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Multiple Perspectives in a Virtual Environment: Critically Examining Virtual History Curriculum

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MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT: CRITICALLY
EXAMINING VIRTUAL HISTORY CURRICULUM

by

TIFFANY RAE MCBEAN

Under the Direction of Dr. Joseph Feinberg

ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the publicly shared United States History curriculum for
Georgia Virtual School. The study focuses on how inclusive the curriculum is to the perspectives
of people of color, as well as how the curriculum addresses race, racism and the impact of racism
on Black Americans. In this study of Georgia Virtual School's United States History curriculum,
Critical Race Theory is used to analyze current social studies curriculum that is publicly
available. With a growing number of students accessing online education and virtual schools,
this research contributes to an emerging literature regarding online social studies curriculum and
critical race theory.

This study sits at the intersection of two under-researched areas in the field of social
studies education. The first area is addressing race and racism in social studies curriculum and
the second area is best practices in a virtual school setting. Qualitative content analysis was

selected because it focuses on the meaning behind the words and the curricular messages shared with online students. The results from this research illustrate a picture of Georgia Virtual School (GAVS) that coincides with research on race and racism in social studies education. In particular, analysis of the U.S. History course from GAVS shows race and racism are not addressed to the degree that Georgia Standards of Excellence require. In addition, traditionally marginalized groups, such as LatinX, Asian Americans and Native Americans, are given significantly less curricular coverage than African Americans. Racism is also presented as an overarching systemic problem. Overall, the data results show that GAVS U.S. History curriculum inadequately addresses the significance of race and racism in United States history.

INDEX WORDS: critical race theory, history, online course, social studies, virtual learning

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT: CRITICALLY
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by

TIFFANY RAE MCBEAN

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

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Doctor of Philosophy

in

Teaching & Learning

in

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this body of work to James R. McBean and Annette B. McBean. My parents set the foundation for my academic achievement before I ever stepped into a classroom. They have encouraged me and supported me my entire life.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

1 THE PROBLEM

The effects of white supremacy manifest in many ways for people of color, such as racial profiling, disproportionate drug and death row convictions, higher unemployment, higher infant mortality rates, and more special education placements (West, 1993). Race has been the motivation behind many social, legal, and economic policies and practices (Howard, 2004). Racial disparities are observed in various aspects of life including (but not limited to) wealth, education, health, employment, and homeownership. Modern critical race researchers (Castles, 1996; Howard 2004; Loury, 2002; Winant, 2001) agree that race is not a biological phenomenon, it is a social construct; the effects of this construct are real and deeply rooted in American society. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) go further by arguing that restricting race to an ideological construct contradicts the existence of a racialized society and how it affects everyone. Moreover, Warmington (2009) explains, "[d]espite its status as a social-historical construct lacking any kind of scientific credibility, the ongoing and pervasive *effects* of racial ideology are all too real, such that 'race' remains a persistent social fact at the level of lived experience and social organization" (p. 284). When the effects of racial ideology are not acknowledged, it creates negative societal consequences (Foreman, 2004).

According to Foreman (2004), failing to examine the complexities of contemporary racism and White supremacy reinforces the idea that this nation is a meritocracy. The false impression of a meritocracy reflects different outcomes for racially marginalized groups that are dismissed by cultural deficits or shortcomings, for example, a lack of ability or motivation. A Pew study conducted in 2014 shows that racial and ethnic wealth inequality has widened since the Great Recession (December 2007 through June 2009). In 2013, the median wealth of white households was 13 times greater than the median wealth of Black households, while in 2010 White

households had eight times the wealth (Kochhar & Fry, 2014). Tyson (2003) insists that to overcome the racial oppression that has historically plagued the nation, there has to be acknowledgment and understanding of how race continues to negatively impact lives.

    Critical examinations of historical events can highlight the impact of race. Providing students with the opportunity to understand the impact of race on our society could affect how students view people from other races. Opportunities to study and understand race could also help to detour some of the racist attitudes that are a barrier to social and economic growth. Several researchers (Banks, 2006; Howard, 2004; Nash, 1989; Stephan &Vogt, 2004; Tyson, 2003) acknowledge that K-12 education plays a vital role in the development of student's racial attitudes. Howard (2004) emphasizes the importance of "developing a framework to help students to coexist across various racial and ethnic differences" (p. 485). He insists that helping students navigate the process of understanding other races is necessary due to increasing racial and ethnic diversity. Banks (2006) suggests that schools should supply students with experiences and materials to help promote positive behaviors and attitudes towards racially, ethnically, and economically different people. Similarly, Stephan and Vogt (2004) recommend curriculum interventions by teachers to prevent the racial attitudes of students from becoming more unfavorable, as they become older. Tyson (2003) concludes that the methods educators use to engage in dialogue about racial issues in social studies can shape how students perceive and respond to the issues. Social studies is uniquely situated to enable the study of race and racism. Teachers have an opportunity to expose students to the multiple perspectives of the people who played a part in American history. Nash (1989) explains "the guiding assumption today is that students can truly learn about the historical processes that have produced present-day societies

only when they understand the roles played by all constituents parts of the society under study"
(p. 239).

Social studies classes are a space where educators should take the opportunity to address systemic racism and its effects. Howard (2004) contends that social studies educators are the most logical choice to theorize and offer strategies on how to discuss differences to eliminate racist attitudes and discrimination. Social, economic and political history illustrates how race has been used to rationalize inequity and oppression. Social studies can be the foundation for unlearning racism (Ladson-Billings, 2003).

Unfortunately, the field of social studies has inadequately addressed issues of race and racism. Tyson (2003) insists that the absence of race in curriculum standards and position statements makes race invisible in social studies. Ladson-Billings (2003a) reveals that social studies and history textbooks usually do not even use the term race. She adds that race is always present in social studies curriculum, policies, and profession, but educators do not want to discuss race because it contradicts with how we view American life. Ladson-Billings (2003a) also evaluates the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) curriculum standards by highlighting that educators find race and racism submerged under the rubrics of prejudice and discrimination. Although, the standards make no direct statement concerning race and racism, which reinforces the idea that there should be a change in attitudes and behaviors without addressing the structural and ideological foundations on which the attitudes and behaviors are built (Ladson-Billings, 2003a).

Outside of the institutional conditions in place in social studies education, Brown (2011) highlights other factors that contribute to race and racism not being addressed. Brown recognizes that institutional factors inhibit the study of race and racism in the elementary, secondary and

post-secondary teacher education, but he maintains that the biggest problem is a lack of sociocultural knowledge about race and racism. Brown (2011) also argues that preservice teacher candidates enter their programs devoid of the knowledge about the role that racism has played in the United States, in addition to how institutionalized racism has maintained social inequities. Teachers and students in teacher education programs have "gaps in racial knowledge," which is another challenge to teaching about race and racism (Brown 2011, p. 250).

Problem Statement

In this study, the U.S. History curriculum for Georgia Virtual School (GAVS) is assessed with a dual focus: (1) how inclusive it is to the perspective of people of color, and (2) how does the curriculum address race and racism and its historical impact on Black Americans. For this study, I employ a qualitative case study methodology. I collect and perform a content analysis of the curriculum materials provided to the students through the online course. These materials cover all of the units and standards in GAVS U.S. History course. .

There are several key reasons this study is a necessary addition to the body of literature on race and social studies education. First, it is essential for students to have a broader, more critical understanding and analysis of history. Loewen (2007) explains the problem.

> While there is nothing wrong with optimism, it can become something of a
> burden for students of color, children of working-class parents, girls who notice
> the dearth of female historical figures, or members of any group that has not
> achieved socioeconomic success. The optimistic approach prevents any
> understanding of failure other than blaming the victim. (p. 25)

As students learn history, educators should go beyond the optimistic approach and guide students to understand how historical events have manifested into the social and economic disparities that

are evident today. For students to identify and understand the implications of institutional racism in contemporary American society, they must critically examine and understand institutionalized racism in history.

Virtual schools have become "one of the fastest growing trends in education" (Ingram 2016, p.34); therefore, it is timely, relevant, and imperative that researchers examine virtual social studies curriculum. Enrollment in virtual and blended schools continues to grow despite school performance measures indicating traditional public schools are more successful (Miron, Shank, & Davidson, 2018). Curriculum designers and online teachers could benefit from an assessment of the curriculum and recommendations on designing content that further incorporates the perspectives of people of color.

Theoretical Framework

Since race and racism are at the center of analysis in this study, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is used to provide a race-based critique of the GAVS virtual curriculum. CRT provides a theoretical tool to eliminate racism, which is part of a more extensive effort to end the subordination of all marginalized groups. CRT also operates to dismantle the process of knowledge construction that exists in higher education and allows researchers to create a space to employ research outside of the Eurocentricity of academia (Malagon, Huber, & Velez, 2009). A common theme of critical race theory is centering and validating the experiences of Black people in their marginalization and alienation.

A little over two decades ago, Critical Race Theory emerged as a new theoretical framework in the field of education through the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate. As a social science scholar, Ladson-Billings recognizes that social studies education is a natural fit for critical race theory and provides a strong foundation for research. As I will explain,

social studies education offers a unique opportunity to utilize Critical Race Theory. If social studies educators are genuinely committed to upholding democratic and multicultural values, critical race theory and research offer a perspective and method to analyze current social studies practices. To contextualize CRT, it is necessary to understand its origins. Since CRT arose from Critical Theory, I will first explain what Critical Theory is by discussing its origins, assumptions, goals, methodologies, and approaches. Next, I will trace the path from Critical Theory to Critical Race Theory. Moving forward, I will define Critical Race Theory with its underlying presumptions from legal studies and education. Following its definitions, I will explore the assumptions, research questions, methodologies, and methodological tools employed by critical race theorists. Finally, I address the significance of Critical Race Theory in social studies education and research.

Critical Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a derivative of Critical Theory. Critical Theory, a term which was coined in 1937, differs from traditional forms of social theory. The belief is that Critical Theory is part of the struggle to liberate human beings to the end that everyone has an equal chance at self-development. Critical Theory proposes that there is an actual possibility to liberate human beings, as a whole, but at the same time recognizes that struggle is necessary to realize this possibility (Wellmer, 2014). Critical Theory was designed as a general social theory, which was incited by the need for liberation. Because changing social conditions inspire new ideas and new problems, the practitioners of critical theory presumed that the character of critical theory would change accordingly (Bronner, 2011).

Cherryholmes (1991) suggests that critical theorists presume that traditional standards are historically based and integrated into the current language, social practices, and institutions, but critical theorists "find no compelling reason to accept those standards simply because they are

present and in force. Critics inquire into texts, institutions, practices, uses of language, and actions

to clarify their meanings, constitution, and justification" (p. 42). Critical Theory rejects the idea

that freedom is associated with any institution or system of thought and it questions and exposes

the purposes of competing theories. Critical Theory maintains that analysis must evolve with the

problems and possibilities for liberation that develop from shifting historical circumstances

(Bronner, 2011).

According to Sim and Van Loon (2012), Critical Theory is inherently pluralist which

means there is a scope of possible perspectives and methods to analyze artifacts and their historical,

political, social, gender and ethnic contexts. Critical Theory supports pluralism, which is the

current cultural paradigm in Western culture, by harboring debate between multiple

interpretations. Two ideas that are often associated with Critical Theory are alienation and

reification. Alienation identifies with the psychological effects of exploitation and the division of

labor, where reification is identified with how people are treated as "things" (Sim & Van Loon,

2012). Since Critical Theory seeks to transform, it only makes sense that the methodologies

associated with Critical Theory probe or assess possible institutional changes. Cohen and Crabtree

(2006) suggest that critical theorists attempt to make change, not just describe situations from a

particular perspective. The history of making change in Critical Theory can be traced back to its

first project "critical theory of society" (Wellmer, 2014).

Exploring the origins of Critical Theory allows researchers to further understand the

development of the theory and the historical context for which it was necessary. A "critical theory

of society" is a project developed by members of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research

(Cherryholmes, 1994; Wellmer, 2014). Karl Marx's *Critique of Political Economy* was a major

influence on the "critical theory of society" project. Transforming Marx's critique was a goal of

the project. Members of the Institute sought transformation through collaboration between philosophers, economists, and psychoanalysts, which would result in a critical theory of society that would be sufficient for the social and historical condition that prevailed after the war. What the authors intended to show, through the lens of Marx, is that contrary to popular belief, life in modern society does not foster a fully emancipated society; adversely, it leads to the opposite of emancipation (Wellmer, 2014).

Evolution of Critical Race Theory

Critical Theory evolved into several more distinct theoretical frameworks. The shift from Critical Theory began in the mid-1970s and developed through the National Critical Legal Studies conferences, which took place during the early to mid-1980s at Harvard and UC-Berkley Law Schools. Critical Legal Studies (CLS) challenges traditional legal scholarship "[i]n favor of a form of law that spoke to the specificity of individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 10). A group of law professors and students began to "question the objective rationalist nature of the law and the process of adjunction in U.S. courts" (Lynn & Parker 2006, p. 259). The CLS movement, which aspires to justice and liberation, is grounded in the social missions of the 1960s (Tate, 1997). The scholars explored how the law privileged the wealthy and powerful in the U.S. while ignoring the rights of poor people (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

CLS critiques the portrayal of U.S. society as a meritocracy, but it does not include racism in the critique (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Kimberle Chrenshaw are among the pioneers of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which was created to examine race, racism, and law (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997). Bell (1980b), Delgado (1987), and

Crenshaw (1988) argue that CRT should go further than Critical Legal Studies by addressing the racialized nature of law and how it affects people of color (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

As a pioneer of CRT, a meaningful connection exists between Bell's work as a civil rights lawyer and his work as an academic. Bell served as a civil rights lawyer for the NAACP where he gained experience using the law to direct civil rights (Lynn and Parker, 2006), after which he propelled into an academic career in law where the methods he used to write about race and racism were at the cutting edge of Critical Race Theory (Tate, 1997). Bell is credited with developing an underlying presumption of Critical Race Theory called interest convergence.

Interest convergence is the idea that "white elites will tolerate or encourage racial advances for blacks only when they also promote white self-interest" (Delgado 1995, p. xiv). Bell (1995) explains "the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites" (p. 22). Any corrective actions taken are those that will not harm and most likely promote the interests of the White middle and upper classes (Bell, 1995).

Along with Derrick Bell, the scholarship of Richard Delgado is essential to understanding CRT (Tate, 1995). Delgado (1987) critiqued the inability of Critical Legal Studies to serve the agenda of people of color and cited three elements that posed a danger and led to a split between CLS and CRT. The elements were: (1) objection of incremental reform, (2) reason and ideology play a significant role, and (3) CLS's notion of false consciousness implies that people of color buy into an oppressive system and defend it. Delgado (1987) challenges the rejection of incremental reform because it is built on the assumption that society uses incremental reform to legitimize oppression. He argues that assumption was imperialistic by dictating to people of color how to interpret their experiences, while also slighting the possible positive impact of incremental change. Delgado (1987) cautions against the significant role of reason and ideology in CLS noting

that racism will not be addressed or detoured by critical legal scholarship exposing the relationships between rights, laws and the power structure (Tate, 1995). Lastly, Delgado (1987) believes that the notion of false consciousness implies that people of color buy into and defend an oppressive system. Delgado views the notion of false consciousness as untrue for marginalized people because many have a distrust of the legal system (Tate, 1995). These views were part of the foundation for the social movement to come.

In 1981, at Harvard Law School, there was a student boycott and subsequently, an alternative course organized. The social origins of CRT can be tied to this movement, which urged the Harvard administration to raise the number of tenured faculty members who were people of color. The students wanted the university to hire someone to teach Race, Racism, and Law, previously taught by Bell (1980). When the university did not meet the demands, Kimberle Crenshaw, who was a student at that time, emerged as one of the essential organizers of an alternative course, which led to discussions among legal scholars about new ways to conceptualize race and law (Tate, 1995).

Through her scholarship, Crenshaw (1988) noted three ways that CLS was faulty for people of color. First, the scholars did not ground their analyses in the reality of racially oppressed people. Next, CLS critique did not analyze the hegemonic role of racism. Finally, CLS exaggerates the role of liberal legal consciousness, yet minimizes the possible transformative power of liberalism. Crenshaw (1998) argued that CLS's deficiencies are shown in the fact that "it fails to speak to or about African-Americans and other people of color" (Tate, 1995, p. 230). Tate (1995) adds that Crenshaw (1998) saw CLS's analysis unrealistic. The critiques of CLS by these scholars pushed toward a theoretical framework that addressed the needs of people of color. Critical Race Theory (CRT), as a race-based critique of society and social institutions, pushes further than its

predecessor, CLS, by "challenging the specific racialized nature of the law and its impact on persons of color" (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 257). Delgado (1995) explains three basic constructs underlying Critical Race Theory: (a) Racism is normal in American society. Racism appears "ordinary and natural" (p. xvi) because it is so ingrained in our daily lives, (b) Critical Race Theory's challenge to racial oppression can take the form of storytelling or narrative, and (c) interest convergence is the idea that "white elites will tolerate or encourage racial advances for blacks only when they also promote white self-interest" (p. xvii).

Delgado (1995) describes the basic insights of Critical Race Theory (CRT) with the first presumption being the notion that racism is normal in American society. Racism appears natural and ordinary because it is so ingrained in the daily lives of humans. Consequently, formal equality (laws that mandate Blacks and Whites be treated equally) has little effect on the covert forms of racism that people of color encounter every day. The second presumption is that CRT's challenge to racial oppression can take the form of storytelling. Since people construct the world with words (stories and silence), people should not entertain those (words, stories, and silence) that are biased and unfair. Instead, people should write and speak out against them. Ladson-Billings (1998) states "[t]he primary reason, then, that stories, or narratives, are deemed important among CRT scholars is that they add necessary contextual contours to the seeming "objectivity" of positivist perspectives" (p. 11). A third presumption underlying CRT is the previously described interest convergence, which was developed by Derrick Bell. Although CRT was grounded in legal studies, there were scholars who discovered an opportunity to apply it to the field of education.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to education research in their article, "Toward a Critical Race Theory." The authors asserted that the gross inequalities between the experiences African American and Latino students and the experiences of White middle-class

students are a logical result of a racialized society. To use race as a theory and tool for dissecting inequities in schools, they set forth three central propositions:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequality in the United States.

2. U.S. society is based on property rights.

3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequality. (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995, p. 48)

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) make two meta-propositions to elaborate on their first point that "[r]ace continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States" (p. 48). First, the authors contend that race remains untheorized. They report that Carter G. Woodson and W.E.B. Du Bois "used race as a theoretical lens for assessing social inequity" (p. 50). When the article was first published, the academic community marginalized their work, yet both scholars presented strong arguments that race should be placed as the centerpiece for understanding inequality. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contend that there had not been a systematic analysis of educational inequity. The second meta-proposition is "class- and gender-based explanations are not powerful enough to explain all of the difference (or variance) in school experience and performance" (Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995, p. 51). They point out that class and gender alone cannot account for the difference in educational achievement between White and students of color.

The second proposition, which addresses U.S. property rights, evaluates the effects of capitalism on democracy. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) assert "traditional civil rights approaches to solving inequality have depended on the "rightness" of democracy while ignoring the structural inequality of capitalism" (p. 52). They insist that there has been a tension between human rights and property rights since the development of the U.S. the purpose of the government

was to protect society, and African people were brought to the U.S. as "property"; therefore, government could not provide human rights for African Americans while also protecting the rights of property owners.

In addressing the third proposition, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explain that "[t]he ability to define, possess, and own property has been a central feature of power in America" (p. 53), and property relates to education in many ways. First, schools in more affluent neighborhoods receive more funding. Additionally, intellectual property is obtained at school, and the quantity and quality of curriculum varies with property value. Lastly, there must be real property to support the intellectual property such as technology, materials for labs and qualified teachers (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). The authors' third proposition is that institutional and structural racism is the reason for poverty and the inequitable condition of schools.

Research Questions

In education research, CRT is used to investigate the ways that racism can create inequality in and out of the classroom by applying five tenets, these include: (1) intersectionality of race and racism with other forms of subordination, (e.g., gender, class, and language); (2) challenge to dominant ideologies that contribute to deficit thinking, (e.g., meritocracy and colorblindness); (3) a commitment to social justice (identify, analyze, and transform structural aspects of education which preserve subordinate positions inside and outside of the classroom); (4) centrality of experiential knowledge, which centers the research process around the lived experiences of People of Color; and (5) the transdisciplinary perspective, which offers a critical race researcher a multitude of research methodologies to consider (Matagon, Huber & Velez, 2009). Matagon et al. (2009) argue social justice must be a guiding methodological principal in a quest for a more critical approach to qualitative research. Moreover, critical race research must

focus on an anti-racist social justice agenda. According to a major assumption of CRT, we live in an unequal and fundamentally racially stratified society in which racially oppressed people are disenfranchised by power processes (Hylton, 2012).

Critical race research operates by placing race at the center of the discussion. CRT positions race as a unit of analysis, which is key to considering the roles of race, racism, and power (Tyson, 2003). The following research questions were used for this investigation.

1. How inclusive is an online U.S. History curriculum to the perspectives of people of color?

2. To what extent is race, systemic racism, and its social and economic impact on Black people addressed in an online U.S. History curriculum?

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how the U.S. History curriculum of Georgia Virtual School incorporates the perspectives of people of color and how it addresses race, racism and its social and economic impact on Black people. Because the number of students accessing online education and virtual schools is significantly growing, it is important that social studies educators focus on research in those areas. Many virtual schools offer alternative solutions for K-12 students who may not fit with traditional schools for a variety of reasons, such as safety issues, bullying, attendance, geographically remote, and students who must be mobile for their family's livelihood (Toppin & Toppin, 2016). In 1997, the first two virtual schools in the U.S. were created (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). The National Education Policy Center's *Virtual Schools Report 2018* indicated that in the 2016-17 school year, there were 429 virtual schools and 296 blended schools serving 295,518 and 116,716 students respectfully. Additionally, there

were 34 states that had full time virtual schools and 29 with blended schools (Miron, Shank, & Davidson, 2018).

Georgia is considered a leader in online learning (Ingram, 2016). The Georgia virtual school was created because state officials were looking for ways to provide alternatives to systems that had limited offerings, scheduling conflicts, and a lack of highly qualified teachers in rural and low-income areas (Ingram, 2016). Unfortunately, the "rapid growth of k-12 virtual academies is outpacing researchers' ability to study the phenomenon and generate data," therefore, there is a critical need of virtual school faculty for best practice research (Toppin & Toppinn 2016, p. 1574). This study supplements the nascent research on social studies curriculum in the virtual setting.

Significance of the Study

This study has significance in two areas: (1) research and practice on teaching race and racism in social studies education; (2) teacher education best practices in a virtual setting. First, this study contributes to the research and practice on teaching race and racism in social studies classrooms. Howard (2003) contends that there has been an absence of research on race and racism and social studies researchers have not been troubled with research and discussion of the effects of race and racism or how to undo racial inequalities. Howard (2003) explains "[i]n order to begin the dialogue on race-related issues, students need to be given the opportunity to study race as a social construct, as well as the social, political, historical, geographical, cultural, and economic ramifications of racism" (p. 39). Through this study, I examine if and to what extent students have the opportunity to address race-related issues in a virtual U.S. History course. Branch (2003) warns the evidence provided by students who have gone through the public school system indicates that race and racism was not part of the curriculum. Examining how race and racism is addressed in

U.S. History curriculum provides insight on if and how the research on these instructional practices have translated into social studies classrooms.

Assumptions and Limitations

I chose this study because social studies classes, particularly U.S. History, have an impact on how students perceive their world and how they construct their social reality. Race and racism have a significant impact on the social structure of the U.S. and it must be addressed throughout history courses for students to fully contextualize the social and economic circumstances of various groups of people, particularly people of color. There are several fields of research (for example, multiculturalism and culturally relevant pedagogy) that encourage incorporating diverse perspectives and integrating the voices of people of color into traditional curriculum. I question whether the push for inclusion has translated into a virtual curriculum.

Because I used Critical Race Theory as my theoretical framework, this study placed race as the focal point of the research. I only assessed the curriculum for references to people of color, race, and racism. As a part of the examination, I made recommendations. These recommendations are limited to my knowledge about history, people of color, racism and its impact.

One underlying assumption of this study is that virtual schools will continue to serve a significant portion of K-12 students and U.S. History will continue to be a required course for high school students. Another underlying assumption is that the shared content provided by Georgia Virtual School is the primary curriculum material for students taking the U.S. History online course.

Summary of Key Point

This study sits at the intersection of two under-researched areas in the field of social studies education: (1) addressing race and racism in social studies curriculum and (2) best practices in a virtual school setting. Because race and racism continues to impact the social and economic lives of all people in the United States, it is important for students to understand the origins (Hylton, 2012). To give students this important learning opportunity, race must be discussed as a factor throughout social studies curriculum and particularly U.S. History. Multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and other pedagogical approaches have encouraged including the perspectives of people of color in social studies curriculum. I examine Georgia Virtual Schools U.S, History curriculum for evidence of these practices.

As virtual schools and online courses taken by K-12 students rise, it is important that educators focus research in this area as much as the traditional brick and mortar classrooms and curriculum. Just as social studies researchers seek data on best practices in the classroom, the same must be done with the newest frontier of K-12 education. Therefore, I examine how the U.S. History curriculum from a virtual school includes the perspectives of people of color and addresses race, racism, and its impact.

Definition of Terms

Race: a social construct that encompasses the notion of essentialized innate difference based on phenotype, ancestry and culture, and that intersects in complex ways with other forms of privilege/ oppression (Paradies, 2006, p. 2).

Racism: A societal system in which actors are divided among socially constructed dimensions with power unevenly distributed. The social system of privilege/oppression is based on ideologies (worldviews) concerning differences between groups, which are embodied through attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, laws, norms, and practices (Paradies, 2006, p. 2).

Virtual School: schools or programs that utilize the internet to offer online courses or entire programs of study (Toppin & Toppin, 2016).

Critical Race Theory (CRT): A race-based critique of society and social institutions.

Critical Legal Studies (CLS): A challenge to traditional legal scholarship "[i]n favor of a form of law that spoke to the specificity of individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 10).

LatinX: a gender neutral neutral term for Latin Americans (Merriam-Websters dictionary, 2018)

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Purpose of Social Studies Education

Finding a consensus on the purpose of social studies education is not an easy task. Critical theorists in social studies education have sustained lively debate in the field surrounding the aim of social studies education and approaches to social studies content and curriculum. In the first section of the literature review, I will highlight the varying philosophies and critiques of social studies education. Additionally, I will discuss critical examinations and the different aspects of social studies curriculum.

There are several different philosophies and beliefs that influence social studies education. These philosophies and beliefs are at the center of the debate behind the aim or purpose of social studies education. Evans (2004) argues that several competing "camps" have battled to influence or retain control of social studies and its direction in what he calls a "century-long struggle" over social studies curriculum. Evans (2004) highlights the history of the battle over social studies curriculum purpose, content, methods and foundations. He describes six of the major "camps" in social studies, each having their pedagogical practices, philosophy, and beliefs. The six major philosophical approaches to social studies include the following: (a) traditional historians believe history to be the core of social studies, (b) mandarins believe in teaching social studies as a social science, (c) social efficiency educators focus on a controlled and more efficient society, (d) social meliorists aim to develop students reflective thinking and promote social improvement, (e) social reconstructionist believe that social studies should play a leading part in transforming American society, and (f) advocates of a general approach view social studies as an integration of history and social sciences (Evans, 2004).

The debate over curricular issues in social studies, such as the nature, purpose, and organization, has stifled or energized the field (depending on one's perspective) since its beginning. Several other social studies researchers also note the debate over the purpose of social studies. Nelson (2001) states, "[s]ocial studies has been disputed academic terrain for over a century" (p. 17). Stanley (2001) contends that as a field, social studies is trying to resolve various competing rationales and is searching for an identity, while Ross (2006a) reveals that the basic aspects of social studies have always been contested.

This debate has led to an extensive list of varying purposes for social studies education. Barr, Barth, and Shermis (1977) and Morrissett and Haas (1982) organize the list by constructing schemes. These two sets of researchers agree on three main purposes of social studies education, which are: "(1) socialization into society's norms; (2) transmission of facts, concepts, and generalizations from the academic disciplines; and (3) the promotion of critical or reflective thinking" (Ross 2006b, loc. 296). For example, Ross (2006b) explains that subject centered approaches to social studies education push for the purpose and content to be derived from disciplines taught in higher education. Civics-centered approaches highlight individual and social attitudes and behaviors, while issue-centered approaches promotes the examination of specific issues in social studies (Ross, 2006b). DeLeon and Ross (2010) argue that despite the debate over the aim of social studies education, surrounding topics possess a disguise of curricular and pedagogical diversity, the aim of social studies is to preserve the "dominant cultural perspectives" (p. x).

Social Studies Curriculum

The debate over the purpose of social studies has also sparked critique. Various researchers advocate for social studies curriculum that focus on issues tied directly to American

society and democracy, for example, equality and justice. Noffke (2000) presents many insightful critiques including (a) the field has failed to address many of the systemic and prevalent issues that affect schools and society, which include the widening gap between the rich and the poor and the privilege and oppression associated with race and gender; (b) instead of accepting the current definitions of social studies, which are grounded in an unequal and unjust system, educators must seek to create new definitions based on justice and democracy; (c) strengthening democratic citizenship must be tied to racial and economic justice and must constantly be addressed and constructed as society changes (Ross, 2006). Similarly, Dewey (1938) explains that only when "the educator views teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience" will educators appropriately address and re-address concepts important to American society. Beane and Apple (2007) insist that educators in a democratic society are obliged to facilitate students in recognizing their voice. Furthermore, for there to be a democracy, there must be informed consent of the people and only a democratic curriculum will afford students access to a plethora of information and viewpoints (Beane & Apple, 2007). Other critiques have focused on the delivery of social studies curriculum.

Formal and Enacted Curriculum

Thornton's (2008) critique of social studies curriculum highlights the dichotomy of formal and enacted curriculum. From a critical perspective, he deems the plans of curriculum reformers ambitious and unobtainable in practice. In his analysis of continuity and change in the social studies curriculum, he focuses on the official or formal curriculum. Thornton (1991) describes the official curriculum as "the curriculum devised in advance by authorities beyond the classroom, which is intended to guide curricular-instructional gatekeepers" (p. 16). The gatekeepers, according to Thornton, are classroom teachers, because teachers ultimately decide

what knowledge is of worth to pass onto the students and do so based on their education, experiences, and beliefs. Thornton also acknowledges that solely examining official curriculum does not speak to what actually goes on in the social studies classroom. The differences between official curriculum and what actually goes on in the social studies classroom is also examined by Wayne E. Ross.

In the *Social Studies Curriculum: Purposes, Problems, and Possibilities*, Wayne E. Ross presents definitions for two types of curriculum that students experience in every classroom. Ross (2006b) attests that there is one essential distinction among the many definitions of curriculum, which is the difference between formal and enacted curriculum. Similar to Thornton (2008), Ross describes the formal curriculum as the official curriculum. He further explains that the formal curriculum includes state frameworks, textbooks, and curriculum standards, while the enacted curriculum is the curriculum experienced by students through the day to day interactions with the teacher (Ross, 2006b). While the teacher is responsible for the enacted curriculum, the formal curriculum is frequently separated and developed by others (Ross, 2006b).

Separating curriculum and instruction is not a sound practice for several reasons. Ross (2006b) explains that distinguishing between curriculum and instruction does not accurately portray how enacted curriculum is created. Distinguishing between curriculum and instruction justifies separating concept and execution, which curtails teachers' control, and diminishes the role of teachers in formal curriculum development. Moreover, the separation of curriculum and instruction decreases the professional role of teachers to the point that they are no longer part of the formal curriculum development. Ross (2006a) contends the goal of curriculum development is "to improve the practical effectiveness of the theories that teachers employ in creating the enacted curriculum" (loc. 109-110). The separation of curriculum and instruction becomes

problematic in that teachers may not know the underlying reasons for their instruction if they are

not involved in the development of the formal curriculum.

Ross (2006b) reveals that because many teachers have "internalized" the separation

between curriculum and instruction, they view their role as an instructional decision maker only

(loc. 414). When states produce curriculum frameworks or standards, there usually is a state-

mandated standardized test that will accompany those standards. Thornton (2008) argues that

social studies curriculum can potentially shape students' world views. Therefore, there is

pressure to preserve or change aspects of the curriculum. Some states deny that frameworks or

standards equal a true curriculum, but in effect, they do especially when frameworks, standards,

textbooks, and tests are all aligned (Ross, 2006b).

Critical Perspectives on Social Studies Curriculum

Using the framework of Critical Race Theory, I critically examine U.S History

curriculum. The focus on CRT was narrowed from the broader field of Critical Theory on social

studies education. Critical theorists, who have examined social studies education, deconstruct

formal social studies curriculum to assess whether truly democratic ideals are ingrained. Many

critical theorists (Beane & Apple, 2007; Nash, 1989; Nash, Crabtree & Dunn, 1997;) find a

disconnection between the ideas upon which American society is founded (i.e., equality and

justice), and the realization of those ideas for all citizens. The United States is a nation, which

provides a free education to all citizens. American citizens comprise many different races,

religions, and ethnicities, and have opinions and different perspectives on historical events and

equity in American society. These opinions and perspectives are influenced by social studies

curriculum (formal or enacted) they experience during their time in school. On one side, we

have those who want to protect the traditional story, which illustrates strong national

overtones, while others want to offer students an inclusive history of our country (Nash, Crabtree & Dunn, 1997). Through an examination of curriculum materials, standards, and common approaches to social studies, these critical theorists (Beane & Apple, 2007; Nash, 1989; Nash, Crabtree & Dunn, 1997;) find that the field of social studies education does not take responsibility for presenting the multi-faceted and complex social interactions that have created present conditions in society. Critical theorists describe specific ways that social studies curriculum can be more inclusive of multiple perspectives.

Critical theorists describe specific ways that social studies curriculum can be more inclusive of multiple perspectives. Beane and Apple (2007) describe a democratic curriculum as a tool that allows students to actively make meaning of knowledge by studying external sources and participating in activities that compel them to construct knowledge. A democratic curriculum allows students to examine topics that exist in society, for example, justice or environmental politics.

Beane and Apple (2007) argue that schools are not fulfilling their obligation to promote a democratic society. Schools continue to silence voices outside the dominant culture by limiting the knowledge and only reproducing forms of knowing and knowledge by the dominant culture (Beane & Apple, 2007). These outside voices include people of color, women and the young. Schools are teaching this knowledge as truth despite the fact that knowledge is socially constructed; therefore, specific values, interests, and biases will always influence this knowledge. Adversely, a democratic curriculum would teach students to question the source, purpose, and validity of the knowledge they receive (Beane & Apple, 2007).

Similarly, Nash (1989) asserts that the superficial treatment of marginalized groups in history does not create an environment where these groups are viewed or feel like equal members of society. In his book, *History on Trial*, Gary Nash asks:

> [c]an there be any grand narrative more powerful, coherent, democratic, and inspiring than the struggles of groups that have suffered discrimination, exploitation, and hostility but have overcome passivity and resignation to challenge their exploiters, fight for legal rights, resist and cross racial boundaries, and hence embrace and advance the American credo "all men are created equal? (p. 101)

He explains that including groups such as enslaved Africans, Native Americans, women, immigrant laborers and others only as victims denies their full humanity. Nash (1989) also argues that presenting history only from the perspective of the majority immediately disengages many students. In addition to academically disengaging marginalized students, the majority narrative also robs students of a sense of belonging. When traditionally marginalized groups are not presented as having an active role in the nation's history, members do not consider themselves or their group as being a part of this nation. Dewey (1916) expressed a similar sentiment. He explained that when individuals believe they are a sharer or partner, they take ownership of the successes and failures of the group, possess the emotional attitude of the group, and subsequently the individual's beliefs and ideas will take a form akin to those of the group. Nash (1989) also challenges the "biographical/great men approach" to history found in a majority of history textbooks.

Nash (1989) insists that excluding the stories of ordinary people to focus only on those in power provides an inaccurate and incomplete version of history. He asserts that fabrication of an

elitist history for a democratic society has been challenged by a small number of historians for at least a century, but the closest that history, as a profession, came to an inclusive approach was during the Progressive period in the early twentieth century. During this period, historians argued for the role of ordinary people in history, but they did not give any attention to gender or race. Moreover, Nash (1989) states the principle of inclusiveness is key to a democratically constructed history, and the difference between contemporary historians and the historians of the early twentieth century is that present-day historians are not only focused on the issues of class, but also the issues of gender and race. He concludes, "[t]he guiding assumption today is that students can truly learn about the historical processes that have produced present-day societies only when they understand the roles played by all constituent parts of the society under study" (Nash 1989, p. 239). He describes how the complex interaction of the "elite and nonelite" and social, political, and religious movements driven by agendas that changed and displaced leaders should be at the center of national history. Additionally, Evans (2004) speaks to inclusiveness as he highlights a multicultural approach to social studies education. He explains that a multicultural education based on the deliberate inclusion of stories, literature, and perspectives of diverse groups in curriculum and textbooks can assist in the creation of a more equitable society (Evans, 2004). Unfortunately, there are several philosophical and systemic challenges that impede teachers' ability to enact a democratic or multicultural curriculum.

Classroom Implications

Although there are barriers to a more inclusive curriculum, multicultural curriculum inherently complements the field of social studies education. A critical examination of social studies and social studies curriculum exposes a field that philosophically may be in direct conflict with itself. Debates surrounding the aim or purpose of social studies have ensued since

the development of the first social studies curriculum by the Committee of Ten in 1894 (Evans, 2004; Nelson, 2001; Ross, 2006a). Different philosophies and beliefs guide different "camps" in their quests to have control or influence over social studies curriculum (Evans, 2004). These camps promote divergent approaches to social studies education. Some of the more conservative camps push for traditional or Eurocentric content and/or a standards based approach, while some of the more progressive camps promote a more issue-centered, multicultural, and critical thinking approach (Thornton, 2008). Both the formal and enacted curriculum are effected by whichever camp was most influential at different points in history (DeLeon & Ross, 2010). Currently, the standards movement has the most influence on social studies curriculum (Beane & Apple, 2007; Ravitch, 2010; Thornton, 2008). It is the job of social studies educators to reconcile the competing factors associated with curricular change (Thornton, 2008).

The standards movement is an attempt to centralize curriculum at the local, state and national levels. Most curriculum-centralization efforts assume that instruction can be separated from the curricular goals and objectives (Ross, 2006b). Levstik (2008) critiques the changes in social studies classrooms since the early 1990s. She explains how restructuring, integrated instruction, and high-stakes testing have had a negative effect on social studies. Because high-stakes tests focus on reading and math, the time devoted to social studies curriculum has declined especially in elementary grades. Frequently, social studies are swallowed into integrated reading programs (Levstik, 2008). Crocco and Thornton (2002) conducted a study where they examined restructured classrooms in New York City Schools. They found that the restructuring had an inconsistent effect on social studies in urban secondary schools due to less experienced teachers, more fragmented curriculum, and goals that were slanted for English language arts. Simultaneously, there was less teacher monitoring while teachers were expected to handle more

complex interdisciplinary instruction (Crocco & Thornton, 2002). DeLeon and Ross (2010) note how accountability systems, such as high-stakes testing threatens diversity in the formal and enacted curriculum.

Race and Racism in Social Studies

Race is a defining social characteristic in the United States (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gordon, 1995), meaning race has social and economic implications. Gordon (1995) notes, "the economic, political, and social configurations of a racialized society impact directly on the economic, political, and social existence of individual members of that society" (p. 189). In other words, the economic, political and social existence of people of color are different due to race and experiences in those realms are guided by race.

Instead of highlighting how racism has enabled a reproduction of the social and economic class systems in the United States, social studies curriculum focuses on reinforcing the ideology that the United States is a true meritocracy (Ross, 2006). Contemporary and historical social studies curriculum has and continues to ignore the role of race and racism in the current conditions of society (Howard, 2003). Moreover, social studies curriculum as expressed in textbooks is a powerful instrument in supporting ideology that detours Americans from critically examining flawed American institutions (Loewen, 1996; Ross, 2006).

According to Ladson-Billings (2003), the NCSS policy and position statements highlight little about race and racism except for the multicultural education curriculum guidelines. There is no statement explicitly integrating race and racism in the NCSS standards; they subside under the rubrics of "prejudice" and "discrimination." Designing the rubrics in this manner supports the belief that educators should address the attitudes and behaviors but not the structural and ideological groundings where they originate (Ladson-Billings, 2003). Marshall (2003) claims

that NCSS has purposefully promoted a deracialized citizen education agenda. He reveals that position statements issued by NCSS during and since the 1980s are silent of the issues race and racism and its effects on education and citizenship.

According to Howard (2003), the issues of race and racism have been absent from most social studies discourse, research, and scholarship. Critical Race Theory (CRT) allows scholars to inquire about the relationship between racism and inequity in education. Howard (2003) believes that a critical race framework in social studies education would recognize the roles the race and racism play in American life, and it would allow race and racism to be examined in democratic citizenship. Another prominent social studies education scholar, Tyson (2003) insists that as a theoretical framework, CRT can encourage social studies to move further than the traditional boundaries of its multiple disciplines by providing a lens in which to critique it. Furthermore, Tyson (2003) explains,

> [s]ocial studies educators, particularly those involved in teaching, research, and scholarship have an opportunity to help actualize the tenets of the field by engaging in thoughtful dialogue, critical inquiry, and inclusive solution-seeking to address the role of race and racism in the pursuit of democratic citizenship. (p. 31)

CRT is a relevant avenue to start an explicit conversation in social studies education. Not many educators want to discuss race because it serves as a contradiction for American life (Ladson-Billings, 2012). Ladson-Billings (2012) also argues that social studies educators display a deeply disconnected account of people who are not White.

Controversial Issues in the Classroom

In a broader context, Brown and Brown (2011) explain that race is a sociocultural factor that is challenging and complex to understand. Because it is a complicated and highly charged issue, it is not often addressed in schools. Brown and Brown argue that despite the limitations of curriculum knowledge about African Americans, teachers can employ pedagogical practices that help students embrace important perspectives about the history of race and racism. Moreover, U.S. History is an ideal space to explore the issues of race and racism.

There has been a debate about how marginalized groups have been represented in official school curriculum (Brown & Brown, 2011; Zimmerman, 2004). Brown and Brown (2011) also argue,

> the current situation exemplified by limited textbook content about race, racism, and social justice—unless supplemented with other critical texts or additional knowledge presented by the teacher—is inadequate, yet it is likely employed unquestioningly by many teachers (both White or Black) as they enter and serve in our schools. (p. 9)

While Brown and Brown (2011) recognize that all students benefit from a curriculum that critically engages race and racism, they highlight the obstacles that inhibit many teachers from approaching the topics. First, Brown and Brown note that some teachers feel uncomfortable teaching about race. This lack of comfort derives from a lack of sociocultural knowledge about race and racism and the difficulties that teacher education programs encounter while preparing preservice teachers to teach critically and promote social justice. Second, there is an assumption that the topics of race and racism are controversial and inappropriate for young learners (Brown & Brown, 2011). Brown and Brown (2011) cite a study by Hughes, Bigler, and Levy (2007) which

found that White and African American students both developed more positive attitudes toward African Americans, while African Americans did not develop more negative attitudes toward Whites.

Brown and Brown (2011) present ways in which teachers can address race and racism in social studies. They contend that teachers can draw from textbook knowledge to engage in discussions about race and racism alongside traditional social studies content knowledge. Teachers in the U.S. can engage students in discussions about race by having students read directly from the text and then participate in a discussion about the meaning, assumptions, and implications of race. Brown and Brown also highlight contemporary texts and how they can be a starting point to critically examine race. Additionally, making space for students to identify the individuals or groups of individuals who participated in, actively and passively, or supported racism or racial violence towards marginalized people and how they may have advanced or benefitted from the actions (Brown & Brown, 2011). Moreover, Brown and Brown explain how fictionalized books that target racism can supplement textbooks. This approach allows students to contemplate how victims of racism and racial violence challenge these actions.

Teachers can also have students discuss contemporary instances of racism through the use of newspapers and other forms of print media. Analyzing current media will allow students to make a connection between their everyday life and school curriculum (DeLeon, 2006). Requesting that students bring current race-related articles will assist students in a more critical analysis of the impact of race in the U.S. (Brown & Brown, 2011). Race-reflective journaling is another method that teachers can use to address race and racism. Teachers can ask students to use pictures and words to express their understandings about race and racism (Milner, 2003). According to Brown

and Brown (2011), "through questioning and inquiry, teachers and students recognize the relationship between their own social realities and those from the past" (p. 11).

Childs (2014) asks, "Can public schools be sites whereby students and teachers critically engage the topics of race? Can middle grades and secondary social studies classrooms facilitate such controversial topics?" (p. 291). Childs suggests that using popular culture as a catalyst for a critical examination of race is an effective strategy to engage students in a critical analysis of race. Teachers can use pop culture to examine racial stereotypes in the U.S. and the impact the media has on their worldviews and identity. Moreover, teachers can promote conversations surrounding racial identity by preparing prompts and questions focused on representations of race in the media and entertainment industry (Childs, 2014). There are several tools that can be utilized when discussing popular culture. Texts can be used as a tool for discussion, debate, and teaching students to support their ideas using valid arguments. Students can create their own popular culture artifacts (i.e., comic strip or mock radio broadcasts) to gain a deeper understanding of history (Childs, 2014). Popular music can be integrated into the social studies classroom to promote efficacy and activism. Music can also strengthen teaching and learning by connecting songs to historical periods, current events, cultural identity, social issues, and foster historical thinking more effectively than many other primary sources (Childs, 2014; Pellegrino, 2013; White & McCormack, 2006).

Branch (2003) highlights several reasons that teachers fail to address race and racism in social studies classrooms. The first reason is a fear of race. Among preservice and public school teachers there is evidence they fear the topics of race and racism. Some teachers may fear teaching race as a result of negative experiences, while uncertainty about racism and fear of being offensive or racist may prevent others from teaching it (Bolgatz, 2005; Branch, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 1995).

Branch (2003) explains another reason that teachers fail to address race and racism is because they adopt a "color-blind perspective" and the fear of race can lead to taking this position. The color-blind perspective is an attempt to ignore the influence of race in society, where individuals deny that they see race or that race has any bearing on the decisions that they make (Branch, 2003). This perspective can have devastating effects on children (Branch, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Schofield, 1997; Tate, 1997). Ladson-Billings (1995) contends that ignoring race is ignoring reality.

A race-less consciousness, which is an element of CRT, is a third reason that teachers do not address race and racism. The consciousness of people of color is different from Whites because of the ongoing experiences of racism that people of color encounter (Delgado, 1998; Tate, 1997). White people rarely experience acts of racism, while minorities experience them often, therefore "since Whites are not targets in the systematic oppression called racism, it is reasonable that they would not understand the importance of making sure children of color and White children understood the devastating effects of racism" (Branch, 2003, p. 112).

Interest convergence is another principal of Critical Race Theory which lends understanding to why teachers may not address race and racism. Interest convergence is the idea that "white elites will tolerate or encourage racial advances for blacks only when they also promote white self-interest" (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv). Bell (1995) explains "the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites" (p. 22). Any corrective actions that are taken are those that will not harm and most likely promote the interests of the White middle and upper classes (Bell, 1995). It is reasonable to question if teachers do not see their best interests in critically examining the social norms that create an identity of superiority in Whites and inferiority in people of color (Branch, 2003).

Branch (2003) believes that high stakes testing is also a factor that prevents many teachers from addressing race and racism in the classroom. A focus on testing does not translate to higher academic achievement for all students. Branch (2003) states,

> This focus on high stakes testing to the deprivation of social studies content will have devastating results measured in the lack of knowledge, skills, and decision-making ability in each of the ten themes in the national standards for the social studies. Not the least of what students will lack is valuable and necessary instruction in race, racism, and race-relations. (p. 116)

As high stakes testing replaces critical and higher levels of thinking, opportunities for students to learn about race and racism in the schools becomes much less likely.

Finally, a major reason that teachers do not address race and racism in the classroom is a lack of sociocultural knowledge. There are many institutional factors that inhibit the study of race and racism, but the biggest barrier is a lack of sociocultural knowledge. Schools are in important setting for students to acquire sociocultural knowledge but teachers often avoid dealing with the issue of race. Frequently, teachers present the topic as benign or non-contentious, or teach about it in non-critical ways that reinforce White privilege (Brown, 2011; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Epstein 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1997).

Several researchers have noted the reasons and benefits of a social studies curriculum that addresses race and racism. First, social studies educators are the most logical choice to theorize and offer strategies on how to discuss differences in order to eliminate racist attitudes and discrimination (Howard, 2004). Moreover, all students benefit from a classroom curriculum that critically engages race and racism (Brown & Brown, 2011). Social, economic, and political history

illustrate how race has been used to rationalize inequity and oppression, and social studies can be the foundation for unlearning that racism (Ladson-Billings, 2003). Ladson-Billings (2003) argues,

> the historical, social, economic, and political records provide compelling blueprints for the way the nation has recruited the concept of race to justify hierarchy, inequity, and oppression. The social studies can serve as a curricular home for unlearning the racism that has confounded us a nation. (p. 8)

Social studies is uniquely situated to unlearn racism and critically challenge the inequities and oppression.

In order to change racial attitudes and the manifestations of those attitudes in the U.S., it must be acknowledged that our fundamental institutions assist in reproducing racism. Banks (1995) explains, "by the late 19th century, rigid and racist ideas about inherited characteristics of different racial groups were codified in established social science in the United States" (p. 20). Helping students navigate the process of understanding other races is necessary due to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the U.S. (Banks, 2006; Howard, 2004).

Multicultural curriculum potentially helps students to develop the skills to examine issues of power, difference, and social justice (Sleeter, 2002). Students must have a deeper, more critical understanding and analysis of history (Loewen, 2007). The study of race and racism is an integral piece to understanding history. "The guiding assumption today is that students can truly learn about the historical processes that have produced present-day societies only when they understand the roles played by all constituents parts of the society under study" (Nash 1989, p. 239). These benefits of a social studies curriculum that addresses race and racism should not be limited to a traditional brick and mortar classroom. 21st century learning is bringing many students out of a traditional setting and providing them alternative mediums to experience K-12 classes. As

educators push for curriculum that is inclusive of multiple perspectives, it is important that educators examine and hold accountable the new frontier of education, virtual learning.

Related Studies

In a review of studies related to this research, no studies were found that critically examined virtual U.S. history curriculum through a content analysis with a specific focus on race and racism. There are multiple studies that used content analysis to critically examine official social studies curriculum and several of the studies are summarized in the following discussion. Scott and Yonghee (2015) performed a qualitative and quantitative content analysis which focused on manifest and latent content in the text. They used several sources of data which included the Virginia Standards of Learning for Civics and U.S. Government, three civics textbooks used in Virginia middle schools, and three government textbooks used in Virginia high schools. Scott and Yonghee (2015) found that curriculum standards and textbooks disregarded the importance of civic purpose for the common good. Hilburn, Journell, and Buchanan (2016) used Critical Race Methodology to perform a content analysis on secondary standards from 18 states. Hilburn et al. found that traditional gateway states have more references to immigration, and immigration standards were more overtly favorable in traditional gateway states. They also found that immigration was more often presented as an historical issue and not a civic or political issue. Suh, An, and Forest (2015) performed a content analysis on eight U.S. history textbooks. The textbooks were middle and high school levels, officially adopted, and widely used in the state of Virginia. Suh et al. found that Asian Americans were mainly represented in three historical periods: 1850-1924, 1939-1945, and 1965 to the present. Although Asian Americans were present throughout American history, it is not presented as such in the U.S. history textbooks. Other studies show similar findings on other racial groups.

Schocker and Woyshner (2013) conducted a content analysis of images in an African American textbook and found that African American women made up less than 15% of the images in the text, while images of African American women made up 30-50% of the text of two mainstream U.S. history textbooks. Anderson and Metzger (2011) performed a text analysis on U.S. History content standards by analyzing Michigan, New Jersey, South Carolina, and Virginia U.S. History standards for African American representation. The researchers found that although the standards allot adequate space to include African Americans during the development of the United States, the inclusion is superficial and minimizes institutional slavery racial hierarchy. Although the previously described studies critically examine official curriculum in the form of textbooks and standards, this study focuses on the emerging relevance of virtual curriculum.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study is grounded in Critical Race Theory, which places race at the center of analysis when dissecting social issues (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Through qualitative content analysis, the curriculum of Georgia Virtual Schools' online U.S. History course is examined to determine the degree of inclusivity of race and racism and the experiences and perspectives of people of color. This chapter begins with an introduction to qualitative research. I then discuss a brief history of content analysis (Berg, 2009; Berg & Lune, 2012; Krippendorff, 2013; Shapiro & Markoff, 1997) and how qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000; McDonald et al., 2009; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999; Schreier, 2012) can be a beneficial tool to investigate how students can interpret or create meaning from online curriculum. I follow with a description and explanation of qualitative content analysis, research design, procedure and guiding questions for data analysis. Next, I consider validity, reliability, and limitations. I conclude with describing my subjectivity as the researcher in this study.

Qualitative Research

This study is a qualitative study. Qualitative research is a vague term. Schram (2006) states, "[o]ne point on which most researchers would agree is that qualitative inquiry is much more challenging to define than it is simply to identify" (p. 1). Goetz and LeCompte (1991) point out that qualitative research is a loosely defined category of research. For this study, I used the four identifying characteristics described by Merriam (2009) to define qualitative research. Merriam (2009) describes a qualitative study as, first, a focus on meaning and understanding, namely, understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspective. The second characteristic of qualitative research is the researcher acts as a primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Because the goal of qualitative research is to gain understanding, a

human instrument is an ideal means to collect and analyze data considering humans can be responsive and adaptive. The third characteristic of qualitative research is that it is an inductive process which means researchers gather data to construct concepts and hypotheses. Information from multiple sources of data is combined to derive themes. Additionally, a richly descriptive final product is another characteristic of qualitative research. Merriam (2009) adds, "qualitative researchers are interested in *understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13).

The broad definition yet complex methods of qualitative research allow for various types of studies and enable researchers to explore a problem and redefine it on the way to the answer. Due to the nature of the research, a qualitative study is the best choice to yield meaningful results. My study is grounded in Critical Race Theory, which puts race at the center of analysis when dissecting social issues (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Because race is a social construct, which means people give the term its meaning, a qualitative study is the most appropriate method to assess the role of race in educational settings. I am examining how the curriculum of an online U.S. History course address race and racism and the inclusiveness of the experiences and perspectives of people of color, therefore, a qualitative study allows me to uncover any agenda that is disguised through numbers and statistics. For example, in an examination of a textbook chapter or section, the frequency or abundance of specific terms or references to events does not reveal the meaning that the text conveys to students or how students might interpret or understand the text. To deconstruct and reconstruct the messages that online curriculum materials send to students in order to understand how students might interpret these messages, I must analyze how word choice and content choice construct the way in which students interpret history and society. There are details that lie within phrasing, word choice, sentence structure,

tone, and content selection that researchers cannot fully explain using quantitative methods. A qualitative study allows me to highlight themes in curriculum standards and analyze the ways students interact with the material.

Case Study Research

A case study is one method of qualitative research. According to Merriam (2009) and Yin (2009), a case study is an in-depth analysis of a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context. One common misconception of a case study is that all data collection must be qualitative. On the contrary, quantitative data collection in a case study might inform and strengthen the results (Goetz & LeCompte, 1991). A case study is an analysis of a case or bounded system, not a topic, and there are four functions of a case study that can assist when deciding whether a case study is an appropriate method: (1) a case study explains a causal relationship that is too complex to be identified by surveys; (2) a case study will describe an intervention in its real-world context; (3) a case study will allow researchers to illustrate an evaluation (provide an in-depth description); and (4) a case study will enlighten an intervention that has more than one possible single or set of outcomes (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). The case or bounded system that was examined in this study is the U.S. History curriculum for Georgia Virtual School.

Researchers typically use case studies when they want to answer "how" or "why" research questions. Case studies are designed to examine phenomena with complex relationships or variables. Contemporary events, interventions, or other phenomena are usually analyzed through a case study (Merriam, 2009; Schram, 2006; Yin 2009). Yin (2009) contends that case study is preferred in examining contemporary events when relevant behaviors cannot be

manipulated. Although the topics of race and racism date back to the beginning of U.S. History, the issues of race, racism, and inclusion continue to be contemporary issues.

Yin (2009) outlines six primary methods of data collection involved with a case study, which are documentation, archival records, observation, participant observation, interviews, and physical artifact. Documentation can come in the form of email correspondence, letters, calendars, agendas, meeting minutes, lesson plans, or any other noted form of communication. Documentation can help to support the analysis of data collected by other methods like interviews. Yin (2009) cautions researchers when searching for and using documentation. He notes that with access to so many documents on the internet, it is easy to acquire too much documentation and waste time with unimportant data. The documentation I used for this study was shared content curriculum. The curriculum documents collected for this study were those that are shared content for all Georgia public school students and teachers.

Yin (2009) explains why the role of the researcher in a case study is extremely important. First, the researcher is directly responsible for the data collection, so it is imperative that the researcher focuses on his or her line of inquiry in a case study. Additionally, to preserve the integrity of the study, the researcher must attend to asking unbiased questions. Saldana (2009) counters this by stating "It is impossible to be an 'objective' evaluator, but it is possible to be systematic in your collection and analysis of data to assess merit and worth" (p. 101). Lastly, the researcher must be a vicarious investigator of documentation, archival records, and physical artifact. Since the documents and records collected for analysis were intended for a different audience, the researcher must be sure to assess the accuracy (Yin, 2009).

Content Analysis

Berg (2009) suggests that content analysis is a "beneficial procedure for assessing events or processes in social groups when public records exist," and it is useful in exploratory and descriptive studies (p. 365). Various researchers provide descriptions to the arguably vague term content analysis. With the growth of technology, media, and communication, many researchers focus their efforts on how "humans read texts, rearticulate texts, or justify actions informed by the reading of text" (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 1003). Berg (2009) explains that, in content analysis, artifacts of social communication are investigated (Berg, 2009). Berg (2009) also describes content analysis as a "systematic examination and interpretation," which is performed on different types of human communication to uncover themes, patterns and meanings. Similar to several other research methods, there are slight variations in descriptions and definitions, but for this study I use a recognized and broad definition of content analysis as "any methodological measurement applied to text (or other symbolic material) for social science purposes" (Shapiro & Markoff, 1997, p. 14).

Some researchers conduct content analysis through quantitative data collecting methods, which include counting the frequency of terms, number of words devoted to a particular topic, size of the text or any other quantifiable characteristics of a particular text (Berg & Lune, 2012, Krippendorff, 2013). Researchers, such as Berelson (1952), Silverman (2006), and Burns and Grove (2005), believe that content analysis should be considered a quantitative method, while other researchers caution that purely quantitative methods in content analysis limits the scope of the data (Berg, 2009). Alternatively, a blend of quantitative and qualitative analysis is possible, for example, Abrahamson (1983) insists that content analysis can focus on qualitative or quantitative qualities of the materials.

A solely quantitative approach to content analysis would not yield appropriate data for my research problem because it is the qualitative characteristics of the content that reveal the messages that the sender is communicating to U.S. History students. Krippendorff (2013) explains,

> For analysts seeking specific political information, quantitative indicators are extremely insensitive and shallow. Even where large amounts of quantitative data are available, as required for statistical analyses, these tend not to lead to the "most obvious" conclusions that political experts would draw from qualitative interpretations of textual data. (p. 791)

On the contrary, incorporating aspects of both qualitative and quantitative analysis could yield data that is beneficial to my study. I focus my research on the qualitative aspects of the curriculum, but I took into account and explored any descriptive aspect that proves to be significant.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Various researchers have set forth characteristics for qualitative content analysis. Schreier (2014) describes three key features that characterize qualitative content analysis. The first key feature is reducing the amount of material. Researchers performing qualitative content analysis should focus on selected aspects of meaning which become categories. When researchers define the categories, they do not focus on the specifics of any particular part; rather, they focus on the meaning of a particular part which will apply to more than one passage (McDonald et al., 2009; Schreier, 2012). Although researchers lose concrete information during this process, they can compare different parts of the material.

A second key feature of qualitative content analysis is that it is systematic. A systematic approach requires that the researcher examine all parts of the material that is relevant to the research question. It also requires that the researcher follow certain specific steps. The third key feature is flexibility. The percentage of content-driven categories and data-driven categories depends on the study. Thus the coding frame matches the material (Schreier, 2014). Schreier's (2014) key features of qualitative analysis compare to Mayring's (2000) model for qualitative content analysis.

Mayring's (2000) model for qualitative content analysis relies on several central points. First, researchers must fit the material into a model of communication by deciding on what part of the communication that inferences should be made in regards to experiences and opinions of the communicator, text production, sociocultural background or the effect of the message. Researchers must establish a system and analyze the material according to the steps of the system. The research question should guide the text interpretation and text categories which are created and revised in the analysis process. Additionally, procedures for qualitative content analysis are adapted depending on the content and subjects. Mayring (2000) suggests that researchers perform a pilot study to verify the instruments, and use theoretical stringency to guide the research. Moreover, the research design should include quantitative steps of analysis when attempting to generalize the results (Mayring, 2000). Before researchers call on the key features of qualitative content analysis to design their study, they must first decide what type of content that they will use (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003).

Nature of Content

The first and one of the most basic questions when performing qualitative content analysis is whether to choose manifest or latent content (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003).

Manifest content deals with the visible and most obvious components of the text, while latent content involves an analysis and interpretation of the meaning of the text. Both types of content involve interpretation but at different levels (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003). To explicitly define and describe the methodology that I use for this study, I refine the analysis to latent content. With manifest content, the focus is on physically present, countable data, while latent content analysis pursues an understanding of the meaning underneath the physical data (Berg, 2012). Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) state, "[m]anifest content is that which is on the surface and easily observable, such as the appearance of a particular word in a written text, the gender of a character in a film, or certain behaviors (blinking eyes, scratching head) in interpersonal conversations" (p. 259). The authors proceed to explain how researchers go further than manifest content to analyze the latent content that moves the focus to the underlying meaning of a message. The analysis of latent content is necessary for this study because it is the symbolism, the underlying meaning of the text, and the messages the curriculum directs to students that I aim to assess.

Latent content analysis is also divided into two categories, which are pattern content and projective content. Pattern content focuses on actual patterns found in the content, while projective content focuses on the meaning of the content (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) explain that both pattern and projective content depend on content cues and coder schema, the difference is which they give priority to. Researchers utilizing pattern content prioritize the content displaying an objective pattern that all coders should uncover, whereas researchers utilizing projective content prioritize coders judgment and "pre-existing mental schema" to evaluate the meaning of the content (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein 1999, p. 259). Because this study focuses on the messages that students interpret

from curriculum, it is based on projective content. If the locus of meaning generally falls in the way that people construct judgments from clues in the data, then the study focuses on the progressive form of latent data (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

Role of Theory

As previously noted, the theoretical framework that shapes this study is Critical Race Theory which is a race-based critique of society and social institutions. CRT provides its users with a theoretical tool to eradicate racism. As previously noted, race is a defining social characteristic in the United States (Gordon, 1995;Ladson-Billings, 1998), meaning race has social and economic implications. These implications foretell that the economic, political and social existence of people of color are different due to race and experiences in those realms are guided by their race (Gordon, 1995).

Theory can play one of three roles in content analysis which is inductive, deductive, and no role. Because I began my analysis with a theory, theory plays a deductive role in my study. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) notes, "[a] formal scientific theory can guide the development of the coding scheme by focusing the designers on certain concepts and helping them derive coding rules and values by the way the concepts are defined in the theory" (p. 262). In the deductive role, theory is used to form the coding scheme.

Performing Content Analysis

As previously noted, qualitative content analysis is a systematic procedure. There are basic steps in which researchers follow to perform a content analysis. Since various researchers highlight the number and descriptions of the steps differently, Figure 1 displays the suggested steps of Schreier (2014), and Berg (2009).

Schreier (2012)	Berg (2009)
1. Deciding on a research question. 2. Selecting Material 3. Building a coding frame. 4. Segmentation. 5. Trial coding. 6. Evaluating and modifying the coding frame. 7. Main analysis. 8. Presenting and interpreting the findings (p. 174).	1. Identify Research Question 2. Determine Analytic Categories (sociological constructs) 3. Read through Data and Establish Grounded Categories (open and axial coding) 4. Determine Systematic (objective) Criteria of Selection for Sorting Data Chunks into Analytic and Grounded Categories 5. Begin Sorting the Data into the Various Categories 6. Count entries for descriptive statistics and review materials in categories seeking patterns. 7. Consider patterns in light of literature/theory, offer and explanation (analysis) of the findings, and relate the analysis to the existing literature (p. 362).

Figure 1: Qualitative Content Analysis Process

Although the researchers name and describe the steps differently, the processes are similar. Both researchers begin the process with a research question, explain how important it is to select the appropriate material and proceed to building the coding frame through the development of categories. After building the coding frame, the data is sorted and categorized, analyzed and interpreted.

As noted in chapter one, my research questions are as follows:

1. How inclusive is an online U.S. History curriculum to the perspectives of people of color?

2. To what extent is race, systemic racism, and its social and economic impact on Black people addressed in an online U.S. History curriculum?

After establishing the research questions, I selected appropriate material. Graneheim and Lundman (2003) suggests units of analysis that are "large enough to be considered a whole and small enough to be possible to keep in mind as a context for the meaning unit, during the analysis process" (p. 106) For this study, I have chosen material from the Georgia Virtual School online programs: Georgia Virtual School. The Georgia Department of Education's Curriculum and Instruction Division's program, Georgia Virtual School (GAVS), is SACS CASI (Southern Association of College and School Improvement) accredited. Georgia Virtual School offers middle and high school level courses to students across the state of Georgia with over 100 course offerings. Students attend class in a virtual environment which is teacher led. Currently, 150 Georgia school districts use GAVS, they employ 250 teachers, and during the 2014-2015 school year, GAVS served 30,000 students. GAVS partners with schools (public, private and home schools) to provide students with opportunities to augment their coursework. (http://gavirtualschool.org). Selecting appropriate material is imperative to the coding process (Schreier, 2014).

Saldana (2009) notes that coding is the process between data collection and data analysis. To code any material, a coding frame must be developed. Coding frames are used to organize data and identify findings (Berg, 2009; David & Sutton, 2004). After selecting materials to code, researchers must structure and generate categories, define the categories, revise and expand the frame if needed (Schreier, 2014). Schreier (2014) notes that the coding frame is the foundation of

content analysis and it consists of at least one main category and two subcategories. Categories can be decided inductively, deductively, or a combination of both (Berg, 2009; Mayring, 2000; Strauss, 1987). Using an inductive approach, researchers immerse themselves in the material to determine the themes that are meaningful to the authors of the material, while a deductive approach requires the researcher to use a categorical theme informed by a theoretical perspective where the documents lend a medium to evaluate a hypothesis (Berg, 2009). Often, both inductive and deductive approaches are necessary to analyze the messages through a theoretical perspective (Berg, 2009). Berg (2009) notes "As with all research methods, conceptualization and operationalization necessarily involve an interaction between theoretical concerns and empirical observations" (p. 350). I used a deductive approach by applying Critical Race Theory to create categories, while I used an inductive approach by applying grounded theory to create additional categories derived from the data.

Coding frames can vary in the number of main categories and the number of hierarchical levels. Therefore, content must meet certain requirements in order to be placed on one level or the other (Schreier, 2014). Schreier (2014) explains that main categories have the requirement of unidimensionality. This means that a main category can only cover one aspect of the material or one concept. She proceeds to define sub-categories as mutually exclusive. This means that a unit can only be coded once under each main category. Lastly, there is a requirement of exhaustiveness which means that all relevant aspects of the content are bound to a category. This insures that all parts of the material are represented by the coding frame (Schreier, 2014).

Berg (2009) describes the three main procedures used to develop classes and categories in standard content analysis. The first procedure identifies common classes of a culture. These are classes used by anyone in a particular society to differentiate between events, people, and

things. Demographic information is an example of common classes. Special classes is the second procedure with designated classifications used by certain communities or professions. Within the special class method, there is an out-group and an in-group classification. The out-group classification refers to labels used by the broader community, while in-group classification refers to labels used among a specific group. Theoretical class is the final procedure used to develop classes and categories. These are classifications that emerge while analyzing the data (Berg, 2009; Schatzman & Stauss, 1973). Developing categories is foundational for content analysis, but it is not the first step.

The first step in building a coding frame is choosing and appropriate amount of material. The material should express the entire scope of the data sources (Schreier, 2014). Schreier (2014) argues that breaking the material into "chunks" and coding each "chunk" is a better method than trying to build the frame in one step by coding the material as a whole. To have material that is representative of my whole collection of data, I selected all units from the GAVS U.S. History curriculum for my first research question and Unit 6- Unit 10 for the second research question. The content units range from 8 to 15 pages when converted to PDF files. The unit key terms range from one to two pages when converted to PDF files.

After selecting materials to build the coding frame, the next step is to determine the analytic categories. Researchers develop analytic categories according to the themes or category labels of the data chunks. This process starts with what Berg (2009) calls open coding and what Saldana (2009) describes as first-round coding. There are seven coding methods that may be used during the first cycle of coding: Grammatical, Affective, Literary and Language, Exploratory, Procedural and Themeing the Data. Saldana (2009) provides a checklist to aid in selecting the appropriate method to apply to a particular qualitative research study.

Categories can derive from links to the research question or from reading the literature (Berg, 2009). Schreier (2014) refers to this step as structuring. Structuring is the creation of the main categories. Saldana (2009) reveals that methodologists suggest that researchers have a provisional list of codes before the first round of coding in order to coordinate with the theoretical framework and enable the researcher to answer the research questions.

After creating the main categories through structuring, the researcher creatse sub-categories, which is the creation of sub-categories (Schreier, 2014). Berg (2009) explains this step as establishing the grounded categories. Schreier (2014) clarifies that two steps can be done in a concept-driven method or a data-driven method. In a concept-driven method, researchers base category classifications on prior knowledge, research or theory. In a data-driven method, researchers create categories by examining the materials. Schreier (201) highlights subsumption and successive summarizing as two strategies to create the data-driven method. After the main categories have been established, subsumption requires examining each passage while observing the recommended process as follows:

1. Reading the material until a relevant concept is encountered.

2. Checking whether a subcategory that covers this concept has already been created.

3. If so, mentally "subsuming" this under the respective subcategory.

4. If not, creating a new subcategory that covers this concept.

5. Continuing to read until the next relevant concept/passage is encountered. (Schreier 2014, p. 176)

Researchers should continue this process until they reach saturation which is the point that no new concepts can be found (Saldana, 2009; Schreier, 2014). Mayring (2010) notes that successive summarizing is an appropriate strategy for developing coding frames. In this strategy,

the researcher paraphrases relevant passages deleting unnecessary information, summarizes related paraphrases, and turns the summaries into categories and subcategories (Schreier, 2014).

After establishing a coding frame with main categories and sub-categories, researchers should define the categories by selecting objective criteria (Berg, 2009; Schreier, 2014). Berg (2009) notes that the purpose of selecting objective criteria is to provide explicit definitions or rules for each category and subcategory. Schreier (2014) suggests that category descriptions should consist of category names, descriptions, examples, and decision rules. Category names should be a brief description of what the category refers to. Descriptions embody two parts which are definition and indicators. The definition explains what is meant by a category and the characteristics of the category. Indicators are ways to recognize a phenomenon which can be words or the manner in which the phenomenon manifests in the data. Concrete examples from the material can help to illustrate category definitions. Decision rules are optional, but they help ensure that subcategories are mutually exclusive when coders may be undecided when categorizing data (Schreier, 2014).

After establishing the criteria for selections, researchers proceed to sort the data (Berg, 2009; Schreier, 2014). Berg (2009) explains the many ways that this can be achieved. Researchers can create a tally sheet and note the location of the appropriate data under each category. Researchers can also cut and label the text and physically put it in a categorical box. There are also electronic methods of sorting data which include computer programs that allow researchers to create categories and locate texts (Berg, 2009).

During the phase where researchers sort the data, Schreier (2014) describes the process of revising and expanding the coding frame. Researchers should look at subcategories to see if any should be collapsed or if any would better serve as main categories. This change in categories

could lead to a revision of the coding frame. As researchers move forward with sorting each part of the material, they should continue to go through the steps and determine if additional main categories or subcategories are necessary. If so, the categories are defined and included in the coding frame. This process is repeated as every new part of the material goes through the data sorting process (Schreier, 2014).

Instrumentation

Data analysis took place in two phases. The instruments used for this study consisted of two coding frames. I developed one frame for each of my research questions. I refer to the two frames as Coding Frame One and Coding Frame Two, and they align to the research questions previously noted respectively. For the first research question, which addresses inclusiveness of the perspectives of people of color, I read through the entire GAVS U.S. History curriculum seeking references to people of color and analyzing the depth of the reference. For example, I examined each reference for superficiality, a statement or passage about their specific involvement in a historical event, or a targeted inclusion of the perspective, significance, and impact on individual members and the group as a whole. For the second research question, I examine the GAVS U.S. History curriculum that covers the period of Reconstruction through Civil Rights seeking references to the impact of race, systemic racism, and the social and economic impact on Black Americans.

Response Categories

The categories and subcategories for each coding frame is a combination of categories created from my research questions and grounded categories that are discovered during open coding. Figure 2 and Figure 3 display the theoretical or research-based categories.

Categories	Native Americans	Asian Americans	Latino/Latina	Black Americans
Sub-categories	superficial mention	superficial mention	superficial mention	superficial mention
	statement or passage citing specific involvement	statement or passage citing specific involvement	statement or passage citing specific involvement	statement or passage citing specific involvement
	inclusion of perspective, significance or impact	inclusion of perspective, significance or impact	inclusion of perspective, significance or impact	inclusion of perspective, significance or impact

Figure 2: Coding Frame One

Categories	Systemic Racism	Social Impact	Economic Impact
Sub-categories	Racism from individuals Racism from groups Racism from Institutions	Exclusion from businesses, social groups, neighborhoods Exclusion from educational, employment opportunities Exclusion from participation in democracy Physiological/ Psychological Impact	Affects jobs/ day to day finances Affects ability to support family/ generational wealth Affects economic influence/spending power/political capital

Figure 3: Coding Frame Two

To develop the grounded categories, I used the method of Descriptive Coding during the

open coding phase. Saldana (2009) points out, "Descriptive Coding summarizes in a word or

short phrase- most often as a nouns- the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (p. 70). While using Descriptive Coding, I assigned topic names to relevant statements and passages. Once I have reached saturation, I assigned each of the codes to one of my research based categories and sub-categories or create new categories and sub-categories if needed. During this phase of coding, I added one category to the coding frame. Racial violence was added with three subcategories: violence perpetrated by individuals, violence perpetrated by groups, and violence perpetrated by individuals.

Following the first round of coding and revision of the coding frame, I conduced a second round of coding for each research question using Evaluation Coding. Evaluation Coding provides an opportunity to judge the merit of programs and policies by applying codes to qualitative data (Saldana, 2009). Rossman and Rallis (2003) reveal that evaluation data should describe, compare, and predict. Description focused on patterned observations, while comparison allows the researcher to examine how it matches the ideal, and prediction allows the researcher to make recommendations for change and implementation

Appropriateness of Instruments

Descriptive Coding method and Evaluation Coding methods are appropriate for my study for several reasons. Saldana (2009) informs that Descriptive Coding is appropriate for almost all qualitative studies and it is especially appropriate for novice qualitative researchers. Additionally, description is the foundation of qualitative inquiry (Wolcott, 1994). Because Descriptive Coding produces a categorized inventory or an index of the data's contents, it is fundamental preparation for the second round of coding, analysis, and interpretation (Wolcott, 1994). This method helps researchers to organize the study by categorizing data at a basic level (Saldana, 2009).

This study is a critical examination of U.S. History curriculum from Georgia Virtual School. Saldana (2009) explains that "Evaluation Coding is appropriate for policy, critical, action, organizational, and (of course) evaluation studies, particularly across multiple sites and extended periods of time" (p.98). Evaluation coding can develop from an evaluative perspective of the researcher and is customized for the specific study so that the coding system follows the initial questions and structure of the evaluation (Saldana, 2009). Saldana (2009) highlights that evaluation research is content specific and "all evaluation studies are case studies" (Stake 1995, p. 95).

NVivo 11 software was utilized to code the data. NVivo is used for qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis. The NVivo program allows researchers to store, organize, categorize, analyze, visualize and discover connections in data (QSRInternational, 2018). Researchers can import data from any source using NVivo and it allows researchers to ask basic to complex questions of the data (QSRInternational, 2018). Woods, Paulus, Atkins and Macklin (2016) found that the number of articles reporting qualitative data analysis software is increasing every year. Woods et al. (2016) reported 414 empirical published articles that used NVivo as the qualitative data analysis software. Freitas, Ribeiro, Brandao, Reis, Souza and Costa (2017) analyzed NVivo in terms of function and assistance and found the software provided fidelity.

Validity in Qualitative Content Analysis

Validity in qualitative content analysis differs from traditional validity that is established in quantitative studies. There are two steps in establishing validity. The first step is to generate a coding scheme that is faithful to the theory with familiarizing coders to the concepts, and the second step is to set a standard to assess the decisions made by coders (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Similarly, Poole and Folger (1981) insist that the key to validity is a good

coding scheme. Validating a coding schema differs depending on the type of content. When dealing with projective content, researchers are tasked with creating a coding scheme that leads all coders to apply the same psychological schema (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) also suggest ecological validity with projective content. Ecological validity tests if coders agree in interpretations which is derived from a common "psychological schema" (p. 268).

The second part of establishing validity, which is a standard to compare codings, also differs according to the type of content. With projective content, norm based standards and intersubjectivity are vital. Intersubjectivity is a high consistency among the subjective judgments made by coders (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Since there were be only three coders involved in the process, I examined the frequency of consistency among the two coders.

Reliability

For the results of research to be deemed valid, the data, the process, and person(s) who analyzes the results must be reliable (Krippendorff, 2013). Krippendorff explains that a study must be reliable to be valid, but reliability does not ensure validity. Additionally, he adds that in content analysis, there are three types of designs to test reliability. The three types are stability, reproducibility, and accuracy. Accuracy, which is how accurately a process complies with a standard, is the strongest reliability test, but this test is not always feasible because experts must be available to set a standard, while stability measures if the coding procedure produces the same results over time (Krippendorff, 2013).Since an accuracy test is unattainable for this study, I conducted a reproducibility test, which is the same content being coded by different coders. Two other coders coded 10% of the units of content with each coding frame. The most considerable

threat to reliability with projective content is the coders' interpretive schemes (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

Interrater Reliability Procedures.

An important criteria of qualitative content analysis is coding consistency (Schreier, 2012). Coding consistency means that the researcher consistently applies the categories to all of the material. Coding consistency can be assessed in two ways. One way is to compare two rounds of coding by two different coders, and the other is to compare two rounds of coding by the same coder at two different points in time (Schreier, 2012). To assess coding consistency, the material must be segmented before coding (Schreier, 2012).

Schreier (2012) explains "[s]egmentation involves dividing the material into units in such a way that each unit fits into exactly one (sub)category of the coding frame" and coding units are "parts of the material that can be interpreted in a meaningful way" (p. 178). Researchers should choose units that complement the categories and use a formal or thematic criteria that specifies where one unit ends, and another begins. Thematic criterion, where a unit correlates with a theme, is most useful in qualitative research and themes vary depending on the coding frame and main categories (Schreier, 2012).

The commonplace test for inter-coder reliability is two coders to code the same subset of data and directly compare their results, but Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) argue that a larger number of coders are needed to conduct a strong test of reliability especially with projective content. To maximize the degree of comparison, coders should be assigned the same material, and coder consistency should be examined using a two-way matrix in which content is stratified by differences in coding challenge and coders are stratified by differences in psychological schema related to the coding task (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

Coding consistency, which means the researcher consistently applies the categories to all of the material, is an important criteria of content analysis (Schrier, 2012). Coding consistency was assessed by comparing three rounds of coding with three different coders. Each round helped strengthen the coding frame definitions.

The first additional coder coded two units with Coding Frame One and two units with Coding Fame Two. For the first coding frame, there were seven codes total between the two coded units that did not match. In all of the references that the first additional coder coded differently, the passages did not specifically name Enslaved Africans, Freedmen, African Americans, or Blacks. In response, the sentence "[c]oding consistency means that the researcher consistently applies the categories to all of the material" was added to the definition of each of the categories for Coding Frame One. For the second coding frame, there were 13 codes total between the two coded units that did not match. In most of the references that the first additional coder, the passages did not explicitly address racism or display a consequence of racism while calling attention to it. In response, the following was added to the definitions of the categories, "[r]eferences must be explicit forms of consequences of racism. Do not include racial acts known from prior knowledge. The text must include the word racism, discrimination OR describe a specific event where a group of people suffers a consequence because of their race." After strengthening both coding frames, another round of coding was conducted with a different coder.

The next round of coding with the second additional coder proceeded differently. The second coder started by coding one content unit for each of the research questions. In this case, the second additional coder did note only the explicit references but did so every time the name of a race was stated in the text. For example, in Unit 1, the third paragraph under the heading "Lesson 2: Southern Colonies" discusses the interactions between American Indians and

Virginia colonists. In this passage, the second additional coder coded seven different references (one for each time Native American or African American was written). In the original round of coding, that entire paragraph was coded as one reference. To strengthen the coding frame, the following directions were added.

> The coding frame states that a reference is a word, phrase, sentence or passage. References should be viewed holistically. If a paragraph discusses an event regarding a race, do not count each time that it says the name of the race in the passage. Look at the most inclusive possible range that discusses the same idea. If the whole paragraph discusses an event and it mentions race, that is one reference. If there are a couple of sentences that discuss an event and it mentions race, then that is one reference. If a race is simply in a list or added to another event, that word or group of words is one reference. There might be a sentence that is coded twice because it mentions African Americans and Native Americans.

After providing the additional instructions to the coding frame, the second coder coded another unit for each research question. At the end of this round of coding, there were only two references that were coded differently from the primary researcher. Not all of the similarly coded references started and stopped at the same exact words, but the majority of the reference included the same words.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to content analysis in general. Berg (2009) explains that one of the most limiting aspects of content analysis is that it is limited to examining messages that have already been recorded. Additionally, content analysis cannot test for causal relationships amongst variables. When researchers present the frequency that a theme or pattern is detected, it is appropriate to discuss the magnitude of certain codes, but attaching cause would be inappropriate (Berg, 2009). Graneheim and Lundman (2003) contend that "reality can be interpreted in various ways and the understanding is dependent on subjective interpretation" and

they presume that "a text always involves multiple meanings and there is always some degree of interpretation when approaching a text" (p. 106).

The curriculum selected for this study only provides a glance at online U.S. History curriculums, other online curriculums used in other school districts and states may be more or less inclusive of the perspectives of people of color and address race and racism differently. Moreover, the courses selected represent a selection of U.S. History curriculum, but other social studies courses, such as American Government, Geography, World History, or Economics, may place a different amount of attention to the concepts under examination.

Researcher Positionality

As the primary instrument for this study, the disclosure of my positionality, subjectivity, and their influence on the research design is necessary. An important caveat to qualitative research is the subjectivity of the researcher which influences the design and the analysis of the qualitative data. Because I interpret meaning from text, it is important to trace the factors that may influence my interpretation.

My experience with race in education began early in my career as a student. I attended public school in one metro-Atlanta school district from Kindergarten through 12th grade. During the time that I attended this public school district, the county that was served was a county in transition in terms of demographics. When I started Kindergarten, the county and the school I attended was majority White and by time I graduated high school, the school and the county had transitioned to over half Black.

I learned quickly that at times of transition, racial tensions increase. I experienced several instances of racism from teachers and students. Although I was designated gifted in the first grade, I had teachers who did not want to treat me as a gifted student. For example, teachers tried

to keep me out of accelerated math and reading in elementary school and honors classes in high school. Fortunately, my parents were very involved in my education and always pushed for me to have the correct placement and I always performed well in those placements. As I reflect on these experiences, I think about the Black students who are not as fortunate to have parents that are able to be as involved in their educational experiences. These students are marginalized and denied access to educational opportunities that they deserve.

I am a Black educator. I have seven years of classroom experience, two years of experience coaching and supervising first-year teachers and student teachers, and I am currently in my second year as a Virtual Learning Specialist with a metro-Atlanta school district. In my classroom experiences, I have worked with social studies teachers who were unknowledgeable and insensitive to cultural differences and teachers with no desire to address the multiple perspectives, race or racism. I have also supervised student teachers with great intentions, but who lacked the sociocultural knowledge to contextualize certain historical events. Even in my years as a public school student, I recall my K-12 history classes not being inclusive in nature and sometimes uncomfortable because of the way the teacher framed the conversations surrounding slavery.

In my current role I develop and teach online social studies courses for high school students in my district. My role is similar to the person who develops and facilitates the U.S. History course under examination in this study, except my student population is restricted to one school district. As an individual who works in a similar role as the as the individual or group of people responsible for the development of the curriculum under examination, I understand the opportunities and limitations present in content development. As I completed this research, I kept

in mind the time it takes to develop quality content and the amount of time that is possibly allotted for this task.

I also have noticed a lack of sociocultural knowledge among preservice teachers and peers regarding race and racism and its historical impact on Black people and other people of color, as well as a lack of curriculum and textbook materials that highlight the impact of race and racism on American society.

Critical Race Theory provides a lens to examine current social studies practices placing race at the center of the discussion. Issues of race and racism have been absent from most social studies discourse, research, and scholarship and critical race theory allows me to inquire about racism's relationships with inequities in education. It is my positionality that influenced me to conduct this research using Critical Race Theory as my theoretical framework.

As previously discussed, in education, critical race theory is used to investigate the ways that racism can create inequality in and out of the classroom by applying five tenets. One of those tenets is a commitment to social justice (identify, analyze, and transform structural aspects of education which preserve subordinate positions inside and outside of the classroom) (Matagon, Huber & Velez, 2009). This is the tenet that drives this study. Because many researchers believe that, as a field, social studies ignores the role of race and racism in society, uncovering structural aspects of social studies curriculum and how it addresses race and racism is important. In this study, I explored GAVS U.S. History curriculum to examine how it reinforces the power structure present in society.

4 FINDINGS

This chapter highlights the findings of the qualitative content analysis. Several themes emerged through an interpretation and analysis of the meaning of the data. Those themes are illustrated with numeric descriptors in the tables below. The numeric descriptors convert into themes in the data. The number of references, types of references, and percentage of coverage in the data illustrate the quality of attention given to the perspectives of people of various racial groups and the effects of historical and contemporary racism in the U.S. History course curriculum.

Coding Frame One Definitions

The first research question, which focuses on inclusivity, was analyzed with four categories in Coding Frame One. There are three subcategories in each category. Figure 4 displays the categories, subcategories, and definitions for Coding Frame One.

Name	Description
African American (AA)	This code refers to any word, phrase, sentence or passage that mentions enslaved Africans, Freedmen, African Americans or Blacks. This code does not refer to the term slave or slavery. An individual or group of people must be explicitly identified.
AA-mention	This reference is a mention of enslaved Africans, Freedmen, African Americans or Blacks. An individual or group is referenced, but there is little significance attributed within the mention. The individual or group is the object of the sentence and not the subject.
AA-Significant	This is a word, phrase, sentence or passage providing the perspective of enslaved Africans, freedmen, African Americans or Blacks, or the impact on an individual of group of people.
AA-Specific	This is a word, phrase, sentence, or passage that refers to enslaved Africans, freedmen, African Americans or Blacks having a specific involvement in a historical event. The

Name	Description
	individual or group is the subject of the sentence or passage, not the object.
American Indian (AI)	This is a word, phrase, sentence, or passage that refers to a person or group of people of American Indian decent. An individual or group of people must be explicitly identified.
AI-mention	This is a mention of American Indians. An individual or group is referenced, but there is little significance attributed in this mention. The individual or group is the object of the sentence or the subject of a passive statement.
AI-significance	This is a word, phrase, sentence or passage providing the perspective of American Indians, or the impact on an individual of group of people. An individual or group of people must be explicitly identified.
AI-specific	This is a word, phrase, sentence, or passage that refers to American Indians having a specific involvement in a historical event. The individual or group is the subject of the sentence or passage, not the object.
Asian American (AS)	This code is any word, phrase, sentence, or passage that refers to immigrants from Asian countries or Asian Americans. An individual or group of people must be explicitly identified.
AS-mention	This is a mention of Asian immigrants or Asian Americans. An individual or group is referenced, but there is little significance attributed in this mention. The individual or group is the object of the sentence or the subject of a passive statement.
AS-Significance	This is a word, phrase, sentence or passage providing the perspective of Asian immigrants or Asian Americans, or the impact on an individual of group of people.
AS-specific	This is a word, phrase, sentence, or passage that refers to Asian immigrants or Asian Americans having a specific involvement in a historical event. The individual or group is the subject of the sentence or passage, not the object.

Name	Description
LatinX (LA)	This is a word, phrase, sentence, or passage that refers to people of Latin decent. This category excludes people from Spain and Portugal that arrived in the time period before the United States became a nation. An individual or group of people must be explicitly identified.
LA-mention	This is a word, phrase, sentence, or passage that refers to people of Latin decent. An individual or group is referenced, but there is little significance attributed in this mention. The individual or group is the object of the sentence or the subject of a passive statement.
LA-significant	This is a word, phrase, sentence or passage providing the perspective a person of Latin decent, or the impact on an individual of group of people.
LA-specific	This is a word, phrase, sentence, or passage that refers to an individual or group of people of Latin decent having a specific involvement in a historical event. The individual or group is the subject of the sentence or passage, not the object.

Figure 4: Coding Frame One Definitions

All 12 content units and unit key terms were examined to address the first research question. The

results of the qualitative content analysis follow.

References to Race in Units

Table 1 displays the number of references found in each content unit, and the percentage

of the text that the references cover in each unit. It also displays the total number of references in

all of the content modules for the entire course.

Table 1

References per Unit (Content)

Unit	Unit Name	References	Coverage
1	Colonial America	11	8.98%

2	American Revolution	2	.84%
3	The Constitution and A New Nation	2	.92%
4	Westward Expansion and Economic Growth	7	3.50%
5	Civil War and Reconstruction	13	9.28%
6	The Industrial Revolution	7	6.24%
7	Imperialism, Progressivism, World War I	4	5.47%
8	The Roaring 20s and the Great Depression	4	4.78%
9	The New Deal and WWII	2	2.84%
10	The Cold War	2	1.63%
11	Social Change Movements and Political Developments	13	13.33%
12	The Modern Era	3	1.79%
Total		70	

Units 5 and Unit 11 have 13 references, which is the highest number of references recorded for a content unit. Unit 5 covers the Civil War and Reconstruction and Unit 11 contains the Civil Rights Movement. Since all of these time periods deal with change for the African American community, there are a greater number of references, and those references tend to be sentences and passages rather than words or phrases. For example, the following two paragraphs describe the Dred Scott decision.

> In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court issued the Dred Scott decision, settling a lawsuit in which an African American slave named Dred Scott claimed he should be a free man because he had lived with his master in slave states and in free states. The Court rejected Scott's claim, ruling that no African American-even if free-could

ever be a U.S. citizen. Further, the Court said Congress could not prohibit slavery in federal territories. Thus, the Court found that popular sovereignty and the Missouri Compromise of 1820 were unconstitutional.

The Dred Scott decision gave slavery the protection of the U.S. Constitution. Proslavery Americans welcomed the Court's ruling as proof they had been right during the previous few decades' struggles against abolitionists. In contrast, abolitionists convinced many state legislatures to declare the Dred Scott decision not binding within their state borders. The new Republican Party said that if their candidate were elected president in 1860 he would appoint a new Supreme Court that would reverse Dred Scott. (GaDOE 2018, Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 2)

Although Unit 5 and Unit 11 have the most references, Unit 1 contains 11 references. However, one third (four of twelve) of the content units only have two references (Unit 2, Unit 3, Unit 9, and Unit 10). There are a total of 70 references in the content modules of the entire course. Although Unit 5 and Unit 11 have the same number of references, those references cover a different percentage of each unit based on the amount of content or number of words in each unit. These percentages were calculated using NVivo 11 software (described in the next section). In Unit 5, the 13 references cover 8.98% of the content unit, while in Unit 11, the 13 references cover 13.33% of the content unit. Unit 5 and Unit 11 have the two highest percentages of the content unit covered by references. In another third (four out of twelve) of the content units, less than 2% of the text contains references (Unit 2, Unit 3, Unit 10, and Unit 12). Moreover, two of those four units (Unit 2 and Unit 3) contain references in less than 1% of the text. The references in Unit 2 were two separate sentences that mentioned Native Americans as follows: "The epic struggle for European control of North America came to a key point with the British defeat of the French and their American Indian allies in 1763" and "Native Americans tended to support the French because, as fur traders, they built forts rather than permanent settlements" (GaDOE 2018, American Revolution, p. 2). The two references, as noted in Table 1, show the disparity in the coverage of race within the U.S. History course.

Table 2, displayed below, shows the number of references found in the key terms for each unit. It also shows the percentage of the unit key terms that is covered by references in each unit. Furthermore, Table 2 presents the total number of references for all of the unit key terms in the entire course. Key terms are frequently used as the most important terms of each unit, so it is important to examine how many of those terms address race and racism.

Table 2

References Per Unit (Key Terms)

Unit	Unit Name	References	Coverage
1	Colonial America	4	9.04%
2	American Revolution	2	6.61%
3	The Constitution and A New Nation	0	0.00%
4	Westward Expansion and Economic Growth	1	1.77%
5	Civil War and Reconstruction	4	5.63%
6	The Industrial Revolution	3	6.13%
7	Imperialism, Progressivism, World War I	4	5.66%
8	The Roaring 20s and the Great Depression	3	11.66%
9	The New Deal and WWII	1	3.68%
10	The Cold War	0	0.00%
11	Social Change Movements and Political Developments	9	11.02%
12	The Modern Era	1	2.76%
Total		32	

Unit 11 contains nine references in the key terms, which is the highest number of references when compared to the other units. The nine references are found in six key terms of the 34 key terms for Unit 11. The specific references are found in the following terms: Jackie Robinson, Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have A Dream*, Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), United Farm Workers' Movement, and Cesar Chavez.

In contrast, Unit 1, Unit 5, and Unit 7 only have four references each, which is the second-highest number of references for a unit's key terms. Unit 9 and Unit 12 have only one reference in key terms. Unit 3 and Unit 10 had no references. Although Unit 8 only had three references, 11.66% of the unit key terms are covered by references, which is the highest percentage when compared to other units for key terms. The three references in Unit 8 are found in the following three key terms: Jazz, Langston Hughes, and Louis Armstrong. Unit 8 is followed by Unit 11, which has 11.02% of unit key terms covered by references. One quarter (three of the twelve) unit key terms (Unit 3, Unit 4, and Unit 10) have less than 2% of the text covered by references. Two of the three (Unit 3 and Unit 10) have no key terms with references.

Representation of Racial Groups

Table 3 presents the number of references in each category and the number of sources that contain references in each category. The total number of references from all categories is also shown.

Table 3

References Per Category

Category	Number of References	Number of Sources
African American	65	17
American Indian	21	9
Asian American	8	5
LatinX	8	4
Total	102	24

The African American category holds the highest number of references and the highest number of sources which are 65 and 17, respectively. Unit 2, Unit 3, and Unit 6 have no references to the African American category. American Indian references were found in 9 sources with a total of 21 references. The most detailed reference for American Indian describes the conflicts between Sioux tribe (lead by Sitting Bull) and the U.S. government.

> Most people who moved west were farmers looking for free and inexpensive land. In turn, Native Americans had to compete with these newcomers for land. For example, the Sioux signed a treaty with the U.S. government promising "no white person or persons shall be permitted to settle upon or occupy" Sioux territory in the Dakotas but, when gold was discovered there, the government tried to buy the land from the Sioux, who refused to sell it. The Sioux leader, Sitting Bull, then fought U.S. Army troops, led his people to a brief exile in Canada, and finally agreed to settle on a reservation.

> About10 years later, Sitting Bull's people became associated with a Sioux religious movement. The Native Americans believed their ceremonies would cleanse the world of evil, including the white man, and restore the Sioux's lost greatness. Government officials ordered Sitting Bull's arrest. He died in a brief gun battle.
> After Sitting Bull died, several hundred of his people fled to an area of South Dakota called Wounded Knee. U.S. soldiers went there to confiscate weapons from the Sioux. A gun was fired-nobody knows by whom-and U.S soldiers then opened machine-gun fire, killing more than 300 Sioux. This ended the Native Americans' long conflict against Americans settling Native American lands. (GaDOE 2018, The Industrial Revolution, p. 5)

While the least detailed reference for American Indian is "as well as hundreds of Native Americans from Alaska" (GaDOE 2018, The New Deal and WWII, p.4). The Asian American and LatinX categories have the least number of references. Both categories have eight total references in the course. Asian American references are found in five of the 12 units, while LatinX references are only found in four units. There are over eight times more references for African American than Asian American or LatinX. For example, the most detailed passage for Asian American details the ways in which Asian Americans and potential Asian immigrants faced systemic racism through immigration and citizenship laws.

> In earlier decades, Asians had immigrated to California and other areas of the American West. Then, in the 1880s, Asian Americans faced anti-immigrant sentiment. When Chinese immigrants accepted low wages for jobs whites had held, employers lowered the pay for all workers. This angered the white workers. They encouraged Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act, which it did in 1882, thereby banning all future Chinese immigration.
>
> Japanese Americans also faced racial prejudice. It was against California law for them to buy land or become U.S. citizens, and the federal government worked with the government of Japan to limit Japanese immigration. (GaDOE 2018, Imperiamlism, Progressivism, WWI, p. 4)

LatinX references are only found in 17% of the sources and makeup only 8% of the total references. The most detailed reference for LatinX is found in Unit 11 and it highlights some achievements of Cesar Chavez, who was the founder of the United Farm Workers movement.

> Latinos also protested to gain civil rights in the 1960s. Their leader was Cesar Chavez, an American of Mexican descent who grew up picking crops in California with his family. As founder of the United Farm Workers movement, Chavez believed in nonviolent methods to achieve his goals. In 1965, he started a nationwide boycott of California grapes, forcing grape growers to negotiate a contract with the United Farm Workers in 1970. This contract gave farm workers higher wages and other benefits for which they had been protesting through the Sixties. (GaDOE 2018, Social Change Movements and Political Developments, p. 6)

Quality of Representation

Table 4 displays the number of references in each subcategory and the number of sources that contain references in each category. The total number of references from all categories is also shown.

Table 4

References Per Subcategory

	Mentions	Specific	Significant
African American	22	19	26
American Indian	12	2	7
Asian American	5	2	3
LatinX	3	3	2
Overall	40	26	38

The Mentions subcategory is the most trivial type of reference. In this subcategory, an individual or a group of people of a certain race is mentioned with little importance. The individual or group of people is the object of the sentence or passage, or the individual or group of people is the subject of a passive statement. An example of a reference in the Mentions subcategory is "[t]he epic struggle for European control of North America came to a key point with the British defeat of the French and their American Indian allies in 1763" (GaDOE 2018, American Revolution, p. 2). This reference belongs in the Mentions category because American Indians are mentioned, but there is no significance attributed to the group. They are merely listed as allies to the French.

The Specific subcategory references carry more importance than the Mentions subcategory. In the Specific subcategory, references identify an individual or group of people from a certain race and their specific involvement in a historical event. The individual or group is the subject of a sentence or passage. For example, the reference below from the Specific subcategory describes how African Americans contributed to World War II but faced discrimination before and afterward the war.

> African Americans fought bravely in World War II and also worked in war industries in the United States during the war. After the war, they once again faced the racial discrimination that had been traditional before the war, but many people took bold actions to end discrimination and promote integration. (GaDOE 2018, Social Change Movements and Political Developments, p. 2)

The Significant subcategory references carry the most weight of all of the subcategories. In the Significant category, references provide the perspective of an individual or group of people of a certain race or the impact on an individual or group of people. The example below of a reference from the Significant category below provides a description of how African Americans contributed to the North winning the Civil War:

> In addition, following the proclamation, the North began to allow African Americans to join the Union army. While few served in combat, more than 150,000 African Americans took the place of white soldiers by garrisoning forts and working behind the front lines. This was the equivalent of giving the North a new army larger than any of the South's. Some historians believe this was enough to guarantee a northern victory. (GaDOE 2018, Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 4)

Overall, the Mentions subcategories topped the Significant subcategories for the number of references, 40 to 38. The Specific subcategories hold 26 references which is the least amount of the three types of subcategories. This trend does not hold when examining each subcategory. For the African American category, the Significant subcategory has 26 references, which is the highest number in any African American subcategory. Mentions is next with 22 references, and Specific is last with 19 references in the African American category. In each of the other categories (American Indian, Asian American, and LatinX), the highest number of references falls in the Mention Subcategory. In the LatinX category, the Significant subcategory has two references, which is the least amount for any LatinX subcategory. Besides African American, American Indian is the only category with more than ten references in any subcategory.

Coding Frame Two Definitions

The second research question focuses on the extent race, systemic racism, and its social and economic impact on Black people are addressed in an online U.S. History curriculum. There are three categories in Coding Frame Two. Each category holds three or four subcategories. Figure 5 displays the categories, subcategories, and the definitions for Coding Frame Two.

Name	Description
Economic Impact (EI) of Racism	
EI-Level 1	Affects jobs/ day to day finances
EI-Level 2	Affects ability to support family/ generational wealth
EI-Level 3	Affects economic influence/spending power/political capital
Racial Violence (RV)	
RV-Groups	Racial Violence perpetrated by groups
RV-Individual	Racial violence perpetrated by individuals
RV-Institutions	Racial Violence perpetrated by Institutions
Social Impact (SI) of Racism	
SI-Level 1	Exclusion from businesses, social groups, neighborhoods
SI-Level 2	Exclusion from educational, employment opportunities
SI-Level 3	Exclusion from participation in democracy
SI-Level 4	Physiological/ Psychological Impact of Racism

Figure 5: Coding Frame Two Definitions

To address the second research question, the researcher examined five content units and unit key terms (Unit 6, Unit 7, Unit 8, Unit 9, and Unit 10). The results of the qualitative content analysis follow.

References to Racism in Units

Table 5 displays the number of references found in each content unit, and the percentage of the text that the references cover in each unit. It also displays the total number of references in all of the content modules used for this data set.

Table 5

References per Unit (Content)

Unit	Unit Name	References	Coverage
6	The Industrial Revolution	0	0.00%
7	Imperialism, Progressivism, World War I	5	3.71%
8	The Roaring 20s and the Great Depression	1	0.25%
9	The New Deal and WWII	2	0.90%
10	The Cold War	1	0.61%
Total		9	

Unit 7 has five references, which is the highest number of references in the data set. The references in Unit 7 cover 3.71% of the unit's content text. The most detailed and explicit reference to racism in Unit 7 content is as follows:

> Race relations in the South worsened. African Americans were denied basic rights. They suffered worse racial discrimination and segregation than what they had encountered in the years after the Civil War. Southern and border states passed segregation laws that required separate public and private facilities for African

Americans. These were called Jim Crow laws and resulted in inferior education, health care, and transportation systems for African Americans. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Jim Crow laws in Plessy v. Ferguson. Under the "separate but equal" doctrine, the Court ruled racial segregation was legal in public accommodations such as railroad cars. (GaDOE 2018, Imperialism, Progressivism, and WWI, p. 4)

This passage illustrates how systemic racism in the form of segregation laws impacted the lives of African Americans. Unit 8 and Unit 10 both have one reference, which covers 0.25% and 0.61% of the text, respectfully. There are a total of 9 references in the data set. Unit 6 has no references. Notably, none of the units in the data set have references that cover more than 4% of the content text.

References per Unit (Key Terms)

Table 6, displayed below, shows the number of references found in the key terms for each unit. The column on the right presents the percentage of each key terms for each unit that are covered by references. It also displays the total number of references in all of the unit key terms in the data set for this question.

Table 6

References per Unit (Key Terms)

Unit	Unit Name	References	Coverage
6	The Industrial Revolution	0	0.00%
7	Imperialism, Progressivism, World War I	3	5.56%
8	The Roaring 20s and the Great Depression	0	0.00%
9	The New Deal and WWII	0	0.00%
10	The Cold War	0	0.00%
Total		3	

Out of the five units in the data set, only Unit 7 has references in the key terms. Unit 7 has three references which cover 5.56% of the key terms for the unit. The actual three references are found in the key terms Jim Crow, *Plessy V. Ferguson*, and Great Migration. Unit 6, Unit 8, Unit 9 and Unit 10 have no references in the key terms for each unit.

Aspects of Racism

Table 7 shows the total number of references located in the category labeled Social Impact of Racism. The table also shows the number of references identified for each subcategory and the number of sources where references were found for each subcategory.

Table 7

Social Impact of Racism

Subcategory	Number of References	Number of Sources
SI-Level 1	6	2
SI-Level 2	4	2
SI-Level 3	0	0
SI-Level 4	1	1
Total	9	

There are a total of 9 references found in the category labeled Social Impact of Racism in the data set. The subcategory SI-Level 1 had six references which were found in two sources. SI-Level 1 had the greatest number of references found in the category Social Impact of Racism and the largest number of sources. The most detailed and explicit reference to racism in the subcategory SI-Level 1 is the same passage previously quoted as being the most detailed and explicit reference to racism in Unit 7. The most general reference in the subcategory SI-Level 1

states, "Despite these advances, however, social problems such as racial segregation and discrimination continued to plague society" (GaDOE 2018, Imperialism, Progressivism, and WW1, p. 1). SI-Level 2 also had references found in two sources, but SI-Level 2 had a total of four references. The most detailed and explicit reference for subcategory SI-Level 2 are the same passages previously noted for being the most detailed and explicit in subcategory SI-Level 1 and Unit 7. The most general reference to racism in subcategory SI-Level 2 states, "Although some in the black community worked to improve conditions for African-Americans, the system of segregation remained in place" (GaDoe 2018, Imperialism, Progressivism, and World War I, p. 1). SI- Level 4 had one reference found in one source, while SI- Level 3 had zero references. The sole reference for SI-Level 4 describes how African Americans fought for social and economic equality.

> African Americans disagreed about how to best oppose Jim Crow laws. One group, which sought full social and economic equality for African Americans, eventually formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to seek full civil rights for African Americans. Better known today as the NAACP, this group still keeps its original name in honor of the people who founded it to help overturn Plessy v. Ferguson. (GaDoe 2018, Imperialism, Progressivism, and WWI, p. 4)

The total number of references for subcategory Social Impact of Racism is greater than the total number of references for subcategory Economic Impact of Racism.

Table 8 shows the total number of references found for the subcategory Economic Impact of Racism. The table also shows the number of references found for each subcategory and the number of sources that references were found for each subcategory.

Table 8

Economic Impact of Racism

Subcategory	Number of References	Number of Sources
EI-Level 1	3	2
EI-Level 2	0	0
EI-Level 3	1	1
Total	4	

There are a total of four references found in the category Economic Impact of Racism. The

subcategory EI-Level 1 has three references, which is the highest number of references found in

any subcategory of Economic Impact of Racism. Two sources in the data set have references to

EI-Level 1. The most detailed and explicit reference to racism in subcategory EI-Level 1 is "[i]n

1941, A. Philip Randolph, the founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, proposed a

march on Washington, D.C., to protest discrimination in the military and in industry" (GaDOE

2018, The New Deal and WWII, p. 3). The most general reference to racism in this subcategory

states, "Great Migration was in the early 20th century when many African Americans moved

from the South where they had very limited opportunities to settle in Northern cities (GaDOE,

Imperialism, Progressivism, and WWI, p. 6). The subcategory EI- Level 3 has one reference

found in one source. This reference is the same passage previously noted as the sole reference for

subcategory SI-Level 4.The subcategory EI-Level 2 has no references. The category Economic

Impact of Racism has a greater number of references than the category Racial Violence.

Table 9 shows the total number of references found in the category labeled Racial

Violence. The table also shows the number of references found for each subcategory and the

number of sources that references were found for each subcategory.

Table 9

Racial Violence

Subcategory	Number of References	Number of Sources
RV-Individual	1	1
RV-Group	0	0
RV- Institution	0	0
Total	1	

RV- Individual also has one source and one reference. RV-Individual is the only subcategory in the Racial Violence category that has a reference. The only reference in the Racial Violence category is "African-American leaders became more vocal and publicly denounced racial violence and injustice" (GaDOE 2018, The Roaring 20s and the Great Depression, p. 1). RV-Group and RV-Institution have zero references.

The results of the qualitative content analysis inform about many aspects of the U.S. History curriculum. First, the largest number of references to race cover no more than 13.5% of any unit. Additionally, African American references are more than double of any other marginalized group examined for this study. Next, references to racism targeted towards Blacks covered less than 4% of the units. These and other findings from the study provide a glimpse of the restrictive nature of discourse surrounding race and racism in social studies classrooms.

NVivo Annotations

In the process of coding and recoding the data, some notable passages were discovered, because these passages were not reflected in the previously presented results. In some of the sources, passages were noted that deviate from the Georgia Standards of Excellence, contain

obvious omissions, or possibly distorted actual historical information. Although this data does not directly address the coding frames, it is important for a holistic discussion of the text.

The first passage is found in Unit 1. The passage states

In America, slaves attempted to make the best of their lives while living under the worst of circumstances. Slave communities were rich with music, dance, basket-weaving, and pottery-making. Enslaved Africans brought with them the arts and crafts skills of their various tribes. Indeed, there could be a hundred slaves working on one farm, and each slave might come from a different tribe and a different part of Africa. (GaDOE 2018, Colonial America, p. 6)

The paragraph follows the heading "African American Culture," and it is the only paragraph under that heading. In the Georgia Standards of Excellence, which is the state of Georgia's curriculum standards, there is a substandard that specifically addresses the contributions of the African population. Substandard B of United States History Standard 2 states, "Describe the Middle Passage, the growth of the African population and their contributions, including but not limited to architecture, agriculture, and foodway" (GaDOE 2016, p.1). The standard calls for the student to be able to describe African contributions to architecture, agriculture and foodway, but the GAVS course describes the only contributions of Enslaved Africans as being "music, dance, basketweaving, and pottery-making." The Georgia Standards of Excellence Teacher Notes contains a very detailed passage (copied below) regarding the contributions of Enslaved Africans to architecture.

Architecture is another topic for which African influences can be detected in America's development. Slave labor often built the homes and buildings of their American masters. Over time, traces of Africanism found their way into the styles of buildings being constructed. The "shotgun" style home has been traced to a dwelling style popular in Haiti and even further removed to a style of hut popular among the Yoruba people of western Africa. A shotgun house is characterized as being very narrow and long with a front porch. The simplistic style, with its entrance being on the short side of the

home, is different from European styled homes. The homes are one room wide and two to three rooms deep with only doors separating the rooms – no hallway. Archaeologists also suggest that some of the building materials used on Georgia plantations may have African roots. The wattle and daub and tabby material used in early Georgia coastal construction is similar to the woven sticks covered in mud or clay technique of West Africa Ashanti homes. (GaDOE 2017, p. 20)

While the preceding passage highlights African influences in architectural style and building materials, GAVS neglected to include this information regarding African influences in architecture in the course materials, which is one example of a significant omission and deviation from the Georgia Standards of Excellence in the GAVS U.S. History course.

Another passage can be found in Unit 6. The following passage shows some agency for American Indians when defending their land and rights.

After Sitting Bull died, several hundred of his people fled to an area of South Dakota called Wounded Knee. U.S. soldiers went there to confiscate weapons from the Sioux. A gun was fired-nobody knows by whom-and U.S soldiers then opened machine-gun fire, killing more than 300 Sioux. This ended the Native Americans' long conflict against Americans settling Native American lands. (GaDOE 2018, The Industrial Revolution, p. 5)

This passage concludes by giving American Indians agency in the conflict over land. Stating "Native Americans' long conflict against Americans" implies that American Indians were the aggressor in the conflict between the two groups.

Analysis

Critical theorists (Nash, Crabtree & Dunn, 1997; Beane & Apple, 2007; Nash, 1989) find a disconnection between the ideas upon which American society is founded, and the realization of those ideas for all citizens. They notice that the field of social studies education does not take responsibility for presenting the multi-faceted and complex social interactions that

have created present conditions in society. More specifically, Beane and Apple (2007) contend that school curriculum silences outside voices by limiting the knowledge or providing knowledge that is produced by the dominant culture. This research shows several examples of limiting knowledge or knowledge that is presented only from the perspective of the dominant culture. Whether it is intentional or not, these omissions regarding race and racism in historical events limit the knowledge and perspectives for students to develop critical perspectives.

Nash (1989) argues that the superficial treatment of marginalized groups in history does not create an environment where these groups are viewed or feel like equal members of society. Nash insists including traditionally marginalized groups only as victims denies their full humanity and disengages students academically and psychologically. He also highlights that history is often presented with marginalized groups having no active role (Nash, 1989).

In reviewing the findings for the first research question, which is focused on inclusitivity, there are a greater number of references in the Mention subcategory for Asian American, American Indian, and LatinX. The Mention subcategory is defined as a mention or reference to an individual or group of people of a particular race. This mention holds very little significance and the individual or group is the object of the sentence or the subject of a passive statement. With the majority of the references to these three groups being mentions, the perspectives of these groups are not being represented in the curriculum materials. The majority of the references communicate what was done to individuals and groups. It does not present these individuals or groups as active participants in shaping history.

As previously discussed, critical race theory in education is used to investigate the ways that racism can create inequality in and out of the classroom by applying five tenets. One of those tenets is a commitment to social justice (identify, analyze, and transform structural aspects

of education which preserve subordinate positions inside and outside of the classroom) (Matagon, Huber & Velez, 2009). This tenet drives this study. Critically researching and uncovering how social studies curriculum addresses race and racism is important on many levels (Tyson, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2003, & Brown, 2011). In this critical study, GAVS U.S. History curriculum was examined to see how it reinforces the dominant power structure.

One finding that relates directly to the existing literature is how the Unites States is presented as a meritocracy. Ross (2006) claims social studies curriculum focuses on reinforcing the ideology that the United States is a true meritocracy instead of highlighting how racism has enabled a reproduction of the social and economic class systems in the United States. The data from this study supports this notion. Looking at the two subcategories Economic Impact of Racism-Level 2 and Economic Impact of Racism-Level 3, there is relatively no evidence that the curriculum contradicts the idea of meritocracy. Economic Impact of Racism-Level 2 and Economic Impact of Racism-Level 3 fall under the category of Economic Impact of Racism. Economic Impact of Racism-Level 2 is a reference that presents an act or an effect of racism that affects ability to support family/ generational wealth. Economic Impact of Racism-Level 3 is a reference that presents and act or an effect of racism that affects economic influence, spending power, or political capital. Between the two categories there was only one reference, which indicates that the curriculum inadequately addresses how racism limits the economic opportunities for marginalized Americans.

Reccomendations

After a detailed and critical examination of GAVS U.S. History curriculum, I have listed five recommendations or suggestions that would make this curriculum more inclusive to the perspectives of different racial groups and help to address racism and its effects on the social and

economic conditions of contemporary American society. The following list provides five aspects of the curriculum that can be easily addressed.

1. Essential Questions: The formal or official curriculum is intended to guide the instructional decision making of classroom teachers (Thornton, 1991). The curriculum is driven by essential questions that are listed in the beginning of each unit. These questions guide the content and what information is included in the unit. At least one question from each unit should specifically address an aspect of race and racism that surrounds the historical events of the unit. This would ensure that race and racism is addressed in some capacity in each time period.

2. Keywords: Keywords are also a staple of formal curriculum. The keywords associated with the unit are the people, places, events, and concepts for each unit that are highlighted as most important. Ensuring that an appropriate percentage of the key terms are covered by significant references to race and racism will diversify the content.

3. Counter-narratives: Presenting history only from the perspective of the majority immediately disengages many students. In addition to academically disengaging marginalized students, the majority narrative also robs students of a sense of belonging (Nash, 1989).This curriculum has condensed content and is not as robust as even traditional textbooks. Therefore, the content is a representation of the major historical events that are found in the traditional mater narrative of United States history that is taught in many classrooms. Adding a counter-narrative to each lesson would allow students to view events from at least one additional perspective.

4. Address Major Omissions of Racism: As previously noted, it is important to make space for students to identify the individuals or groups of individuals who participated in,

actively and passively, or supported racism or racial violence towards marginalized people and how they may have advanced or benefitted from the actions (Brown & Brown, 2011). Compared to references of race, there were very few references to racism. Racism has played a major role in the history of the United States in all time periods, which means that there are major omissions to racism in each unit. Curriculum developers should aim to include the effects of racism on the historical events in each unit.

5. Challenge the Great Men Approach: Excluding the stories of ordinary people to focus only on those in power provides an inaccurate and incomplete version of history (Nash, 1989). Another characteristic of the traditional master narrative U.S. History curriculum is the glorification of "great men" and their credit and ownership of major events and change in history. Dedicating space in the curriculum to the common man or groups of people who contributed to major historical events or change will allow students to examine additional perspectives.

Next, I will provide an example of how curriculum developers can apply the recommendations from the list above using Unit 7. Unit 7 held the highest number of references to racism, which was 5. Unit 7: Imperialism, Progressivism, & World War I, Lesson 1: Progressivism discusses the following topics: Muckrakers, Progressive Reforms, Leaders of the Progressive Movement, African American Rights, and Asian American Rights. The essential questions for Unit 7 are as follows:

1. What were the major reform movements during the Progressive Era and to what extent were they successful?

2. How was the Spanish-American War a significant point in America's emergence as a world power?

3. Which events drew the United States into World War I?

4. How did society change at the turn of the 20th century?

The following essential question could be added to Unit 7 which would give students the opportunity to examine the progressive era from a different perspective. How did social Darwinism and the Eugenics movement influence progressive policies?

Piggybacking off of the essential question, Social Darwinism and Eugenics can be added to the list of keywords. Exploration of these key terms will highlight the ideologies of racism that persisted during the progressive era. A counter-narrative discussing Ida. B. Wells could be added to Unit 7, Lesson 1. This counter-narrative could provide further context of the difference in the experiences of Black and White people during the progressive era, while also highlighting how a Black woman used her voice to expose the horrors of lynching. Although this lesson briefly touches on racism experiences by Blacks and Asian Americans, it omits the continued struggles of American Indians. Highlighting their struggle will add dimension to the perspectives of those groups of people who were considered inferior during this time period. In a challenge to the "great men" approach to history, curriculum developers could expand on their description of progressive leaders. Although there are no specific names listed, the content discusses progressives reformers "leveling the field for the common man (and women)", but this was not necessarily true for all progressive reformers and it still credits most of the accomplishments to a few unnamed people. Discussion of how the "common man" fought for his or her own struggle as well would challenge the traditional

great men historical narrative. There is a lot of complex history waiting to be taught and there is no way to teach it all in one course, but if curriculum developers intentionally and systematically ingrain multiple perspectives into their content, they can easily enhance their courses.

5 DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the data, a discussion of the implications and recommendations for further study. Chapter 5 situates this study in the existing body of literature on race and racism in social studies curriculum. The discussion in this chapter highlights examples in the data that directly relate to the literature. Although there is not an extensive number of studies that focus on race and racism in social studies curriculum, the findings in this study do support findings in related studies.

Summary of Study

Racial disparities are prevalent in many aspects of American society. Although critical race researchers (Howard 2004; Castles, 1996; Loury, 2002; Winant, 2001) agree that race is a social construct and not a biological phenomenon, there are real life effects to this social construct in American society. Race is the motivation behind many social, legal, and economic policies (Howard, 2004). Reducing race to only a social or ideological construct counters peoples' experiences in a racialized society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Providing students with the opportunity to understand the impact that race has on American society, through critical analysis of historical events, could impact how students view people of other races. K-12 education plays an integral role in the development of student's racial attitudes (Howard, 2004; Banks, 2006; Vogt, 2004; Tyson, 2003; Nash, 1989).

Educators can shape the way that students perceive and respond to race based issues through the methods that they use to engage in dialogue (Tyson, 2003). Social studies is uniquely situated to highlight the study of race and racism; and social studies educators are the most logical choice to theorize and offer strategies on how to eliminate racist attitudes and discrimination (Howard, 2004). Ladson-Billings (2003) finds that race has been used to

rationalize inequity and oppression and social studies can be the foundation for unlearning racism.

Thus far, the field of social studies has not adequately addressed issues of race and racism. The absence of race in curriculum standards and position statements makes race invisible in social studies (Tyson, 2003). Even in the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) curriculum standards race and racism are submerged under the rubrics of prejudice and discrimination (Ladson-Billings, 2003). The neglect of race and racism in social studies curriculum brings significance to this study.

This study is an examination of the publicly shared United States History curriculum for Georgia Virtual School. The study focuses on the inclusivity of the curriculum to the perspectives of people of color, as well as how the curriculum addresses race, racism and the impact of racism on Black Americans. In this study of Georgia Virtual School's United States History curriculum, Critical Race Theory is used to analyze current social studies curriculum that is publicly available. With a growing number of students accessing online education and virtual schools, this research contributes to an emerging literature regarding online social studies curriculum and Critical Race Theory. The following research questions defined the purpose of this study which was to examine how the U.S. History curriculum of Georgia Virtual School incorporates the perspectives of people of color and how it addresses race, racism and its social and economic impact on Black people.

1. How inclusive is an online U.S. History curriculum to the perspectives of people of color?

2. To what extent is race, systemic racism, and its social and economic impact on Black people addressed in an online U.S. History curriculum?

Because the number of students accessing online education and virtual schools is significantly

growing, it is important that social studies educators focus on research in those areas.

The methodology used in this study is qualitative content analysis because it focuses on

the meaning behind the words and the curricular messages shared with online students. The

themes and patterns that emerge from the analysis of the online curriculum provide insights

about the racialized nature of online curriculum. The results of this study have research and

practice significance race and racism in social studies curriculum.

Conclusions

This study provided an opportunity to critically analyze the role of race and racism in

social studies education. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is ideally situated as a race-based critique

of social institutions (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Thus, CRT provided a relevant theoretical

perspective to investigate the ways that race and racism are presented in an online curriculum.

This study combines social studies curriculum, which has long been debated, researched and

critiqued, with virtual learning which is relatively new and under researched. The intersection of

race and racism in social studies curriculum and virtual learning occurs in Georgia Virtual

Schools' U.S. History course. For students across the state of Georgia, the GAVS U.S. History

course is likely the only formal U.S. History course that they will take in high school.

Unfortunately, the data analyzed for this study does not indicate that Georgia Virtual

Schools' U.S. History course is inclusive to the perspectives of different races. Moreover, there

is little mention of systemic racism and its impact on the social and economic circumstances in

contemporary American society. Inadequate discussion of systemic racism and its impact does

not challenge dominant ideologies, rather it helps to support ideologies, such as meritocracy, that

add to deficit thinking. African Americans were the most frequently represented traditionally marginalized group in the U.S. History curriculum. Although African Americans have a high number of references and many of those references were noteworthy, most of those references fell into two time periods. During these two time periods, students traditionally learn about the African American struggles for freedom, the end of slavery, and the Civil Rights Movement. The struggle for freedom is not the only aspect to African American history; moreover, the passing of Civil Rights legislation did not even the playing field for Blacks.

In the case of Asian Americans and LatinX, there are 10 or less references for both of these groups in the GAVS U.S. History course. The majority of those references are mentions with no significance. The data collected in this study supports the CRT perspective that social studies curriculum is not inclusive, which may lead to academic and psychological disengagement (Nash 1989). The number of references for American Indian fall between the higher number for African Americans and the lower numbers for Asian Americans and LatinX. Yet the majority of the references for American Indian are mentions have little numerical weight. Overall, the data shows that GAVS virtual U.S. History curriculum does not appear to prioritize the inclusion of race and racism.

Findings Related to the Literature

Hillburn, Journell & Buchanan (2016) examined secondary standards from 18 different states, with different immigration demographics, using Critical Race Methodology and content analysis. The researchers found that traditional gateway states have more references to immigration in U.S. History and Civics standards and immigration was presented more often as a historical issue rather than as a civic or political issue. Similarly to this study, Hilburn et al. found few references to racism found and the references to racism that were found present

racism as a historical issue. They do not make any connections to present day society and current effects of racism in American society. This is problematic because students disassociate historical racism and the present conditions of society.

Suh, An & Forest (2015) examine eight U.S. history textbooks at the middle and high school levels. The textbooks are officially adopted and widely used in the state of Virginia. Through a content analysis, Suh, An & Forest (2015) found that Asian Americans were mainly represented in the textbooks during three historical periods which are 1850–1924, 1939–1945, and 1965 to the present. I found a similar trend in the GAVS U.S. History course. Racism is more heavily addressed in in two units which were Unit 5 and Unit 11. Unit 5 is Civil Rights and Reconstruction and Unit 11 features the Civil Rights Movement. These two time periods are generally known as periods of great struggle and change for African Americans. The time period between Reconstruction and the Civil Rights movement shows significantly less references racism and Black Americans. Adversely, Black Americans suffered severe racial oppression especially in the form of Jim Crow laws. Systemic racism shaped the social and economic lives of Black Americans during this time.

Pellegrino, Mann and Russell (2013) conducted a related study where they utilized Critical Race Theory to examine how segregated education is treated in eight secondary U.S. History and Government textbooks. The researchers performed a content analysis to determine how manifest and latent content in the U.S. History and Government textbooks compared to historical analysis, which examines the African American experience in segregated schools. They analyzed the words, phrases and topics selected by the authors of the textbooks.

There are some key similarities between the findings of Pellegrino et al. (2013) and this study. First, Pellegrino et al. found that although all of the textbooks include a mention of

education and African Americans, most do not recognize the importance of the role that African Americans played in attaining quality education in their communities in spite of segregation policies. Correspondingly, in this study the number of mentions of African Americans outweigh the number of significant references which acknowledge the role that African Americans play in various historical events. Moreover, some textbooks provided extensive coverage of topics related to the "African American education experience," but they did not connect the events with current and past race relations in the United States. Similarly, findings from this study show that there were few references coded under economic and social impact which would connect historical events to present day conditions. Pellegrino et al. (2018)also noted omissions, such as events and individuals that contributed to the struggle for civil rights, and the significance of these omissions for teacher educators, teachers, and students.

Another study conducted by Woyshner and Schocker (2015) examined the representation of Black Women in history textbooks. While Woyshner and Schocker (2015) focused on the intersectionality of race and gender and a visual cultural studies framework, their study is comparable to this study because it investigates an aspect of race in social studies curriculum. Woyshner and Schocker (2015) found that Black women are under-represented in high school history textbooks. Similarly, the Asian American and LatinX groups were severely underrepresented in the GAVS U.S. History course.

In a parallel study, through the lens of critical race theory and cultural memory, Brown and Brown (2010) explore how history textbooks treat the history of racial violence and resistance in the United States The researchers conducted a contemporary social studies textbook analysis. Just as many of the significant references for African Americans fall between two times periods in this study, Brown and Brown (2010) found that 5th and 8th grade texts show how

violent actions and resistant actions manifested, but these also generally fell into the two time periods of slavery and reconstruction. Furthermore, comparable to our findings of little attention to systemic racism and its social and economic impact in American society, Brown and Brown (2011) posit that the narrative found in the text fail to highlight how racial violence was used to systemically oppress African Americans social mobility in the United States.

Overall, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 supports the findings in this study. As discussed in Chapter 2, critical theorists (Nash, Crabtree & Dunn, 1997; Beane & Apple, 2007; Nash, 1989) find a disconnection between the ideas upon which American society is founded, and the realization of those ideas for all citizens. They notice that the field of social studies education does not take responsibility for presenting the multi-faceted and complex social interactions that have created present conditions in society. More specifically, Beane and Apple (2007) contend that schools silence outside voices by limiting the knowledge or providing knowledge that is produced by the dominant culture. There are several examples of limiting knowledge and knowledge that is presented only in the perspective of the dominant culture. Whether it is intentional or not, there are several omissions of the presence or effects of racism in historical events that were plagued with racism. For example, race and racism was not mentioned in any of the paragraphs describing the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Not only did racism play a significant role in the United States during those two periods of time, but it was also a significant factor in military interactions abroad.

Nash (1989) argues that the superficial treatment of marginalized groups in history does not create an environment where these groups are viewed or feel like equal members of society. Nash (1989) insists including minority groups only as victims denies their full humanity and disengages students academically and psychologically. Nash (1989) also

highlights how often times when history is presented to students, minorities do not have an active role. In looking at the analysis for research question one, there are a greater number of references in the Mention subcategory for Asian American, American Indian, and LatinX. The definition of the Mention subcategory states that there is a mention or reference to an individual or group of people of particular race. This mention holds very little significance and the individual or group is the object of the sentence or the subject of a passive statement. With the majority of the references to these three groups being mentions, the perspectives of these groups are not being represented in the curriculum materials. The majority of the reference either speak about what was done to individuals and groups. It does not present these individuals or groups as active participants in shaping history.

One finding that relates directly to the existing literature is how the Unites States is presented as a meritocracy. Ross (2006) claims social studies curriculum focuses on reinforcing the ideology that the United States is a true meritocracy instead of highlighting how racism has enabled a reproduction of the social and economic class systems in the United States. The data from this study supports this notion. Looking at the two subcategories EI-Level2 and EI-Level 3, there is relatively no evidence that the curriculum contradicts the idea of meritocracy. EI-level 2 and EI-Level 3 fall under the category of Economic Impact of Racism. EI-Level 2 is a reference that presents an act or an effect of racism that affects ability to support family/ generational wealth. EI-Level 3 is a reference that presents and act or an effect of racism that affects economic influence, spending power, or political capital. Between the two categories there was only one reference which indicates that the curriculum does not adequately address how the economic impact of racism limits the opportunities for Black Americans.

Limitations

There are certain limitations to content analysis in general. Berg (2009) explains that one of the most limiting aspects of content analysis is that it is constrained to examining messages that have already been recorded. Additionally, content analysis cannot test for causal relationships amongst variables. When researchers present the frequency that a theme or pattern is detected, it is appropriate to discuss the magnitude of certain codes, but attaching cause would be inappropriate (Berg, 2009). Graneheim and Lundman (2003) contend that "reality can be interpreted in various ways and the understanding is dependent on subjective interpretation" and they presume that "a text always involves multiple meanings and there is always some degree of interpretation when approaching a text" (p. 106).

The curriculum selected for this study only provides a glance at online U.S. History curriculums, other online curriculums used in other school districts and states may be more or less inclusive of the perspectives of people of color and address race and racism differently. Moreover, the course selected represent a selection of U.S. History curriculum, but other social studies courses, such as American Government, Geography, World History, or Economics, may place a different amount of attention to the concepts under examination.

Suggestions for Further Research

Although this is a case study and the results only provide an examination of one online program, the findings raise questions of the standards for online curriculum. Many of the most recent studies on virtual learning focus on the organizational structure, foundational processes, types of courses and administration of various virtual and blended learning programs (Taylor & McNair, 2018; Waddell, 2017; Fuller, 2017). Greater attention should focus on the scope, depth, and rigor of the courses while offering a critical examination of race and racism. Ongoing

research on virtual schools and virtual programs is imperative because it impacts many students. Moreover, the value of conducting research on virtual schools and virtual programs through the lens of Critical Race Theory is highlighted by the upward trend of students participating in online education. GAVS serves a large population of students across the state of Georgia and there are obvious gaps in the curriculum. Furthermore, similar studies should examine additional virtual schools and virtual programs in other states.

Additionally, researchers should conduct student-focused studies. It is also important to examine how students receive the messages sent by virtual curriculum, as well as the increased isolation caused by not being in the same physical learning space with their peers and classmates. Social studies educators devoted to inclusitivity, multiple perspectives, and a more critical examination of history must focus research in virtual curriculum. This will allow programs with exemplary curriculum to serve as an example.

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