A NEW MEASURING ROD:
A QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF HOW SLAVERY IS TAUGHT IN NORTH CAROLINA

By
Lucy B. Russell

Senior Honors Thesis
Department of Public Policy
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Approved:

Dr. Anna Krome-Lukens

Dr. Cassandra Davis

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Abstract

Slavery created a foundation of profound racial inequality in America, and the philosophy of white supremacy used to justify slavery remains today. Meanwhile, the public education system reaches nearly all young people in our country and is a major force of national socialization: schools instill knowledge in and shape historical consensus of burgeoning citizens. But existing scholarship has established that students in America's schools incorrectly learned about slavery for over a century (Washburn, 1997). The historical inconsistency requires an evaluation of how social studies educators teach about slavery in 2020. This thesis explores the following research question: how is slavery taught in North Carolina public schools?

The thesis includes a historical contextualization of North Carolina's public education system to preface the contemporary research analysis. One analytical lens focuses on the current K-12 social studies standards established by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) due to their statewide uniformity, but the research also discerns how educators teach about slavery at a classroom level. Qualitative methods were used to collect input from nearly 70 educators through online surveys and in-person interviews. After synthesizing the main findings, the conclusion features a set of policy recommendations for improved instruction about slavery through a comprehensive three-pronged approach: state-wide, district, and individual teacher levels. Overall, the research underscores how education stakeholders should set *a new measuring rod* to comprehensively teach the history of slavery by (1) establishing better content expectations, (2) providing more professional learning opportunities about history and race for educators, and (3) blending history and literature courses into humanities offerings.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Anne Eliza Riddle and James Henry Woodson were born into slavery during 19th century rural Virginia; they remained illiterate until their deaths, a tragic reminder of how educational opportunities were stolen from enslaved people. Despite being born into dire circumstances and denied basic human rights, Anna and James fought for emancipation and eventually started their own family (Bickley, 2008). Their son Carter G. Woodson, one short generation removed from American enslavement, would ultimately earn acclaim as the "father of Black history.” Only the second Black man to receive a doctorate from Harvard University, Carter G. Woodson ultimately dedicated his career to educational reform scholarship and was the inspiration behind Black History Month. He published “The Mis-Education of the Negro” in 1933 to document the education system's failure to teach authentic African-American history. In “The Mis-Education of the Negro,” Woodson elucidates the inextricable connection between schools and racism:

> The philosophy and ethics resulting from our educational system have justified slavery, peonage, segregation, and lynching… There would be no lynching, if it did not start in the schoolroom. The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples (Woodson, 1933).

The history of the United States is indisputably rooted in oppression, from the original colonial plundering of land from indigenous peoples to establishing an economy dependent on race-based, chattel slavery (Kendi, 2016). Racism and oppression continue to manifest themselves today through systems, institutions, and individual behavior in our country (Kendi, 2016). As Woodson aptly stated in 1933, American classrooms possess great power to inspire the oppressor or deconstruct the modes of thought that enable oppression. It is impossible to separate one's actions from the foundation of knowledge that inspires them. Born in the shadows of slavery, Woodson keenly underscored how schoolrooms instill cultural values and expectations into children that can help explain their future attitudes and patterns of behavior - even atrocious histories such as slavery and lynching.

In twenty-first century America, our public education system reaches nearly all young people in our country and is a major force of national socialization: schools instill knowledge in and shape historical consensus of burgeoning citizens. American schools are a conduit through which we can learn how historical knowledge is instilled into citizens, and in a more optimistic sense, to dismantle the hierarchical racialized system that has been ingrained into the fabric of our country. Focusing on education alone would not fix racial inequity, but there is an undeniable connection between the knowledge produced in schools and social manifestations of racism. It is possible to leverage public classrooms to both acknowledge America's abhorrent histories and chart an anti-racist, inclusive path forward.

Key Question

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the primary purpose of kindergarten-12th grade social studies education is to help young people make decisions for the public good as citizens ("NCDPI Social," 2019). Without a comprehensive awareness of slavery, North Carolina students will not be equipped with the historical knowledge to make informed choices about their position in our society - especially a society in which racism is so pervasive. Building on the premises that slavery is the foundation of our country and our American education system has great power, this thesis explores the research question: How is slavery taught in North Carolina public schools?

It is impossible to discern what exactly is collectively taught by unique teachers in individual classrooms against the backdrop of disparate geographic and sociopolitical contexts. There are two major avenues for analysis that can provide insight into how slavery is being discussed in classrooms: (1) social studies standards that set expectations for learning outcomes and (2) materials that educators use to translate standards into learning. Standards are content knowledge that is uniform at the state level to be applied in every public school classroom, while lessons differ with individual teachers because they have autonomy to decide how the standards are interpreted.

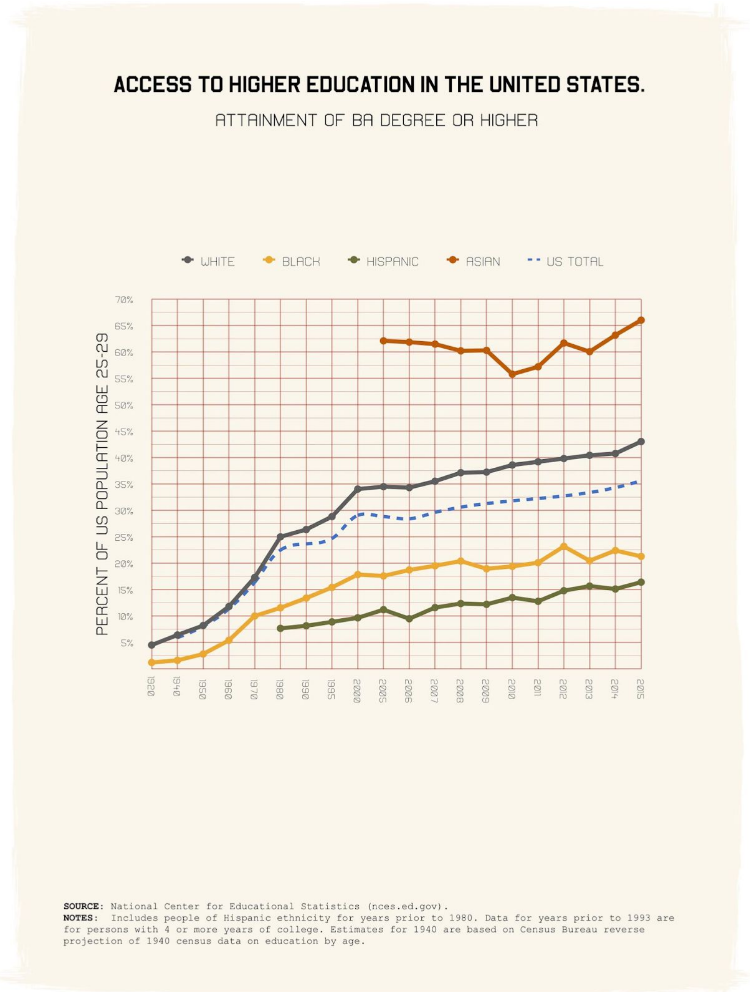
The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction currently writes the wording of social studies standards, while the State Board of Education votes on final approval. Social studies standards should align with the most recent historiography in order to reflect the iterative process of scholarly historical consensus. Existing literature establishes that "given the apparent influence standards have on social studies teachers' actions, the way individual states frame their standards may act as the most salient determinant of the way certain topics are handled in the classroom" (Journell, 2008). While social studies content standards are instrumental in setting the statewide expectation, there is inherent limitation in focusing solely on their wording to evaluate how topics are discussed in the classroom. Further research indicates significant variation in how individual teachers translate standards into practice.

The primary focus of the thesis is on the K-12 social studies standards from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) due to their statewide uniformity, but the research seeks to enhance its findings by documenting how teachers implement the social studies standards about slavery at a classroom level. The thesis uses a qualitative methods research approach by collecting data through surveys and in-person interviews with teachers. It is critical to preface the contemporary analysis of education with a broad description of historical contextualization, found in Chapter 2. A thorough decades-long historical analysis of content standards, textbooks, and resources in North Carolina could comprise an entire thesis of its own; for this reason, I provide a summary of the history of North Carolina's public education to briefly illustrate its evolution over time. The section summarizes notable influences on social studies curriculum in North Carolina public schools during the 20th century.

While there is national research about how slavery is taught, there is no qualitative study about how it is taught specifically in North Carolina. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to effectively improve the language of North Carolina's social studies standards or any additional history resources, such as professional development or optional lesson plans offered from DPI. This research advances existing literature to understand how slavery is currently taught in North Carolina and how it can be improved, particularly as it relates to the statewide social studies standards.

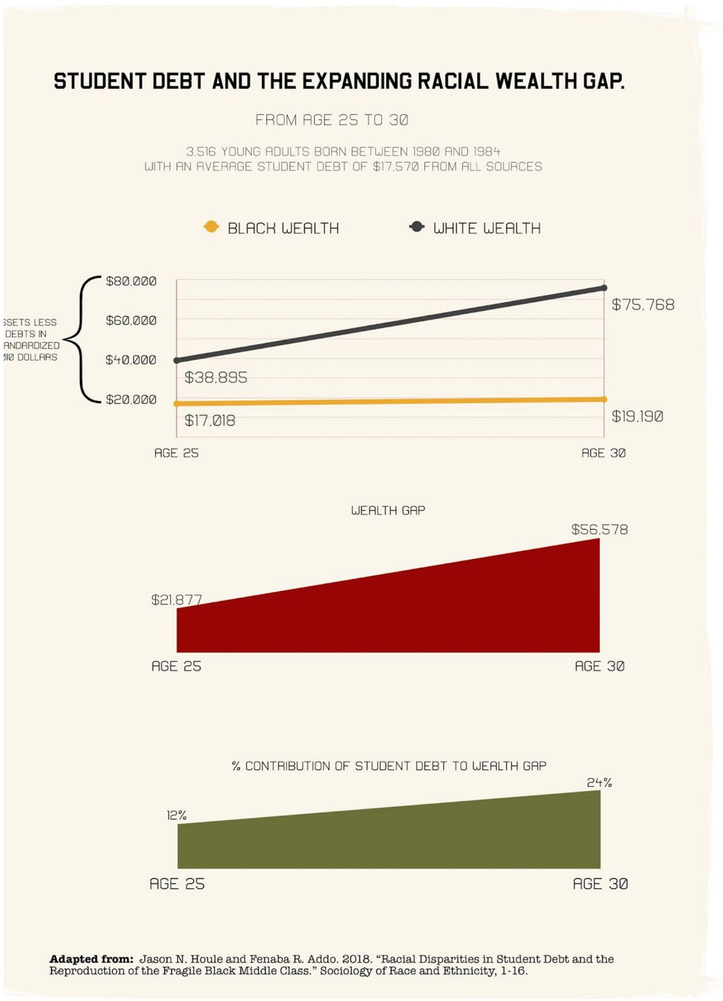
Why the Topic of Slavery?

Slavery is the critical historical topic of focus because it created a foundation of profound racial inequality in America, and the philosophy of white supremacy used to justify slavery remains today. W.E.B. Du Bois declared “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line" in his 1903 work *The Souls of Black Folk* (Du Bois, 1903). Unfortunately, mounting evidence demonstrates that Du Bois’s quote about the American racial fracture is still relevant in 2020. According to countless measures ranging from health to economic to criminal justice disparities, racial inequities are prevalent in American society today. The two graphics below were created by the *Dignity + Debt Network* at Princeton University and inspired by Du Bois’s visualizations of social science data; the first illustrates stark racial disparities in higher education access while the second depicts the racial wealth gap (Wherry, 2019). According to the


ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES.

ATTAINMENT OF BA DEGREE OR HIGHER

SOURCE: National Center for Educational Statistics (nces.ed.gov).
NOTES: Includes people of Hispanic ethnicity for years prior to 1980. Data for years prior to 1993 are for persons with 4 or more years of college. Estimates for 1940 are based on Census Bureau reverse projection of 1940 census data on education by age.


STUDENT DEBT AND THE EXPANDING RACIAL WEALTH GAP.

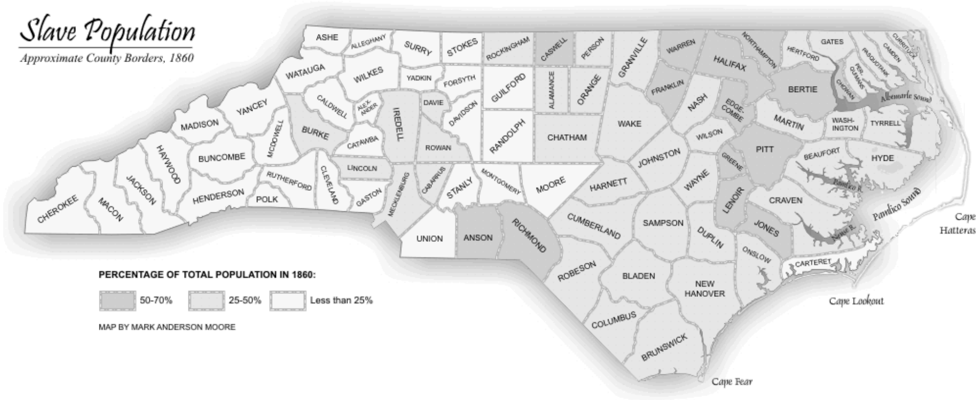
FROM AGE 25 TO 30

3,516 YOUNG ADULTS BORN BETWEEN 1980 AND 1984
WITH AN AVERAGE STUDENT DEBT OF $17,570 FROM ALL SOURCES

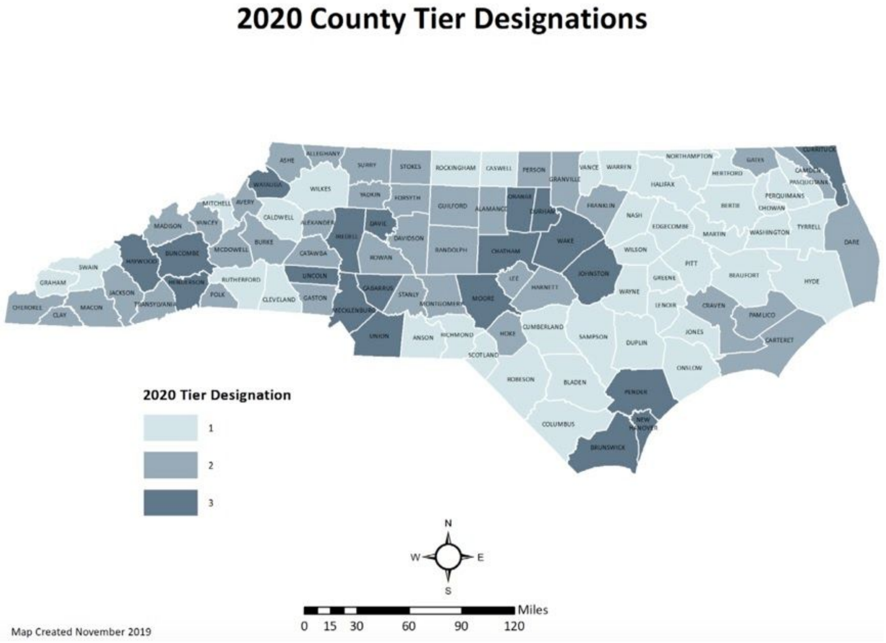
Adapted from: Jason N. Houle and Fenaba R. Addo. 2018. “Racial Disparities in Student Debt and the Reproduction of the Fragile Black Middle Class.” Sociology of Race and Ethnicity, 1-16.

Federal Reserve, there is an enormous wealth gap along racial lines: Black families' median net worth is less than 15 percent that of white families, at $17,600 and $171,000, respectively (Dettling, 2017). In terms of criminal justice, a report from *The Sentencing Project* to the United Nations found that African-American adults are 5.9 times more likely to be incarcerated as whites in the United States. As of 2001, one of every three Black boys born in that year could expect to go to prison in his lifetime. In the healthcare space, a 2019 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention maternal mortality report found that Black mothers are 3.3 times more likely to die from pregnancy complications than white mothers, and Native American or Alaskan Native women die at a rate 2.5 times greater than white mothers (Petersen, 2019). These statistics are just a few measures of the racial inequities that span every facet of society; there are countless more that demonstrate how white people continue to have heightened opportunity and access. It is clear that the problem of the 21st century remains the “color-line” that divides us within every sphere of society.

In North Carolina, there is an undeniable link between the roots of slavery with current distress and disadvantage in predominantly Black communities. The first map below depicts the percentage of enslaved people who lived in North Carolina according to the 1860 census (Moore, 2019). Fourteen counties had enslaved people as over 50% of the total county-wide population, concentrated in the northeastern part of the state.


Slave Population
Approximate County Borders, 1860
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION IN 1860:
50-70%
25-50%
Less than 25%
MAP BY MARK ANDERSON MOORE
Albemarle Sound
Pamlico Sound
Cape Hatteras
Cape Lookout
Cape Fear

The second map below depicts the economic development designations for North Carolina counties in 2020. The North Carolina Department of Commerce creates the measurements by evaluating each county’s average unemployment rate, median household income, percentage growth in population, and adjusted property tax base per capita (“2020 North Carolina,” 2019). After calculating the above factors, each county is designated Tier One (most distressed), Tier Two, or Tier Three (least distressed) (“2020 North Carolina,” 2019).


2020 County Tier Designations
2020 Tier Designation
1
2
3
N
W
E
S
Miles
0 15 30 60 90 120
Map Created November 2019

Out of the fourteen counties that had 50% or more enslaved people in their populations, thirteen of them are designated as Tier 1 (most distressed) in 2020. Over 90% of the regional area where slavery was significantly pervasive is now in the worst state of economic well-being. The maps clearly depict how there is overlap between the most economically distressed counties in North Carolina today with the counties that had the most enslavement in 1860. This is not stating direct causation between the magnitude of enslavement with current socioeconomic markers, but there is an undeniable correlation that illuminates how slavery impacts the livelihood of communities to this day.

Historical Consensus and Historiography of Slavery

The way slavery has been taught in schools is not uniform; this has led to varied understanding about the magnitude and significance of slavery. Existing scholarship has established that students in America's schools incorrectly learned about slavery for over a century (Washburn, 1997). This stems from the premise that history is not a fixed quantity of information that is 'known' and 'knowable.' Dr. Karin Wulf, the executive director of the Omohundro Institute for Early American History & Culture, underscores how history is a *continual process of discovery* that develops over time (Louis, 2020). The technical term for analyzing this discovery process is known as "historiography," which is the field of studying how historians have developed historical consensus over time. Historiography adapts with changing conditions and explains why historical consensus shifts over time. As historical consensus changes, so should educational expectations for which history should be taught in public schools.

Historians and their scholarship used to understand and portray slavery differently. As historiography has evolved, leading scholars today has concluded that the history of slavery established in the 20th century was often overtly racist and wrong. According to a comprehensive survey of national textbooks from the 20th century, slavery was taught in inadequate ways even beyond the surgence of 'Lost Cause' rhetoric at the height of the United Daughters of Confederacy's influence (Washburn, 1997). Recent historiography notes how in most textbooks during the 20th century, "discussions of enslaved Africans are limited to narrow historical eras and sections of the text, rather than holistically integrated into the nation's entire history, and remain largely absent from subheadings, highlights, and bibliographies" (Weiner, 2014, Foster, 1999, Cha-Jua and Weems, 1994). Historical consensus during the 20th century reinforced narratives of Black inferiority and minimized the centrality of slavery.

During the Great Depression and World War II, authors justified slavery by appealing to the needs of the economic market (Washburn, 1997). Dr. Brenda Stevenson's scholarship establishes how slavery historians mentored under Columbia University's Dr. William Dunning (1857-1922) published history that "left the slave voiceless and and characterized, not only as an inferior, but also as a social, cultural, and material beneficiary of the practice of slavery" (Stevenson, 2015: 699). Historian Eric Foner describes the Dunning School as an example of "what can happen when racial prejudice shapes historical judgment" (Foner, 2013: xi). The Dunning School had significant impact for legitimizing and lending credibility to the racial attitudes of whites, as evident by scholarship that documents the historiographical impact of the Dunning School in the twentieth century (Foner, 2013). Most historical studies in the following thirty years followed those sentiments; the leading white historians "helped to validate myths of

Black inferiority, incompetence, and moral laxity popularized in public art forms, codified in law, and tenaciously woven into the fabric of the grand American narrative" (Stevenson, 2015: 699).

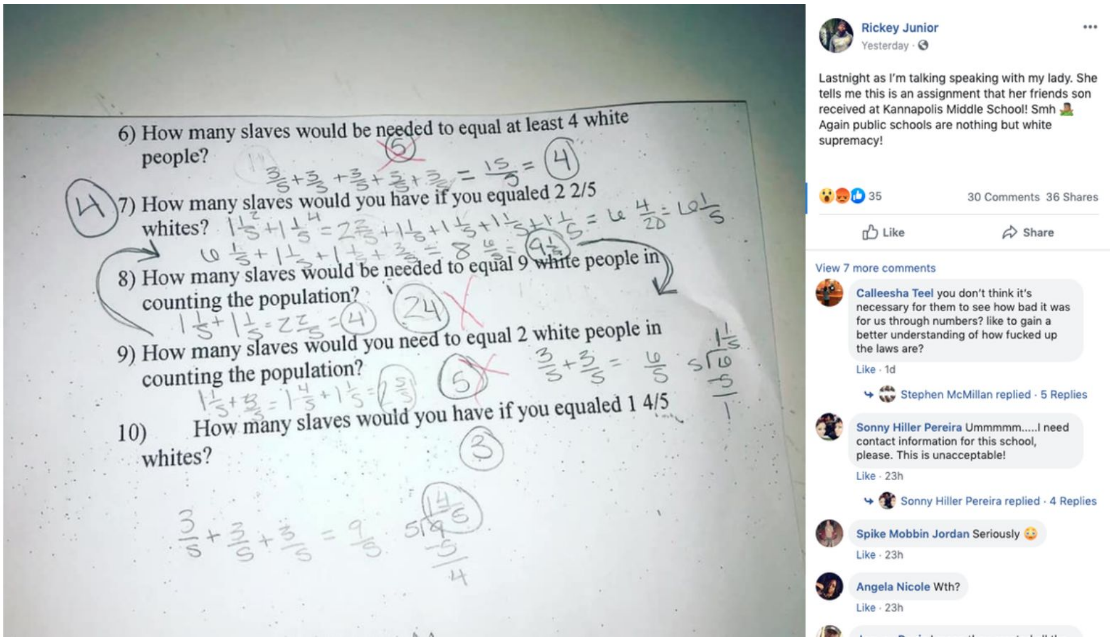
The late 1950s and the 1960s saw limited discussion of the moral wrongs of slavery, but not a significant amount. In light of the Civil Rights movement, the 1960s and the 1970s began to express an awareness of the value of social diversity. But the 1980s and 1990s brought a new presentation of slavery that reflected the nation's growing conservatism and influence of the religious right (Washburn, 1997). The impacts of these discrepancies has led to different generations developing different perceptions of slavery. Leading scholarship in the late 20th and early 21st centuries shifted the historical consensus around slavery to recognize its centrality to the American economy and the resistance of enslaved people. Historians David Brion Davis, Ira Berlin, and Eric Foner notably expanded the historical consensus about slavery and uncovered its deeper complexities and magnitude. In 2016, the University of Wisconsin Press published *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery* and used the scholarship of Davis and Berlin as the major historical underpinning.

The book established that teaching slavery should align with leading historiography by including the following facts: "Protections for slavery were embedded in the founding documents; Enslavers dominated the federal government, Supreme Court, and Senate from 1787 through 1860; 'Slavery was an institution of power,' designed to create profit for the enslaver and break the will of the enslaved and was a relentless quest for profit abetted by racism; Slavery shaped the fundamental beliefs of Americans about race and whiteness, and white supremacy was both a product and legacy of slavery," among others (Shuster, 2018: 45). Although leading historians agree on the aforementioned consensus about the magnitude and legacy of slavery, K-12 social studies resources across the country have not been updated in response.

A recent report that measured how slavery is being taught in the 2010s found that despite the renewed scholarship around slavery, social studies resources "remain bound to the same old narratives and limited primary sources" (Shuster, 2018: 20). This historical inconsistency inspires the research in this thesis to document what the public education system in North Carolina currently expects students to learn about the history of American slavery. To reflect the evolving historical consensus about slavery, North Carolina must set *a new measuring rod* in 2020 to establish better expectations for how slavery is discussed in classrooms.

Recent Media Representations

Furthermore, the need to conduct research about slavery's portrayal is evident in recent media stories about how it has been mishandled in the classroom. "How many slaves ... equal at least 4 white people?" was a question from a middle school homework assignment asking students "to compare the values of slaves with white people" (Fowler, 2019). In North Carolina, news headlines are scattered with examples of misguided and harmful classroom activities related to slavery. A recent headline described a classroom activity in a Wilmington, NC elementary school where a "fourth grade school teacher led the class in a role-playing game that included shackles, plantations, severe punishment and simulated slaves running toward freedom" (Smart, 2019). In the Underground Railroad board game called Escaping Slavery, teachers gave students a Freedom Punch Card that read, "If your group runs into trouble four times, you will be severely punished and sent back to the plantation to work as a slave." The grandmother of one of the distressed students remarked: "Slavery is not a game. It happened to Black people. It happened to my ancestors. They were slaves" (Smart, 2019).



6) How many slaves would be needed to equal at least 4 white people?

7) How many slaves would you have if you equaled 2 2/5 whites?

8) How many slaves would be needed to equal 9 white people in counting the population?

9) How many slaves would you need to equal 2 white people in counting the population?

10) How many slaves would you have if you equaled 1 4/5 whites?

Rickey Junior
Yesterday ·

Lastnight as I'm talking speaking with my lady. She tells me this is an assignment that her friends son received at Kannapolis Middle School! Smh 🤦🏾‍♂️
Again public schools are nothing but white supremacy!

35 30 Comments 36 Shares

Like Share

View 7 more comments

Calleesha Teel you don't think it's necessary for them to see how bad it was for us through numbers? like to gain a better understanding of how fucked up the laws are?
Like · 1d
Stephen McMillan replied · 5 Replies

Sonny Hiller Pereira Ummmmm.....I need contact information for this school, please. This is unacceptable!
Like · 23h
Sonny Hiller Pereira replied · 4 Replies

Spike Mobbin Jordan Seriously 😳
Like · 23h

Angela Nicole Wth?
Like · 23h

Source: https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article238272648.html

Public outcry about these classroom activities demonstrates how even mass media outlets have noticed how slavery is not always taught well to all students. Given the backlash against teachers about their choice of classroom activities, it is a critical moment to determine how to prevent these instances from occurring again and instead to teach about slavery in a responsible way that aligns with modern historiography.

Beyond the negative headlines, there has been a recent shift in public consciousness about slavery and its relevance to contemporary society. *The New York Times Magazine* published its groundbreaking "The 1619 Project" in summer 2019, sparking a surge in public interest about slavery and its inextricable relationship with American history. Its intention is to reframe history by understanding the year 1619 as our nation's true founding and placing the contributions of Black people at the center of the American story. The groundbreaking journalistic initiative aimed to engage more citizens in conversations about the brutality of slavery and its multi-faceted impacts of its legacy in the criminal justice, education, and healthcare systems, among many others. One article is called "The sugar that saturates the American diet has a barbaric history as the 'white gold' that fueled slavery," another is "Slavery gave America a fear of Black people, and a taste for violent publishment. Both still define our prison system" ("The 1619 Project*,*" 2019).

The 1619 project filled an entire edition of the *New York Times Magazine* and "people lined up on the street in New York City to get copies" (Shuster, 2018). Such high demand for a printed magazine is uncommon and demonstrates a surge in public interest in the subject. Scholarly reactions have largely been positive, although some historians such as Princeton historian Sean Wilentz offered criticism over "The 1619 Project"*'*s "cynicism" (Wilentz, 2019). The majority of academic historians and public figures alike have given "The 1619 Project" appreciative reviews; in a piece for the Columbia Journalism Review, Alexandria Neason notes "For the media to tell the truth about the US, it must commit to both a re-education of its readers and of its workers. Efforts like *The 1619 Project* look backwards to inform a path forward" (Neason, 2019). "The 1619 Project" catalyzed widespread public discussions about slavery and its modern relevance. The concluding piece from the project's compilation of essays, *'We are committing educational malpractice': why slavery is mistaught — and worse — in American schools*, gives a call for renewed attention to the country for how it teaches about slavery ("The 1619 Project"). It opens with an anecdote from a North Carolina native, Marinda Branson

Moore, who started a girls' school and wrote a geography textbook in 1863. The set of suggested questions at the end of Moore's book include the following:

> *Q. Which race is the most civilized?*
> *A. The Caucasian.*
> *Q. Is the African savage in this country?*
> *A. No; they are docile and religious here.*
> *Q. How are they in Africa where they first come from?*
> *A. They are very ignorant, cruel and wretched.*

This example was included in the article to demonstrate the overt racial discrimination in 19th century texts used when American public schools began to coalesce, but the author contends that this rhetoric that upholds a racial hierarchy has adapted in more subtle ways over time. Stewart further notes how slavery is still "treated like a dot on a timeline" in most history courses today; she calls for schools to "bring this history alive, using stories to help us understand the evil our nation was founded on" (Stewart, 2019). This was a resounding call with specific relevance for the state of North Carolina, beyond the author's specific use of the opening anecdote from Marina Moore's geography book.

2018 Southern Poverty Law Center Report

This research focus on slavery is especially pertinent due to a recent report from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) that examined the alarmingly inadequate climate of how students across the country learn about enslaved people. The 2018 "Teaching Hard History: American Slavery" report, published within the SPLC's *Teaching Tolerance* initiative that prevents the growth of hate in schools and provides anti-bias resources for teachers, found national discrepancies on how slavery is taught. The major finding is that despite "an explosion of new scholarship on slavery and abolition, scholarship that uncovers the institution from the perspective of the enslaved and reveals a world of creativity and resilience that also puts race at the center of American history," this knowledge has not made its way into K–12 classrooms (Shuster, 2018: 20). According to the SPLC report, "widespread ignorance about slavery, the antebellum South and the Confederacy persists to the present day" (Shuster, 2018: 12). The report found that this ignorance significantly contributes to people's inability to confront racism in America today.

The report emphasizes urgency to address the lack of understanding slavery because it is "on display in controversies over [Confederate] monument removal in places like New Orleans, Louisiana, and Charlottesville, Virginia, where protests turned deadly in the summer of 2017" (Shuster, 2018: 12). One year after the 2017 Charlottesville *Unite the Right* Rally, a white supremacist and neo-Nazi gathering in Virginia, two senior fellows at Brookings Institution penned a poignant analysis describing how "the march demonstrated how completely we have failed, as a nation, to acknowledge the brutality of slavery" (Busette, 2018). Disagreements about statues, marches celebrating white supremacy, and refusal to acknowledge systemic racism are symptoms; miseducation about slavery is one root cause.

Significance for Public Policy

There is significance between which policy levers influence how slavery is taught in public school classrooms; conversely, there is significance in how the teaching of slavery and history overall impact public policy.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI), at the direction of the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, implements the state's public school laws for pre-kindergarten through 12th grade public schools. DPI gives directives to public school teachers through the following programs: curriculum and instruction, accountability, finance, teacher and administrator preparation and licensing, professional development and school business support and operations. This thesis specifically explores the K-12 social studies content standards piece and its implementation at the classroom level. DPI and the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) are undergoing a revamping of the K-12 social studies standards, set to finish in summer 2020. The updated standards will likely be in place from 2020 to at least 2027 or beyond, demonstrating their long-term impact on the state's public schools ("NCDPI Social," 2019). More information about the standards revision process and its recent updates are included in subsequent sections.

In addition to agency directives from DPI, there are several recent pieces of session law from the North Carolina General Assembly that are relevant to the current social studies standards. This precedent demonstrates the inevitable role that elected policymakers play in informing the creation of schooling expectations. The main legislation that currently shape the NCDPI social studies standards are: Session Law 2009-236 ("An Act Modifying the History and Geography Curricula in Public Schools"), Session Law 2015-291 (Founding Principles Legislation), and the 2019 Personal Financial Literacy Course ("NCDPI Social," 2019).

Beyond the minutiae of North Carolina legislation, there are significant broader public policy implications related to how citizens and policymakers understand slavery and our country’s history. Many current policymakers were educated in American schools and received lessons about slavery in their social studies classes. In “Teaching Hard History,” Dr. Hakeem Jeffries makes a critical observation: “Our discomfort with hard history and our fondness for historical fiction also lead us to make bad public policy” (Shuster, 2018: 6). Due to the generations of inaccurate lessons and blatant misinformation about slavery instructed in classrooms, public policy is impacted on a broader scale. Dr. Jeffries further explains the long-lasting damage of miseducation surrounding slavery: “We choose to ignore the fact that when slavery ended, white Southerners carried the mindsets of enslavers with them into the post-emancipation period, creating new exploitative labor arrangements such as sharecropping, new disenfranchisement mechanisms including literacy tests and new discriminatory social systems, namely Jim Crow” (Shuster, 2018: 6). As Dr. Jeffries notes, “Our narrow understanding of the institution [of slavery]... prevents us from seeing this long legacy and leads policymakers to try to fix people instead of addressing the historically rooted causes of their problems” (Shuster, 2018: 6).

While focusing on public schools may seem narrow, the broader ramifications of how slavery is taught are far-reaching and long-lasting for policymaking. Nearly all future decision-makers learn about slavery - and other hard history - during their K-12 educations. If slavery is taught more comprehensively in schools, public policy writ large can be improved.

Self-Reflection

On a personal note, this thesis stirred my consciousness as a researcher, as a white person, as an American citizen, and as a human. In many conversations with educators and other stakeholders, I discovered myself relearning American history. The research process illuminated significant gaps in my understanding of America's history, especially about marginalized communities that have been purposely excluded from mainstream social studies for decades. Throughout this process, I was encouraged to explore and challenge my positionality as a privileged white woman. I humbly recognize that I am in a lifelong position of learning about my own privilege and the legacy of my ancestors.

At a young age, I first learned about how my great, great, great-grandfather fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. My maternal ancestor is Edward Porter Alexander, a high-ranking Confederate Brigadier General. At Appomattox Courthouse, Alexander was the officer who famously told General Robert E. Lee that the Confederacy should disperse instead of surrender, retreat to the South, and continue fighting for the Confederate Cause with guerrilla warfare. Although my family taught me about Alexander's "illustrious military accomplishments," they never talked about the meaning of the Confederacy or his involvement in the slave trade.

In 1850, as tensions over the legality of slavery surged, my ancestors enslaved 55 people in Georgia. Edward Porter Alexander's family enslaved people who were as young as one year and as old as eighty; they each had loves and dreams of their own, but my ancestors stole their freedom. As Ta-Nehisi Coates artfully captures, "slavery is not an indefinable mass of flesh. It is a particular, specific enslaved woman, whose mind is as active as your own, whose range of feeling is as vast as your own; who prefers the way the light falls in one particular spot in the woods, who enjoys fishing where the water eddies in a nearby stream, who loves her mother in her own complicated way, thinks her sister talks too loud, has a favorite cousin, a favorite season, who excels at dressmaking and knows, inside herself, that she is as intelligent and capable as anyone" (Coates, 2015: 69). The individuality of enslaved people is often lost in history lessons, and is certainly purposefully diminished by Confederate sympathizers. My own family avoided the truth of our ancestor's actions: my great, great, great-grandfather joined the Confederacy to preserve his right to continue enslaving men, women, and children.

I did not deeply learn about the truth of my family heritage or explore my personal feelings about it until college. Attending UNC-Chapel Hill between the years 2016 and 2020 coincided with a formative time in the University's history and our collective memory in the South. After decades of anti-racist student activism, the Confederate monument known as "Silent Sam" was torn down in August 2018, reinvigorating public conversations about the presence of Confederate symbols, the inextricable legacy of slavery, and contemporary white supremacy. To explore this cultural development through a policy lens, my interest in this thesis research was piqued in the MEJO 458: Southern Politics course taught by Professor Ferrel Guillory.

In Professor Guillory's class, I read *In the Shadows of Statues* by Mitch Landrieu, the former Mayor of New Orleans. The book is a declaration of the need to fully confront the legacy of the Confederacy and remove Confederate monuments in our communities. *In the Shadows of Statues* offers a compelling story from a white man about the need for white people - especially descendent of Confederates - to fully confront the realities and aftermath of slavery; it made me realize I had work to do to address my own family's relationship with enslavement. The book provided context in understanding how my personal heritage fits in a larger Southern narrative of glorifying the Confederacy, diminishing slavery, and obscuring the fully unvarnished history of America in our schools.

All across the South, Landrieu contends that “the history we learned was a purposefully false history” (Landrieu, 2018: 36). Building upon scholarship from leading historians and organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center, Landrieu rightfully observed that the history we learned in school was not the full truth. In fact, it had been designed to sugarcoat the realities of slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction and more. It is my hope that the research conducted through this thesis will uplift the educators who are teaching purposefully truthful history of slavery - no matter how hard it may be - and inspire others to do the same.

Following Chapters

Overall, the dual historical and contemporary approach enables this thesis to contribute critical background information about the evolution of social studies instruction while also being grounded in modern understanding of how slavery is taught in North Carolina public schools. Chapter II provides a fuller perspective about the history of public education in the state of North Carolina. Additionally, it examines the body of literature around how social studies knowledge is crafted through textbooks and standards, particularly related to slavery. Chapter III discusses the methodology and data collection used for the primary data collection in this thesis. Chapter IV presents the results from the qualitative research; it also discusses the strengths and limitations of my data and findings. Finally, Chapter V discusses the policy significance and recommendations for future social studies directives in North Carolina.

Chapter II: Background and Conceptual Framework

I consulted multiple sources and publications for the historical background and literature review. I mainly drew research about the public education system in North Carolina from the State Archives of North Carolina and the UNC Special Collections in Wilson Library. Research about content standards and textbooks were drawn mainly from articles in academic journals that synthesized current social studies and pedagogical research, including the *Journal of Social Studies Research* and *The History Teacher*.

Evolution of Public Education in North Carolina

North Carolina was once regarded as the educational beacon of the South, and a 1997 State Supreme Court case - Leandro v. The State of North Carolina - determined that all North Carolina children are entitled to a "sound basic education" (McColl, 2020). The landmark legal ruling established that every student in the state is Constitutionally mandated to be provided with a public education that instills "sufficient fundamental knowledge of geography, history, basic economic and political systems to enable students to make informed choices about issues that affect the student (personally, or in the student's community, state, and nation)" (McColl, 2020).

The history of public education provides insight into how social studies instruction has evolved and helps explain how education decisions are made today. The current provision of education falls under the policy purview of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which works alongside the State Board of Education and local education agencies (LEAs) to interpret and implement education directives from the state legislature. Contemporary social studies standards are constructed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and approved by the State Board of Education, but this oversight structure has not always been in place over the state's public schools. The education system has been shaped by a multitude of forces, including "government policies, market economics, legal decisions, popular culture, educational philosophies, political struggles, and shifting concepts of race and community" (Grundy, 2017). This section provides an overview of the development of North Carolina's public education system, paying particular attention to the relationships between forces listed above. There are three main themes throughout the landscape of North Carolina's education system: elected policymakers and bureaucrats control which knowledge is prioritized in schools; social studies expectations range from textbooks to state standards; and there is frequent public frustration over decisions made by NCDPI.

Control Over Historical Knowledge

History has been approached as an integral part of education since the inception of North Carolina's school system. The 1907 North Carolina "Handbook for high school teachers" outlines how high school students should be able to

> see that our present social and political conditions are but the outgrowth of previous conditions; that states, like human beings, are living organisms; that they are born, grow into strength and influence, and decay; that society is not static but highly dynamic; that the political and social seeds which we sow today will bear fruit tomorrow (Walker, 1914: 38).

At the inception of North Carolina's education system, who controlled the historical knowledge passed on in schools was contested. The roots of North Carolina's public schooling were established at the turn of the 20th century when Progressive-era reformers encouraged a "newfound appreciation of the importance of childhood" (Link, 2018: 330). Reformers believed that children should be "sent to structured elementary and secondary schools, where they could be educated in basic literacy and civic values and socialized to appropriate behavior," and political leaders encouraged investments in public education as a way to improve the state's economy.

Concurrently, there was a darker side to this Progressive push for educational reform because politically-motivated interest groups tried to influence historical content taught in the new public schools. Several organizations emerged during a "cultural phenomenon" in an effort to exalt and revere the (failed) efforts of the Confederate Army in the Civil War (Link, 2018: 322). According to William Link's "North Carolina: Change and Tradition in a Southern State," the Lost Cause movement was designed to "bolster a demoralized Southern (white) manhood by memorializing Confederate sacrifices and celebrating the bravery of white soldiers through commemorations, monuments, and other events in honor of military heroes and battles" (Link, 2018: 322). However, the influence of the movement transcended physical statues; one of the main goals of the agenda was to change how history was remembered. The version of history established by Lost Cause proponents dismissed the experiences of enslaved people and minimized the magnitude of slavery. The supporters of the Lost Cause sought to spread their version of history by influencing how the Confederacy and slavery were taught public schools across the South.

In 1919, the United Confederate Veterans, Sons of Confederate Veterans, and United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) formed a committee of fifteen individuals to "disseminate the truths of Confederate history" (Rutherford, 1920: 2). Members of the committee included North Carolinian Julian S. Carr, the Confederate general whose bragged about how he "horse-whipped a negro wench until her skirts hung in shreds" in his dedication speech for UNC-Chapel Hill's "Silent Sam" monument (Carr, 1913). Carr also described how Confederate soldiers had "saved the very life of the Anglo Saxon race in the South" in the same dedication speech (Carr, 1913).

Julian S. Carr of Durham and UDC leader Mildred Lewis Rutherford were prominent members of the committee, which was designed to promote the Lost Cause version of American history through school textbooks. Through the committee, Rutherford published a 23-page pamphlet called "A Measuring Rod to Test Text Books, and Reference Books in Schools, Colleges and Libraries" in 1919 to establish standards for textbooks across the South. "A Measuring Rod" perpetuated a Lost Cause-driven, false narrative about slavery that fellow UDC, UCV, and SCV members supported. Number V of "A Measuring Rod" outlines that "Slaves Were Not Ill-treated in the South. The North was Largely Responsible for Their Presence in the South." (Rutherford, 1920: 10). The report describes how "the servants were very happy in their life upon the old plantations" and used anecdotal evidence to support their claims. One example was about a visitor's impression of slaves from a visit to a Southern plantation:

> How they sang! How they danced How they laughed! How they shouted! How they bowed and scraped and com-plimented! So free, so happy! I saw them dressed on Sunday in their Sunday best—far better dressed than our English tenants of the working class are in their holiday attire. To me, it is the dearest institution I have ever seen and these slaves seem far better off than any tenants I have seen under any other tenantry system (Rutherford, 1920: 10).

Following the publishing of "A Measuring Rod," Mildred Rutherford spearheaded a communications campaign to encourage public school officials across the South to adopt only textbooks recommended by the Rutherford Committee. Fellow Committee member Julian Carr reached out to Professor T.R. Foust of Greensboro, who served on the North Carolina's Textbook Commission at the time, and provided a list of 18 textbooks to remove from schools to adhere to Rutherford's "A Measuring Rod" (Carr, 1921).

William Mason West's textbook "History of the American People" was subsequently endorsed by the North Carolina Textbook Commission in 1923 and followed the criteria set forth by Rutherford's "A Measuring Rod." The portrayal of slavery in West's "History of American People" downplays the violence on plantations and perpetuates an image of innocent masters, in alignment with Julian Carr and Mildred Rutherford's "A Measuring Rod" report that argued: "Slaves Were Not Ill-treated in the South" (Rutherford, 1920: 10). On plantations in Carolina or Georgia rice swamps, West describes how "house servants were petted and gently cared for, as a rule; and often between masters and slaves there was warm affection" (West, 1923: 507). West offers an illustration of such benevolent affection: "On a certain Carolina plantation, in the evening, the hostess had warmly denounced Northern antislavery agitation. In the early morning from [a guest's] window, he chanced to see her returning from the group of Negro cabins, where, he learned, she had spent the later hours of the night in nursing a dying Negro baby" (West, 1923: 508). West's textbook described slavery in a way that perpetuated false stereotypes about formerly enslaved and Black people. This demonstrates one way in which historical knowledge was contested and how white supremacy was explicitly featured in materials used to teach American history during the education system's formative years.

Shift from Textbooks to Standards

Textbooks were the main indicators of what was taught in North Carolina social studies lessons during the 20th century. The initial State Textbook Commission was established in 1901 to "select and adopt a uniform service or system of textbooks for use in public schools of North Carolina" (Warren, 1990: 1). The advisory body was responsible to the State Board of Education for the endorsement of textbooks to be used in North Carolina public schools (Warren, 1990: 8). From 1901 to the early 1990s, the textbook commission existed in various structures to oversee textbook recommendations for K-12 students.

In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a shift in the major source of historical knowledge used in classrooms: the influence shifted from textbooks to statewide standards being the major source of learning expectations. The shift to content standards partly stemmed from directives at the federal level. The *A Nation at Risk* report, published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983, detailed an abysmal state of student achievement in American schools. This catalyzed increased national pressure to adopt and strengthen common academic content standards to improve student learning (Placier, 2002). North Carolina started writing social studies standards as a state to establish cohesive expectations for teachers.

A new textbook adoption process approved in 1990 established regional textbook advisory committees (Warren, 1990: 6). In addition, the School Improvement and Accountability Act of 1989 started to allow "flexible funding" to local school districts that participate in performance-based accountability. It gave local school districts the option to "request permission from the State Superintendent to purchase textbooks for classroom use that [were] not on the state approved list" (Warren, 1990: 7). These developments gave more textbook autonomy to local districts, and it is noted in the "Origin and Development" report as having "more impact on the state textbook adoption process than anything that has happened in the last century" (Warren, 1990: 7). Influence shifted from statewide to local authority to oversee textbooks for North Carolina public schools, making the statewide social standards more relevant.

In 1993, DPI started the new end-of-grade testing program for grades three through eight that included multiple-choice and open-ended test questions (Etheridge, 1993). This marked a major shift from knowledge being gleaned from textbooks to knowledge expectations being set by statewide academic standards and reinforced by statewide tests. This general structure of statewide content expectation and evaluation through testing remains today.

Public Frustration with DPI

In terms of social studies oversight today, there is important context around the current relationship between educators and the state agency that oversees their profession. The following information provides insight into how educators react to decisions from State Superintendent Mark Johnson, and by extension, NCDPI. In November 2016, Mark Johnson won the election for State Superintendent, defeating 3-term Democrat June Atkinson narrowly by 1%. Upon his win, Republicans in the North Carolina General Assembly passed a sweeping bill that gave Superintendent Johnson unprecedented control over our state's education funds.

There is currently significant tension between DPI and the public regarding its trustworthiness and effectiveness, specifically due to behavior by State Superintendent Mark Johnson. Johnson has made national headlines for supposedly inappropriately leveraging the agency's resources for political maneuvering. A February article described how "multiple ethics complaints have been filed against State Schools Superintendent Mark Johnson [because he] sent 540,000 text messages and 800,000 email messages that he accessed from a state database to voice his opposition to the "Common Core" educational standards" ("Schools Chief," 2020).

This builds upon existing dissatisfaction with Johnson that has led to an overall fractured state of trust.

While there is no approval rating polling available to accurately capture the level of discontent with Superintendent Johnson, documentation of public frustration is prevalent in teacher blogs. One notable blogger is Justin Parmenter, a 7th grade language-arts teacher in Charlotte, who writes *Notes From the Chalkboard*. Parmenter has written extensively about his frustrations with Superintendent Johnson, ranging from articles about how "Superintendent Mark Johnson is doling out iPads like Santa Claus" to "NC Superintendent ignores input of professional educators, opts for increased screen time for schools' youngest readers." The sentiments of his criticism are shared widely among other educators; one of Parmenter's posts about the Superintendent's proposed school supply program was shared 879 times on social media and described Johnson as a "state superintendent who is all too ready to sign off on bad ideas and pretend teachers are on board with them. Our students and teachers deserve better than this disingenuous shell game" (Parmenter, 2019). There is significant tension between educators and Superintendent Johnson.

The public's dissatisfaction with Superintendent Johnson is often extended to the entire Department of Public Instruction; this is not to conflate him with the agency, but insight into how Johnson is perceived is critical in understanding how educators respond to directives from NCDPI. The latest public referendum on Superintendent Johnson came from the Republican Party's primary election for Lieutenant Governor on March 3, 2020. Despite having name recognition as the only candidate serving in a statewide elected position, Johnson placed in a distant third place with only 12.04% of the total votes. The election result demonstrated how he does not have a positive reception even among his own political party. Educator Justin Parmenter documented Johnson's election loss in his blog by stating "The voters have spoken. Johnson failed to win a single county in the contest" (Parmenter, 2019). The post had over 3,700 social media shares.

Overall, the historical background of North Carolina's public school system is instrumental in understanding how decisions are made at the state agency today. It also underscores why directives from NCDPI are subject to contention and how the writing process of modern social studies standards came to fruition.

Literature Review

This section provides a review of existing research to expand the scope beyond North Carolina history to survey literature about social studies instruction more broadly. When the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, it set off alarm bells about the abysmal state of student achievement in American classrooms. As a response, pressure increased among state and federal governments to adopt and strengthen common academic standards to improve student learning (Placier, 2002: 282). While the federal government adopted standards for reading and math subjects, none were created for social studies. The federal disregard of social studies resulted in a lack of uniform national consensus about what should be included in social studies curriculum, putting the onus on state agencies to create their own expectations. The Brookings Institution's 2018 examination of the American social studies teacher workforce reaffirmed that there is limited national testing accountability. The report notes that social studies is "largely absent from federal education law and policy," making it a "second-tier academic" subject in the eyes of the national government (Hansen, 2018). Accordingly, state governments have greater control of social studies instruction; consequently, content standards vary significantly within individual states (Mathison & Fragnoli, 2006). Although they are not as closely scrutinized as reading and math ones, social studies standards are used as a tool to help standardize testing across districts and counties. According to UNC-Greensboro professor Dr. Wayne Journell, “given the apparent influence standards have on social studies teachers' actions, the way individual states frame their standards may act as the most salient determinant of the way certain topics are handled in the classroom” (Journell, 2008).

Social studies content standards provide common expectations for how specific historical topics should be taught across all public schools. However, “state curricula [lag] behind the cutting edge of scholarly work” and to compound this delay, “many school districts and states feel uncomfortable with… new scholarship, preferring to continue to teach an older narrative” (Deardorff, 2005: 443). State social studies standards are often behind the curve of current historiography, or how contemporary historians critically examine and interpret historical scholarship. Another layer to the complexity of content standards is that “statewide testing, too often tied to the older narrative, makes it difficult for teachers familiar with the new narrative to teach what they know” (Deardorff, 2005: 444).

Existing literature explores how choices about curricula in public education are made in a broad sense. Michael Apple of the University of Wisconsin-Madison explores the relationship between knowledge and power in public schooling. Apple notes that “understanding education requires that we situate it back into both the unequal relations of power in the larger society and the relations of exploitation, dominance, and subordination—and the conflicts—that generate and are generated by these relations” (Apple, 1991: 5). Apple describes how his work "illuminated the political economy of the 'real' curriculum in schools—the textbook" (Apple, 1991: 6). There is a distinction between social studies standards and textbooks, however; although impossible to separate one from the other, standards are the common expectations for content knowledge, while textbooks are the materials that align with those standards and can vary depending on the desires of an individual school or district. Often, content standards are government-mandated while the textbooks are not.

Inclusion of slavery in the public education sphere has largely focused on how it has been represented in textbooks. Existing literature establishes that textbooks play a critical role in how students understand their nation's history and conceptions about race and racial hierarchies (Apple, 1991; Giroux, 1997; Giroux and McLaren, 1989). Further literature supports the contention that the majority of textbooks are written from the perspective of white, male, Protestant, middle or upper class authors (Foster, 1999). Textbooks "offer a window into the dominant values and beliefs of established groups in any given period" (Foster, 1999). American textbooks commonly seek to "construct an idealized image of American values and American character," which aims to gloss over the negative and focus on positive accomplishments to foster a sense of patriotism. But this sanitized version of history neglects to consider the injustices committed against marginalized groups and does not provide room for firsthand perspectives from individuals of marginalized backgrounds. UNC-Greensboro professor Wayne Journell found that "political decisions that perpetuate the traditional canon in public education too often exclude the voices of marginalized Americans in society" (Journell, 2008). Further research supports this assertion that both textbooks and curriculum predominantly place minority groups in positions of victimization and oppression (Journell, 2008; Abridge, 2006; Ladson

Billings, 2003; Loewen, 1996). However, the literature's focus on representation of slavery in textbooks is a limitation because it does not address content standards; this has resulted in a lack of analysis regarding slavery's inclusion in social studies content standards written directly by policymakers.

Social studies standards set the expectation for which curriculum teachers choose to teach in their classrooms. Curriculum has critical bearing on a student's experience with schooling. One growing area of academic research focuses on racial trauma that occurs in schools through the medium of curriculum, and by extension, content standards. Two Black scholars, Erhabor Ighodaro and Greg Wiggan, coined a new term - curriculum violence - in their 2010 work *Curriculum Violence: America's New Civil Rights Issue*. Curriculum violence is defined as the deliberate manipulation of academic programming in a manner that ignores or compromises the intellectual and psychological well being of learners (Ighodaro and Wiggan, 2010). Dr. Stephanie Jones, an assistant professor of education at Grinnell College, expands upon this definition by removing the clause of intentionality. She contends that curriculum violence does not have to be deliberate, as it occurs when educators and curriculum writers use lessons that damage or otherwise adversely affect students intellectually and emotionally. Jones recently started an initiative at Grinnell College called *Mapping Racial Trauma in Schools*, which compiles an account of racialized violence enacted by teachers and students in schools in the United States K-12 and higher education spaces. Several examples from Grinnell's mapping intiative include classroom activities in which American slavery is the main source of curriculum violence and racial trauma (*Mapping Racial Trauma in Schools,* 2020*)*. The research on how lessons can create violence demonstrates how there are mental and emotional impacts for how social studies standards impact students.

To deconstruct the traditionally white perspective of social studies, there is a push to incorporate more inclusive, multicultural curricula in public schools that provide representation for historically marginalized populations. Multiculturalism emphasizes diversity and tolerance in teaching, in part to combat the narratives discussed above that solely focus on the white, male perspective (Abowitz, 2006). Research shows how curricula that highlight the accomplishments of marginalized communities helps students of color perform better in academic settings (Ogbu, 1992; Journell, 2008). Journell found that a multicultural curriculum gives "[minority] students a feeling of representation and agency within the classroom" (Journell, 2008). Research supports that multicultural education does not exclusively benefit students of color: "White students also benefit from understanding minority voices and culture. Such an understanding allows White students to better understand current racial issues. Too often White students cannot empathize with minority concerns, either because they live and attend school in predominantly segregated areas or they have never experienced the multitude of issues that marginalize people of color on a daily basis" (Marri, 2005). By exposure to lessons about other communities' identities and practices, all students in a classroom benefit from the knowledge gained.

Most content analyses regarding representation of people or events in social studies standards have been engaged in states other than North Carolina and have covered a range of curriculum topics. One qualitative case study in Missouri analyzed "conflicts that significantly influenced the final wording of the standards" (Placier, 2002: 281). It noted how "changes in the language of the standards are a window on political relationships and competing values among politicians, teachers, business leaders, and the public" (Placier, 2002: 282). Fundamentally, people contest the wording of educational content standards because it is a political process and power struggle (Fairclough 1992). The words within the standards themselves matter because they are connected to "social beliefs and theories behind them" (Gee, 1990: 18). Placier describes how "policy language also matters because the most well-intended outcomes will not be realized if those to whom implementation is delegated have difficulty interpreting the policy" (Placier, 2002: 286). Placier's argument demonstrates the impossible separation of politics from classrooms. Public schools are often subject to major political disagreements, and social studies standards are one mechanism through which political parties can influence education. One example is Vaughan's analysis of the adoption process for the 2011 South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards. It found that the Standards Writing Panel was not proportionally representative of the demographics of the state in terms of race and geography and instead reflected only white, suburban districts. For social studies specifically, Vaughan determined that conservative, white political power heavily influenced the history standards for United States History and the Constitution, creating a document that perpetuated the "status quo of white, male, heterosexual, middle-class hegemony" (Vaughan, 2012: p. vii).

Journell argues that most social studies instructional resources present a Eurocentric, White male dominant narrative of history and civic participation. Specific studies on the portrayals of history in social studies standards includes analyses about how the Civil Rights Movement is represented in all state standards (Costello, 2014), how Indigeneous Peoples are represented in K-12 U.S. History Standards (Shear, 2015), and how African Americans are represented in nine states' standards (Journell, 2008). As Shear notes, social studies standards send both covert and overt messages to students about what America means as a nation; other research reinforces this ability of standards to shape student understanding of our county and its citizens (Shear, 2015; Alridge, 2006; Brown & Brown, 2010; Lintner, 2007). Misco et al. (2011) studied how Ohio teachers view social studies standards in a mixed-methods study. A dual approach was used to include a survey from a random sample of K-12 social studies teachers followed by an intentionally selected pool of nine interviewees. Misco found that Ohio social studies teachers changed their instruction to "test-driven, teacher centered practices to accommodate what the teachers interpreted as a narrowed curriculum established by the state standards" (Misco, 2011). Misco's study demonstrates a strong research approach that considers the language of standards while also including teacher input.

Most literature that analyzes curricula and history only focuses on textual analysis of content standards or textbooks. Scholarship affirms that a purely textual analysis does not adequately evaluate what is being taught or learned in a classroom (Foster, 1999; Apple, 1991). Apple reaffirms the notion that teachers and students interpret and construct their own meaning out of textual materials. He described how "we cannot assume that what is 'in' the text actually is taught. Nor can we assume that what is taught is actually learned" (Apple, 1991). This argues that in order to fully understand what is being taught, it is necessary to learn how individual teachers interpret and implement social studies standards at a classroom level. Prior scholarship supports this contention, as existing research has emphasized the need to conduct interviews to explore more deeply the meaning these teachers make of standards and social studies in practice (Misco, 2011; Patton, 1990).

Contribution of this Thesis

This thesis builds upon existing literature about social studies standards and representation of marginalized communities in curricula by analyzing how slavery is included in content standards. Additionally, this thesis enhances prior research because it features primary qualitative research from current educators in North Carolina. Data collection from public school educators is critical to fully understand how standards are implemented at a classroom level, so this thesis aims to fill this void in the current literature. The following section analyzes the inclusion of slavery in the North Carolina K-12 social studies that are followed in 2020.

North Carolina's Social Studies Standards

There is a growing body of literature about how to improve teaching about slavery in classrooms across the United States. The SPLC's "Teaching Hard History: American Slavery" report is a major underpinning of this evaluation. The national analysis comprehensively explains the best practices for teaching about slavery according to recent historiography. The report lays out clearly ten key concepts to learn about slavery based on leading scholarship and seven key problems related to teaching about slavery (Shuster, 2018).

Its research design was framed around four pieces, including "a survey of high school seniors, a survey of teachers, a review of selected state standards, and a review of popular textbooks" (Shuster, 2018: 22). Overall, the SPLC report found that despite slavery's far reach into our lives today, our schools do not do an adequate job of teaching about its full history. The report's four key national findings were condemnatory: "high school seniors struggle on even the most basic questions about American enslavement of Africans; teachers are serious about teaching slavery, but there’s a lack of deep coverage of the subject in the classroom; popular textbooks fail to provide comprehensive coverage of slavery and enslaved peoples; and states fail to set appropriately high expectations with their content standards” (Shuster, 2018: 9). This has left thousands of students with an inadequate understanding of the legacy of slavery and its modern relevance.

In its survey of over 1,000 high school senior students from across the country, there was a resounding lack of understanding about slavery and its legacy. Only 46% - less than half of student respondents - correctly identified the Middle Passage as the journey across the Atlantic from Africa to North America (Shuster, 2018: 24). Out of all participants, only 8% of students identified that the reason why the South seceded from the Union was to preserve slavery; 92% of students chose incorrect answers or said that they were not sure (Shuster, 2018: 24). This polling data from high school students demonstrates a national crisis of understanding around slavery’s role as the impetus behind the Civil War in addition to other settled historical realities of slavery.

The SPLC analyzed the coverage of slavery from social studies content standards in 15 states: Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Virginia, South Carolina, Oklahoma, North Carolina, New York, Kansas, New Jersey, New Mexico, Washington D.C. and Washington State. Not analyzing all 50 states is a limitation of the SPLC’s research, but the sample of 15 states was chosen to provide a holistic national overview. The overall analysis shows that most content standards “fail to lay out meaningful requirements for learning about slavery, the lives of the millions of enslaved people or how their labor was essential to the American economy for more than a century of our history” (Shuster, 2018: 29). The report finds that the “good parts” of slavery, for example the abolitionist movement, tend to be covered, while “everyday experiences of slavery, its extent and its relationship to the persistent ideology of white supremacy” are not (Shuster, 2018: 29).

The SPLC’s review of state content standards proved especially alarming due to analysis of North Carolina’s social studies standards. North Carolina is the only state-- out of the fifteen states analyzed in the report-- that does not introduce slavery in elementary school. In the current North Carolina K-12 social studies standards, slavery is first mentioned in 8th grade. The table below summarizes when slavery is introduced in the fifteen states assessed by the SPLC; on the left column is the grade, on the right column includes the states that introduce slavery at that level:

Grade	**States**
2nd	Virginia
3rd	Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina
4th	California, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Washington, D.C.
5th	Louisiana, Oklahoma, Kansas, Washington, New Mexico
6th	
7th	
8th	North Carolina
9th	

Table: When is slavery introduced in state social studies standards? (Shuster, 2018: 35)

Moreover, when slavery is first explicitly introduced in North Carolina, it is not its own independent standard but merely mentioned “in the context of a list of migration and immigration phenomena, including the Trail of Tears, the Great Migration and Ellis Island" (Shuster, 2018: 33). Under the section "Understand the factors that contribute to change and continuity in North Carolina and the United States," the below reference of slavery is in the 8th grade social studies standard:

> Explain how migration and immigration contributed to the development of North Carolina and the United States from colonization to contemporary times (e.g. westward movement, African slavery, Trail of Tears, the Great Migration and Ellis and Angel Island) ("Eighth Grade Social Studies" 3).

Leading anti-racist historian Dr. Ibram X. Kendi pinpointed the untruthfulness of framing slavery in the context of migration: "To refer to them (enslaved people) again as immigrants insinuates that they chose to come. The African people who were almost totally … forced to come and certainly did not want to come to the United States in chains" (Duncan, 2020).

Historian Ira Berlin wrote a foreword to the book "Understanding and Teaching American Slavery" that outlined ten "essential elements" for accurately depicting slavery in the classroom. The researchers at the SPLC worked with the book's editors to distill Berlin's elements into ten simple sentences, which established the project's ten "Key Concepts" that every graduating high school senior should know about the history of American slavery. (Shuster, 2018: 15). All fifteen states included in the report were evaluated on how many key concepts were already included in their social studies standards. North Carolina did not include 7 of the 10 recommended essential facts about slavery, including that protections for slavery were embedded in American's founding documents; slavery was an institution of power; enslaved people resisted the efforts of their enslavers; and slavery shaped the fundamental beliefs of

Americans about race and whiteness; and white supremacy was both a product of, and legacy of slavery, among several other excluded concepts (Shuster, 2018: 33).

Key Concept Description	**Included in North Carolina K-12 Social Studies Standards?**
1. Slavery, which was practiced by Europeans prior to their arrival in the Americas, was important to all of the colonial powers and existed in all of the European North American colonies.	Yes
2. Slavery and the slave trade were central to the development and growth of the economy across British North America and later, the United States.	Yes
3. Protections for slavery were embedded in the founding documents; enslavers dominated the federal government, Supreme Court, and Senate from 1787 through 1860.	No
4. “Slavery was an institution of power,” designed to create profit for the slaveholder and break the will of the enslaved and was a relentless quest for profit abetted by racism.	No
5. Enslaved people resisted the efforts of their enslavers to reduce them to commodities in both revolutionary and everyday ways.	No
6. The experience of slavery varied depending on time, location, crop, labor performed, size of slaveholding, and gender.	No
7. Slavery was the central cause of the Civil War.	Yes

8. Slavery shaped the fundamental beliefs of Americans about race and whiteness, and white supremacy was both a product of, and legacy of, slavery.	No
9. Enslaved and free people of African descent had a profound impact on American culture, producing leaders and literary, artistic and folk traditions that continue to influence the nation.	No
10. By knowing how to read and interpret the sources that tell the story of American slavery, we gain insight into some of what enslaving and enslaved Americans created, aspired to, thought and desired (Shuster 19)	No

Table: Inclusion of concepts about slavery in existing NC social studies standards

The SPLC's evaluation indicates how slavery is introduced too late and do not include all essential historical elements of slavery. The discussion above underscores the need to introduce slavery at an earlier age in a developmentally-appropriate way and to make North Carolina's standards more comprehensive.

Social Studies Developments 2019-2020

Social studies instruction in North Carolina will significantly change in the next year due to two major policy developments: the addition of a personal finance course and a revision process of the current K-12 social studies standards. The North Carolina General Assembly approved a major change to add a new high school social studies requirement for a personal finance class. On July 8, 2019, House Bill 924 was signed into law to "require completion of an economics and personal finance course as a high school graduation requirement in public schools, to clarify requirements for high school civic literacy, and to require professional development for economics and personal finance teachers" ("General Assembly of North Carolina, Session Law 2019-82, House Bill 924," 2019). The Economics and Personal Finance (EPF) course content must include materials developed by the Council for Economic Education to provide instruction on economic principles and personal financial literacy.

There has been a substantial pushback over the new financial literacy course because it is a legislatively-mandated graduation requirement for high school students. Teachers across the state have voiced significant opposition because the finance course will supplant an existing history course requirement (Hui, 2019). The new financial literacy course had to replace one of the four social studies courses already required for students to graduate: Civics and Economics, World History, American History 1 and American History 2 (Hui, 2019). As a result, there will no longer be a mandate for students to take two American History courses to accommodate the new requirement. Starting in the 2020-21 school year, North Carolina high school freshmen will be required to take an economics and personal finance course before they graduate instead of both parts of American History; in accordance with this requirement, the American History course will be condensed into one semester to adjust for the new addition of personal finance. This development has significant bearing on the development of North Carolina's K-12 social studies standards and has caused resentment among social studies educators.

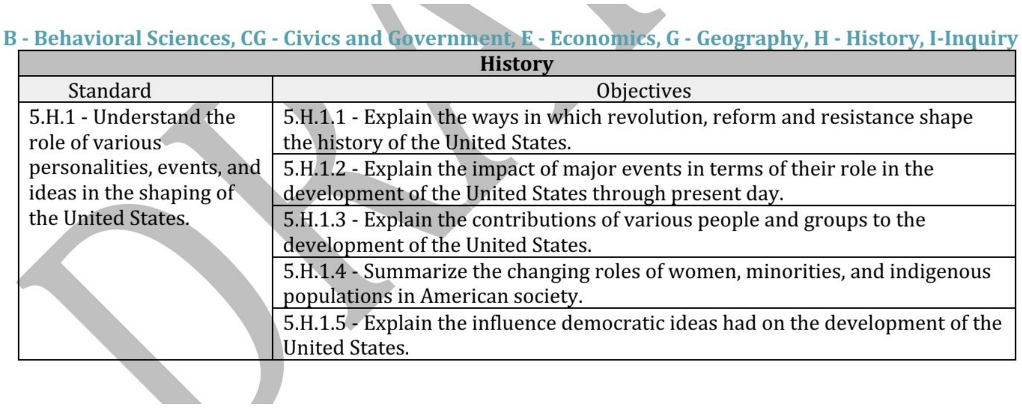
In addition, there is currently a 2-year revision process underway of the North Carolina K-12 social studies standards. As a part of national policy requirements, all states must "periodically review existing state-level academic standards" in order to "address academic, education, and societal changes over time and to best meet the needs of student learners" ("NCDPI Social," 2019). The North Carolina State Board of Education requires a review of the content standards every 5-9 years to ensure they consist of clear, relevant standards and objectives ("NCDPI Social," 2019). The current K-12 social studies content standards were approved by the State Board of Education in 2010 with required implementation for schools in 2012. Per the regular review guidelines, in April 2019, the State Board of Education approved a request from DPI to begin reviewing and revising the K-12 social studies academic standards. The new requirement for the personal finance course further necessitated a review and revision of K-12 social studies standards. The 2019-2020 social studies standards revision process underway has been based on the following: "informal feedback from stakeholders, focused feedback through surveys, focused feedback from the Social Studies Leaders Institute, review of other states' standards, and current research on civic education, social studies in elementary grades, and best practices, and legislation" ("NCDPI Social," 2019). The revision process intends to be completed by summer 2020.

The draft 1 documents were open during a public review period from December 13, 2019 to January 31, 2020. To determine how representation slavery may change in the future, I completed a content analysis of the K-12 draft social studies standards to search for "slave" or "slavery." Neither term was mentioned once in the entire set of proposed standards from kindergarten through 12th grade. as of January 2020, North Carolina does not even reference slavery as an institution or any enslaved people in its entire proposed course of study for social studies. This is major backsliding away from meeting the Southern Poverty Law Center's metrics for teaching about slavery; if the draft standards are implemented as is, North Carolina will go from missing seven key concepts to missing all ten key concepts established as being essential to understanding American slavery.

In comparison to a state that recently underwent social studies standards revisions, the complete lack of reference to slavery is abnormal. In 2018, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released its equivalent of revised social studies standards, the "History And Social Science Framework for Grades Pre-Kindergarten to 12" ("History and Social Science," 2018). The term "slaves" was mentioned 7 times in the entire report, while "slavery" was referenced 20 times. Furthermore, slavery is first introduced in 5th grade and comprises a separate topic of focus in elementary school: "Topic 5. Slavery, the legacy of the Civil War and the struggle for civil rights for all" ("History and Social Science," 2018: 71). The following is a 5th grade content standard about slavery from the recently revised Massachusetts framework:

> Describe the origins of slavery, its legal status in all the colonies through the 18th century, and the prevalence of slave ownership, including by many of the country's early leaders (e.g., George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Mason.) ("History and Social Science," 2018: 72).

The standard above demonstrates a high level of detail and clear expectations for student learning outcomes in Massachusetts elementary schools. North Carolina, meanwhile, proposed revised new standards that do not mention slavery once in elementary, middle, or high school. The introduction for North Carolina's drafted 5th grade standards, as of January 2020, states how students will understand the national level from pre-colonial times through the present day ("Grade 5 Public Draft 1," 2020). The following picture is the draft 5th grade social studies standard for history, as of January 2020:



B - Behavioral Sciences, CG - Civics and Government, E - Economics, G - Geography, H - History, I-Inquiry

History	
Standard	Objectives
5.H.1 - Understand the role of various personalities, events, and ideas in the shaping of the United States.	5.H.1.1 - Explain the ways in which revolution, reform and resistance shape the history of the United States.
	5.H.1.2 - Explain the impact of major events in terms of their role in the development of the United States through present day.
	5.H.1.3 - Explain the contributions of various people and groups to the development of the United States.
	5.H.1.4 - Summarize the changing roles of women, minorities, and indigenous populations in American society.
	5.H.1.5 - Explain the influence democratic ideas had on the development of the United States.

Source: “NCDPI” https://drive.google.com/file/d/1v8B1q0QSje7fnqCN7qaQgnJC0YwP1LVy/view

The only 5th grade history standard is “Understand the role of various personalities, events, and ideas in the shaping of the United States” (“Grade 5 Public Draft 1,” 2020). Even in the clarifying objectives, there is no explicit inclusion of slavery. There is a wide disparity between the level of specificity in the Massachusetts 5th grade standards and the proposed North Carolina ones. The discrepancy underscores the need to focus on how the social studies standards can be improved by using feedback from teachers about what is currently effective.

Chapter III: Research Design

The research question that undergirds this thesis is as follows: how is slavery taught in North Carolina public schools? The previous chapter provided a historical backdrop to outline the context of education in North Carolina and summarized existing literature to understand how this research fills a research void. This chapter outlines and summarizes the methodology behind the primary data collection.

I employed a qualitative methods approach for the data collection by using a survey and interviews from teachers. Following guidance from the United States General Accounting Office Case Study Evaluations Report, I used a "case study extensive analysis" by combining multiple types of data sources, including surveys from public school teachers, interviews with public school teachers, documents, and archives ("Case Study," 1990: 20). This illustrative case study is descriptive in character and adds in-depth examples to other information ("Case Study," 1990: 9).

As discussed earlier, solely relying on a textual analysis of the current North Carolina K-12 social studies standards would not adequately reflect how they are implemented at a classroom level. There is significant variation in how standards are implemented depending on a teacher's background, lived experiences, and instructional approaches. In order to adjust for the complex implementation of state standards, I employed a Qualtrics survey to collect input from individual teachers. In addition to the digital survey component, the research process also included in-person interviews with several public school teachers in North Carolina. Both qualitative research instruments sought to capture the nuances of how slavery is taught in classrooms.

In order to provide an accessible opportunity to give feedback, I sent the anonymous survey via email to a sample of 250 public school teachers. This sampling is known as quota sampling because it is a non-random sampling technique in which participants were chosen on the basis of predetermined characteristics. The total sample was designed to have roughly the same distribution of characteristics as the wider population of teachers in North Carolina (Davis, 2005). In addition, the data was collected anonymously with no identifiers connected to the data. The only non-identifiable personal information collected included the number of years employed as a teacher, grade and subject taught, and race. Due to the time and geographic limitations of a thesis, an online collection instrument was used as the main source of data. Also, due to the sensitivity of the topic, having an online option potentially mitigated any feelings of in-person discomfort. People may have felt more free to share their experiences as an anonymous individual opposed to being face-to-face with someone. In order to enhance the Qualtrics survey findings, I conducted multiple in-person interviews with public school teachers. The interviews followed the same questions and protocol as the survey. The educators who volunteered for the interview are also anonymous for the purposes of this research, and their identities are protected for sensitivity purposes.

The teachers who participated in the in-person interviews were selected based on convenience sampling. This is a method of selection that chooses participants because they are often readily and easily available. Typically, convenience sampling tends to be a favored sampling technique among students as it is an inexpensive and accessible option compared to other sampling techniques (Ackoff, 1953). The teachers who participated in this thesis were recommended by community members or people affiliated with the UNC School of Education.

All teachers who were interviewed are employed within the State Board of Education District 3; the same as survey participants. However, there was slight variation in the counties chosen for the in-person interviews, as some were from neighboring counties to the survey LEAs.

I obtained consent from the participants by sending them email messages and allowing them to opt-in to the survey. The informed consent was part of the recruitment email and subjects could consent by clicking on the survey link and completing the survey. For the in-person interviews, an interview protocol was followed that used the same questions as the survey. All research participants had the choice to opt-into the survey interviews, and they were all given a description of their rights as research participants. All participants remained anonymous and any potentially identifiable information was removed from the interview transcripts.

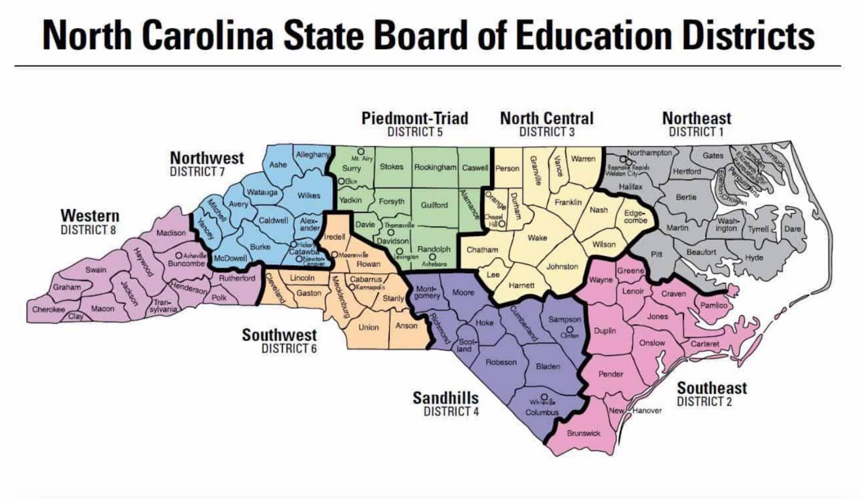

North Carolina State Board of Education Districts
Piedmont-Triad DISTRICT 5
North Central DISTRICT 3
Northeast DISTRICT 1
Northwest DISTRICT 7
Western DISTRICT 8
Southwest DISTRICT 6
Sandhills DISTRICT 4
Southeast DISTRICT 2
Alleghany
Ashe
Watauga
Wilkes
Avery
Caldwell
Alexander
Mitchell
Yancey
Burke
McDowell
Catawba
Madison
Haywood
Asheville
Buncombe
Swain
Graham
Cherokee
Clay
Macon
Jackson
Transylvania
Henderson
Polk
Rutherford
Mt. Airy
Surry
Elkin
Stokes
Rockingham
Caswell
Yadkin
Forsyth
Guilford
Alamance
Davie
Thomasville
Davidson
Lexington
Randolph
Asheboro
Iredell
Mooresville
Rowan
Hickory
Newton
Lincoln
Cabarrus
Kannapolis
Cleveland
Gaston
Mecklenburg
Stanly
Union
Anson
Person
Granville
Vance
Warren
Orange
Chapel Hill
Durham
Franklin
Nash
Edgecombe
Wake
Chatham
Wilson
Lee
Harnett
Johnston
Northampton
Roanoke Rapids
Weldon City
Gates
Hertford
Halifax
Bertie
Currituck
Camden
Pasquotank
Perquimans
Chowan
Martin
Washington
Tyrrell
Dare
Pitt
Beaufort
Hyde
Montgomery
Moore
Richmond
Hoke
Scotland
Cumberland
Sampson
Clinton
Robeson
Bladen
Whiteville
Columbus
Brunswick
Wayne
Greene
Lenoir
Craven
Pamlico
Jones
Duplin
Onslow
Carteret
Pender
New Hanover

Image Source: https://www.ncasa.net/Page/93

Setting

For the Qualtrics survey, I reached out to teachers from four local education agencies (LEAs) within central North Carolina. The selections were located within one district within the State Board of Education: District 3. Within this district, I reached out to teachers within the following four LEAs: Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (CHCCS), Orange County Schools (OCS), and Durham Public Schools (DPS), and Edgecombe County Public Schools (ECPS).

These LEAs within District 3 are representative of the diversity of North Carolina schools. In the 2019-20 school year for traditional North Carolina public schools, 1.1% of students were American Indian, 3.6% were Asian, 19.3% were Hispanic, 24.3% were black, 46.1% were white, 5.5% were two or more races, and 0.1% were Pacific Islander ("Table 10," 2020). The choice of the four LEAs represents school systems with different racial and socioeconomic compositions in the 2019-2020 school year. When combined together, the four counties represent a microcosm of the state as a whole; they balance racial and ethnic representation while also including rural and urban school settings.

County Background Information

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (CHCCS) is more urban and predominantly white; in 2019-20, the racial composition of students enrolled in CHCCS was the following:

Race	**Number of Students**
American Indian	24
Asian	1,714
Hispanic	2,128
Black	1,348
White	6,211

Two or more races	900

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 10 - Pupils in Membership by Race & Sex. 2019-20 School Year.
Source: http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:15:::NO:::

A recent Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis report estimated racial and ethnic achievement gaps in several hundred metropolitan areas and several thousand school districts in the United States. The study found that Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools had the second largest achievement gap in the country. Although CHCCS is ranked as the "best district in North Carolina" according to the data analysis website Niche, when Black students are isolated in these measurements, CHCCS ranks 48th in student achievement in NC. The Southern Coalition for Social Justice issues Racial Equity Report Cards every year; in 2019, Black students in CHCCS were 13.9 times more likely than White students to receive a short-term suspension ("Racial Equity Chapel Hill," 2019).

Orange County Schools (OCS) is more rural and predominantly white, with its 2019-20 racial makeup being the following:

Race	**Number of Students**
American Indian	13
Asian	100
Hispanic	1,826
Black	985
White	3,907
Pacific Islander	2
Two or more races	523

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 10 - Pupils in Membership by Race & Sex. 2019-20 School Year.
Source: http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:15:::NO:::

In terms of administrative structure, although Chapel Hill and Carrboro are both located in Orange County, the cities form an independent local education agency, as described above. The 2019 Racial Equity Report Card found that Black students in Orange County were 3.2 times more likely than White students to receive a short-term suspension ("Racial Equity Orange," 2019).

Durham Public Schools (DPS) is more urban and predominantly black; its racial makeup in 2019-20 is the following:

Race	**Number of Students**
American Indian	64
Asian	677
Hispanic	10,785
Black	13,705
White	6,247
Pacific Islander	28
Two or more races	1,422

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 10 - Pupils in Membership by Race & Sex. 2019-20 School Year. Source: http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:15:::NO:::

Based on the 2019 Racial Equity Report Card, White students in grades 3-8 were 2.6 times more likely to score "Career and College Ready" on 2017-18 end-of-grade exams than Black students in Durham County. In addition, Black students were 9.7 times more likely than White students to receive a short- term suspension in 2016-17 ("Racial Equity Durham," 2019).

Edgecombe County Public Schools (ECPS) is more rural and predominantly black; its racial makeup in 2019-20 is the following:

Race	**Number of Students**

American Indian	5
Asian	10
Hispanic	620
Black	3,165
White	1,562
Pacific Islander	2
Two or more races	246

Source: NC DPI Statistical Profile. Table 10 - Pupils in Membership by Race & Sex. 2019-20 School Year. Source: http://apps.schools.nc.gov/ords/f?p=145:15:::NO:::

The 2019 Racial Equity Report Card found that White students in grades 3-8 were 2.1 times more likely to score “Career and College Ready” on 2017-18 end-of-grade exams than Black students in Edgecombe County (“Racial Equity Edgecombe,” 2019). Edgecombe County is home to the first town in the United States founded by freedpeople, Princeville (Ford, 2019).

The basis of the outreach was a spreadsheet I created with contact information from all 6th-12th social studies teachers from the four aforementioned LEAs. The email addresses and phone numbers for all public school teachers were available publicly from the websites of individual schools. The two hundred and fifty social studies educators came from forty unique schools across the LEAs. The total numbers for individual school districts are below:

District	**Number of Schools**	**Number of Educators**
Chapel Hill-Carrboro	8	69
Orange	6	38
Edgecombe	9	43
Durham	17	100

Total	*40*	*250*

Table: How many educators were contacted?

The questions for the survey are included in Appendix A, located on page 125. The questions were developed in consultation with several sources, including multiple classroom teachers (not research subjects) who informally volunteered to be reviewers, the *Handbook of Survey Questions*, two professors from the UNC School of Education, and qualitative policy experts who have experience using surveys as research tools. The question about race adheres to the guidelines set forth by the 1997 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards on race and ethnicity. The OMB standards also guide the U.S. Census Bureau in classifying written responses to questions about race.

Some of the survey questions were inspired, in part, by the Teaching Tolerance and Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) "Teaching Hard History: American Slavery" report. In January 2017, Teaching Tolerance and SPLC conducted a survey of K–12 teachers to assess their attitudes and perceived self-efficacy related to teaching the history of American slavery. The methodology used in the survey portion of this thesis is similar to the SPLC's approach. There was a limitation in the SPLC's data collection in that it mainly included responses from teachers affiliated with Teaching Tolerance, the teaching and curriculum arm of the SPLC. Over 1,700 social studies teachers responded in total, 90% of which were affiliated with Teaching Tolerance in some capacity. As SPLC noted in the report, this could have led to "self-selection problems that might arise with surveying only teachers already predisposed to think about social justice issues" (Shuster, 2018: 23). The methodology I used for this thesis was designed to mitigate self-selection bias by reaching out to all employed social studies educators with accessible contact information, not just ones who were predisposed to thinking about social justice or addressing hard history.

In terms of recruitment, the primary data collection for this thesis only included middle and high school social studies teachers because slavery is not explicitly mentioned until the 8th grade North Carolina standards. Appendix B provides the text for recruitment communications conducted through email. In order to encourage more participation, I strategically sent the survey in tandem with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. This timing was coordinated with the hope of increasing completion during a time when conversations about Dr. King and Black history in general were more pronounced.

This research was approved by the UNC-Chapel Hill Institutional Research Board for exemption because the methodology fell under the following categories:

> (1) Research, conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, that specifically involves normal educational practices that are not likely to adversely impact students' opportunity to learn required educational content or the assessment of educators who provide instruction. This includes most research on regular and special education instructional strategies, and research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
> (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Chapter IV: Findings/Results

The following chapter outlines findings from the qualitative research collected from North Carolina public educators. The survey results were collected from 58 educators in four different local education agencies (LEAs). Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, four of which comprise a separate section to fully capture their personal narratives and pedagogical strategies that shape how they teach slavery.

The qualitative approach enabled the research to capture the nuanced complexity of teaching within our public school classrooms; the following summaries and findings are not intended to be representative of all social studies teachers in North Carolina. Instead, the research provides qualitative documentation and analysis of how slavery is taught by selected participants who willingly and graciously shared their own experiences. After synthesizing the findings and sharing key themes, this chapter will conclude with a description of the limitations and hopes for future research.

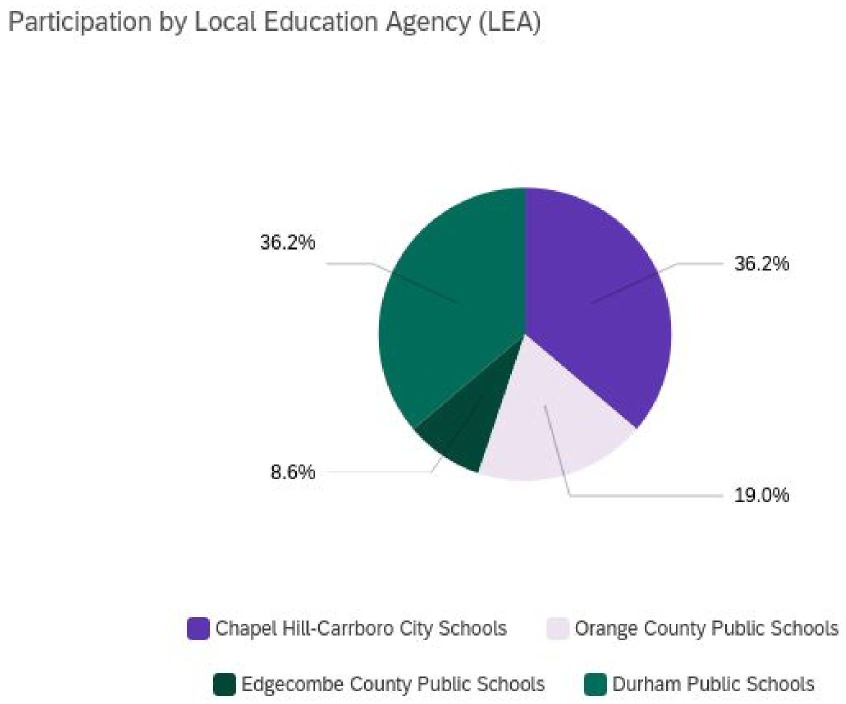
Qualtrics Survey

Summary

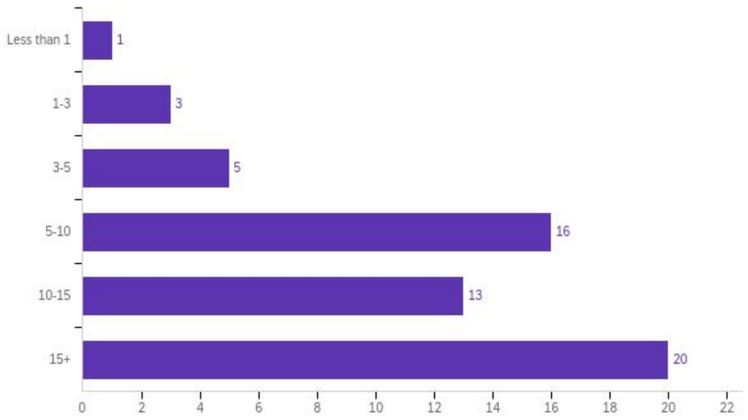
The Qualtrics survey received 58 responses from teachers employed within the State Board of Education's District 3. There were 250 email addresses obtained to communicate with middle and high school social studies teachers, but 15 emails were invalid leading to an overall contact rate with 235 educators. Out of the 235 total reached through recruitment messages, 24.7% of educators participated in the anonymous survey. This response rate is fairly high considering no incentive was given and the only method of outreach was through email.

Participant Characteristics

There were 58 total participants in the survey component. The breakdown of participation by local education agencies (LEA) is as follows: 21 from Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, 11 from Orange County Public Schools, 5 from Edgecombe County Public Schools, and 21 from Durham Public Schools.

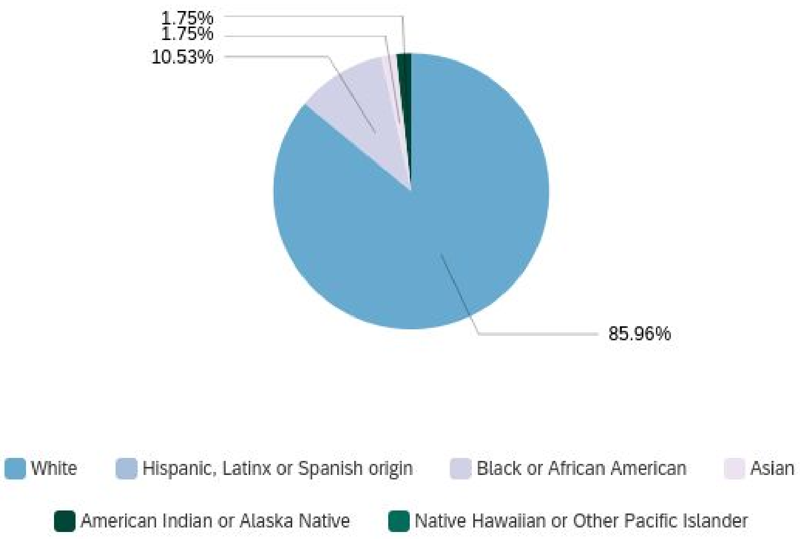


The majority of participants had taught for over 15 years; only one respondent was in their first year teaching.



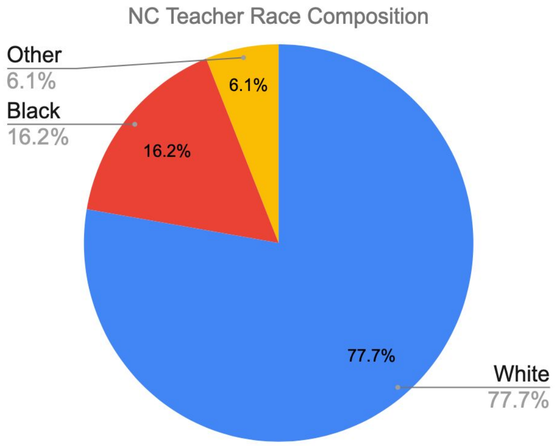
Participation by Years of Teaching

In terms of racial demographics, the survey response was very homogeneous. Almost 85% of participants self-identified as white. No participants were of Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin nor Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Only 6 participants identified as Black or African American. To compound this underrepresentation, the participants who identified as educators of color did not fully complete the survey.



Participation by Race

In comparison to the statewide teacher population, the survey was not racially representative. The 2019-20 teacher workforce in North Carolina has a racial composition displayed in the pie chart below. In the 2019-20 school year, 77.7% of the teacher workforce is white, 16.2% is black, and 6.1% is listed as “other” (“Number of,” 2020).



Although an overwhelming majority - almost 80% - of North Carolina’s teaching force is white, this research is limited by the participation from over 85% white people. I hoped the research would include more perspectives from people of color about how they teach slavery in the classroom. While the outcome of the research process did not achieve that goal, there is value in its findings, specifically to analyze how white educators engage with the topic of slavery.

Hard History Strategies

In order to ease into the survey questions, the first one asked about teaching history in a broad sense: “In general, how do you approach introducing difficult history topics in your classroom? (e.g. Holocaust, Slavery, The Great Depression, etc.)”

One educator rightfully troubled the phrasing of the question, noting how “This is a difficult and broad question. Most of my students are students of color. Most have been taught a whitewashed version of history. I want to empower students by thinking of themselves as potential history-makers, which they won’t if they feel like they need to be a superhero to make change and write history.” The same educator further challenged the presumption that there is such a thing as a difficult history topic: “Defining something as a ‘difficult’ topic is weird. Every topic is difficult if you complicate it enough. Voting should be straightforward, but gerrymandering and voter suppression and the history of voting-based terrorism has made it a ‘difficult’ topic. My students have a right to be exposed to that difficulty.”

In addition to the “whitewashed version of history” remark by the teacher above, only one additional educator referenced whiteness in the answer: “Overall I like to build students towards the topic of slavery - we start with the birth of the transatlantic slave trade looking at statistics and data surrounding it + the impacts of it on West Africa, then in the next unit build on that by talking about Bacon's Rebellion and the birth of 'whiteness' and race as a way to differentiate and divide. We read primary sources and make claims on compelling questions such as "What makes 'white' and 'black' people 'white' and 'black'?"

Overall, responses fell mainly in three categories: encouraging open-ended inquiry, emphasizing individual humanity, and embracing frank awareness. Many educators described how they approach difficult history topics by facilitating discussions around compelling questions and inquiry: “By having honest open discussions and giving students the opportunity to understand that history is a vast entity that cannot be defined by any one event or period,” “Opening and with lots of respect. Often admit I don't know everything, but encourage students to talk about it,” and “With an open mind. Making sure the topic is covered, but making sure I do not offend students impacted either ethnically or racially.”

The second major category was that it was important to emphasize the humanity of affected individuals by difficult historical events. One noted that students should “read/hear history from people that actually experienced it” and then the course does open-ended seminars to process the sources. One teacher described how “We talk about the political and social environments that allowed terrible things to take place, but we focus on the people that they impact.” Many of them use personal narratives to present humanized information about more abstract events and topics.

The third major theme was the need for a frank awareness and candid introduction to history courses in general. Embracing *unvarnished* discussions about difficult history topics was referenced by 10 participants. Many directly shared similar sentiments that they do not stray from “uncomfortable truths or controversial topics.” One educator of over 15 years described their pedagogical strategy around history: “It will not always be feel good history, and I don't want it to be feel bad history, it is AWARENESS history. You must have a community feel in your classroom and with your students and between your students before throwing out difficult topics.” In order to have constructive conversations, several educators stressed the need for an underlying foundation of trust to foster a sense of respect in the classroom; the same educator who coined the term ‘awareness history’ added the following: “Once [the community] is established, they will trust you and each other with their thoughts, opinions, feelings and be more willing to listen to ideas that are different than theirs."

Personal Memories

Participants had varied perspectives about the first time they learned about slavery in school, at home, or in general. The table below indicates the code distribution according to where respondents first learned about slavery.

FAMILY	**10 times**
***ROOTS* TELEVISION MINI-SERIES**	**8 times**
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	**11 times**
VAGUE BUT NOTED SADNESS	**5 times**
DIDN'T REMEMBER	**11 times**
OTHER	**3 times**
BLANK	**10 times**

Although the educators had different experiences learning about slavery, several of them described how their personal education on slavery was not enough: "Not very good. It was vague. Had to rely on college courses and family history to fully understand and learn about slavery," "I was conditioned to believe it was something that happened a very long time ago, in a time period that was so far away from our own world that it was unfathomable," "I was in middle school, I read about it in a textbook, maybe watched a short video and sadly that was it." One educator of color noted: "The strongest memory about oppression that stands out is in 5th grade when we were learning American history. The chapter focused on a lot of things and at the end, there was a short paragraph on the Trail of Tears. I asked the teacher if we were going to learn more about it, but she said no. At this moment, I started to realize that schools don't speak honestly about history unless it makes us look good."

Lesson Key Points and Concepts

I coded the responses from survey question 10 - "Can you share 2-3 key points or concepts you want students to gain from a lesson about slavery" - to follow the key concepts from the SPLC's *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery* report. The survey question was purposefully open-ended to not lead the respondents into choosing predefined options. This led to a less rigid coding system based on the SPLC report than I anticipated; many of the educators noted key points that did not align with the specific SPLC key concepts.

Of the 10 SPLC's key concepts, all of them were generally referred to at least once. The number of general references to the points are outlined in the table below. None of the concepts were written word-for-word besides one educator whose responses were verbatim compared to the SPLC's ones; this educator has taught for more than 15 years in CHCCS and was clearly already using the *Teaching Hard History* report to guide her classes. Beyond her response, the highest frequencies were found in the concepts about slavery's centrality to the economy, the varied experiences depending on a range of factors, and the resistance by enslaved people. The blue shaded concepts are explicitly included in North Carolina's K-12 social studies standards, while the red shaded concepts are not.

Key Concept	**# of References in**

	Responses
One: Slavery, which was practiced by Europeans prior to their arrival in the Americas, was important to all of the colonial powers and existed in all of the European North American colonies.	2
Two: Slavery and the slave trade were central to the development and growth of the economy across British North America and later, the United States.	9
Three: Protections for slavery were embedded in the founding documents; enslavers dominated the federal government, Supreme Court, and Senate from 1787 through 1860.	2
Four: “Slavery was an institution of power,” designed to create profit for the enslaver and break the will of the enslaved and was a relentless quest for profit abetted by racism.	2
Five: Enslaved people resisted the efforts of their enslavers to reduce them to commodities in both revolutionary and everyday ways.	6
Six: The experience of slavery varied depending on time, location, crop, labor performed, size of slaveholding and gender.	7
Seven: Slavery was the central cause of the Civil War.	3
Eight: Slavery shaped the fundamental beliefs of Americans about race and whiteness, and white supremacy was both a product and legacy of slavery.	6
Nine: Enslaved and free people of African descent had a profound impact on American culture, producing leaders, and literary, artistic and folk traditions, etc., that continue to influence the nation.	5
Ten: By knowing how to read and interpret the sources that tell the story of American slavery, we gain insight into some of what enslaving and enslaved Americans created, thought, aspired to and desired.	6

The list above is not exhaustive of all stated key concepts; many educators referenced points that could not be classified with the criteria used by the SPLC. The following descriptions capture key concepts that were not covered by the table above.

One point was that the language used about slavery matters. Several teachers noted that it was critical to use the term “enslaved person” instead of “slave” to emphasize that while the injustice was done to them, they were not defined as humans by their enslavement.

The specific differentiation between chattel slavery and other iterations of slavery was another key point not highlighted by the SPLC’s criteria. Six educators outlined how chattel slavery was unique in nature, including “humans were treated like property. Less than human,” “historical slavery vs. chattel slavery,” and “slavery was a global phenomenon, but Atlantic chattel slavery was dramatically worse than other forms.”

Seven respondents described key concepts that - to varying degrees - referred to slavery still existing today. The points included “slavery is not a thing of the past,” “continues today - we need to speak up always,” “the UDHR has 30 articles of human rights and one of them is still the right to be free from slavery. It is still a challenge today.” It is unclear whether they mean that slavery still exists in the form of human trafficking or whether they mean enslavement of Black people has adapted; this is subject to further conversation with survey respondents.

One troubling point by a white teacher of more than 15 years in a more rural district was that “Africans themselves were equally responsible for igniting the Atlantic slave trade.” This is a fundamental misunderstanding that does not align with current historiography. Through emphasizing points such as blaming Africans, the teacher shifts blame away from white colonists, Europeans and Americans.

Out of 58 educators, only four respondents (less than 7%) explicitly referred to whiteness or white supremacy in their lesson points. The SPLC’s eighth key concept is that “Slavery shaped the fundamental beliefs of Americans about race and whiteness, and white supremacy was both a product of, and legacy of, slavery." The social construction of whiteness and white supremacy is a critical fact that is necessary for understanding slavery (Shuster, 2018). While six respondents described lesson points related to the history of race, two of these exclude white supremacy and only use the term race. The answers that mention whiteness include: "It is an institution that was created by people in power, perpetuated intentionally by white supremacy not just something that happened," "How slavery contributed to the rise of white supremacy," and "The roots of white supremacy and racism in our country can be tied back to enslavement, it's all connected."

By neglecting to reference race and specifically whiteness, 54 educators demonstrated a (conscious or not) lack of engagement with the undeniable construction of white supremacy that developed in America as justification for slavery. This question illuminates a blatant exclusion of white supremacy, which is especially notable because the respondents were predominantly white. The underlying cause of the lack of discussion about white supremacy is unclear based on the survey answers alone; it could be a fundamental misunderstanding of the topic, willful exclusion, or a host of other reasons. Further discussions with participants would be required to interrogate this finding further.

Advice and Resources for Teaching about Slavery

One question asked: "What, if any, additional resources would help you teach about slavery better (e.g., professional development, extra lesson plans, or more extensive standards)?" In retrospect, the phrasing of this question is a bit leading because it specifically outlines the different options instead of providing a more open-ended structure. The main answer was professional development (PD), as 15 respondents (over 25%) indicated that they would choose additional PD to help them teach slavery better. Eight people wanted more lesson plans, particularly lessons or information tailored for their geographic region in order to provide a more localized connection. Only two educators stated that more extensive standards were needed, including that there should be “extensive standards to hold teachers accountable who might otherwise ignore certain facets of the issue.”

Four educators stressed the need for more time: “TIME!! I enjoy doing research and I think the work Social Studies teachers do is some of THE most important work. We often get brushed aside in favor of Language Arts, Math and Science, however it is imperative that our next generation understands the nuances and applications of getting history right, even if it's ugly and uncomfortable.” Another educator shared qualms about the imminent reduction of American History courses in North Carolina high schools: “At the high school level, time to teach the topic in more depth. There is a lot of local history regarding slavery that I would love to explore with my students. But I am discouraged because they are cramming ALL of American History back [into] one semester. So we will only have time to skim the surface of so many important topics.”

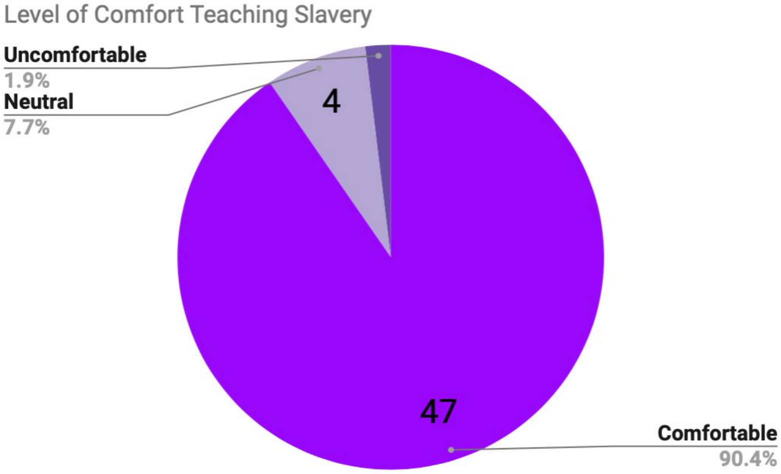
The need for more time is in direct contradiction of the recent decision to condense the American History I and II courses into one semester; this consolidation will reduce the amount of time dedicated to learning about American history and specifically slavery. Social studies teachers will not have more time, they will have less.

Levels of Agreement

Respondents shared significantly varied levels of agreement around the effectiveness of resources and support from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. One response bias was that within the answers of this question, ⅓ of the Black or African American survey participants (2 educators) left the answers blank. It is important to note that this exacerbates the existing lack of representativeness for the survey's generalizability in relation to this specific Likert scale.

Level of Agreement with the Following Statements:	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
I feel comfortable teaching about the topic of slavery.	26 (50%)	21 (40%)	4 (8%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
I use the NC K-12 social studies standards to guide how to teach about slavery.	7 (13%)	17 (33%)	15 (29%)	8 (15%)	5 (10%)
The NC K-12 social studies standards provide enough information to help me teach about slavery.	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	18 (35%)	17 (33%)	9 (17%)
I have adequate support from the NC Department of Public Instruction for teaching about slavery.	4 (8%)	7 (13%)	20 (38%)	11 (21%)	10 (19%)

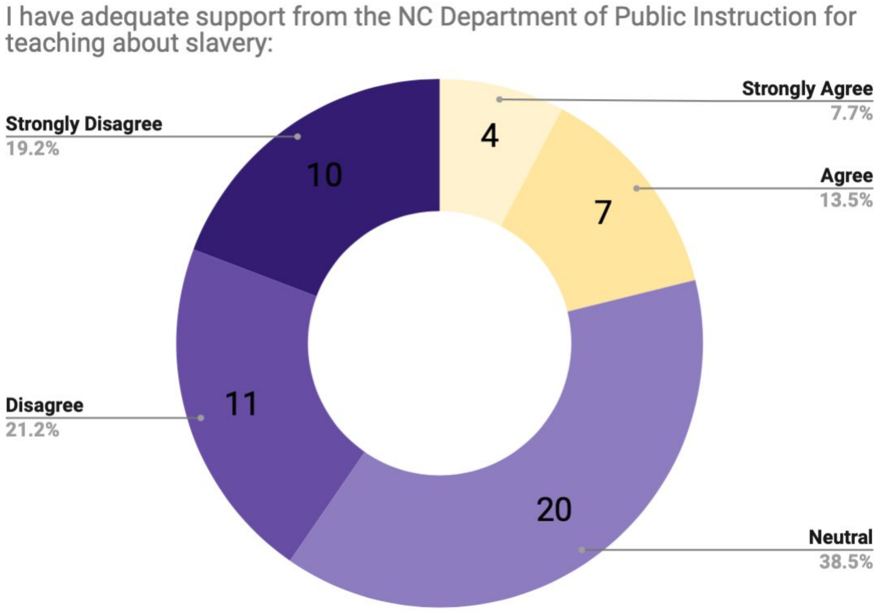
Only one person stated that they did not feel comfortable teaching about the topic of slavery. Three educators held a neutral position on how they felt. The majority of respondents - 90% - indicated that they are in agreement with being comfortable teaching about slavery to their students. The sample is largely comprised of educators who willingly chose to complete the survey, and therefore are representing teachers who are generally not apprehensive about discussing slavery.



Forty-six percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they use the NC K-12 social studies standards to guide their teaching of slavery. Almost thirty percent indicated a neutral opinion; while 25% shared that they do not use the social studies standards. Fifty percent of respondents think the K-12 social studies standards do not provide enough information to help them teach about slavery; thirty-five percent were neutral while 16% agreed or strongly agreed that the standards had enough information.

The highest percentage of respondents - 38% - were neutral on whether NC DPI provides adequately support for teaching about slavery. More people disagreed with the statement: “I have adequate support from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for teaching about slavery.” Forty percent of participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement;

only roughly 20% of respondents felt they had adequate support from the NC Department of Public Instruction for this subject.



Despite 90% of respondents sharing that they feel comfortable teaching about slavery, most educators clearly do not derive their comfort from resources provided by NCDPI. This is a disconnect that can lead to an assumption that the educators must be finding helpful sources outside of those offered from the state agency. It also demonstrates how NCDPI is not providing adequate professional and pedagogical support for social studies educators to teach about slavery.

Current Standards Revision Process

The penultimate question asked: “What, if any, are your thoughts about the current revision process of the NC K-12 social studies standards?” An overwhelming majority did not support the revision process for the social studies standards. Twenty-eight respondents did not know about the revision process or left the answer blank. Almost half of survey respondents shared a high level of apathy about the usefulness of standards. One person summed up his perception of standards in general: “I pretty much ignore the ones I have now, and I’m sure whatever the next round is, I’ll probably ignore those as much as I can, too.”

Twenty-one participants had overtly negative views around the standards revision process. One educator said: “I. Am. Horrified. It’s like DPI took all our suggestions and went the total opposite direction. It feels like they are selling out our kids, our teachers, and our once enviable public school system to the lowest corporate bidder.” Another said

> For the issue of slavery, it’s a catastrophic failure in our mission to provide a quality education for students. The combining of the two American history courses will narrow teachers' ability to provide depth and multiple perspectives to the American story, especially for marginalized groups, who will undoubtedly be ignored to an even greater extent.

One educator felt that professional development would be helpful in a much more significant way than standards ever will: “I find the Essential Standards useful in that they provide a loose framework.” A teacher of over 15 years noted the need for more individual stories: “I worry about how the general nature of standards allow teachers to continue to teach a narrow curriculum and do not require broadening to include more groups and individuals' stories in history.” In addition, several teachers described a fear of focusing solely on white people: “[the standards are] an embarrassment from a cultural perspective - the current standards do little to address cultural/social impacts and continue to focus far [too] much on the accomplishments of white American men.”

Several referenced the new personal finance course in relation to the standards revision process, without prompting in the question. One described the tension between the mission of the personal finance course with traditional history offerings: “I think that it is intended to emphasize a celebration of free market economic principles, at the expense of being able to teach a more inclusive American history.” One high school educator offered a jarring anecdote about the loss of a teacher due to the standards revision process: “The personal finance class is a terrible idea, and I'll be leaving the state to teach elsewhere as a result of it and other factors (low pay, non-unionization, etc).”

The only neutral remarks about the revision process were as follows: “It is needed,” “It seems fine,” and the only positive reference to the finance course was “I like that we are moving to personal finance and dropping American History to one class in high school.” This translates to less than 5% of respondents having a lukewarm view of the process. The rest of participants had no comment or were opposed to the process entirely. The general consensus was that there is not enough information in the drafted standards and that expert educators were not consulted enough during the process.

In-Depth Interviews

Many findings gleaned from the in-person interviews reaffirm the survey results. The in-depth interviews featured below also reveal new material that was not explicitly highlighted in the survey. For this reason, they are shared in the following separate section to convey their experiences in full.

Teacher 1

Teacher 1 is white woman who has taught for over 25 years in a suburban school district. She teaches high school social studies.

She started talking about race in her first answer. She immediately noted that she grew up in a home of white people. She described how her family background informed how she initially talked about issues race in her classroom:

> The idea was if you said, hey, go see that woman over there, we would say like in the red shirt, we wouldn't mention, she's black. Because if you said she's a Black woman that meant you're a racist, or you were overly focused on race. So when you grow up in a home of origin like that, where just mentioning people's race is taboo, then getting up in front of a classroom and talking about race doesn't come intuitively.

Teacher 1 first learned about slavery in school in a compartmentalized way: “We talked about the colonies and what all the white people were doing. We mentioned the plantations, but we didn't really talk about the slaves. It was a very patriarchal white focus.” Her teachers did not talk about slavery until they had to out of necessity when they approached a unit on the Civil War. She observed that the hesitance to discuss slavery in class stemmed from her teachers' discomfort:

> Our teachers were just as uncomfortable as I was when I first started teaching, moreso, about talking about it. I was born in [the 1970s]. A lot of teachers were just getting used to desegregated classrooms so it was a tricky space for a teacher to address that topic in school.

She further described how her family upbringing influenced her understanding of slavery. When she asked her grandmothers about how they were taught about slavery in North Carolina schools, they shared an anecdote about the Curse of Ham, a biblical story in the Book of Genesis when Ham commits a shameful act against Noah and becomes cursed: “My grandmother said [Ham] was Black and that's why Black people are slaves; it is biblically based.” Her experience within a North Carolinian family illuminates the generational differences in how slavery has been taught:

> You go from [my grandmother’s experience] to my parents probably talking hardly about slavery at all in their schooling, to me where it's compartmentalized, to now me busting that compartmentalization apart and making it a constant drumbeat that Black history is American history. You're not going to study American history without studying Black people. It's a pretty huge shift in a century.

Her overall teaching style evolved as she grew more experienced in the classroom. When she started teaching African American History at her school, she discovered “you can't teach African American history without talking about race all day.” She described how she became “desensitized” to talk about race, and it led her to “realize the whole history of the country was built on a race based system. You can't talk about America without talking about race if you're going to be honest about America.” Now after teaching for over twenty-five years, she said “there's not a lot I feel like I should hold back about” in social studies classes. But she also referenced the importance of creating a safe space for students and noted how social studies teachers “are always walking a line all day where you're just trying not to get fired for saying the wrong thing to the wrong person.” After decades of teaching, she has honed a pedagogical strategy “that doesn't lead me to not talk about hard things. It just leads me to talk about hard things in a balanced and nuanced way.”

When she taught African American history to a class of “predominantly black children,” she talked about race constantly. On the first day of class, she described how she introduced herself to students: “I would apologize like ‘I am white and I am sorry, because if I was a student taking African American history, I kind of would want my teacher to be black.’” After she would share this apology, one surprising response she described was when the students told her: “‘Oh, no, we're so glad you're white. If the white people are saying it is, it's really true.’” She thought it was an “interesting point” and described that her students observed “if the white people are articulating it, you know it happened.”

One of the critical experiences that guided how she taught slavery was a summer institute at UNC-Chapel Hill taught by Dr. Harry Watson, a UNC-CH professor in the History Department. She was able to stay in the Old East dormitory on campus and read “unbelievable” primary sources, which she went on to“bring into the classroom and make them a part of my lessons in a way that's engaging and memorable.” She noted that this was during a time “back when we invested in professional development for teachers. We don't do that anymore.” Her career as an educator started as a North Carolina Teaching Fellow. She was deeply appreciative to the Teaching Fellows program because they “paid for me to have all these kinds of professional development opportunities that led me to be a much better teacher.” She directly connected her experience with the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program and its professional development for her ability to teach slavery in a comprehensive way using primary sources.

In the year 2020 in North Carolina, she remarked that robust professional development for teachers “is a crazy concept. We don't really know anything about that anymore.” She noted that while professional development was crucial in her early days of teaching, it is even more critical now due to the influx of resources available to teachers. When she first started teaching, creating lesson plans was like “trying to plant a garden and you had to find the seeds off the ground. And then make your own tools and figure out how to plant.” With the advent of the internet, access to resources became overwhelmingly prevalent:

> Now the other opposite problem is there's a fire hose. A fire hydrant of texts, sources, words, lesson plans. Teachers who packaged it will sell it to you like Teachers Pay

> Teachers. Now your biggest problem is how do I decide what to do on Monday and how do I curate?

Instead of scouring for the seeds on the ground as before, the current difficulty is distinguishing which one seed to plant out of millions of options. Teaching is now about curation: “How do I curate the best things for my students? It's like each one of us is running a museum on our own laptops.” This leads to an inevitable barrage of resources for all educational topics, but it can be difficult to discern which ones to use when teaching about slavery.

When discussing the “horrific lapses in judgment” of teachers using classroom activities such as re-enacting enslaved people’s auctions, she observed that it occurs when teachers get caught up in group think. In addition, “teachers have less time than ever to prepare; they have bigger classes, right? They have very, very little time these days, less time than ever, to just be reflective and to talk with each other.” The amount of time and thoughtfulness with instructional materials is limited, and there isn't necessarily as much vetting going on.

When she starts her lessons on slavery, she described how “a lot of our students are like, why do we keep talking about [slavery]? Why are teachers making trouble? I have Black friends, and we all get along… they don't feel like there's a whole lot of barriers between them.” She described a general atmosphere of apprehension about the importance of learning about slavery because her students often say “they are really confused about why we want to talk about all this crap... it seems to draw wedges. And it's because they have no appreciation of the systemic state of America.”

She used a metaphor about being fish in water to describe how to teach students about the history of systemic racism and oppression:

> But it's like a fish and you're asking them about the water they're in. You know what I mean? They're just like 'What water? I don't see water. Why do you keep talking about water? There's no water here.' Like dude! Once you show the water they're like, holy crap this water is crazy! Unless they're black children who grew up in underprivileged circumstances and you don't have to tell them about the water, they're like *dude I know all about the water.* They're kind of relieved that you're telling them about the water.

She further described how "the degree to which students understand the systemic nature of a race-based system really depends on their social class. So if they're privileged children, they're confused. And if they're unprivileged children, their perceptions are somewhat validated."

In her lessons about slavery, she stressed from the beginning that "chattel slavery was very different from the slavery that existed in any civilization before that" to clarify how American slavery is unique and different. She also drew several chronological connections through to the 20th century and beyond: "You must make race-based discussions just seamless, like there's not a single unit you teach where you don't make it clear how screwed up the whole thing was and kept getting screwed up time after time." She frames slavery as the "the beginning of a story about an entire society that was built on a foundation of a race-based system that was arbitrary in its foundation." She further described how the creation of race is a "bizarre story" that isn't biologically significant in any way but is an "arbitrary, socially-constructed notion that for 400 years permeated almost every behavior of a significant percentage of the population in this country." She noted that in society, "it's sad but true that a lot of white privileged people think slavery ended in 1865. Or the story ended or something and they just weren't that affected by segregation. They don't know about redlining, they don't know about generational wealth." A lot of white people don't understand that we are currently reckoning with slavery today. She shared that "when you talk about things like reparations, [white people] freak out. I'm starting to want to talk about reparations and get away from the *cash going to Black people* story. And think about what reparations looks like in other strategies." As much as she wishes our society could have that discussion about reparations, she felt that "those kinds of conversations about how we're going to repair the nation can't go forward if you don't understand how we tore the nation apart."

When asked if she had support from the social studies coordinator at the district office to help with lesson plans or professional development, she remarked: "I don't have a full time person anymore." Beyond the district level, she critiqued the social studies staff at the state agency:

> The person at DPI has never taught social studies. She's an English and theater teacher and I don't think she's actually ever taught in a brick and mortar school. So if you are looking for a lot of resources, support or instructional strategies from the bureaucracy at the district or state level, I think you're going to be pretty disappointed. Their websites are pretty out of date.

The technology lag was a particular area of disappointment, as she noted that DPI regularly shifts the digital platforms it uses for materials. Teachers have to constantly relearn the new program and shift their old content onto the next iteration from DPI. She described an age difference in teacher relationships with DPI because "older teachers like myself have quit depending on anyone and have built our own things because that's how you stay sane."

One resource from DPI for all teachers are the K-12 social studies content standards. When asked about the 2019-2020 revision process, she immediately pulled out the printed versions of the former standards and the draft copy of the new ones. She placed both of them side by side on the desk and offered a cursory observation about their thickness. The former social studies standards were three times as tall as the proposed new set.

> This is the old curriculum printed. This curriculum has a lot of detail and clear guidance, especially in American History and Civics courses about what actually is going to be taught. And that was because it was going to be tested. Every one of these courses was going to have a North Carolina final exam. So there was a need to be pretty explicit about what kids needed to know. There are no North Carolina final exams for [the new ones]. With no exams, there will not be as much detail required for the new standards.

She also had major qualms about the writing process of the new standards: “People were paid to write the [previous] version: teachers. They were paid money for their time. The writers for [the 2020 standards] are volunteers.” She elaborated further about this lack of funding for the writers’ time and expertise in the current revision process:

> No one's labor was deemed worthy of compensation. Let me remind you that we revised the whole curriculum because we don't understand basic economic concepts. And yet, the Department of Public Instruction does not seem to know the most basic concept about the relationship between price and quality, which is very interesting.

She viewed the decision to stress personal economic literacy among students as hypocritical; NC DPI clearly didn’t know the basic law of price and quality due to their decision to not pay content standards writers. The drafted new standards are extremely vague and it is “evident not a lot of time was taken to produce these documents. If this is anything like the final form, this is a bit of a joke.” She positioned this development in a broader historical context of school accountability efforts:

> This feels to us like a full-scale retreat from the accountability movement. With No Child Left Behind, the federal government had this idea that they were gonna fix education. And then they get into it and they realize it's the most complex and expensive thing you could ever get involved in.

She further observed a political divide in accountability policies for schools, noting how the Republican Party approached its strategy:

> I think this is what 10 years of Republican accountability structures has done. The Republicans came in thinking we're going to fix the schools or we are going to kill them,

> one or the other. The way we're going to do it is with this rigorous accountability structure. They found out the accountability script structure is extremely expensive. The whole apparatus from the writing of the test questions to the deployment of the tests. So testing culture was going to be their be all end all, and now they realized that it is politically not popular and it's expensive, and they want to keep cutting taxes.

Broadly, she felt that most teachers are seeing the drafted standards as a defiant retreat from accountability. She pointedly observed many political forces at play with the social studies standards revision process:

> First of all, the bureaucracy is not in a great position right now to be doing this process. There's some brilliant people at DPI. But half of the brilliant minds I knew at DPI have gone. The people left behind are doing the very best they can do. But it's just a bad situation right now. We have a [state] superintendent who actually doesn't really seem to care that much about the public schools. He's fighting with the State Board. The legislature decides to rewrite the school curriculum.

She equated the competing interests over the new social studies standards to be “just as bad as any high school group project you've ever heard.” In her eyes, the proposed draft of K-12 content standards “looks like a vague propaganda document.” Backlash from social studies teachers is throughout the state. One of her peers decided to publish an entire whole alternative social studies curriculum for North Carolina “like a guerrilla tactic.”

The solution was very simple for her. When asked what policymakers should do in the future to prevent decisions like that, she said: “They need to listen to the teachers. The teachers.” She asked to be simply listened to by policymakers instead of their tendency to cater to “for-profit, corporate interests who are selling curriculum or privatizing education.” She contended that

> the whole law that predicated the need for [the new social studies standards] simply got rolling down the track because nobody picked up the phone and asked the teacher about the flawed narrative that the lieutenant governor was putting out that we don't teach

> personal financial literacy. If somebody would have picked up the phone, this whole thing could have been derailed at the beginning.

If she could provide an alternative to the current reality of policymaking related to the teaching profession, her

> dream would be in a time capsule and to go back to 2005 or 2008. We had the Teaching Fellows. We had resources, we had teacher pay approaching the national average, we had 8000 more teacher assistants, master's pay, we had due process rights, NCAE was strong, we had professional development; we had adequate instructional resources.

She uses a metaphor to describe how the teaching profession has changed since she started as an educator: "I call it the Wizard of Oz effect. I'm like Dorothy and a storm came. I just want to go home. I just want to go home. But we're not going home."

There are potential ramifications of the changes to more broad expectations for social studies instruction, specifically related to the drafted new standards that do not mention slavery: "Some teachers, especially in smaller districts, where they only have like maybe one high school, are like, great! *We're going to teach whatever we want, however we want, in the order we want. Who's gonna care or find out?*" She noted how this will lead to a huge devolution of decision-making to local districts. The impact will be very inconsistent attention given to slavery in North Carolina. The future of social studies will be "where we just got some random teacher who put together some random class… it's gonna be really inconsistent and really depend upon the qualifications and the quality of the teaching corps."

She pivoted to focus on her emotional reaction to the 2019-20 standards revision process, describing how

> demoralizing a curriculum change like this is because they redid it in 2010 and we've spent the last nine years building in professional learning teams trying to build things together around these standards, which we had a growing amount of confidence in.

She contends that DPI is “asking teachers to take nine years of work, nine years of assessments, nine years of skillbuilders, nine years of learning the statements that we crafted, nine years of rubrics, nine years” and “just throw it all away.” She paused, then shared: “It makes me so glad I'm retiring because I just can't build it again. There's a reason why you teach for 30 years. I just can't build it again. I've built it a lot of times.”

Teacher 2

Teacher 2 is a white man in a high school situated within a suburban town. He has taught for over twenty years in the English Department and primarily teaches 10th grade literature. His interview similarly illuminated different ways in which English classes can inform pedagogical strategies in social studies.

His class completed a Holocaust unit on Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Simon Wiesenthal's *The Sunflower* in addition to a spoken word and performance poetry unit. The rest of the semester entailed working on a passion research project for each student. His approach was to “really focus on individuals and people and stories in addition to the temptation to make it more empirical and about historical facts and regimented statistics.” He utilized a classroom activity around the pyramid of hate, which depicts varying levels of violence with genocide at the top. The pyramid demonstrates that at the foundation of hate is disconnection from other people, “so I fear you because I don't know you, and that fear leads to the prejudicing, the biasing and the culminating forms of violence.” His class talked about how slavery is at the top of that pyramid, but how he framed the discussion to decipher how we are all “still connected to that lineage of hate when we are disconnected from people who are different from us." He stated that theoretically to fight genocide or other peaks of violence, one solution is to become more connected to other people. One methodology or pedagogical practice of building connections across lines of difference is through story-telling. A question that centered his course is: "how can we use creative storytelling and diverse voices to connect and understand each other on a deeper and more real level?" He firmly believed that this foundational base of thinking and questioning can prevent disconnection and help others make sense of manifestations of violence. Reflective story-telling exercises in his class include poetry, narrative writing, or creative nonfiction. After diving deep into those writing exercises, they often share pieces out loud and extend them through different forms of art.

One exercise about America's legacy of racism started with a screening of the documentary *13th* and culminated in a whole class circular seminar. He led a discussion about colonialism and recognizing everyone's ethnocentric perspective, which he described as reading "from the particular lens of your identity demographics in 2020, situated in the classroom that you are in, and how that impacts your critical response to it." In addition, a second classroom exercise is a personal reflection about racial identity in which he gave students the opportunity to racially identify:

> They're tasked with writing their life story from a racialized perspective. For kids who say they don't know how to do that, or there aren't clear markers, then that becomes part of their story. My Black and Brown kids never have a hard time with that assignment. In terms of the moments where they learned about race and key moments in their life where they were taught cultural aspects of what it means to be their race.

He noted that the kids who struggle most with the exercise are the white kids, who feel "a sense of immunity to the question of how race has impacted their lives." His goal was for the students to look through a “gender-related or racial-related lens to examine the text but also their own upbringing, evolution and understanding of who they are.”

His positionality as a teacher was especially clear as someone who was self-admittedly passionate about any and all issues related to justice. He explained that his job as a white male is to “model vulnerability and to model critical thinking” in addition to always remaining curious. He also remarked that he embraces the hard work he hopes his students will pursue:

> I try to model being disciplined to question my own assumptions and upbringing and to be open to the idea that when exploring issues of race, it's not inherently an attack. It's more a healthy questioning exercise to try to get to a greater place of understanding and empathy.

One challenge he faced was the segregation within the school through racial disparities between regular and honors courses. The honors classes are significantly white, and although they definitely talked about race, he knows those conversations can be very difficult for the couple kids of color in that setting because they can often feel like the spotlight is on them any time race comes up. He noticed that his strategy is to :

> I definitely try to steer unwanted hyper-focusing on those kids out of that exercise, which leads me to believe that I should probably be developing more content around whiteness for those classes. That's been on my radar for a while: classes of all white kids should be having conversations about whiteness, and I don't think I'm doing that enough.

When posed with a question about how slavery can be incorporated in classrooms, he noted: “Hard history is oftentimes suggesting that we look at history from the deconstructionist point of view and and look at it from the perspective of the oppressed.” He implored white educators to start questioning their whiteness. In addition, he emphasized the need for hiring practices to become more representative of the student body to have more teachers of color. He feared that there is a current “mindset of teaching white history,” even evident at his own high school, because the majority of the teaching workforce is white. To try to mitigate his concern, he was very conscious of examining what voices occupied space and time in his classroom, as his goal is centered around representation.

In addition, he underscored the need to blend literature and history course offerings in the future. He challenged how “we teach the histories and the stories in a fragmented manner,” which he said “makes absolutely no sense.” It would take administrative creativity to re-examine the matrix of scheduling possibilities between course offerings and teacher allotment time, but he wanted to “believe that that's the future.” To him, it was a “no-brainer to teach history in stories and writing and everything more together as a humanities offering.”

Teacher 3

Teacher 3 is a white man in a suburban high school. Although he primarily teaches in the English Department, he is piloting a social studies elective in an upcoming semester. The class will only study histories specific to North Carolina, ranging from Cherokee removal and eugenics to the Wilmington 1898 white supremacist coup d’etat. His interview also illuminated ways in which practices from English courses can be used to improve pedagogical strategies for teaching social studies.

This teacher has taught in the same district for almost 20 years. He described the new course he is writing as a “tremendous opportunity” by his district. He had never heard of a similar situation where they gave a green light to pilot a course without asking for lesson plans up front. He felt that the district had complete trust in his ability to create an entirely new class. The idea was sparked when two of his students presented at a school district board meeting about their experience in one of his classes. Two young women prepared a speech for the public part of the board meeting, and they shared that they needed to learn more about hard history and referenced slavery in particular. Within a week of the board meeting, the Superintendent for Instruction and the head of all social studies curriculum were in his classroom, eager to learn from the students and hear their thoughts on improving history education. During that period, his students asked the visitors: “Why don't we learn more about women? Why don't we learn more about people of color? Why don't we learn more about Native Americans? Why don't we learn more about Latinx?” The teacher noted that the visitors listened, and the outcome is the new course launching in an upcoming semester.

There is important context for how the development of the new course was catalyzed. In late 2017, the teacher read *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, the founder of the Alabama-based Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), to prepare for his African American Literature class. The book inspired him to reach out to the EJI to discuss its multi-year investigation called Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror. The investigation produced a map of lynchings in the South, and there was one in his school’s county. EJI was encouraging communities to research the lynching sites and facilitated a soil collection to be displayed at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. These community remembrance projects were underway in many states that had lynchings in their history, but churches and other faith-based organizations were commonly leading them. This teacher took the initiative to have his African American literature class work in partnership with the EJI. One of his students had an idea for their project: “There were 300 people that we learned participated in this lynching. She said, ‘why don't we instead get soil samples from 300 people in Wake County to symbolize our whole community taking ownership of this event.'" The entire class took ownership on researching the lynching case, establishing a narrative about what happened, and spearheading a public campaign to tell the truth about what occurred. Ultimately, instead of getting 300 soil samples, they have now received almost 600 from private citizens, businesses, schools, and faith-based organizations. The students did presentations all over the region to discuss their findings and share the story about the lynching. In addition, the current class cohort is working with the local town clerk to research the records of a street in order to rename it. The teacher stressed this was "something right in my kids' community that they are going to impact based on something they do in a class in high school." He is a strong proponent of action civics and experiential engagement with the community.

This pedagogical approach has reaped benefits for his students, especially for building public speaking skills: "They're getting up and talking to County Commissioners, they're going to talk to the Board of Ed, they're talking to the mayors of towns. That's something that terrifies most adults." He described how the class answers questions such as: "How do you put together a presentation? How do you write a letter to an elected official? How do you network effectively? How do you collaborate amongst yourselves?" He tried to stay out of it as much as possible in order to let them learn themselves, which led to sometimes having to watch them fail. From a pure pedagogical standpoint, he noted:

> There's skill acquisition that this work affords them. If it was just something on a worksheet, or if it was attached to something that wasn't real, I don't know that they would acquire this skill as deeply and as permanently as by doing this.

The stakes are high when they present to local officials and people with decision-making power: "If they pull off a positive presentation, that might lead to a name of a street getting changed. That's way bigger than if you get 100 on a piece of rubric that a teacher wrote."

Another example of engagement was when his students learned about abysmal literacy rates in New Orleans. That compelled them to make a little neighborhood library because they realized the bus loop that comes through their neighborhood doesn't go to a public library. He didn't want class to be all about reading and writing all the time because it would be boring for everyone. He believed in the potential of students demanding change and action: "We're going to really actively interface with changemakers in our community and really utilize their voice." He hesitated and noted: "That seems really idealistic and kind of naive, but that's how any significant change happened anyway… somebody refused to accept something that wasn't fair."

When discussing difficult history topics in his classroom, from slavery to lynching and beyond, he takes the "ripping the band aid approach." He stated:

> I don't know how you can dip your toe into the topic of enslavement. I don't know how you ease into it. It's almost like you're doing it a disservice by trying to pretend like you can ease your mind into topics. You can't.

He explained how he personally leans into the introduction of hard history: "People have to become comfortable with being uncomfortable." He initiated a comment about how he is positioned as a racialized being at the head of the classroom: "I'm a white educator standing up in front of a room that is primarily Black and Brown students. And I'm talking about enslavement. That's not comfortable. There's nothing comfortable about it." He pointedly described the discomfort that will arise when talking about slavery, particularly for other white teachers like him. He found that by confronting the discomfort head on, he was able to lead by example for his students:

> My primary tool is modeling. They see me process it, and they take their lead from me. They understand that it emotionally affects me to go through this process, so that it's okay for it to emotionally affect them and it's just how we process it.

On the second day of his African American literature course every semester, they read a passage from the book *Middle Passage* and view ship packing diagrams. He stated that he always asks how many people have heard of the Middle Passage, and usually only 25% of the students raise their hands. When he asks who knows about the Transatlantic Slave Trade, only a few more hands would go up. He has to explain how people “didn't magically show up here” in order to describe the process that itself “was evil and horrible and terrible enough on its own, nevermind the era of enslavement.” He wants them to jump right in. The class typically has a conversation framed around the question: “Have you ever read a depiction of the era of enslavement like this?” Typically they say no, and the students feel that in years past teachers didn’t share the truth because they didn’t want to hurt their feelings. The students “constantly talk about sugarcoating things” and literally “white washing some things.” The class vocalized that they are “tired of people sugarcoating things” because they want to be told the truth and deal with it. His pedagogical style of “jumping in” helps to facilitate candid conversations about topics students may have been shielded from before. He acknowledged that the students “may have some emotions about this, you're going to get angry or you're going to get sad. I've had kids crying in class. I've had kids yelling and cursing in class. It's okay. It's a part of the process.” He observed that different groups of kids react differently to the discussions, sometimes expressing sadness or anger. He felt a powerful camaraderie within the courses that talked about such sensitive topics: “The shared experience of going through that bonds a class. We have family reunion dinners of that class.” He saw his students’ vulnerability and subsequent collective connection as being a solution for a much broader societal challenge.

He argued that if you only crave comfort, you will never confront the dark realities within American history. “I think our real national addiction is comfort” he contended, illustrating the impasse he feels America has reached with confronting difficult subjects. He saw this when he took kids on global trips and they were so used to being in a climate controlled environment all the time:

> We want lots of ice in our drink. You take Americans and put us in any other situation than what we're used to, and immediately everybody's freaking out. We don't know how to be physically uncomfortable or emotionally uncomfortable. We want everything to be perfect all the time. And I just don't know how real learning happens in that environment.

Once his students had difficult conversations about the realities of slavery, their cuirosity was piqued about all other historical topics: “Once they get a sense of if something as huge as the era of enslavement has been clouded, obscured at best, just ignored sometimes, what else are they not talking about?” This piques their curiosity about topics including eugenics, Cherokee Removal, and the Wilmington 1898 race riot and coup d’etat, among others. He described how learning these obscured historical facts creates lightbulb moments for his students: “they start to realize there's stuff they haven't told us. There's a sense of a Scooby Doo mystery about it where you're finding stuff out that you're not supposed to find out.” He didn’t mean that this history is hidden, but he felt others don't trust that people will go pick up a book and teach themselves about it. His hope is he wants them to be the ones who ask questions to uncover history. He contended: “parts of our history that have had the most lasting impact, the tremors of what happened can still be felt today are in these moments.”

When asked about why others have difficulty addressing sensitive historical topics, he noted:

> Number one, teachers teach what they were taught themselves. I wasn't taught this stuff. All of this comes from me having to educate myself and seeking that information. And it's an ongoing process. I am far from an expert on it.

He tells his students that he is learning right alongside them because he wants them to see him as a learner. In addition to the limitation if teachers were not taught about it themselves to begin with, these conversations are also uncomfortable: "I think people think George Washington and his cherry tree is an easier story. When talking about Thomas Jefferson and framing the Declaration of Independence, [they say] let's not talk about Sally Hemings because that complicates things." When notable historical figures also committed injustice, some teachers choose to "go with the path of least resistance" that ultimately ends up with a "heroic American narrative that rings false." He observed that his students can "smell it a mile away." He thought the root cause of why it doesn't get taught is because of the inability to be uncomfortable with the truth. He underscored again that teachers don't teach it because "they weren't taught it, and there's not been adequate professional development to teach teachers what they need to know in order to teach it, contextualize it and make it connect to today's life."

He also raised the impacts of standardized testing:

> There's also the issue of how many questions on the standardized test at the end of the semester are reflected by this content? If there's not a sizable enough percentage, then you let that go. And you focus on the things that you know are gonna show up on that test.

He enthusiastically stated that the beauty of his new course is that "there's no standardized test for it." He will not have to worry about hitting the highlighted points or running through the practice test questions with them. He knows the school, district and state are measured by those tests, so teachers will make sure they hit the highlighted points if the test is looming.

In order to improve how teachers educate about slavery, he immediately referenced the need for strengthened professional development (PD). He stressed the importance of face-to-face PD alongside other teachers. He praised the organization Carolina K-12 for its three-day PD series in October 2019 called *Teaching Hard History*. Speakers ranged from historians at local universities to singers and arts performers. All participants had lunch at the Governor's Mansion with the First Lady of North Carolina, to which he remarked: “that means something when you have somebody that high up saying this is important.” He stressed that their model should become a district initiative where teachers are told you're *going to do* this PD, not this PD *is out there*. He acknowledged that this could be perceived as “a dangerous path” to require teachers to have PD around hard history because “you still hear people saying why do you want to keep dredging this stuff?” He contended that this mentality is a pretty loud voice, and “there's a number of voters behind that voice.” It would be a bold step for a district to require all staff to have the appropriate training for teaching about slavery and other hard histories.

While he encouraged more professional development at the local levels, I asked him what should be done from the state agency: “There needs to be a happy medium because I'm never a big fan of entirely top-down initiatives.” He thought teaching hard history needs to be prioritized and just, equitable education practices should be put into place K through 12: “That message needs to come down from on high from DPI.” Instead of prescribing to all North Carolina teachers - “this is the PD that people need to do” - DPI should put together a list of vendors that compiled the offerings from existing organizations. He stressed that teachers should hear the message “from on high” and then the individual districts and schools should seek out the training that's best suited for them. He shared that: “If you're in western North Carolina, you might be wanting to look specifically at issues pertaining to our native population. If you are in the eastern North Carolina, you might be looking at Wilmington 1898.” Leaving the ultimate decision up to the local agency was key, in conjunction with a message from the top of the agency about its importance.

His advice for other teachers is to start small. His own pedagogical pivot into the interactive, history-based course started with reading *Just Mercy*. By starting with the one lynching partnership with the EJI, they had a point of focus and then it broadened out from there. He encouraged other teachers to focus on what is in front of them: “Start small, start local, find something in your own backyard, because then it's going to be immediately relevant to the kids.” In order to combat the feelings of pain that arise when talking about the painful legacy of slavery, he named one antidote: “It's action. I tell my kids all the time that my primary fuel for everything that I do is anger. I'm just mad all the time.” He added a disclaimer that he felt this was not healthy, but he uses that anger to fuel his lessons: “I have some kind of sense of hope that I can go to a job where I feel like I can potentially positively impact the future. That's so idealistic, but I have to have that in my heart.” He noted that if you teach these topics to the depth they need, it's going to stir up emotions.

He told an anecdote about one lesson regarding slavery:

> If all I do is stand up there and say the Middle Passage was awful. Let me show you this picture of an oral speculum that they used to shove food down enslaved Africans' throats to keep them alive if they refused to eat. I am traumatizing my kids if that's all I do. Because then the next step is okay, now that you know this, what are you going to do with that information? What action is this moving you towards?

He stressed the importance of channeling the inevitable pain into fuel: “If you're angry about something, what are you going to do about it? Because if you don't do anything, then all you're left with is anger. And that's poisonous.”

One example he shared was a student who turned to a creative outlet of writing traditional Chinese poetry about the 1938 Nanjing Massacre, which students in a dance class then adapted into choreography set to the student’s poem. This was one way that giving students freedom to creatively process difficult subjects was beneficial for their creative development. Another way to “do something” along those lines is to be a truth-teller, and he referenced the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa as an embodiment of the power of telling the truth. He noted that “a huge part of why so many of the problems in our country exist is because we never adequately did [a truth commission]. We've allowed these flat-out lies and narratives [to] go forth to cover the tracks.” Everyone in America pretends like everything's fine now and that we're all good. He contended that we as a nation have not adequately discussed any of our country’s hard histories. His goal, at the least, is for his students to share the information they learn with somebody else: “That's a positive move. That's the hope. The hope is action.”

Teacher 4

Teacher 4 is a white woman who teaches social studies in an urban high school. She primarily teaches students of color and has been an educator for 7 years. She mainly teaches juniors in American History I, II, and Advanced Placement United States History courses.

When discussing hard history topics in her classes, she distinguishes between the different emotional weight of human suffering: “With events like slavery and the Holocaust that are more about specific oppression of specific groups of people, I focus a lot more on resistance consistently.” Whenever she discusses a negative event that was occurring, she always stresses the ways that people were resisting it. She has developed this method of stressing constant resistance throughout her seven years of teaching: “I'm like a broken record with [stressing resistance] where they're talking about the patriarchy or structural racism or whatever.” This helps prime the students to constantly ask “What was the resistance?” when encountering oppression.

When she explained her personal education about slavery, she first discussed a 5th grade teacher who was in charge of the school’s Black history program. She initially learned about slavery and did not have a “super strong emotional reaction to it… because it was framed within the celebratory Black history framework of we're gonna celebrate people who were amazing.” In contrast, a strong memory in her own history education was through a multicultural studies high school studies elective: “The teacher [was a] really well-intentioned white lady who interpreted the class to be like nine weeks on the Holocaust and nine weeks on the transatlantic slave trade. Her objectives for us in our learning were very much emotional objectives… she wanted us to perform an emotional reaction.” She felt that the teacher intended to invoke very strong emotional responses by showing them graphic videos, leading to students leaving the classroom crying. During this multicultural studies class, she remembered thinking: “This is kind of messed up, the fact that this is what she wants from me feels really wrong.” This created a tension in her mind as someone who was starting to think about being a teacher at that point, because she recognized that histories like “this should be taught but [was] aware that this should be taught in a way that is more sensitive to kids' full range of possible emotions and questions about it.”

Her pedagogical exploration was further expanded in her Masters in Teaching program in which she had two mentors who were “really, really strong in how they approached slavery” so she had initial access to materials from them. Over time, she has adapted lessons for new classes and uses additional resources from the Zinn Education Project and Who Built America. In her current lessons about slavery, she stresses three main points: the economic magnitude of the industry, the resistance of enslaved people, and their individual humanity. She chooses not to “over emphasize the specifics of the physical brutality partially because I think they've had some exposure and a fixation on that. And it can be kind of traumatic.” In her lessons, she tries to strike a balance between acknowledging the brutality while not being emotionally exploitative:

> In [the movie] *Glory* where Denzel Washington's character is whipped by another officer in the Union Army, it's a horribly impactful scene and kids are crying during it. I am okay with that being in the room. But I don't want to be the teacher that I had in high school, where every day the purpose is for you to understand just how bad it was.

She doesn’t want her students to ignore the brutality and she stated she isn’t “trying to sugarcoat anything, but given the choice, I'm not gonna highlight the worst moments of real human people's lives on loop over and over again.”

In terms of her positionality as a white teacher, she was very candid in her understanding of her racial identity. She noted how it has been a journey to process her whiteness and privilege, and her awareness has evolved since she was first student teaching. At the beginning of her career, she felt guilt around her whiteness. Now in the classroom, she observed that:

> It's impactful for students of color to hear very matter-of-fact anti-racist statements come from a white person or almost just to be like, and I'm very clear with my students too that my ancestors were slave holders, and I'm the beneficiary of that.

She further noted that it was helpful that her “guilt kind of got dealt with earlier than maybe some other white ladies' guilt.” It's not that she never experiences guilt anymore, but it is not the place from which she is teaching: “I can make decisions that are more student-centered than teacher-centered and not like doing therapy for myself on my students, which I have made the mistake of doing before in other ways.” In previous classes, she occasionally found herself “doing therapy” by bringing up unrelated current events with students to vent to them in a sense. After a few years of teaching, she now recognizes that when she is acting from “a place of questioning or doubt, I'm just not usually going to make decisions that are best for my students' learning if I'm too busy trying to prove to myself or someone else that I'm good” and that “the more secure that I feel in myself as an anti-racist person, the better teacher I become.” By embodying this as a pedagogical approach, she made an effort to “cut the air that we're all breathing and water we're swimming in.” Her identity as an anti-racist teacher was linked to her personal heritage.

“'Hey guys, I gotta tell you something. My ancestors were slaveholders” is what she has shared to her students in American History. She doesn’t say that on the first day of class, but when they discuss the cotton kingdom and how much wealth there was generated by the industry, she shares her family’s deeds of enslaved people: “If somebody wants to see them, I'll happily show them to my students. Because it's half a million dollars worth of wealth that was in people.” She was first exposed to this family history during her K-12 education in North Carolina. In middle school, her dad sat down with her and her sister to have a purposeful conversation about their paternal ancestors’ involvement with slavery. She started to process this realization for the next couple years to figure out what that meant. In her junior year, her AP United States History teacher had them read "Blood Done Sign My Name" by Tim Tyson. Her father’s family had a very personal connection to the story from the mid-70s:

> Compared to my peers, I had a different experience of reading that book because I knew that my family was connected to but also kind of implicated in this. My grandparents were the type of well-intentioned and deeply racist Methodists that were described in the book.

This led her to write a reflection paper on the book, which left an indelible memory in her mind: “I just remember going so hard and being like, *this is what this means to me, this is how I'm thinking about it, and this really made me realize a lot of thing*s.” Although that exceeded the expectations for the assignment, her high school APUSH teacher supported her personal exploration. She recognized that this realization was a pivotal point when her “guilt-churning got processed” and that now she accepts “how good of lives my ancestors were allowed to have because of how terrible of lives they were requiring other people to have. It's a thing to look directly at and know it.”

However, she didn’t start off her teaching career by being so open with her students about her family’s background:

> I do think that there is some sort of tipping point that just happens for a teacher's level of confidence with the content, with the pedagogy, with teaching, where more of you can just like organically come out because you feel safe in your work. And that didn't happen for me for a while.

At first, she struggled to form good relationships with students because she got “overly frustrated with students for doing teenage things like being off task or being chatty. And I would take it as a personal affront to me rather than just *look at that teen doing a teen thing*.” As she developed a more trusting classroom environment, she was able to feel more grounded in her own identity. She noted how her personal reflections on race continue to be sustained and evolving:

> I feel like I'm constantly discovering new ways that [whiteness] extends, but I do think that being more or less comfortable with the discomfort is the main thing... It is being

> okay with being constantly open to hearing new ways that you have unfair advantages or that people that created you did horrible things.

She felt that a lack of vulnerability or open mindedness "is one of the biggest problems that we have." To help herself become more comfortable in her personal exploration, she does not view what she learns "as a sign of whether I personally am good or bad, but what is my position in the universe and what do I owe to other people?"

Discussion

Personal Education and Professional Development

One major finding was that nearly every teacher indicated that they did not adequately learn about slavery in their personal education, which forced them to conduct significant external research on their own time in order to feel prepared to teach the subject. Many indicated the need for better professional learning opportunities to provide a forum with other teachers where they could talk through their approaches for teaching about slavery. This stems from the significant discrepancies in how teachers learned about slavery during their childhoods compared to the expectations of how slavery should be responsibly taught according to modern historiography. Many educators explicitly suggested that discussions about hard history and race should be integrated more into teacher preparation programs. There were not enough professional development offerings that adequately bolstered their historical knowledge while also equipping them with the instructional techniques to talk about difficult subjects, especially related to racial oppression.

Localized Narratives and Creative Reflection

The second major finding is that students are especially responsive when history courses are framed in a narrative style. Two interviews with literature teachers were conducted to begin a discussion about what that would look like in practice. Many educators already emphasize the individual humanity of enslaved people as key lesson concepts; by integrating the best practices from literature courses, students can delve into more nuanced discussions of individuals using narratives in the appropriate historical context. Offering more humanities courses that integrate narratives with history is a promising avenue that was widely supported among teachers. It also fostered unique ways for student reflection; they could express their thoughts about slavery in poems, plays, essays, and other creative outlets.

In addition, connecting history lessons with the local community made the material more interesting and relevant for students. There is ripe ground for educators to draw connections between slavery with local histories because using examples from close to home helped the students develop more pride and agency. A teacher from a rural county shared a moving anecdote about the power of incorporating local history in his classroom: "[The students'] grandparents tell them 'That Klan rally your teacher was talking about… We fought the Klan. I was there. I ran in the ditch because I was afraid I was going to get shot.'" When the educator talks about aspects of community history, including but not limited to Ku Klux Klan rallies, the students are able to draw connections with their home and even their own family. The same teacher observed that "when a kid can make that connection, it resonates. We bring in people from the community to complement what I teach, and it resonates with these kids." He shared that this instructional strategy can instill pride in the student's hometown:

> Maybe they won't be like me. When I went off to college, I was really ashamed to tell people where I was from. They'll be proud to tell people where they're from. They can say 'We don't have much, but we are arguably the most historic county in the state of North Carolina.'

By emphasizing local connections, history can become relevant - and empowering - for students. Many of the educators noted the importance of instilling civic agency in their students as an antidote to the emotional weight of heavy historical topics. Teachers 2 and 3 used creative exercises for their students to reflect on difficult subjects that were tied to local history. Using local narratives and encouraging creative reflection developed stronger empowerment and agency within students while they learn history. Two teachers' classrooms were filled with art projects developed by students. The students created portraits, paintings, and sculptures of historical figures who fought against oppression, such as Lunsford Lane, a formerly enslaved African-American and entrepreneur from North Carolina who bought freedom for himself and his family. The students found inspiration in the individuals' stories while learning the truthful history of slavery.

District Level

The third finding is that buy-in from district and local offices was critical for teacher success. In order to have leeway to creatively facilitate discussions about hard history, each teacher needed to feel support from their local education agency and regional staff. If they knew they were encouraged by those key stakeholders, they felt the independence to have pedagogical freedom. This was a necessary step, especially for Teacher 3 who was given a district opportunity to pilot his own social studies elective related to hard history. Without district buy-in, the new course would never have been allowed. Due to the support from the district, the students were able to build upon their previous learning in an impactful way through the new course.

Overall consensus was that during the crisis of trust with the statewide agency, district and regional authorities were viewed as providing more effective resources. In practice, teachers indicated that NCDPI should support discussing slavery in a symbolic way by offering information about its importance, but ultimately implementation of professional development and other resources should mainly be done at the district level.

Distrust of the Department of Public Instruction

The fourth finding was that there is widespread skepticism about the current leadership at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. This leads to a great deal of tension between the educator workforce and the administrative authority that oversees them. This generally causes all policy directives from NCDPI to be viewed in a negative light. There were essentially zero positive remarks about DPI. This fractured environment is especially disruptive during a year in which the entire set of social studies standards are being rewritten. One teacher aptly captured the current dilemma of setting statewide expectations from NCDPI: “On the one hand, I obviously want teachers to feel both expected and supported and required to teach really hard history in K-12. But, if the standards are going to be written by the Department of Public

Instruction in North Carolina, I don't want to have to follow them because they're going to be at least partially trash.”

There is significant work to be done by the state agency to repair relationships and build trust with the social studies educator workforce. The revision process for the social studies content standards is one critical avenue to do so; hopefully it is not too late to listen to and incorporate teacher feedback regarding the new standards. However, there is not an easy solution because the complexities of the educational decision-makers in North Carolina are so nuanced. For example, although there is significant angst directed to DPI over the new personal finance course, the agency did not voluntarily choose to add the social studies graduation requirement. Although there is validity in teachers’ frustrations with DPI, some of the anger is misplaced regarding the personal finance course specifically. The NC General Assembly was the body that passed the legislation and charged DPI and the State Board of Education with implementation after the fact.

Standards/Standardized Testing

While measuring student attainment is critical for self-awareness and identifying areas for improving, the requirement of a standardized test causes a dramatic shift to “teaching to the test” in social studies classrooms. With standardized tests, teachers do not have the ability to explore salient contemporary connections or other additional exercises. One educator described how “the catch 22 of social studies standard writing is that you can't enforce it. Because if you enforce it, you're going to be enforcing something that's deeply flawed and imperfect and has huge holes in it.” The same educator described how if social studies standards are clearly delineated and the curricular freedom is restricted, “I'm not gonna like half of that stuff. I would rather it be mushy gushy and let me do my way and let Joe MAGA hat, social studies teacher in whatever other county, do it his way.” However, standards must be set to address that exact point: it mitigates the potential for teachers in different places - aka ‘Joe MAGA hat’ - to avoid discussing slavery entirely.

The role of the education agency is to set an expectation for all teachers about which historical knowledge should be prioritized. Content standards must be crafted to ensure prioritization of marginalized communities and truthful histories, but standardized tests should not be the definitive measure of their implementation. Instead, more holistic evaluations could be taken such as creative learning opportunities for students or informal assessments of teachers by social studies coordinators at the local level.

Whiteness and White Supremacy

Previous studies call for social studies classrooms to be settings where students critically examine the role race and racism play in shaping our nation's social, political, and economic structures (Chandler, 2010; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billing, 2003). Furthermore, historians support that “racism is important to understanding the institution of slavery and the social system of the South prior to the Civil War” (Eargle, 2015). I anticipated that despite the explicit absence of race and the term “white supremacy” in North Carolina’s K-12 social studies standards, educators would address it in their survey responses. However, white supremacy was only discussed by four educators. This lack of explicit acknowledgment illuminates a dire need to talk about white supremacy’s role in justifying slavery and the perpetuation of racism. Despite 92% of educators stating they are “comfortable teaching the topic of slavery,” less than 7% explicitly referenced whiteness or white supremacy. This illuminates an obvious disconnect; while most of the teachers may feel comfortable teaching about certain aspects of slavery, their level of comfort does not extend to talking about whiteness or white supremacy.

The need for white teachers to engage with these topics is especially pertinent because the teacher workforce in North Carolina is roughly 80% white. Over 85% of the research participants identified as white, so this overrepresentation should ideally have led to more discussions about white people's role in perpetuating racism. But the survey indicated that the majority of white people were not explicitly talking about whiteness in their lessons about slavery. Part of this could be attributed to the method of research collection, as there could be more hesitation in discussing race when completing a survey on a computer.

Participants were more willing to discuss race and whiteness during the in-person interviews. All four featured interviewees discussed their positionality as white teachers and how they approach learning about their racial identities. They underscored how it was essential for them to do identity work, especially because they had not adequately learned about race from their education or families. One of the most striking examples of how conversations about race have evolved was from Teacher 1. She discussed how her grandmother was taught in North Carolina about the Curse of Ham as reasoning behind why Africans were enslaved: her grandmother learned the false history that the enslaved people were inferior and cursed in a biblical sense because they were black. Teacher 1's familial experience underscores how the notion of race itself has evolved in education spaces. This intergenerational disconnect has produced friction between what current scholarship establishes and how previous generations have learned outdated, racist ideas. Teacher 1's grandmother was instructed by teachers who provided false information about slavery, so the educator had to do her own exploration of race in order to challenge what her family believed.

The most successful teaching by white teachers was when they had explored their racial identity on their own and participated in racial equity training. This was not evident in the survey responses, but it was a major theme from the interviews. This suggests that in order to have meaningful discussions about historic racial oppression, the educator must have a firm grasp on race, racism and their own racial identity in the present. This is especially pertinent for white educators, as research establishes that white people are generally defensive, silent, or argumentative in discussions about race (DiAngelo, 2018). In an in-person interview, one teacher specifically noted there should be more content developed and used around critical whiteness. The educator felt that as a white educator in his class of majority white students, he had a responsibility to interrogate whiteness and white supremacy. But he did not have the adequate resources to guide those classroom discussions and therefore did not fully engage with the topic enough as he wanted. The lack of resources is likely impacting other white teachers, which points to the need for additional resources about whiteness in relation to anti-racism.

The most critical piece is that work around race must be sustained, lifelong, and available in various modalities. It is essential for white educators to “break with the conditioning of whiteness -- the conditioning that makes us apathetic about racism and prevents us from developing the skills we need to interrupt it” (DiAngelo, 2018: 144). DiAngelo further notes the reflecting on race cannot be accomplished with a single workshop. In the broad sense of racial equity training, DiAngelo contends there is no way to check the box of deconstructing racism. Her argument is that “we must never consider ourselves finished with our learning. Even if challenging all the racism and superiority we have internalized was quick and easy to do, our racism would be reinforced all over again just by virtue of living in the culture" (DiAngelo, 2018: 153). Teachers 3 and 4 from the in-person interviews explicitly stressed their commitment to constantly learning about race and whiteness. They found it to be important for their own positionality as responsible teachers in the classroom, and they also strived to model behavior for their own students to emulate in their lives. The desire for more learning affirms the need for increased accessible professional development, particularly about race and history.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the geographic constraint of research participants. I conducted primary data collection with only four local education agencies, while I was also only able to interview educators within a limited geographic region. In addition, I was limited to only one conversation with each interview participant due to time constraints.

Another significant limitation is the self-selection bias in the teacher sample who completed the survey and volunteered for interviews. Because the teachers had to willfully opt-in to the research, a limitation is that there is no representation from educators who are generally resistant to talking about slavery. This sample largely represents the educators who are most willing, and comfortable, discussing slavery and their personal classroom experience. There was variation within the degrees of subject matter knowledge possessed by participating educators, but largely it was a sample of educators who were already predisposed to discussing slavery.

In addition, the racial composition of the research participants was very homogeneous. Although an overwhelming amount - over 80% - of North Carolina's teaching force is white, this research is limited in its extensive focus on white educators. While this is not necessarily a negative quality due to the ability to critically analyze the role of whiteness in research participants' responses, it is nonetheless a limitation. There is a limitation in not including more people of color about how they personally teach about slavery in the classroom.

My own positionality and personal bias are also limitations in this study. While I attempted to be as objective as possible when crafting questions and analyzing answers, personal bias always has a bearing on research. It is not possible to have true objectivity, so this could have impacted my research design or data analysis. In addition, my own identity as a white person is a limitation in my personal lived experience as a human and researcher. Much of the commentary in this thesis centers around race and racism in America, and I am speaking from the perspective of a white woman with white privilege. This lends me firsthand experience when specifically analyzing how white people talk about slavery and racism, but is a general limitation of my ability to viscerally understand racial inequality.

Generalizability

The findings presented in this research represent the individual experiences of participating public school educators. While the lessons that are gleaned can be shared and applied to other teachers and classrooms, they do not fully capture the hundreds of social studies classrooms across the state of North Carolina. The pedagogical strategies outlined in this thesis should not be generalized as the "best" ones, but rather serve as guiding examples to be adapted for individual learning settings according to the needs of students. Many teachers themselves troubled the notion of there being a "best" or "perfect" way to teach slavery specifically or social studies broadly; they underscored how it should be a never-ending process of self-reflection and historical discovery. At the least, the findings should inspire educators to constantly strive for improved and iterative teaching of social studies that aligns with current historiography.

Broadly, the research affirms existing literature that describes how the construction of social studies content standards is one of the most politicized processes in K-12 public education (Cuenca, 2019; Placier, 2002; Sleeter, 2002; Heilig, 2012). The people who determine the prioritization of knowledge also shape who possesses political power, so there is significant politicalization behind social studies decisions. Criticism over the North Carolina standards revision process was evident in many comments from educators about their distrust of the NCDPI. While there are unique political factors that play a role in the current discontent with Superintendent Johnson, as addressed in Chapter 2, the findings are generalizable to broad scholarship about how the standards writing process is politicized and leads to varied interpretation by educators.

There are also generalizable patterns in how this research group of teachers found productive ways to talk about slavery and race. By embracing inevitable discomfort, actively exploring one's racial identity, and constantly learning and critically thinking about race, teachers were able to have meaningful conversations about slavery with their students. But the first step was that the teacher chose to learn more about their own racial identity above all else. This is affirmed by existing research, especially as it relates to white teachers, and can be generalized to encourage more discussions about race in pedagogical settings.

Future Research

Further research should look at the interconnectedness of teacher identity, particularly race, and how slavery is taught. There is room for more exploration of the dynamic of whiteness as it related to the data collection in this thesis: Why did mainly white people respond to the survey? Why do white people purport to be comfortable talking about ‘slavery’ but do not mention white supremacy? What professional development has been most helpful for educators (especially white ones) to explore race and their own identities?

In addition, as a researcher I was concerned that I potentially caused harm by sending the survey about slavery without warning after observing that the Black participants are underrepresented in the sample and disproportionately did not finish the survey questions. This is an area for additional discussion, especially to further examine how teachers’ identities shape how they teach about slavery and other hard history topics related to racial oppression. It is without stating that such historical realities are heavy to discuss; further dissection of the research methodology would be instrumental in gauging the most responsible and effective way to conduct research around this topic.

Chapter V: Recommendations

The following chapter provides several public policy recommendations that were derived from the research findings and subsequent conversations with education experts. Informational interviews were conducted with the Director of Carolina K-12, several professors from the UNC School of Education, and other educational stakeholders to help inform the conclusions. The policy recommendations are organized in three-tiers: state, district, and individual teacher levels.

Policy Recommendations

State Level: Standards

One major finding was recognition of the fine balance between setting statewide content standards and creating an environment that fosters teachers' pedagogical freedom. A teacher aptly described this dilemma as a catch 22. In order to create a balance between explicit expectations and educator flexibility, the social studies standards should be improved in the following ways. The state K-12 social studies standards should introduce slavery in elementary school to align with the majority of other states' standards, including Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. By not including a single reference to slavery in the draft set of K-12 social studies standards, as of March 2020, NC DPI is neglecting its obligation to ensure teachers are required to cover this integral part of American history. There must be some uniformity in the expectations for content or else in some areas, as several teachers warned, topics such as slavery may not be covered at all.

In addition, the North Carolina supplemental clarifying objectives for the social studies standards should include all 10 key criteria for comprehensively teaching about slavery established by the Southern Poverty Law Center. All 10 elements were referenced at least once as being included in the survey respondents' lessons, but there was an uneven distribution. In order to adequately convey the magnitude of slavery and incorporate the most recent historiography, it is critical to add coverage of all criteria to the materials provided by DPI. Even while adhering to clear standards that explicitly document slavery, educators would still maintain pedagogical autonomy by tailoring their instructional material for their individual classes.

Due to the current revision process for the K-12 social studies standards in 2020, it may not be possible to implement the recommendations above in the immediate future. To respond to the final standards adopted by NCDPI, I propose a statewide teaching fellowship program supported by NCDPI that includes a reference to *North Carolina's Hard History: Truth and Reconciliation* or *North Carolina's Hidden History: Truth and Reconciliation*. The fellowship would provide a professional learning opportunity for educators with a charge to devise standards implementation strategies according to local input. The fellowship program could be structured as follows:

- All fellows must be current public school teachers who apply through a competitive application process and receive compensation for their work.
- All fellows must agree to serve as coalition builders with the goal to work as a team and lean upon existing work by organizations such as Carolina K-12 and we are.

- At minimum, there must be a fellow from each district from the State Board of Education. In the future, there will ideally be one educator from each LEA in the state represented as it scales up.
- The year-long cohort will meet on a monthly or bimonthly basis that begins with racial equity training and then explores pedagogical methods for the most pressing North Carolina relevant historical subjects in order to dive deeper into the new NC K-12 social studies standards.
- The fellows will be tasked with absorbing the new standards and creating instructional materials that are community-relevant, culturally-responsive, and anti-racist. While slavery will be one aspect of history that is centered, great attention must also be paid to other oppressed and marginalized groups in our state's history. By consulting with leading historians in the state and leveraging non-profit expertise, the recommended instructional materials should embody equity and truth-telling.
- The fellows will commit to training other educators as a way to disseminate the information they learn and resources they compile for others in their districts.
- A virtual network will be created to continue conversations and sharing resources beyond the time constraints of the fellowship. This will provide a forum for continued collaboration and will multiply the reach of the program by creating connections between former and current fellows.

State Level: Professional Development

The research found a dire need for more social studies professional development opportunities. Nearly every teacher stressed the importance of professional development (PD) in helping them improve teaching of slavery. Many felt that their own personal education did not equip them with the adequate historical background to comprehensively teach slavery: “Teachers teach what they were taught themselves. I wasn't taught this stuff. All of this comes from me having to educate myself and seeking that information. It's an ongoing process. I am far from an expert on it.” With the divide of existing knowledge, there must be professional learning programs that fill in the historical gaps. This is likely to continue as historians uncover further information about the nuances of slavery; as such, there should be increased dedication to updating outdated instructional materials for contemporary contexts through professional development.

Several educators shared how the most effective PD they have received has been through groups such as Carolina K-12, which is incubated within the UNC-Chapel Hill College of Arts & Sciences’ program Carolina Public Humanities. According to an informational discussion with Carolina K-12’s Director, the organization does not have enough capacity to meet its demand. In order to increase capacity, an infusion of financial support from the state would be necessary. One solution I propose is to invest in replicating its model to other UNC system schools to serve as satellite Carolina K-12 sites across the state. While the original one is housed within Carolina Public Humanities at UNC-Chapel Hill, the satellite sites could report directly to the headquarters in Chapel Hill in order to maintain cohesive coordination. This would increase capacity for the existing incredible work within the organization while expanding its reach to a broader geographic region.

This recommendation for increased professional development supports recent findings from WestEd’s December 2019 report on the Leandro v. State case (WestEd, 2019). The consultant found that there is limited availability of high-quality professional learning opportunities due to a “significant decrease in North Carolina in funding and support for professional learning for teachers over the past decade, resulting in reduced capacity to provide adequate professional learning for teachers” (WestEd, 2019: 210). Principals and superintendents from across North Carolina pointed specifically to DPI's lack of support and funding to provide such high-quality professional learning opportunities for teachers (WestEd, 2019: 210). The dissatisfaction from district leaders indicates heightened need and urgency for more learning opportunities about slavery and other hard histories. Bolstering accessible professional development for teachers is directly supportive of the state constitutional mandate for all students to receive a sound, basic education in North Carolina. In Judge Lee’s consent order for remedial, systemic actions to bring North Carolina into constitutional compliance, the first necessary component is “a system of teacher development and recruitment that ensures each classroom is staffed with a high-quality teacher who is *supported by early and ongoing professional learning”* (McColl, 2020). DPI must commit more personnel and funding to increase capacity for professional development at a statewide level.

District Level: Resources and Assessments

Social studies directives from a more localized level were perceived by teachers as being more trustworthy and effective. Therefore, resource provisions that align with the K-12 state standards should be tailored for local regions and disseminated through the district social studies team. For instance, the SPLC’s key concepts that should be incorporated into the standards could have materials created that are tailored for local areas. There are rich archival resources available at the North Carolina Digital Archives in addition to the network of local records that would bring direct relevance to the classroom material. Addressing the finding that localized narratives resonate with and empower students, lesson plans should be tailored to align with local histories so community ties will be strengthened.

Additionally, districts can provide invaluable support to encourage social studies educators to be creative with delivery of historical knowledge. Teachers 2 and 3 both strongly encouraged more district-level offerings to blend traditional social studies and english courses into holistic humanities courses. By creating a fusion of the traditionally separated subjects, districts could pilot new electives or reconfigure the traditional lens of separating history into its own category. Instead of teaching them in a fragmented manner, Teacher 2 stated it was a "no-brainer to teach history in stories and writing and everything more together as a humanities offering." As several educators noted, classroom coverage of slavery would improve because a hybrid course would ground student understanding in the humanity of enslaved people and would foster an environment to process the hard history through creative, individualized outlets.

To measure student knowledge, new assessments for learning should be developed at the district level, especially in light of the potential for North Carolina end-of-course examinations going away. As one teacher put it, district should have "folks developing that benchmark who are committed to teaching slavery in a clear-eyed way." The teacher further said "I don't want DPI to particularly write the tests, to be totally honest. But if there's not a test, I'm painfully aware that it will not happen in a lot of places. Local assessments should be created by informed people." In order to decrease the need for teachers to "teach to the test" by revolving their curriculum solely around one final exam, alternative assessments could be more regularly scheduled throughout the school year and be formatted in a structure other than multiple-choice questions.

Additionally, creating alternative forms of district assessment and "testing" should be informed by the pedagogical successes of Teachers 2 and 3. By integrating history with literature and community service projects, the educators provided opportunities for their students to learn through creative and impactful modes, not standardized multiple-choice tests. Teacher 3 found his experiential lessons resonate with students and produce learning that wasn't always measurable through standardized testing:

> There's skill acquisition that this work affords them. If it was just something on a worksheet, or if it was attached to something that wasn't real, I don't know that they would acquire this skill as deeply and as permanently as by doing this.

Teacher Level: Professional Learning

The research illuminated a need to support teachers in their ongoing learning as people and professionals. The most valuable asset at the teacher level was having informal and formal professional forums to discuss their classroom experiences with other educators. In those spaces, exploration of race, identity, privilege and unconscious bias is the most critical charge. Not only would this assist educators in feeling grounded in the understanding of their personal identities and lived experiences, it would equip them with the language and knowledge to effectively facilitate conversations with their students about histories of oppression and their contemporary relevance. But without a firm grounding in one's identity in the present, it is difficult to talk about how aspects of others' identities, particularly race, relate to historical oppression.

Providing more professional learning opportunities for racial equity training would also mitigate some of the apprehension in discussing race that many white teachers indicated. Racial equity training is especially critical when discussing slavery, but this is a broad tool that can be applied to all aspects within the classroom. The other objective is that this identity exploration cannot be accomplished by a single workshop alone; it must be a sustained and ongoing effort from teacher preparation and professional development programs as opposed to a one-time offering that provides magical improvement.

This can be accomplished by supporting and fostering relationships with key stakeholders who are already doing groundbreaking work around race in North Carolina, including:

- The Racial Equity Institute (REI), based in Greensboro. REI is "a Black-owned business comprised of a multiracial team of organizers and trainers who are committed to the work of anti-racism transformation. Our training and consulting programs are designed to help individuals, organizations, and communities grow their understanding and analysis of structural racism and its cultural and historic roots" ("REI," 2020).
- **we are** is an organization based in Durham. The purpose of **we are** (working to extend anti-racist education) is to equip students, parents, and educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the complexity of racism and to extend anti-racist education with the ultimate goal of dismantling systemic racism. Using a combination of week-long summer camps for students, professional development for teachers, and workshops for parents, **we are** provides a three pronged approach to addressing racial inequities. One opportunity specific to K-12 educators was the 2020 **Let's Talk Racism**

Conference about becoming anti-racist educators. The purpose of this event was to give K-12 educators and pre-service teachers an opportunity to engage in sessions centered on the impact of systemic racism and ways of dismantling it in our schools ("we are," 2020).

Truth & Reconciliation Beyond the Education Sphere

The research underscored the dire need for the entire state to take ownership in addressing slavery's pervasive reach and lasting impact. There should be an effort to engage with not just educators, but all community members to discuss the truth of slavery in our state and its bearing on people's lives today. One example of how the state of North Carolina addressed a similar example of egregious history can serve as a guiding light for future efforts related to slavery.

The Eugenics Board of North Carolina formed from 1933 to 1977 and forcibly sterilized over 7,000 people it judged to be 'mentally defective or feeble-minded.' This injustice in the state's history caused the North Carolina General Assembly and former Governor Beverly Perdue to collaborate to address the human rights violations that occurred due to the Eugenics Board. Governor Perdue ran on this platform in her gubernatorial campaign, won the election, and ultimately used an Executive Order to create a Task Force to Determine the Method of Compensation for Victims of North Carolina's Eugenics Board (Gerald, 2018).

The Task Force established recommendations for lump sum financial damages for living victims of the eugenics program with the caveat that: "It's clear to us that they deserve compensation and that no value or amount can provide complete closure. In seeking to provide sincere recommendations to the state and victims of this past scar on North Carolina's history, we each acknowledge that the state of North Carolina must move beyond just an apology" (Gerald, 2018: 1). The Task Force's report stressed the necessity to additionally invest in documentary work that can be used to reach large numbers of North Carolina citizens because "The state also has an obligation to make sure such violations of basic human rights are never repeated. We believe that education will serve as a deterrent" (Gerald, 2018: 2). The Governor's Task Force rightfully acknowledged the importance of engaging the public in the full truth about eugenics. This lesson should inform how the state confronts its history of slavery, not just through the content it chooses to prioritize in classrooms, but also for the general public.

Although imperfect, the broad approach of statewide teamwork should be used for future policy decisions to address North Carolina's history. By bringing together a team of historians, researchers and other stakeholders about slavery, North Carolina can show its commitment to confronting its hidden histories in a transparent manner. The depths of slavery's impact are difficult to quantify, but some leading historians and policy researchers argue that financial reparations are necessary to address the economic damage inflicted upon enslaved people and their descendents.

The impetus behind the statewide initiative should be grounded in the research of scholars like Dr. William Darity, the Cook Professor of Public Policy, African and African American Studies, and Economics at Duke University. Dr. Darity contends that the case for national reparations is predicated on "1) the cumulative damages of slavery; 2) nearly a century-long epoch of legal segregation (known as the Jim Crow era) and white terrorism; and 3) the ongoing harms of racialized mass incarceration, police executions of unarmed blacks, credit, housing, and employment discrimination, as well as the enormous racial wealth gap" (Darity, 2020). While Dr. Darity’s work emphasizes the need for national reparations, North Carolina should still be a leader in state efforts by spearheading a truth and reconciliation initiative around slavery that informs any decisions about reparations.

A North Carolina-specific task force or working group with legislatively-vested power would provide an essential step in acknowledging the truths of the state’s history. By seizing synergy among scholarship produced in North Carolina’s network of higher education institutions and from work in organizations, the state can lead efforts to be fully transparent about the pervasive history and indelible legacy of slavery. It must tell the truth first and foremost to chart a clear-eyed path forward.

Appendix A:

1. In which district/LEA do you teach?
    a. Chapel Hill Carrboro-City Schools
    b. Orange County Public Schools
    c. Edgecombe County Public Schools
    d. Durham Public Schools
2. Which grade do you teach?
    a. 6th
    b. 7th
    c. 8th
    d. 9th
    e. 10th
    f. 11th
    g. 12th
3. Do you teach history, social studies, or english?
    a. Yes
    b. No
4. How many years have you been teaching?
    a. Less than 1
    b. 1-3
    c. 3-5
    d. 5-10

   e. 10-15
   f. 15+
5. Which category best describes you? [can check multiple boxes]
   a. White
   b. Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin
   c. Black or African American
   d. Asian
   e. American Indian or Alaska Native
   f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   g. Prefer not to say
6. In general, how do you approach introducing difficult history topics in your classroom? (e.g. Holocaust, Slavery, The Great Depression, etc.)
7. Do you teach slavery in your classroom?
   a. Yes
   b. No
8. What is a memory you have of the first time you learned about slavery in school, at home, or in general?
9. Are there any resources that are especially helpful when you create your lesson plans about slavery?
10. Can you share 2-3 key points or concepts you want students to gain from a lesson about slavery?
11. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

a. I feel comfortable teaching the topic of slavery.
    i. 1 = Strongly Disagree
    ii. 2 = Disagree
    iii. 3 = Neutral
    iv. 4 = Agree
    v. 5 = Strongly Agree

b. I feel equipped to teach about slavery.
    i. 1 = Strongly Disagree
    ii. 2 = Disagree
    iii. 3 = Neutral
    iv. 4 = Agree
    v. 5 = Strongly Agree

c. I have adequate support from my principal for teaching about slavery.
    i. 1 = Strongly Disagree
    ii. 2 = Disagree
    iii. 3 = Neutral
    iv. 4 = Agree
    v. 5 = Strongly Agree

d. I have adequate support from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for teaching about slavery.
    i. 1 = Strongly Disagree
    ii. 2 = Disagree

    iii. 3 = Neutral
    iv. 4 = Agree
    v. 5 = Strongly Agree

12. What, if any, advice do you have for teachers on how to teach about slavery?
13. What, if any, are your thoughts about the current revision process of the NC K-12 social studies standards?
14. What, if any, additional resources would help you teach about slavery better (e.g., professional development, extra lesson plans, or more extensive standards)?

Thank you so much for your response!

Appendix B: Email Communications and Dates

Email 1 - On Friday, January 17, 2020

Dear Educator:

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said: “We are not makers of history. We are made by history.” As we approach the holiday weekend honoring MLK’s legacy, I am asking for your help as an expert educator who teaches about history.

My name is Lucy, and I am a student at UNC-Chapel Hill. I am writing an honors thesis within the Public Policy Department under the supervision of Dr. Anna Krome-Lukens, who can be reached at annakl@email.unc.edu. My thesis student project aims to learn how teachers are addressing difficult historical topics in the classroom. In this instance, the historical topic of focus is slavery.

As a public school teacher, you are the expert in our state’s classrooms! The results of this survey will help pull together successful teaching practices from across the state. This goal of this research to help other educators teach about hard historical topics and ideally to help inform policymakers’ future decisions about changes to social studies standards. This **anonymous survey is only 10 questions** (excluding personal information); it should take no more than ten minutes. **Click on this link to take the Survey:**

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Thank you SO much for your time, help, and invaluable feedback!

1. This is research. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the UNC Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.
2. This is voluntary and participants can withdraw their consent at any time.
3. If you have any questions, please email me at lucyrussell@unc.edu or call at 919-740-9018.
4. Individuals must be 21 years or older to participate. If you are younger than 21 years old, please stop now.
5. To protect your identity as a research subject, no identifiable information will be collected, the research data will not be stored with your name, the researcher(s) will not share your information with anyone.

Follow this link to the Survey:

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

${l://SurveyURL}

Email 2 - On Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Monday, January 20, 2020

Dear Educator,

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”

Thank you for all that you do for your students and for our community. As we celebrate MLK's legacy today, I'm remembering the most important people who are shaping our collective future: educators. I am emailing you to ask you a few questions about how you teach social studies. If you have a few minutes, the information you provide for this **anonymous survey** will help inform how other teachers address difficult history topics in their classrooms. I need your help because YOU are the expert in your own experience and I would love to share your knowledge.

Follow this link to the 10 minute, anonymous survey:

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Thank you SO much for your time, help, and invaluable feedback!

Lucy

Follow this link to the Survey:

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

${l://SurveyURL}

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

Email 3 - On Thursday, January 23, 2020

Dear Educator:

My name is Lucy, and I am a student at UNC-Chapel Hill. I emailed you earlier because I am working on a thesis at UNC and would love your input as an social studies expert in our state's classrooms! My thesis student project aims to learn how teachers talk about difficult historical topics with their students. In this instance, the topic of focus is slavery. **Follow this link to the anonymous survey:**

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

I know your time is so precious, but your experience and input is SO important. If you have 10 minutes, the information from this short anonymous survey will help pull together successful teaching practices for other educators. **Here is the link again:**

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey} You will be a huge help to other North Carolina teachers, students, and communities.

Your feedback is so appreciated. Thanks so much for your participation!

Sincerely,

Lucy

Follow this link to the Survey:

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Email 4 - On Monday, January 27, 2020

Dear Educator:

Thanks so much for your time. My name is Lucy, and I am a student at UNC-Chapel Hill. I emailed you earlier because I am working on a thesis at UNC and would love your input as a social studies teacher! My project aims to learn how educators talk about difficult historical topics with their students. In this instance, the topic of focus is slavery. **Please offer your feedback by clicking on this link to the anonymous survey:**

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

Your experiences and input are SO important. If you have 10 minutes, the information from this short anonymous survey will help pull together successful teaching practices for other educators. **Here is the link again:**

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey} You will be a huge help to other North Carolina teachers, students, and communities. I promise to stop bugging you on email- thanks so much for your patience.

Your feedback is so appreciated. Thanks so much for your participation!

Sincerely,

Lucy

Follow this link to the Survey:

${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}

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