's social studies standards, taught but competed with the experiences of other historically marginalized communities. An example of the latter point is when Superintendent Truitt stated there were too many examples of African Americans' history or experiences in North Carolina's social studies standards.

Suggesting that too many examples of one are competing with another; thus, an equal number is the only way to eliminate competition. However, I recommend African American history be taught as a required standalone course and also incorporated into American History similar to North Carolina's social studies standards but with greater intentionality. Banks (1975) states that ethnic studies, which African American history can be considered a part of (Hu-DeHart, 1993), should be taught as a standalone course. From its content, *The 1619 Project* has shown that African American history needs to have its own course because the experiences of African Americans are distinctly linked to the development of the United States. Further, the SBM also shows that the curricular space and time a stand-alone course affords would attend to the complex narratives of Black and African American history in the United States and avoid presenting the Black experience as monolithic. Making it a potential space for both liberal and conservative Black perspectives. However, it is imperative to include narratives or counternarratives

such as The 1619 Project into traditional social studies curriculum to present a holistic picture or perspective of American History to students beginning as early as elementary school. This is part of the overall purpose of *The 1619 Project* – to show that the United States is a nation of democracy that enjoys freedom, liberty, and economic prosperity because of the Black and African American contributions and sacrifices.

Teaching African American history as a standalone course has its advantages and disadvantages. The third idea of BlackCrit states, “BlackCrit should create space for Black liberatory fantasy, and resist a revisionist history that supports dangerous majoritarian stories that disappear whites from a history of racial dominance” (Leonardo, 2004) and based on how *The 1619 Project* was politicized is clear there is a need for re-shift the narratives surrounding Blackness in America. The Black experience in America is unique and dynamic which Woodson (2020) and 1776unites.org show by pushing back on the “victimhood” mentality they believe *The 1619 Project* embodies. Therefore, I recommend it would be beneficial to have African American history as a standalone course because it would grant students the opportunity to unpack the complexities of African American history in the United States, i.e., “political” compliance versus “political” disruption. Moreover, as a standalone course, African American students would be granted the opportunity to experience representation and their histories as narrators of past and present political and social events (Marie, 2016; Sotiropoulos, 2017). It is imperative for students that the social studies curriculum acknowledges in depth the role of African Americans in American History (Banks, 1975, 1990; Hannah-Jones, 2019). Thus, there is a need for greater intentionality in incorporating African American history within the American history curriculum and the perspectives which are

represented within this curriculum. Simply acknowledging the enslavement of African Americans, Jim Crow Laws, the Civil Rights Movement, etc. is not enough because it dismisses the importance of membership; how instrumental African Americans have been in the formation of the United States, their right to membership, and obtaining equity should not be questioned or denied.

The United States continues to grapple with understanding history cannot be singular because there will always be a minority voice that competes to be heard over the majority. Additionally, because the African American community's perspective on the role of race is not monolithic as the theme's American ideals versus American reality and "political" compliance versus "political" disruption illuminates, determining the majority voice or consensus of African Americans works against them. This is primarily because societal membership has been associated with race. African Americans continue to experience a lack of clarity of their place in the United States whether it be based on political party affiliation, socioeconomic status, education, etc. Thus, when aiming to create a curriculum and/or incorporate African American history into the school curriculum, the starting point differs. Yet, in part this is what *The 1619 Project* attempted to do—start African American history, which is the history of America in 1619. The aim of social studies is to foster citizenship, assist in the development of human relations, and advance knowledge to promote a democratic and socially just society (Ross, 2020), and how race is being considered to not be a part of social studies does not align with its aim. Unpacking the historical role and difficulties race has held in the United States assists with developing "human relations, and advance knowledge to promote a democratic and

socially just society” (Ross, 2020). Now whether that will be openly accepted remains uncertain and highly dependent upon the media’s role in national issues.

Nevertheless, when aiming to determine where to begin the discussion surrounding race, *The 1619 Project* presents ways in which dialogue can begin. Moreover, depending on the grade level, the content presented in the project can be modified or adjusted to present the foundational components to support future grade-level learning. However, this point was in the national debate but is a massive benefit and tangible takeaway of *The 1619 Project* for practitioners.

Furthermore, *The 1619 Project* and its politicization present a strong case for the need to expose students to critical media literacy skills (Mirra et al., 2022; Kahne & Bowyer, 2019), the role of the said skill within social studies, and the necessity to include it in social studies curriculum. *The 1619 Project* displayed that media literacy is critical and imperative. The media thrives off sensationalized journalism or click-bait headlines. Thus, outside of navigating sensationalized media, one must also have an awareness of the politically created echo chambers surrounding an issue found within media (Abisheva et al., 2016; Bruns, 2019, Dubois & Blank, 2018). Therefore, teaching students how to identify these components within the media sources they utilize would support students learning to look at the source where information is being presented and look at the ways in which the media is using the information for their gain. But more importantly, it fosters responsible citizenship, a component of social studies and an important aspect of civic education and civic awareness (Ross, 2020) (See Figure 8 in Appendix C).

Implications for Action

The politicization of social studies curriculum will not end with *The 1619 Project*. Vice Chairman Duncan stated on June 4th, 2020, SBM, that he hoped a consensus can be reached regarding what is accurate American History. However, I conclude that while this hope is admirable and well-intended, I recommend becoming or accepting the fact we may never reach a consensus regarding American History, but that is social studies and what students need to learn. The SBM in North Carolina displayed the importance of representation within the curriculum because based on the content students are exposed to, they developed either positive or negative perspectives (Aldana & Byrd, 2015). A key reason why *The 1619 Project* was created was because of the lack of representation and recognition regarding the role African American hold in the building of the United States. Thus, the content of the project is not only to inform but also to empower African Americans by representing the historical resistance they have shown at the expense of the development of the United States. Therefore, since the intent of journalism from Nikole Hannah-Jones's perspective is to prompt change, I hope *The 1619 Project* can empower future generations of Black children to see themselves beyond the skewed perspectives frequently presented in curriculum.

As has been shown throughout history, social studies have been the bedrock of “controversy” (Ansley, 2021; Howard, 2003). Thus, if work similar to *The 1619 Project* is produced, it should expect pushback. To better support a racially diverse social studies curriculum with an emphasis on African American history, there must be a willingness to acknowledge and understand the role politics hold within the process. The politicization of *The 1619 Project* mirrors what the nation can expect to see as the discussion

surrounding the social studies curriculum continues (See Table 19 in Appendix C). As the discussion surrounding race and what is considered “divisive concepts” continues, the United States has a great likelihood to turn into a checkboard with states that choose to allow or not allow the inclusion of “divisive concepts” or CRT resulting in the miseducation of information and differentiation of historical information based on a student’s state of origin. (See Table 19 in Appendix C).

Additionally, political involvement has become imperative for practitioners, especially those identifying as a Person of Color. Regardless of one’s perspective on the two dominant political parties and how closely they align themselves with them or are politically active, politics holds a monumental role in the United States’ educational system. Thus, if education reform in the context of transformative social studies curriculum is to occur, practitioners who support the said stance must be involved in local and state politics, specifically local politics. It is imperative to state my previous statement is not to be wrongly interpreted as teachers simply “needing a seat at the table”; instead, I am recommending that is the first and most vital step. If SB member Dr. James Ford, a former social studies teacher, was not a part of North Carolina’s School Board, would another SB member call out the omission of the Black experience from the then-presented social studies standards? Dr. Ford’s willingness to articulate the complexities of the Black experience while directly identifying how it is being silenced supports the theme of **“political” compliance versus “political” disruption**. For change to occur, there must be a willingness to disrupt the status quo. Furthermore, teaching has become a political act (Freire, 1972; 1975). Thus, when given the opportunity to provide feedback and/or be involved in the development of standards, it is vital for practitioners to take

advantage of the said opportunity. Although SB member Todd Chasteen brought up that the total social studies teacher involved equaled 1% to dismiss or negate the influence of the findings associated with the standards, that 1% represents a collective voice of social studies teachers.

Additionally, Dr. Ford is a parent; therefore, alongside his desire for wanting social studies to be better for all students, he has a personal incentive in the matter as well. Which is another vital component necessary for continuing the discussion surrounding the inclusion of transformative social studies curricula is parental involvement in the form of advocacy. On February 3rd, 2020, SBM Chairman Davis and Superintendent Truitt read an email each from concerned parents surrounding the discussion on North Carolina's social studies standards. From these emails, a distinct level of authority was placed on the opinions of the parents from the emails because their perspectives were heard by the masses. Similar to these parents, I conclude the same is necessary to promote the inclusion of transformative social studies curricula. Further, in conjunction with incorporating parental advocacy, student advocacy is just as much, if not more, necessary. SB member Mariah Morris urged fellow SB members to consider the level of positive feedback the revised social studies standards received from students. Moreover, that the language being debated was the *specific language* students wanted within their standards. Therefore, advocacy groups aimed to present student concerns at SBM during the public forum can promote the inclusion of transformative social studies curricula. Conclusively, during SBM, community involvement through grassroots or non-profit organizations can support the development of transformative social studies curricula.

However, to do so has resulted in a discussion surrounding who has the **authority to prompt change**. Creditability became a core component of the political debate occurring amongst media and even within the school board meetings (See Chapter 4, How do the Media Portrayals of The 1619 Project Accurately or Inaccurately Represent the intent of The 1619 Project for Other Stakeholders, such as Opponents and Critics of The 1619 Project?). Various SB members stated their academic disciplines as a method of indicating *they* had the right to have a say so because, from their perspective, they had the credentials to do so. Therefore, the necessity of academic creditability has yet to be determined. However, when aiming to disrupt what is considered an “acceptable” social studies curriculum or American history, the *authority* to have a say requires questioning and challenging.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The multi-method study conducted on *The 1619 Project* aimed to understand the politicization of social studies curriculum, but in essence, illuminated the politicization of education holistically. Moreover, through the North Carolina case study, it became extremely apparent that state issues are not isolated from national debates. However, a key challenge and limitation to understanding and unpacking the politicization of *The 1619 Project* is it is still occurring as the dissertation study was being conducted.

Thus, rather it as a stagnate problem, it is continuously evolving, and legislation is being created to prohibit racially diverse school curricula, specifically African American history-related curricula. Therefore, a recommendation for a future study is to conduct a case study on a state that has legislation opposing the direct inclusion of African American history curriculum using the publication of *The 1619 Project* as the starting

point. This approach would allow the research to understand the influence of national politics on state education issues but also how that given state is choosing to respond based on its political lean.

Further, using a multi-method research design created challenges and suggest using a qualitative approach for future research. This study provided foundational descriptive data such as word frequency count. However, the content of *The 1619 Project* is what became politicized. Thus, incorporating quantitative methods was not overly beneficial because there was very little to quantify outside of word frequency, author's name, and publication dates. Initially, the goal of the research was to collect 300 articles that would then become a part of a random, stratified sample; I was unable to complete this goal because I was unable to find 300 articles that met the search criteria which resulted in me collecting 170 articles. Further, because I only collected 170 articles, those articles became my random stratified sample. Continuing, when aiming to identify the journalists' outlets prefer, there were no commonalities found within or amongst sources. Nor was there a "spike" in publication dates; of the 170 articles collected, August 14, 2019, had the highest article frequency date with 6 articles published on the said date. The meaning behind this date was never clearly defined; however, I infer it was a matter of chance or because the project was recently released; these were early articles talking about the content without political intent. Similarly, I intended to separate or identify articles collected based on whether they were opinions or editorials which I was unable to do due to not being able to distinguish the difference between the two. Moreover, because journalism as a field has a premise of subjectivity, there is no universal definition defining the two.

Additionally, within media, newspapers are not the quickest or most relevant way individuals of any political lean obtain their news; many utilize social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter. Although it can be argued that the use of social media to obtain news is problematic because frequently context is often limited, many of today's readers are looking for soundbites. Twitter especially allows journalists to reach the masses on a larger scale and thrives off sensationalized content. An example of this is how leading author Nikole Hannah-Jones has and continues to use Twitter to not only promote *The 1619 Project* but also directly address praise and criticism it has received. Therefore, because Twitter was not included as a media source, much of the political debate which occurred because of it being politicized by politicians, authors of *The 1619 Project*, and the public were excluded from the research. Furthermore, many of the events that I expected to occur within the newspaper selected (e.g., spikes in dates, repeat of names) could have been found on Twitter resulting in greater quantitative data findings. Consequently, this said limitation yields a great opportunity for future research to be done on *The 1619 Project*, the politicization of *The 1619 Project*, and/or how authors and politicians have chosen to address its praise and criticism.

Lastly, a final limitation of the study that grants the opportunity for further research to be conducted is *The 1619 Project* curriculum created and published by the Pulitzer Center was not a part of the data analysis. Thus, to understand on a different angle whether *The 1619 Project* is a curriculum, the various lessons plan and content within it could be analyzed and compared against a school curriculum. Moreover, because *The 1619 Project* entails poems along with essays, the curriculum is possibly not

limited to social studies which allow the possibility of different lens of analysis to be completed.

Concluding Remarks

Frequently in society, many like to say, “I don’t get involved in politics” or “I’m not a political person.” However, regardless of if one identifies as a political person or is involved in politics, the politicization of *The 1619 Project* shows that politics is involved in one’s everyday life and in education. *The 1619 Project* is an example of the power of representation and the power of a collective voice. Further, *The 1619 Project* reminds society that even if the minority voice does not align with the dominant narrative, it is important and imperative to acknowledge the minority voice because it is a part of the collective voice that makes up the pluralistic history of the United States.

The 1619 Project is a journalistic endeavor led by Nikole Hannah-Jones to reframe how the United States discusses the role and history of African Americans (Gyarkye, 2019). Further, the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* is to dismantle the notion that anti-Blackness sentiments are not a part of America’s history and identity which can be seen through the development of the highway system, healthcare towards African Americans, land ownership, and more (Hannah-Jones, 2019; Klein, 2021; See Appendix A). Based on its *intent*, *The 1619 Project* became politicalized because it directly challenges the ideals of democracy in the United States, past and present, using the experiences/history of African Americans as its foundation. Or as the leading author Nikole Hannah-Jones stated in *The 1619 Project*, “...some might argue that this nation was founded not a democracy but as a slavocracy” (Hannah-Jones, 2019, p.18). Thus, the rhetorical, political debate associated with (around) *The 1619 Project* is whether the

journalistic approach of *The 1619 Project* accurately represents the historical experiences of African American and whether anti-Blackness sentiments built American democracy (Silverstein, 2020). Further, because *The 1619 Project* was not written by historians, the creditability of the project fueled its politicization because it put into question who has the authority to write or rewrite American history (Bendix, 2020; Hulse, 2021). Due to its politicization in the media, the accuracy or inaccuracy of *The 1619 Project's* author's *intent* varied based on the political lean of the outlet.

A continuous argument that was presented regarding the project was the vetting or lack thereof of information, determining what and how we define historical truths, having teachers vet their curricular choices, and the intent of curricula itself. Thus, if were to be presented in the classroom, teachers would emphasize that *The 1619 Project* is a journalistic perspective on American history while emphasizing that journalists have played a critical role in the development of historical understanding through society. Further, they often create the most representative understanding of the current issues within society within any particular time period. Thus, the increase in the rise of looking for alternative curricula to incorporate within classrooms reflects the status of society which journalism reflects.

Overall, the *Christian Science Monitor* was the only news outlet to accurately represent the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* (See Table 13 in Appendix B). Evidence of this is based on the outlet's ability to contextualize how *The 1619 Project* differs from CRT while addressing how the content of the project evokes "...pain and reckoning in the narrative of black America" (Sappenfield, 2019; Sheasley, 2021). Comparatively, *The Washington Post* presented the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* in alignment with their

political base stating “...it is the story of a radical principle-the principle of human equality-introduced into a deeply unjust society” (Gerson, 2019). However, *The Washington Post* openly challenged the creditability and language used within the project as having political agendas stating, “...trust evaporates when journalistic entities embrace political projects” (Will, 2020). Further, when the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* was presented in the media by other stakeholders such as opponents/critics, i.e., the *Wall Street Journal* the *intent* was misrepresented primarily because the creditability of the project became the focus (Eberstadt, 2020; Guelzo, 2020; Kaufman, 2019; Riley, 2020). Moreover, the *Wall Street Journal* drew on the fact that the African American experience in the United States is not monolithic (Woodson, 2020); a point *The 1619 Project* and its publisher *The New York Times* failed to address. Thus, although the *Wall Street Journal* presented the *intent* of *The 1619 Project* as a “...moral crusade” (Riley, 2021) and “...weaponizing history” (McClay, 2019), it was successful in addressing the shortcomings of the project and aligned its perspective to its political base by stating, “*1619 Project* is aimed at legitimizing the politics of the Democratic Party and at “dividing workers” by race” (Kaufman, 2019).

The 1619 Project is a great way to support K-12 classroom discussions on race but should not be the core or sole material used. Race will always be a challenging, social construct to grapple with in the United States. As the last tenet of CRT states, “the incorporation and use of counternarratives and storytelling grants People of Color to tell their experiences and perspectives on racism and “being racially minoritized” (Rollock & Gillborn, 2011, p. 2); *The 1619 Project* help brings said tenet to fruition. Former President Lyndon B. Johnson stated, "The answer for all our national problems comes

down to one single word: education" (Schultz, 2019, p. 97). However, if there is an unwillingness to hear or learn about the experiences of People of Color, specifically African Americans, how can the problem of our nation be solved? Within *The 1619 Project* the authors, especially Nikole Hannah-Jones, argued that democracy was founded and created at the expense of African Americans (Hannah-Jones, 2019); America's "whole idea about democracy actually comes from Black resistance" (Klein, 2021, p. 5). Furthermore, King (2016) argued that when African American history is accurately incorporated within classroom instruction, it yields racial justice and racial literacy. *The 1619 Project* presents Blackness as a history of resilience and resistance that embodies empowerment and the power of voice or personal narrative to prompt change. Students, especially white students, benefit just as much, if not more, when African American history is incorporated into school curriculum (Epstein, 1998) and the use of counternarratives and storytelling provides students with that exposure.

The 1619 Project is a counternarrative to *Eurocentric* American history (King, 2014; King & Brown, 2014). Elizabeth Martinez stated in *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* (2018, p. 189), "We can choose to believe the destiny of the United States is still manifest: global domination. Or we can seek a transformative vision that carries us forward, not backward...we do have choices." *The 1619 Project* reminds us of that choice, and it is up to Americans to determine where we place the value in that choice.

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APPENDIX A: ESSAYS

Essay Two: “American Capitalism Is Brutal. You Can Trace That to the Plantation” by Matthew Desmond

Expanding on the ramification of slavery in the United States, Matthew Desmond, a Sociology Professor at Princeton University, discussed the correlation between slavery and capitalism (Desmond, 2019). Specifically, he inferred that the business model used by any corporation, small or big, can be traced back to the business model developed to support the transatlantic slave trade. Thus, as in the opening essay, Matthew Desmond directed his attention towards the lack of democracy given to African Americans. However, rather than connect said issue to historic founding documents, he chose to address a foundational component of America’s identity, capitalism, i.e., the economy (Desmond, 2019).

A major attribute of the United States is that it is a capitalist society. Capitalism in the United States, from Matthew Desmond’s perspective, is formulated in a manner that suppresses its citizens and creates and upholds classism, specifically a lower-class system. Moreover, instead of American history associating the development of capitalism in America to the business or industry of slavery, it prefers omission. Matthew Desmond conveyed slavery was an extremely profitable business, primarily because cotton was a highly desired commodity in the global market. Thus, he indicated it was imperative for plantation owners to not only produce large amounts of cotton but also ensure they retained access to purchasing and selling slaves to either gain/uphold profit as well as purchase agricultural needs (land and more). However, to do this, Matthew Desmond explained plantation owners had to receive bank loan(s) because within agriculture there

is harvesting and reaping season, limiting direct monetary funds. So, to enable their ability to obtain a bank loan(s), slaves were used as collateral, creating the first mortgage system within the United States (Desmond, 2019).

Mortgaging enslaved African Americans became essential to the Southern economy, so much so, Matthew Desmond stated, “slave mortgages injected more capital into the economy than sales from the crops harvested by enslaved workers” (p. 38). Likewise, to ensure the industry of slavery was seamless as possible, Matthew Desmond conveyed Thomas Affleck created the *Plantation Record and Account Book* which provided plantation owners an accounting manual allowing them to track productivity, end-year balances, track revenue, expenses, and more while implementing Affleck’s suggested interest rate (Desmond, 2019). Sadly, during this time, as treatment towards enslaved African Americans worsened, productivity expectations increased, Matthew Desmond stated (Desmond, 2019).

Unlike in Nikole Hannah-Jones’s opening essay, Matthew Desmond made direct claims to how the modern-day working conditions impact African Americans more than white Americans. Specifically, he highlighted the wealth gap between African Americans and white Americans echoes sentiments of enslavement because an element of capitalism in the United States is racial hierarchy. Therefore, because African Americans were literally a form of money and held a financial purpose as slaves, their racial inferiority is inherently entrenched in capitalism. Thus, through the United States choosing to remain capitalist, it has chosen to uphold slavery, but in twenty-first-century conditions (Desmond, 2019).

Essay Three: “Why Doesn’t America Have Universal Healthcare? One Word: Race” by Jeneen Interlandi

In the third essay written by Jeneen Interlandi, a staff writer at *The New York Times*, she addressed the United States healthcare system. Beginning with the smallpox pandemic, Jeneen Interlandi unpacked how the healthcare system in the United States has and remains to be a racialized system. More explicitly, she conveyed inequities found within the United States’ healthcare system can be directly attributed to discriminatory practices conducted by doctors solely based on race. As in the previous essays, Jeneen Interlandi attributed the inequities found within the modern-day healthcare system to slavery, but more explicitly the notion of racial hierarchy associated with whiteness in America. Specifically, Jeneen Interlandi examined how during the smallpox pandemic which occurred post-Civil War, African Americans died at higher rates than white Americans, but not because white Americans did not know they were dying. On the contrary, the federal and various state governments knew African Americans were dying in larger numbers due to malnutrition, poor sanitation, disease, and more, but intentionally chose not to intervene. The reason was, s rather than use the monetary assistance Congress allotted for medical within the Freedmen’s Bureau, white legislators took that stance that death was occurring in the African American community because they (African Americans) were “so ill suited to freedom that the entire race was going extinct” (p. 45). Additionally, providing African Americans free medical assistance, i.e., using the medical funds from the Freedmen’s Bureau to provide aid, would create dependency or an expectation to receive handouts (Interlandi, 2019).

Further, Jeneen Interlandi discussed the exclusion of African Americans from the medical community; this includes prohibiting African Americans from joining medical

associations, medical schools, as well as being admitted to particular hospitals and clinics as patients. These restrictions did not stop African Americans from breaking barriers in the medical field, however, and instead of succumbing to challenges, African Americans created their own medical associations, schools, hospitals, and clinics. Likewise, to combat African Americans being denied medical care, the leading Black medical organization, the National Medical Association, proposed and pushed for a national care system. This proposal nonetheless was met with successful resistance by white medical doctors who associated the creation of a national healthcare system with socialism (Interlandi, 2019).

To conclude modern-day implications, Jeneen Interlandi presented the battle surrounding the Affordable Health Care Act (AHCA). Emphasizing the positive impact the AHCA has had on reducing racial disparities in medicine, Jeneen Interlandi does not shy away from identifying states that were a part of the Confederacy have chosen not to incorporate AHCA into their state Medicaid expansion. Again, this essentially denied African Americans access to the United States healthcare system and reenforced “There has never been any period in American history where the health of blacks was equal to that of whites” (p.45).

Essay Four: “How Segregation Caused Your Traffic Jam” by Kevin Kruse

Taking on a well-known issue many major cities in the United States face, Kevin Kruse, a History Professor at Princeton University, in the fourth essay in *The 1619 Project* situated the development of highways as a method of maintaining racial segregation in the South. During the Reconstruction Era, newly freed African Americans, both by force and choice, created their own communities that were separate from white

Americans. Racial segregation, according to Kruse, was not only present in the South, but also in major cities in the north such as Baltimore, Maryland for instance. However, a distinction between the North and South, primarily during the 1930s and years was the legalization of segregation which Kevin Kruse states impacted African Americans' ability to obtain mortgage loans. Specifically, during the New Deal Era, Kruse said redlining became overly popular to further racial isolation to now, urban renewal to displacement or remove African Americans for urban development (Kruse, 2019).

A component of urban renewal is infrastructure development. Through this, Kevin Kruse stated highways have intentionally been developed through communities that have high populations of African Americans, and along with displacing African Americans highways are used as a method to keep African Americans and white Americans separately. To corroborate his stance, he presented the highway and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) system in Atlanta, Georgia. Within Atlanta, the highways "winding route" created "the boundary between the white and Negro communities" according to former Mayor Bill Hartsfield in the 1950s (Kruse, 2019). Agreeably Kevin Kruse indicated the system to use infrastructure to maintain racial separation continues and is outwardly expressed when the expansion of MARTA is proposed to extend to suburban counties surrounding Atlanta. However, instead of the expansion of MARTA being attributed to being racially driven, white suburbanites used biases associated with the socioeconomic status of MARTA users as their reasoning for their resistance, echoing the sentiments of white flight of the 1980s (Kruse, 2019).

Essay Five: "What the Reactionary Politics of 2019 Owe to the Politics of Slavery"
by Jamelle Bouie

Connecting to Nikole Hannah-Jones's and Matthew Desmond's essays, Jamelle Bouie, a Washington-based *New York Times* columnist, addressed America's political system and surmised that it is inherently racist based on the ideologies of prominent politicians during America's slavery era. Starting with the political resistance former President Obama encountered from the Republican Party when in office, Jamelle Bouie situated said resistance as more than opposition based on political party differences. From his perspective, Jamelle Bouie took the stance that former President Obama's second term in office was overshadowed by the belief he was literally and figuratively not American; his American citizenship was questioned and the policies he aimed to pass did not embody the "American ideals" of the United States. As a result, the House and Senate changed to Republican Party majority preventing various legislation from being passed. From this, Jamelle Bouie raised a similar point presented in Nikole Hannah-Jones's essay, who has "democratic legitimacy—who can claim the country as their own, and who has the right to act as a citizen" (p. 52).

As in the former essays, a key component of Jamelle Bouie's essay aims to display how racism found within American politics can be traced back to southern white America's resistance to ending slavery and fundamentally viewing African Americans as equals. To illustrate this point, the political theories of John C. Calhoun were unpacked. John C. Calhoun was instrumental in the fight for southern states' rights. More explicitly, Calhoun popularized the concept of "nullification" which would grant states the power to petition themselves out of federal laws, i.e., the federal abolishment of slavery. Through this ideology, Calhoun was able to capitalize on sentiments associated with statehood, state rights, and most importantly, the economic stability of the state is more important

than those of the nation. Unsurprisingly, Jamelle Bouie indicated Calhoun's perspectives gained traction amongst southern states, and as a result many southern states ultimately seceded from the Union sparking the Civil War (Bouie, 2019).

Although the United States is in no way in the same conditions as it was during the Civil War, Jamelle Bouie associates the mindset of Calhoun to current political dynamics and conditions. A crucial component of Calhoun's theories was southern white legislators should use their political power to prevent the integration of African Americans into society. Hence, the creation of Jim Crow laws, literacy tests, the grandfather clause, and more from Jamelle Bouie's vantage point reflects said ideology. Likewise, the same ideology remains present in the modern-day Republican Party, whom Jamelle Bouie insinuated uses their political influence to suppress the voices of historically marginalized communities, specifically African Americans, to ensure they maintain majority ruling power. To illustrate the said point, Bouie presented voting outcomes in Wisconsin, Michigan, and North Carolina where African American political participation was either suppressed or rigged to benefit the Republican or Tea Party (conservatives). Consequently Bouie concluded, although there is undeniable power in African American political involvement, the United States's political system is structured to view and treat African Americans as the unwanted minority and/or majority. Therefore, rather than grant them the political influence to structurally change their position and/or conditions in the United States through laws and policies, politics is used as a method to reinforce their inability to achieve democratic legitimacy.

Essay Six: "How False Beliefs in Physical Racial Difference Still Live in Medicine Today" by Linda Villarosa

Revisiting the topic of the medical experiences of African Americans, Linda Villarosa, an author and journalist at *The New York Times* expounds further on how doctors historically and presently treat African American patients (Villarosa, 2019). Dating back to the 1820s, Linda Villarosa explained that plantation physicians were obsessed to prove “medically” and “physiological” (p. 57) African Americans were different from white Americans. For instance, a physician experimented on the skin of an enslaved African American to prove African Americans had thicker skin and conducted testing that caused blistering to the extent the patient was unable to work in the field anymore. Additionally, African Americans were believed to have larger skulls and sexual organs resulting in inhuman medical treatments being conducted on African American women by J. Marion Sims, the father of modern gynecology (Villarosa, 2019).

The dire effects of these accusations or beliefs have had, from Linda Villarosa’s perspective, lasting effects on the African American community. For example, during the Slavery Era, physicians believed African Americans had a higher pain tolerance than white Americans. Therefore, the punishment enslaved African Americans experienced during enslavement was perceived to be felt less or differently than if inflicted on a white or Indigenous Americans. Presently, when in need of pain treatment, African American adults and youth are inadequately served under the notion that they experience pain less severely according to 2013 and 2016 medical review findings.

Samuel Cartwright was a leading physician during the Slavery Era. Cartwright accused enslaved African Americans desire to run away, attempting to do so, and/or successfully running away from plantations as a “disease of the mind called drapetomania” (p.57). Additionally, as the first physician in the United States to use the

spirometer to measure lung function, Cartwright made the claim that African Americans had a lower lung capacity or a reduced lung capacity of 20 percent and that labor of/in the plantation from his stance supported blood flow. Cartwright's claim regarding African Americans' lung capacity Linda Villarosa stated is still present in modern-day medical practices. From this claim, present-day respiratory monitors use "race correction" software to account for the differences between African Americans and their racial counterparts. In other words, the claims of physician Samuel Cartwright which were founded during the Slavery Era of American history remain to be seen as scientific fact, even though the basis for his claim was situated in the notion that African Americans, freed or enslaved, are inferior to white Americans.

Essay Seven: "Why Is Everyone Always Stealing Black Music?" by Wesley Morris

The role and place of music in America's identity are undeniable, so much so, the diversity found within America's musical genres differs much from other parts of the world. However, unlike in other nations, the physical face associated with particular music genre, trends, and voices has not been disregarded and changed overtly according to Wesley Morris, a film critic and podcast host. Addressing the origin of America's musical identity resulted in being one of the lengthiest articles within the *1619 Project*. Within his essay, Wesley Morris aimed to dismantle the notion that America's musical identity came solely from white Americans. Instead, he strived to prove what is considered white music was intentionally derived from African American culture although it is never credited as such (Morris, 2019).

To show the historical connection from past to present, Wesley Morris begins his inquisition with the origins of Black face in music. Thomas Dartmouth Rice (T. D. Rice)

was the first performer to market the character “Jim Crow” with the use of minstrels to patronize the experiences of enslaved African Americans while using Black face. However, what is frequently unknown about T.D. Rice was the song he sang while performing was a song he heard an African American man singing while grooming a horse on his travels. Never extending credit was not the biggest insult from Wesley Morris’s perspective, but rather, when African Americans were allowed to enter the music scene, they were expected to put on Black face. This meant the “Blackness” they naturally embodied being a POC was not good enough for white audiences furthering the shame they already had to endure through singing and partaking in “Jim Crow” minstrel. Nevertheless, Wesley Morris explained African Americans thrived in music and it was from the minstrels of African Americans Blues, Jazz, and Rhythm and Blues (R&B) were formed (Morris, 2019).

There are various components that make Blues, Jazz, and R&B unique from their tempo to musical arrangement, yet a key element to these three genres Wesley Morris claimed was its ability to be a form of emotional expression for African Americans. African Americans used these genres to express love, joy, pain, and became a method of self-preservation. This self-preservation can be seen during the Motown era when African American artists signed to Motown and intentionally presented themselves in a manner that would be deemed respectable to white America. Nevertheless, when making themselves (African American artists) more acceptable to white audiences, African American artists found “Loving black culture has never meant loving black people, too. Loving black culture risks loving the life out of it” (p. 66). Hence, while African American music culture which is embedded in modern pop culture and can be identified

as such if its origins are traced, it is viewed as “America’s identity” which belongs to white America.

Essay Eight: “The Barbaric History of Sugar in America” by Khalil Gibran Muhammad

A leading crop of many southern plantations was sugar cane. Requiring vast amounts of land because through its yielding, the soil itself becomes drained, sugar cane was one of the most dangerous and gruesome plantations to work on stated Khalil Gibran Muhammad, a Professor of History, Race, and Public Policy at Harvard University. Framing his essay around the economic gains the United States achieved through sugar plantations, Khalil Gibran Muhammad conveyed the United States ranked among the top six nations in sugar production. However, in comparison to picking cotton, cultivating, and milling sugar cane, which both African American youth and adults partook in, resulted in the loss of limbs and high mortality rates. Nonetheless, these outcomes did not deter plantation owners from requiring high production and when slaves refused or did not maintain production outcomes, they were met with inhumane treatment such as being placed in a box lined with nails at the bottom (Muhammad, 2019).

Although the mistreatment and dehumanization of enslaved African Americans was a known component of southern plantations, upon visiting the Whitney Plantation Museum in Louisiana, Khalil Gibran Muhammad stated white individuals trivialized what the museum represents to southern African Americans. The Whitney Plantation Museum was created to showcase, “the everyday struggles and resistance of black people who didn’t lose their dignity even when they lost everything else” (p. 74); it is located near the 1811 enslaved uprising which was one of the largest and as a result has immense

historical founding. Unfortunately, tour operators have been known to state the Whitney Plantation Museum is “misrepresenting the past”; the museum presents the experiences of African Americans who worked on the Whitney Plantation as inaccurate, stating “you are meant to empathize with the owners as their guest” (p.74).. Nevertheless, he stated the land itself shows truth to the history the museum presents, leaving the echoing point of whose interpretation of historical events is more valid, the oppressor or the oppressed (Muhammad, 2019).

As in previous essays, Khalil Gibran Muhammad made present-day implications to sugar cane plantations and relayed through his tour that he learned the said plantations inherently upheld racial hierarchy in the South. Explicitly, in the 1940s African Americans were working unfair wages when cultivating sugar cane and presently when they desired to purchase land to harvest their own crop, they encountered loan discrimination. As a result, Khalil Gibran Muhammad relayed legal action has been taken against banks in Louisiana regarding the denial and manipulation of federal crop loan applications which solidified African American farmers being less than two percent. Wenceslaus Provost Jr., a fourth-generation farmer, is currently in litigation pertaining to crop loan applications that were denied and manipulated causing his to default on his existing crop loan and losing his home. To summarize, Khalil Gibran Muhammad indicated when African Americans “lose” their land rather than question the integrity of the banks, white farmers state it is because African American farmers cannot farm. This raises the underlying question: how is it that when working the land of others African Americans are excellent farmers, but when they farm for themselves, they are unable to? Sugar cane plantations were cultivated and maintained, from Khalil Gibran Muhammad’s

perspective, through the sweat and lives of African Americans. Therefore, stating that they are unable to cultivate any crop for that matter dismisses and disrespects the generational legacy of agriculture many African Americans claimed as their own due to southern enslavement (Muhammad, 2019).

Essay Nine: “Why American Prisons Owe Their Cruelty to Slavery” by Bryan Stevenson

Using Angola’s penitentiary located in Louisiana as the foundation of his essay, Bryan Stevenson, a lawyer, unpacked how the criminal justice system is racialized. Bryan Stevenson is not the first to address the similarities of prison to slavery. On the contrary, the penal system of the United States is frequently accused to have been created as a method to legally enslave newly freed African Americans by wrongly and unlawfully incriminating them (Stevenson, 2019). Likewise, citing the United States’s population size in comparison to its incarceration rate, which is among the highest in the world, Bryan Stevenson indicated that mandatory sentencing has had adverse effects on minor criminal offenses based on the “three strikes” law (Stevenson, 2019).

Angola is located on land that was once a slave plantation. Bryan Stevenson stated it is one of America’s most dangerous prisons and Matthew, an inmate of Angola, was sentenced to life without parole at the age of sixteen. Through Matthew’s experience, Bryan Stevenson relayed the brutality of Angola penitentiary as well as how the said prison is a direct manifestation of the post-Civil War America, i.e., the Reconstruction era in the South. For example, in Angola, the prison supervisors can be found on horseback with shotguns while inmates work in the field picking crops such as cotton.

Refusal to pick cotton or picking cotton too slowly can result in time in “the hole” (p. 81) which further results in limited food to tear-gassing according to Stevenson.

In Maryland in 1664, the General Assembly tasked African Americans to “hard labor for life” within their enslavement. In 1729, punishment for enslaved African Americans could include the severing of limbs, decapitation, and decapitation with the posting of one’s limbs in the most public area of town. In 1861, in Alabama, enslaved African Americans were considered capable of committing crimes resulting in them being deemed a person, yet, outside of criminal activity, African Americans were viewed as property. However, upon the passing of the 13th Amendment, which legally abolished slavery in the United States, Black Codes were created from Bryan Stevenson’s stance to create a *legal* criminal justice system to allow the *lawful* imprisonment of African Americans. Black Codes were anything, but lawful Bryan Stevenson indicated and formulated a system that permitted African Americans who were imprisoned to be leased to provide labor to farmers and businesses. This system mirrored itself throughout United States history, resulting in countless acts of cruelty being shown towards African Americans without legal ramifications (Stevenson, 2019).

From this system, prisons similar to Angola have been able to be created and thrive. Likewise, the passing of harsh sentencing practices during various presidential administrations dating back to Nixon have subjected African Americans and other POC to be wrongfully targeted and incriminated. Therefore, when trying to unpack the criminal justice system, ignoring the unfavorable statistics shown towards African Americans is nearly impossible. For instance, African Americans are twenty-two percent more likely to receive the death penalty if the victim of the crime is white versus Black.

Yet, Bryan Stevenson stated, “I realized how important it is to stay hopeful: Hopelessness is the enemy of justice” (p. 81) upon the release of his client Matthew from Angola (Stevenson, 2019).

Essay Ten: “How America's Vast Racial Wealth Gap Grew: By Plunder” by Trymaine Lee

In the final essay of the *1619 Project*, Trymaine Lee, a journalist, closes the project by addressing the historical connection between post-Civil War America and the present financial circumstances or conditions of African Americans. According to Trymaine Lee, the Civil War established “economic terror” (p. 83) on African Americans and stricken them to live in a poverty then and for generations to come. However, prior to African Americans becoming free from enslavement, the federal government promised all newly freed slaves 40 acres and a mule as a form of *reparations* located in southern territories (Lee, 2019).

Although well intended, Tyramine Lee indicated the said reparations were never given to African Americans for various; the main reason which had a trickle-down effect was the unexpected assassination of President Lincoln. Following his assassination, southern resistance, and ideologies from Vice President Andrew Johnson swiftly blocked federal funds from being distributed to African Americans to assist in their gaining of financial freedom, i.e., the Freedman’s Saving Bank. Explicitly, Vice President Andrew Johnson said in 1866, “This is a country for white men, and by God, as long as I am President, it shall be a government for white men” (p. 83). Thus, under his presidency, the federal funds to secure the land promised to African Americans under William

Sherman's orders in January 1865, which were to come from southern plantations remained the property of their white, southern owners.

The ideology or notion that the United States "shall be a government for white men" Tyramine Lee argued did not end post-slavery in the South. Instead, he argued it is embedded into white America's identity by opening his essay with the story of an African American family in 1947 whose brother "Buddy" was murdered for being "too successful to be a Negro" in Alabama. Following Buddy's death, his family lost all his assets, savings equaling roughly \$500,000 to banks. Using Buddy's life and family experiences following his murder as a springboard, Tyramine Lee presented the current economic wealth gap between African Americans and white Americans. Making up 13 percent of the population, African Americans make "less than 3 percent of the nation's total wealth"; white Americans on average family wealth is \$171,000 while for African Americans it is \$17,600; 19 percent of African American homes hold "zero to negative net worth" compared to only 9 percent of white American homes are equally or as poor (p. 83).

The importance of these statistics and the history associated with African Americans' inability to establish economic wealth from Tyramine Lee's perspective, is according to William A. Darity Jr., a professor of public policy and African American studies at Duke University, "the origins of the racial wealth gap start with the failure to provide the formerly enslaved with the land grants of 40 acres" (p. 83). Likewise, Darity stated, "the major way in which people have an opportunity to accumulate wealth is contingent on the wealth positions of their parents and their grandparents" (p. 83). Thus, because African Americans were never able to obtain land post-slavery and were unable

to establish financial success (generational wealth) without recourse for years to come, white America has inherently ensured the United States remains “a government for white men” because it remains to stricken African Americans to a position of destitute, especially within the housing market. To close, Tyramine Lee presented the current financial position of Buddy’s family; only one of his seven children went to college, the men have remained in low-paid work, and of Buddy’s 25 grandchildren, only six have attended college. Two are the children of the only child who attended college.

APPENDIX B: POLITICIZATION OF THE INTENT OF THE 1619 PROJECT

Table 12*The Intent of The 1619 Project as written in The New York Times*

Date	Quote on “intent”	Title	Author
August 14, 2019	“The 1619 Project is a major initiative from The New York Times observing the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery. It <i>aims to reframe the country’s history, understanding 1619 as our true founding, and placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are</i> [emphasis added].”	The 1619 Project	
August 23, 2019	“The stated aim of the project is to “ <i>reframe the country’s history</i> ” around the arrival of enslaved Africans to English North America [emphasis added]. The argument is not that the United States was actually founded in 1619 but that its culture, economy, politics and social relations are inextricably bound in the race-based chattel slavery that would emerge in Virginia and spread throughout the colonies.”	Slavery Was Not a Secondary Part of Our History	Jamelle Bouie
December 20, 2019	“The project was <i>intended to address the marginalization of African-American history in the telling of our national</i>	We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued The 1619 Project	

December 20, 2019	<p><i>story and examine the legacy of slavery in contemporary American life</i> [emphasis added].”</p> <p>“The very premise of The 1619 Project, in fact, is that <i>many of the inequalities that continue to afflict the nation are a direct result of the unhealed wound created by 250 years of slavery and an additional century of second-class citizenship and white-supremacist terrorism inflicted on black people (together, those two periods account for 88 percent of our history since 1619)</i> [emphasis added].”</p>	We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued The 1619 Project	
December 20, 2019	<p>“That, above all, is what we hoped our project would do: <i>expand the reader’s sense of the American past</i> [emphasis added].”</p>	We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued The 1619 Project	
December 27, 2019	<p>“...the 1619 Project, which <i>aimed to reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the center of our national narrative</i> [emphasis added].”</p>	Race/Related: From Affirmative Action to Farmers’ Markets	Adeel Hassan
March 12, 2020	<p>“...she [Nikole Hannah-Jones] wanted readers to understand that the <i>magazine articles were intended to be the beginning of a conversation</i> [emphasis added], and that she hoped these forums incorporating a variety of voices would stimulate more dialogue. <i>“This project is an origin story. It is not pretending to be the origin story,” she</i></p>	Discussing the Legacy of Slavery	Louise Pierre-Antoine

	<i>said. "We are talking about a particular moment in time and making an argument and really asking a question: What would it mean to imagine 1619 as an origin story and how would that help us understand the country that we are [emphasis added]?"</i>		
March 13, 2020	"...the 1619 Project, said she wanted readers to understand that the magazine articles were intended to be the beginning of a conversation, and that she hoped these forums incorporating a variety of voices would stimulate more dialogue. "This project is an origin story. It is not pretending to be <i>the</i> [emphasis added] origin story," she said.	Race/Related: Slavery and the Shaping of Early America	Louise Pierre-Antoine
May 4, 2020	"The goal of the 1619 project is <i>to reframe American history, and to place the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country</i> [emphasis added]."	The 1619 Project Wins a Pulitzer Prize	
October 9, 2020	"...the core of the project's most controversial goal, " <i>to reframe American history by considering what it would mean to regard 1619 as our nation's birth year</i> [emphasis added]."	The 1619 Chronicles	Bret Stephens
October 9, 2020	"The 1619 Project is <i>a thesis in search of evidence, not the other way around</i> [emphasis added]."	The 1619 Chronicles	Bret Stephens

October 16, 2020	“...The New York Times Magazine, advances a bold claim: <i>that the date when the first enslaved Africans arrived in the English colonies that would become the United States —August of 1619 —can be regarded as the nation’s birth or point of origin</i> [emphasis added].”	On Recent Criticism of The 1619 Project	Jake Silverstein
October 16, 2020	“The goal of The 1619 Project, a major initiative from The New York Times that this issue of the magazine inaugurates, <i>is to reframe American history by considering what it would mean to regard 1619 as our nation’s birth year</i> [emphasis added]. Doing so requires us to place the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country.”	On Recent Criticism of The 1619 Project	Jake Silverstein

Table 13*The Intent of The 1619 Project as Written in Other News Outlets*

Date	Quote on “intent”	Outlet	Title	Author
August 26, 2019	“...New York Times's audacious <i>"1619 Project,"</i> which argues <i>"that nearly everything that has made America exceptional grew out of slavery</i> [emphasis added]. "	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	The Weaponization of History	Wilfred M. McClay
August 29, 2019	“Titled <i>"The 1619 Project"</i> (referencing the arrival of the first black slaves, 400 years ago), <i>the initiative is designed to show that whites have always been and continue to be the beneficiaries of both slavery and its attendant institutional racism - and blacks the perpetual victims</i> [emphasis added].”	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	“The 1619 Project” Hurts Blacks	Robert L. Woodson
September 10, 2019	“...the New York Times' <i>"1619 Project"</i> - <i>an attempt to tell the story of slavery and its lasting effect on American political, economic and social structures</i> [emphasis added]...”	<i>The Washington Post</i>	No excuse for the Founders' failure on slavery	Michael Gerson
December 17, 2019	“ <i>It intends to "reframe the country's history" by crossing out 1776 as</i>	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	The “1619 Project” Get Schooled	Elliot Kaufman

June 30, 2020	<i>America's founding date and substituting 1619, the year 20 or so African slaves were brought to Jamestown, Va. [emphasis added]."</i>	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Main Street: Speak Up, Mr. Biden	William McGurn
September 11, 2020	<i>"The New York Times's "1619 Project," an initiative designed to define America by the arrival of slavery, didn't cause the riots and looting. But it certainly captures the rioters' animating spirit, rooted in the idea that the entire American system is racist to the core and has been from birth [emphasis added]."</i>	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	God, Parents and the '1619 Project'	Latasha Fields
September 22, 2020	<i>"The 1619 Project's creator, Nikole Hannah-Jones, says its purpose is to help Americans "to work to live up to the majestic ideas of our founding [emphasis added]."</i>	<i>Christian Science Monitor</i>	Teaching America's past with a common goal	Monitor's Editorial Board
October 25, 2020	<i>"...in its own words, "aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of</i>	<i>Christian Science Monitor</i>	Looking past false choices	Mark Sappenfield

	<i>slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative [emphasis added]."</i>			
October 25, 2020	<i>"The legacy of 1619 shows how deeply flawed the application of those principles were at the nation's founding with regard to race, and how they remain flawed today [emphasis added]."</i>	<i>Christian Science Monitor</i>	Looking past false choices	Mark Sappenfield
May 17, 2021	<i>"The New York Times's "1619 Project," now taught in schools all over the country, is, in its essence, racist propaganda. Its story lines are instruments for the consolidation of political power. Marxists discovered long ago that class doesn't work as a great divider in America. But race does work [emphasis added]."</i>	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Can Freedom Survive the Narratives?	Lance Morrow
May 26, 2021	<i>"...the New York Times published its "1619 Project" -- which posits that America's true founding was not 1776 but 1619, the year African slaves arrived in Virginia, and that the American Revolution</i>	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Upward Mobility: Correcting 1619's Falsehoods About the American Founding	Jason L. Riley

June 15, 2021	<p><i>was fought primarily to preserve slavery -- he became incensed [emphasis added]."</i></p> <p><i>"The goal of The 1619 Project is to reframe American history by considering what it would mean to regard 1619 as our nation's birth year [emphasis added],"</i></p> <p>editor Jake Silverstein wrote in an essay about why the project was published. "Doing so requires us to place the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country."</p>	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i>	Defund K-12 schools that teach 'misleading' 1619	Brian Murphy
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Table 14*The Intent of The 1776 Report and Commission*

Date	Quote on “ <i>intent</i> ”	Outlet	Title	Author
September 17, 2020	“...he said he would create a new ‘1776 Commission’ to help ‘restore patriotic education to our schools.’”	<i>The New York Times</i>	Trump Calls for “Patriotic Education” to Defend American History From the Left	Michael Crowley
September 17, 2020	“He said the commission would promote a ‘patriotic education’” and ‘encourage our educators to teach our children about the miracle of American history and make plans to honor the 250th anniversary of our founding.’”	<i>The New York Times</i>	Trump Calls for “Patriotic Education” to Defend American History From the Left	Michael Crowley
September 22, 2020	“He announced the creation of a ‘1776 Commission’ that would “restore patriotic education to our schools.’ He wants students to learn ‘the magnificent truth’ of America’s past rather than a new approach in some schools that, he claims, tries “to make students ashamed of their own history.’”	<i>Christian Science Monitor</i>	Teaching America’s past with a common goal	Monitor's Editorial Board
September 27, 2020	“This month, President Trump	<i>The New York Times</i>	Why New Mexico’s 1680	Simon Romero

	said he would create a 1776 Commission to help ‘restore patriotic education to our schools.’		Pueblo Revolt Is Echoing in 2020 Protests	
October 9, 2020	“He even proposed establishing a ‘1776 Commission” to help ‘restore patriotic education to our schools.’	<i>The New York Times</i>	The 1619 Chronicles	Bret Stephens
October 25, 2020	“...President Donald Trump announced the creation of the 1776 Commission. The intent was to recenter American education on patriotic themes. ‘The only path to national unity is through our shared identity as Americans,’ the president said.”	<i>Christian Science Monitor</i>	Looking past false choices	Mark Sappenfield
January 18, 2021	“The Trump White House released the report of the presidential ‘1776 Commission,’ a sweeping attack on liberal thought and activism that calls for a ‘patriotic education,’ defends America’s founding on the basis of slavery and likens	<i>The New York Times</i>	Trump’s “1776 report” defends America’s founding on the basis of slavery and blasts progressivism.	Michael Crowley

January 18, 2021	progressivism to fascism.” “...presidential 1776 Commission, a sweeping attack on liberal thought and activism that calls for a ‘patriotic education,’ defends America’s founding against charges that it was tainted by slavery and likens progressivism to fascism.”	<i>The New York Times</i>	Trump’s 1776 Commission Critiques Liberalism in Report Derided by Historians	Michael Crowley & Jennifer Schuessler
February 1, 2021	“...the 1776 report, rushed out by a presidential commission of the same name just two days before Donald Trump left office (and terminated by President Biden on his first day), it begins and ends with the “fundamental truths” expressed in the nation’s founding documents. ‘We will—we must— always hold these truths,” the report’s unnamed authors insist, if we hope to transcend the deep divisions that plague the nation. Only if schools convey a ‘true education’ based on the principles of	<i>The New York Times</i>	The 1776 Follies	Michael Kazin

February 10, 2021	<p>‘equality, liberty, justice and government by consent’ will a ‘national renewal’ be possible.”</p> <p>“President Donald Trump’s 1776 Commission — established as a response to The New York Times’s 1619 Project, an examination of this nation’s history that took the Black past seriously — revolved around the belief that the ideological underpinnings of America were being threatened and that the nation needed to be reminded ‘that our Declaration is worth preserving, our Constitution worth defending, our fellow citizens worth loving, and our country worth fighting for.’</p>	<i>The New York Times</i>	Isn’t 400 Years Enough?	Jonathan Holloway
May 20, 2021	<p>“...Donald J. Trump’s 1776 Commission, which similarly called for ‘patriotic education’ about United States history.”</p>	<i>The New York Times</i>	Texas Pushes to Obscure the State’s History of Slavery and Racism	Simon Romero
June 29, 2021	<p>“...the</p>	<i>The New York Times</i>	The War on History Is a	Timothy Snyder

	American president, Donald Trump, created the President's Advisory 1776 Commission. Its '1776 Report,' published just as Trump's term came to an end in January, defined its task as the 'restoration of American education.'		War on Democracy	
July 1, 2021	"...announced the formation of the 1776 Commission, set up explicitly to link what he said was 'left-wing indoctrination' in schools to the sometimes violent protests over police killings."	<i>The New York Times</i>	Disputing Racism's Reach, Republicans Rattle American Schools	Gabriel Trip & Dana Goldstein
July 2, 2021	"...President Trump's 1776 Commission issued its report calling for 'patriotic education,' which painted progressives as enemies of the timeless values of the founding."	<i>The New York Times</i>	The Battle for 1776	Jennifer Schuessler

APPENDIX C: TABLES OF EXEMPLIFY NEWSPAPERS ARTICLES ON CRITICAL RACE THEORY, *THE 1619 PROJECT*, AND NEWSPAPER POSITIONALITIES ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Table 15

Key Articles that Exemplify Newspapers Positionality on Critical Race Theory

Date	Outlet	Title	Author
May 27, 2021	<i>The Washington Post</i>	Why Conservatives Fear Critical Race Theory	Christine Emba
June 4, 2021	<i>Christian Science Monitor</i>	Critical Race Theory: Who Gets to Decide What Is?	Chelsea Sheasley
June 7, 2021	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i> (Reprint from <i>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i>)	Conservatives Revolt Against Critical Race Theory in Georgia Schools	Ty Tagami, Kristal Dixon, & Greg Bluestein
June 8, 2021	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i>	What is Critical Race Theory and is it taught in schools?	T. Keung Hui
June 16, 2021	<i>The New York Times</i>	Scholarly Groups Condemn Laws Limiting Teaching on Race	Jennifer Schuessler
June 26, 2021	<i>The New York Times</i>	What Progressives Want, and What Conservatives Are Fighting	Ross Douthat
July 21, 2021	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Politics & Ideas: A Deeper Look at Critical Race Theory	William A. Galston
October 21, 2021	<i>The New York Times</i>	How Should We Teach Students About Inequality?	Jay Caspian Kang

Table 16*Key Articles that Exemplify Newspapers Positionality on The 1619 Project*

Date	Outlet	Title	Author
August 22, 2019	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i> (Reprint from the <i>Chicago Tribune</i>)	Mueller Crushes Dreams, so Dems Pivot to Race	John Kass
August 23, 2019	<i>The New York Times</i>	Slavery Was Not a Secondary Part of Our History	Jamelle Bouie
December 20, 2019	<i>The New York Times</i>	We Respond to the Historians Who Critiqued The 1619 Project	Jake Silverstein
September 17, 2020	<i>The New York Times</i>	Trump Calls for ‘Patriotic Education’ to Defend American History From the Left	Michael Crowley & Peter Baker (Contributed Reporting)
October 9, 2020	<i>The New York Times</i>	The 1619 Chronicles	Bret Stephens
October 16, 2020	<i>The New York Times</i>	On Recent Criticism of <i>The 1619 Project</i>	Jake Silverstein
October 19, 2020	<i>The New York Times</i>	1619, Revisited	Nicholas Guyatt
January 18, 2021	<i>The New York Times</i>	Trump’s 1776 Commission Critiques Liberalism in Report Derided by Historians	Michael Crowley & Jennifer Schuessler
February 1, 2021	<i>The New York Times</i>	The 1776 Follies	Michael Kazin
February 5, 2021	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i>	GOP States Weigh Limits on How Race and Slavery are Taught	Andrew Demillo

July 30, 2021

*The New York
Times*

Transcript: Ezra
Klein Interviews
Ta-Nehisi
Coates and Nikole
Hannah-Jones

Ezra Klein

Table 17*Key Articles that Exemplify Newspapers Positionality on Research Questions*

Date	Outlet	Title	Author
August 26, 2019	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	The Weaponization of History	Wilfred M. McClay
September 10, 2019	<i>The Washington Post</i>	No Excuse for the Founders' Failure on Slavery	Michael Gerson
December 9, 2019	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i>	Replacing One Myth with Another	J. Peder Zane
January 18, 2020	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	The Left Forgets What Martin Luther King Stood For	Robert L. Woodson Sr.
September 11, 2020	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	God, Parents and the "1619 Project"	Latasha Fields
September 16, 2020	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i> (Reprint from <i>The New York Times</i>)	Trump Casts Himself as the Defender of white America	Peter Baker
October 22, 2020	<i>The New York Times</i>	The Interpreter: That Light Bulb Moment	
October 25, 2020	<i>Christian Science Monitor</i>	Looking Past False Choices	Mark Sappenfield
February 13, 2021	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i> (Reprint from the <i>Baltimore Sun</i>)	Black History is Under Attack From An Array of Forces	Andrea K. McDaniels
May 17, 2021	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Can Freedom Survive the Narratives?	Lance Morrow
May 21, 2021	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i>	UNC-Nikole Hannah-Jones: They're Coming For You	Issac Bailey

May 25, 2021	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Upward Mobility: Correcting 1619's Falsehood About the American Founding	Jason L. Riley
June 15, 2021	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i>	Defund K-12 Schools that Teach “Misleading” 1619	Brian Murphy
June 29, 2021	<i>The Washington Post</i>	The Truth About the GOP and Critical Race Theory	Eugene Robinson
July 3, 2021	<i>The Washington Post</i>	A Battle that Shouldn't Have Had to be Fought	Karen Attiah

Table 18Themes: *What is Being Debated Across Sources?*

Theme	Definition	Total Frequency
<i>1619 Project</i>	The project as is	34
	[Either] portions of an essay, selected essays, and/or the project in its entirety	
	Typically, news outlets and media are responding to Nikole Hannah-Jones's opening essay	
<i>1619 Project Supporting Content</i>	General mention of the <i>1619 Project</i> aimed at supporting a larger argument	23
	Indirectly related to the <i>intent</i> of the <i>1619 Project</i>	
<i>Critical Race Theory (CRT)</i>	[Either] discusses the incorporation of CRT in the public K-12 curriculum	18
	Accuracy in definition and how it is being interpreted/used by politicians	
	Views on democracy in the United States by POC	
<i>Unrelated</i>	[Has] nothing to do with the <i>1619 Project</i> or CRT	33
	Merely mentions either as an example of unrelated topic	
<i>Democracy in Curriculum</i>	[Encompasses] the impact, positive or negative, of having CRT and the <i>1619 Project</i> in the social studies curriculum and overall education	30
	Power [associated with] choice, diversity, voice in education	

<i>Advocacy Journalism</i>	[Evaluating the] <u>purpose</u> and/or <u>role</u> of a journalist	3
	[Evaluating] whether journalists are solely <u>advocates</u> and meant to bring attention to an issue of interest or to remain <u>unbiased</u>	
	[Role of journalist] avenue for minority groups to speak and bring <u>national attention</u> to an issue	
<i>American Democracy</i>	[Evaluating the] ability to express concerns and/or criticize progress in the United States	1
	[Evaluating] if the United States has become a <u>perfect union</u> based on the Founding Father's definition	
<i>History</i>	What <u>version</u> of U.S. History do Americans want to be taught in public K-12 social studies curriculum	10
	What <u>perspective</u> on U.S. History is <u>historically accurate</u> based on the source and holistically accepted by society at large?	
	<u>Who</u> decides "what history" is U.S. History?	
<i>American Ideals vs. American Reality</i>	[Evaluate] what <u>should</u> occur vs. what <u>actually</u> occurs in the United States toward Blacks and/or African American	1
<i>Dialogue</i>	Ability to generate dialogue through sensationalized journalism	1
	Journalism can be used as a starting or guided talking point on a topic that needs to be discussed	
<i>"Political" Compliance vs. "Political" Disruption</i>	Raise awareness [Evaluates] how Black and/or African American progression	2

	should occur or be approached in society at large	
<i>Political Party Agenda</i>	<p>Martin Luther King Jr. vs. Malcolm X's approach to societal and social reform;</p> <p>Indirect acknowledgment that each political party (Republicans and Democrats) has a “race-related” or “race-focused” agenda that supports its political party ideology and alignment to America’s ideals and achieving democracy</p>	4
<i>National Debate</i>	<p>Related to national debate, dialogue, membership, race;</p> <p>A larger societal discussion is occurring concerning citizenship, equity, equality, education...etc. in the United States toward POC</p>	0
<i>Singular vs. Pluralistic U.S. History</i>	<p>The <i>1619 Project</i> is an example of an issue/concern within public education (inclusive curriculum) [Contextualizing] differences in interpretation of U.S. History.</p> <p>Aims to address whether there is one or more <u>valid</u> perspectives of U.S. History</p>	2
<i>Culture War(s)</i>	<p>Related to history</p> <p>A “rise” in or example of <u>controversial</u> topics being discussed in the United States that cause or result in the overt social division</p> <p><u>Intentionally</u> disrupts the overt harmonious status for white people in society</p>	0
<i>Propaganda</i>	<p>Challenges white privilege;</p> <p>Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition, “the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the</p>	0

	purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person”	
<i>Authority to Prompt Change</i>	Related to national debate, democracy in curriculum [Investigate or identify] <u>who</u> can prompt change, specifically <u>identifying</u> them	1
	Career path/position <u>justifies</u> their authority to be noteworthy, credible voice for reform to occur and/or be accepted by them	
	Related to history, advocacy journalism, national debate;	
<i>Membership</i>	[Evaluating] placement within society of POC, specifically Blacks and/or African American Related to political party agenda, national debate;	1
<i>Race</i>	[Discussing the use of] “ <u>race-baiting</u> ”; Using race as an excuse and/or explanation for inequities and/or inequalities in the United States; Deflecting racial issues as minimal	2
<i>Political “Wokeness” in Education</i>	Related to CRT, national debate, membership; [Evaluate] whether counternarratives weaponize history or present a <u>necessary</u> , nondominated perspective/stance on U.S. History	4
	Related to “democracy in curriculum”	

Table 19*States Openly Opposed/Legislation Against The 1619 Project*

State
Arkansas
Florida
Idaho
Iowa
Louisiana
New Hampshire
Oklahoma
Tennessee
Texas
West Virginia

Table 20*Frequently Mentioned Names in Wall Street Journal*

Name	Occupation
Allen C. Guelzo	Historian
Jake Silverstein	Editor at <i>NYT</i>
James McPherson	Historian
John McWhorter	Professor of Language
Phillip Magress	Historian
Robert Woodson	Black Voice, Civil Rights Activist
Sean Wilentz	Historian
Senator Mitch McConnell	Politician

Table 21*Frequently Mentioned Names in The Washington Post*

Name	Occupation
Allen Guelzo	Historian
Barbara Fields	Historian
Gordon Woods	Historian
James Grossman	Historian
James McPherson	Historian
James Oakes	Historian
Representative Tom Cole	Politician
Sean Wilentz	Historian
Walter Hussman	Journalist

Table 22*Frequently mentioned names in The Charlotte Observer*

Name	Occupation
Jake Silverstein	Editor at <i>NYT</i>
James McPherson	Historian
Senator Thom Tillis	Politician
Senator Tom Cotton	Politician
Walter Hussman	Historian

Table 23*Frequently mentioned names in Christian Science Monitor*

Name	Occupation
James Grossman	Historian

Table 24*Frequently mentioned names in The New York Times*

Name	Occupation
Allen C. Guelzo	Historian
Annette Gordon-Reed	Historian
Jake Silverstein	Editor at <i>NYT</i>
James Grossman	Historian
James McPherson	Historian
Jane Kamensky	Historian
Jordan Cohen	Blogger
Leslie M. Harris	Historian
Matthew Karp	Historian
Phillip W. Magress	Historian
Representative Tom Cole	Politician
Sean Wilentz	Historian
Senator John Cornyn	Politician
Senator Mitch McConnell	Politician
Senator Thom Tillis	Politician
Senator Tom Cotton	Politician
Seth Masket	Political Scientist
Tucker Carlson	American Television Host

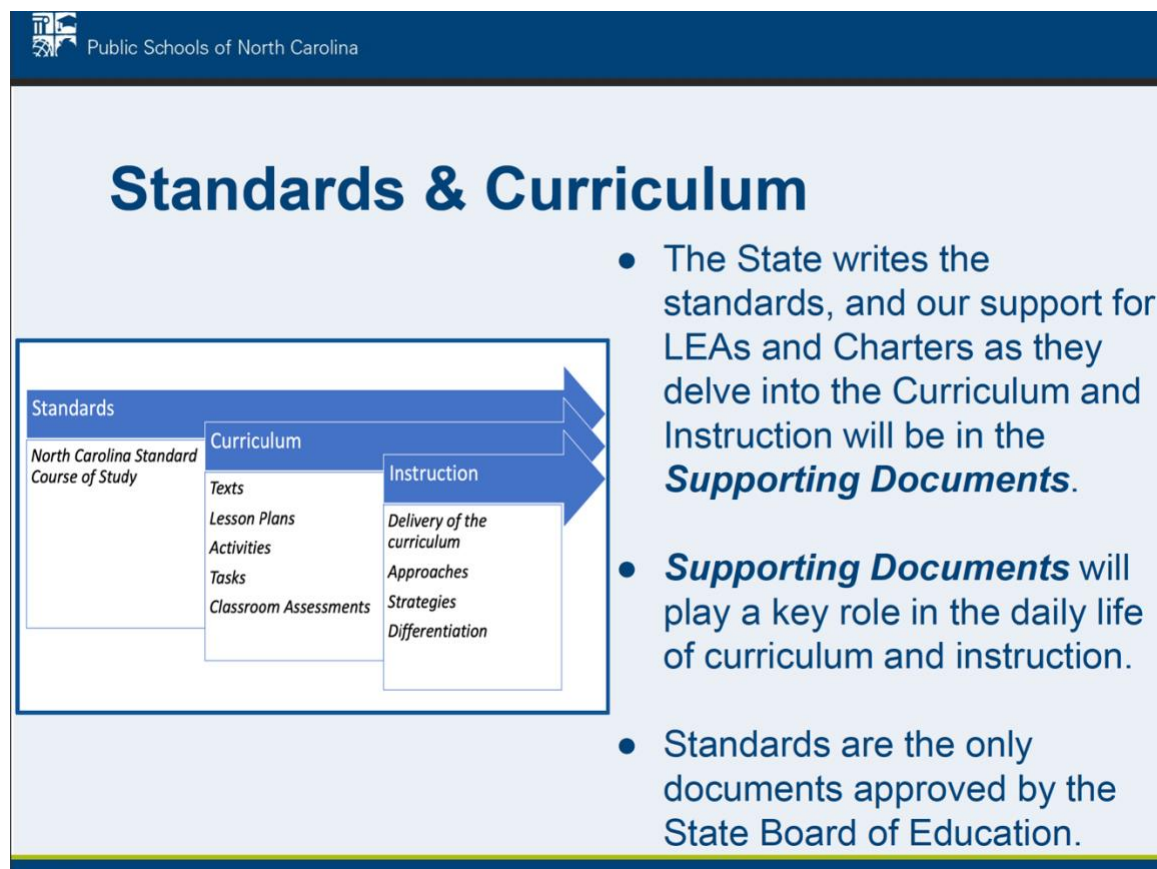
Table 25*Facts about North Carolina School Board Members*

Name	Gender	Race	Occupation	Political Affiliation	Fact(s)
Dr. Donna Tipton-Rogers	Female	white	CEO Tri-County Community College	Unknown	
Dr. James Ford	Male	African American	Executive Director, CREED & former Social Studies Educator	Independent	2014-2015 NC Teacher of the Year
Dr. Olivia Oxendine	Female	Indigenous	University Professor & former Social Studies Educator	Republican	Lumbee Indian
Eric C. Davis	Male	white	Chairman	Unknown	1st Black Lt. Governor of NC
Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson	Male	African American	Lieutenant Governor	Republican	Army veteran
Mariah Morris	Female	white	Social Studies Educator	Unknown	2019 NC Teacher of the Year
Matthew Bristow-Smith	Male	white	Social Studies Educator	Unknown	2019 Wells Fargo NC Principal of the Year

Superintendent Catherine Truitt	Female	white	Secretary to the State Board & Superintendent	Unknown	
Todd Chasteen	Male	white	VP of Public Policy & Corporate Counsel at Samaritan's Purse	Republican	Appointed by former governor Republican Pat McCoy

Figure 2

Standards & Curriculum Definitions from NCDPI



Note. Retrieved from State Content Standards Revision: K 12 Social Studies PowerPoint.
<https://www.slideshare.net/educationnc/social-studies-standards-revisions>

Figure 3*Refinement of Terms from NCDPI*

Refinement of Terms:		
Current Draft 4 Term:	Proposed Changes:	How the change will be addressed:
Systemic Racism	Racism	Glossary definition to include multiple types/forms/etc. of racism; Term included on unpacking document.
Gender Identity	Identity	Glossary definition to include multiple types/forms/etc. of identity; Term included on unpacking document.
Systemic Discrimination	Discrimination	Glossary definition to include multiple types/forms/etc. of discrimination; Term included on unpacking document.




Public Schools of North Carolina

Note. Retrieved from State Content Standards Revision: K 12 Social Studies PowerPoint.
<https://www.slideshare.net/educationnc/social-studies-standards-revisions>

Figure 4

Snapshot of Supporting Documents from NCDPI





Public Schools of North Carolina

Snapshot of Supporting Documents

Discrimination	Discrimination is made up of actions based on conscious or unconscious prejudice that favor one group over others in the provision of goods, services or opportunities.
Identity	Identity is an awareness of one's own values, attitudes, and the characteristics that define a person as an individual and as a member of different groups. It is the way an individual views themselves as well as how they are viewed by others. Some examples of types of identity may include religious, gender, ethnic, racial, regional, socio-economic, educational, and ability.
Racism <div style="background-color: yellow; color: black; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"> Glossary of Terms </div>	Racism can be defined as a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race. The concept of racism is widely thought of as simply personal prejudice, but in fact, it is a complex system of racial hierarchies and inequities. At the micro level of racism, or individual level, are internalized and interpersonal racism. At the macro level of racism, we look beyond the individuals to the broader dynamics, including institutional and structural racism.

Note. Retrieved from State Content Standards Revision: K 12 Social Studies PowerPoint.
<https://www.slideshare.net/educationnc/social-studies-standards-revisions>

Figure 5*Legislation & Policies from NCDPI*

 Public Schools of North Carolina Legislation & Policies		
SBE Policies Concerning Standards	<u>Relevant Legislation</u>	Current SS HS Grad Reqs for students entering Grade 9 in 2021
<p><u>SCOS-012</u></p> <p>Policy lays out the manner, timeframe, and process in which standards are revised, created, and adopted.</p> <p><u>GRAD-004</u></p> <p>Policy lays out the requirements for graduation from high school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Session Law 2009-236</u> • <u>Founding Principles Legislation</u> • <u>Personal Financial Literacy (EPF Course)</u> <p>Legislated Courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Carolina History - 4th Grade • US/NC History - 8th Grade • Economics and Personal Finance - High School (2020-21) • Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy - High School (2021-22) 	<p><i>Already approved and aligned to legislation.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Founding Principles of the US and NC: Civic Literacy 2. Economics and Personal Finance 3. American History 4. World History <p>SS Standards revision was legislated.</p>
 Public Schools of North Carolina		

Note. Retrieved from State Content Standards Revision: K 12 Social Studies PowerPoint.
<https://www.slideshare.net/educationnc/social-studies-standards-revisions>

Figure 6*North Carolina Revised Preamble 2021*

PREAMBLE

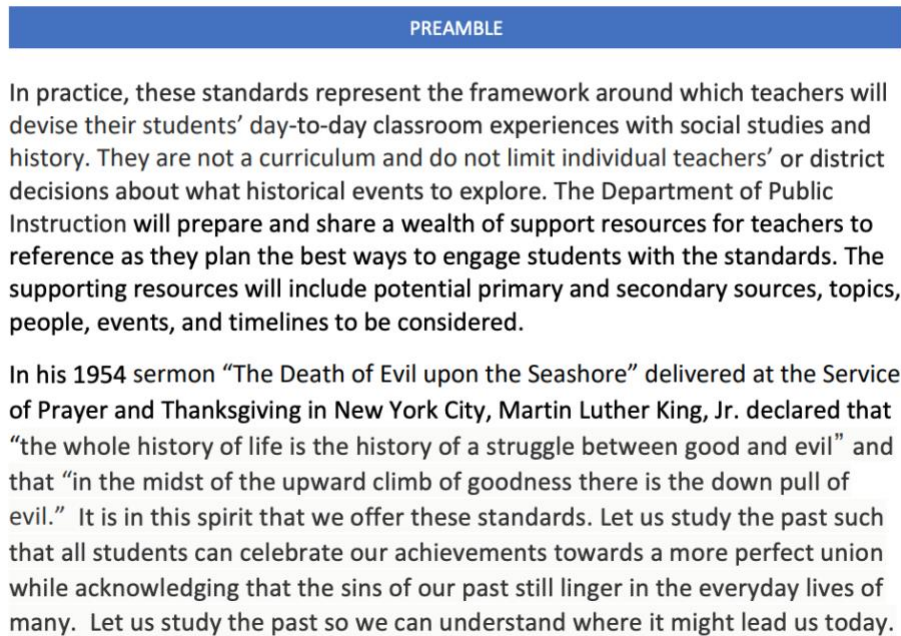
"So very difficult a matter it is to trace and find out the truth of anything by history."

--Plutarch's Lives

The word "history" has its roots in the ancient Greek verb *historia*, which meant the act of seeking knowledge (Oxford English Dictionary). A more modern way to describe the discipline of History is the study of imperfect choices across the ages that requires knowledge of facts, dates, names, places, events, and ideas. It also requires students to engage in questioning, research, and discussion so that as young adults, they can examine a historical record for themselves and support their views.

Students in North Carolina public schools study history throughout the entirety of their public school experience. While the public at large might not agree as to *why* it's important that students learn geography, civics, and history, the North Carolina State Board of Education believes that our collective social studies standards must reflect the nation's diversity and that the successes, contributions, and struggles of multiple groups and individuals should be included. This means teaching the hard truths of Native American oppression, anti-Catholicism, exploitation of child labor, and Jim Crow to name a few, while simultaneously teaching that the US Constitution created the world's first organized democracy since ancient Rome and that than 90 years into our country's history, President Lincoln ended the United States' participation in what had been more than 9,000 years of legalized slavery and human bondage in most parts of the world.

However, it is important to remember that history itself doesn't provide the sole explanation for why we have injustices, racism, and discrimination today, be they institutionalized or localized. Our human failings have at times taken the form of racism, xenophobia, nativism, extremism, and isolationism. We need to study history in order to understand how these situations developed, the harmful impact they caused, and the forces and actors that sometimes helped us move beyond these outcomes. In the words of former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the Constitution is the very document that the likes of Thurgood Marshall used to bring systemic change to our country.

Figure 7*North Carolina Revised Preamble 2021*

Note. Retrieved from <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/media/11824/open>

Figure 8

Venn Diagram of Themes Associated with Political Perspective

