

**Born Into These Crooked Ways: Black Men Secondary Social Studies Teachers'  
Thoughts on American Citizenship and Teaching as Activism in the American Dirty  
South**

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Auburn University in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama  
August 3, 2024

**Keywords:** Black Men Teachers, Secondary Social Studies Education, American  
Citizenship, Dirty South, Black Critical Patriotism, Pedagogical Beliefs, Pedagogical  
Practices

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## **ABSTRACT**

This interpretive case study used Black Critical Patriotism (Busey & Walker, 2017) as a theoretical framework to make meaning of two Black men secondary social studies teachers' thoughts on American citizenship, the purposes of social studies education, and the extent to which they taught for social justice amid anti-CRT legislation and discourse within the American Dirty South. Findings from the study indicated that the Black men secondary social studies teachers described America's racist legacy yet America's possibilities for reconciliation as informing their conceptualization of American citizenship. Furthermore, findings also suggest that their conceptualizations of American citizenship informed what the Black men secondary social studies teachers described as the purposes of social studies education. Finally, while the Black men social studies teachers were suspicious of traditional democratic processes to achieve social justice, they viewed teaching as a civic duty and a form of activism amid being forced to operate with and within the confines of language of state-required standards to teach for social justice. Implications, limitations, and directions for further research are provided.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**DEDICATION:** To my grandmothers, Clara Elizabeth Byrd (grandma) and Lue Ellen Lewis (granny), this dissertation represents what I knew you could have accomplished had you been given the opportunity. Second, to my parents, Arthur Lewis III and Patricia Ann Lewis, thank you for instilling the value of hard work in my siblings and me at an early age. I now see the return of that value as I obtain the highest educational degree within my field. Lastly, to every student who entered classrooms 201 (when I taught high school), 313 (either physically or virtually), the classrooms (I had to float sometimes) from the four days I worked as a substitute teacher, and to the students or athletes with whom I have ever interacted, this is for you! I hope you realize that through hard work and a quest for learning[education], your life trajectory can and will change for the better.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** A trouble in my way... I have to cry sometimes; I lay awake at night, but that's alright. See, Jesus, he will fix it afterwhile. To Him through whom all blessings flow, thank you. You have made all this possible. Taking a leap of faith to resign from my teaching position to pursue this journey was all part of your plan. Thank you for giving me the discernment to take action, to trust, and to believe in your plan. Lord, continue to use me as a vessel to do your will. Thank you!

To my parents, this would not have been possible without your continuous love and support. Dad, thanks for making the sacrifice to serve our country in the Armed Forces, which granted me an affordable opportunity to pursue higher education. Mom, thanks for all of your love, kind words, and support through both the good and the not-so-good times. I thank both of you and love you both with more words than I could ever articulate. To my brothers and sister,

thank you as well for the many conversations we had throughout this journey. Little did you know that those conversations got me through some tough times here on The Plains (Auburn).

Next, to my committee, words cannot express how much I appreciate the time, effort, and mentorship you provided to me on this journey. Since day one, you have seen something in me that I did not see in myself. To my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Tirado, thank you. To Dr. Kohlmeier, thank you for affording me this opportunity to come to Auburn and to obtain this degree in an affordable manner. To Dr. Baggett, thank you for always keeping me honest and for challenging me to think past binaries in my interpretations. Lastly, to Dr. Carter, thank you for your expertise and the many books (they were interesting) I was required to read in your classes. Dr. Smith, thanks for agreeing to be my university reader!

To the Beta Eta Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated (chartered on the campus of The University of Alabama), until this point, I do not think there is another brother in our chapter that can say they obtained an undergraduate degree from UA and then a doctorate degree from AU. I want my chapter in our history book...lol! RQQ. To my line brothers, the Nine Methods of Methodical (9MM), thank you for all the support you rendered while I furthered my Scholarship. To the Nu Iota Iota Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated (Auburn/Opelika graduate chapter), thank you for taking me in and supporting me throughout my doctoral and lifelong fraternal journey. To other close fraternal brothers from other chapters, thank you as well.

Next, to my friends, thank you! You know the role you played. To Mr. Green, thanks for not letting me give up on a career in education. You were truly a ram in the bush during a critical juncture in my professional career. To my former professor, Dr. Megan Hallissey, thanks for introducing me to research and the research process. My love for research was ignited because of

you. To my former student Aiden, I want to give a special shoutout. Sometimes, it is assumed that teachers should always be the encouragers. Well, I want to emphasize that teachers also require encouragement at times. I think that is true, even more so now than ever. Aiden, thanks for periodically checking in with me regarding my progress in the program. Your words of comfort and support went an extremely long way. Please invite me to all of your college graduations!

Lastly, to my participants, thank you, thank you, thank you! You know the Good Book talks about that "Ram in the Bush." Thank you for serving that purpose. I truly believe that God selected you to participate in this study. Your insight, knowledge, and work are not going unseen or unnoticed. I promise, in my new capacity, to bring voice to your experiences and what it means to teach in the Dirty South because we truly have something to say!

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASALH	Association for the Study African American Life and History
ASNLH	Association for the Study of Negro Life and History
AUC	Atlanta University Center
BCP	Black Critical Patriotism
BGLO	Black Greek Lettered Organization
BHM	Black History Month
BLM	Black Live Matter
CIC	Commission of Interracial Cooperation
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DBQ	Document-Based Question
DJ	Disk Jockey
HBCU	Historically Black College and University
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCSS	National Council for the Social Studies
NEA	National Education Association
NFL	National Football League
NMAAHC	National Museum of African American History and Culture
MC	Master/Mistress of ceremony
WWII	World War II/Second World War

## PREFACE

I have to share this vignette. OutKast are my favorite hip-hop artists. In fact, the first CD I ever owned was *Stankonia*, OutKast's fourth studio album. However, I got the CD when I got my first CD player which was several years after the album was released. I later bought all OutKast's subsequent and older albums which included Killer Mike on some songs. That was my introduction to Killer Mike. However, T.I. and his music were my teenage years. This was back when mixtapes were just as if not hotter than studio albums, and hip-hop artists would travel to various cities to distribute their new projects to listeners. Given how close Columbus, Georgia, is to Atlanta, Georgia, T.I.'s mixtapes were constantly played through the streets of Columbus. While I am familiar with his album *Trap Muzik*, his album *Paper Trail*, which was released after OutKast stopped making music, was during my teenage years.

*Paper Trail* was arguably written when T.I. was experiencing an extremely low point in his life as the album detailed the transformation and resilience from Dirty South living in the pursuit of the American Dream. For example, the last song on the album, *Dead and Gone*, spoke to T.I.'s transition and growth as he awaited trial for criminal charges. T.I. later served a year and a day in prison for those charges. However, I question how education and in particular, social studies education can serve as a place where the same transition T.I. experienced while imprisoned can occur through education and not prison. To be clear, I do not intend or want to suggest that prison is a reform worthy of an investment because even when Black people display resiliency despite inequitable and unfair conditions, "Whiteness somehow still wins" (Love, 2023, p. 141). I do, however, mention this short vignette to emphasize that racist, sexist, and ageist life experiences that occur outside of school (and most times before a child even attends school) directly inform how Black people and other people of color conceptualize citizenship (Johnson; 2017; Vickery, 2017).

With that, I vehemently believe social studies education can be a space where those varied conceptualizations of citizenship must be acknowledged, centered, and interrogated. For example, Johnson (2021) studied with ten first and second grade Black boys from the American South to examine how social issues informed their conceptualizations of citizenship. In Johnson's (2021) study, the Black boys specifically acknowledged and alluded to how Black rappers and Black athletes are often dehumanized for how they choose to engage and express their understanding of American citizenship. With that, however, the Black boys who participated in the study did recognize that Black rappers and Black athletes have "good points" behind why they chose to strongly criticize racism through music or choosing to take a knee during the American national anthem (p. 814). First, I share that to emphasize that young children oftentimes notice and understand inequity. To add to that, I believe the way citizenship is expressed does not have to always be traditional, which I believe is another flaw of current civic education within schools. Patriotism can be expressed in many ways, including through music. Most students within American schools are citizens before they ever even come to school, and I believe social studies teachers must understand and acknowledge that for civic education to serve its purpose for society and for all students.

Therefore, I think civic education must begin to respond to the nuances of students' experiences and potentially rethink its purposes and aims within modern contexts. With that, if this dissertation ever reaches the eyes and hands of OutKast, Killer Mike, or T.I., rest assured knowing that I will tirelessly work to ensure your creative genius is represented and included in

the body of academic research literature, especially as it relates to citizenship and civic education. Using your music, I hope to shed light, nuance, and challenge future teachers to think differently about how students, especially those of color, can engage as American citizens. Given the importance of public pedagogy in framing the views of educators, maybe a movie is warranted that features a Black social studies teacher who teaches his students and helps them develop the skills they need to become the nontraditional yet creative patriotic geniuses you all are? Idk, just a thought. In short, I believe, and I hope this dissertation demonstrates that the sole purpose of social studies education and all forms of education for that matter is to defend against all forms of inhumanity while protecting democracy, the only regime that centers the voices of *all* people. Maya Angelou once stated that “no one of us can be free until everybody’s free.” Therefore, the marathon must continue!

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“What You Know About the Dirty South?”

-(*Soul Food*, 1995a)

I am a trained educator. However, I am also a man—a Black man<sup>1</sup>. I am a Black man who was born in the American South during the middle of *The People of the State of California v. Orenthal James Simpson* criminal case. Orenthal James Simpson (O.J.)<sup>2</sup> is a former professional football player who played in the National Football League (NFL) and is often discussed as being one of the best running backs to have ever played that position and within the league. To add, O.J. Simpson was a broadcaster, actor, and an American household name who won numerous awards for his personal and professional success. O.J. Simpson and the professional success he achieved as a Black man epitomized that the “American Dream” was a possibility for Black people, especially given that Simpson’s life story began with him living in the projects yet going on to achieve great success and financial fortune when he was at his peak.

However, his success and reputation were questioned and ultimately damaged when he was charged and later acquitted for the murder of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown, and her friend, Ron Goldman. Both Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman were White. To add, the verdict rendered in the case also demonstrated that while America had come very far regarding Black people and the pursuit of the American Dream, racism remained part of the *contract* associated with American

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<sup>1</sup> For this project, I will use the term "man" or "men" when referring to adults who are and identify as being Black and men. This decision was given much thought and consideration. First, I use the terms Black men, Black young men, and Black boys, because according to Wright and Counsel (2018), the phrase "Black male" is frequently utilized to degrade, criminalize, and dehumanize those whose identities include being Black and being men or boys (p. 4). Second, the term man is an expression aligning with a certain set of norms that describes a person’s masculinity. Therefore, I think and use the term man/boy because it better captures the uniqueness and diversity of boyhood and manhood that recent research literature surrounding Black boys and Black men seeks to highlight (Woodson, et al., 2020). As a result, I believe the terms "man/boy" humanize in ways the term "male" does not.

<sup>2</sup> While I was writing this report, O.J. Simpson died on April 10, 2024, due to complications of prostate cancer (Blinn, 2024).

citizenship (Mills, 1997). For instance, racism permeated national discourse, the media, and society after Simpson was acquitted by a mostly Black jury on October 3, 1995. Many White people believed that Simpson got away with the murder and that he was acquitted simply because the jury was mostly Black (Lassiter, 1996). On the other hand, many Black people viewed the acquittal as a sign that the system had finally worked for a Black person, more specifically a Black man. Nevertheless, the *Simpson* case demonstrated that America was still very much split between Black and White.

I intentionally referenced the *Simpson* case for several reasons. First, the *Simpson* case occurred during the mid-1990s which was a time in American history where most Americans thought that American race relations were “generally bad” (Pew Research Center, 2017). In fact, some researchers, such as Sasha Torres, argued that news media and television played a substantial role in what led to the racial polarization that occurred in the 1990s (Torres, 1998). Furthermore, the *Simpson* case occurred two years after the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, which occurred after four White Los Angeles police officers were acquitted for the beating of Rodney King. Second, I began with the *Simpson* case because I believe Simpson, while not perfect, epitomized that the American Dream was still a possibility and achievable for Black people<sup>3</sup>. Third, I began with the *Simpson* case because I was born during the case in the American South, which also was marked by tensions that existed in American citizenship due to the anti-Black racism that was still alive in the American South. Lastly, I began with the *Simpson* case to display how American race relations that existed in the early 1990s are like modern day race relations within America.

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<sup>3</sup> Black people, African Americans, and people of color are used interchangeably in this study. Please reference Black in the “Definition of Key Terms” section later in this chapter for more context.

For more context, a little over one month after the verdict in the O.J. Simpson case, the Atlanta-based hip-hop group Goodie Mob<sup>4</sup> released their debut album, *Soul Food*. *Soul Food* went gold and is largely considered the album that brought southern hip-hop and the experiences of Black southern living mainstream. In fact, one of the songs from the album was named *Soul Food*, and in the sixth verse of the song, T-Mo Goodie (one of the group's members) strongly criticized Chris Darden and Marcia Clark for even prosecuting the *Simpson* case. T-Mo Goodie expressed that the case was racially motivated and was a larger attack on Blackness, especially Black Americans who were pursuing or had achieved the American Dream.

Furthermore, the album, *Soul Food*, introduced the world to the term and the idea of the Dirty South. From the album, *Soul Food*, the song, Dirty South provided a raw account of how racism and oppression was deeply entrenched in the everyday experiences of Black people from Atlanta and other regions of the South who were financially poor. To be clear, while the song did detail a life of survival through drug-selling, it was also critical of oppressive and racist societal factors that made that type of lifestyle a reality for many Black men and Black people who lived in the American South. This style of hip-hop and the way it appealed to the critical consciousness of its listeners later influenced other hip-hop artists, such as OutKast, Killer Mike, and T.I. who were also from Atlanta, Georgia<sup>5</sup>. As a result, southern hip hop and other hip hop

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<sup>4</sup> A more detailed account of Goodie Mob and the context of the Dirty South is provided in the Methodology section of this dissertation. To add, the terms “Dirty South” and “American South” in this dissertation are used interchangeably. However, while the American South does encompass the Dirty South, the Dirty South does not necessarily encompass the entire American South. A definition of Dirty South is included in the “Definition of Key Terms” section later in this chapter. Lastly, I resist the urge to use the term “Deep South.” While the Deep South is geographically like the Dirty South, the Deep South, in my opinion, does not acknowledge the racist and oppressive legacy of the South that caused Black people to enact varied forms of resistance to restore their full humanity.

<sup>5</sup> In February of 2024 and at the time I was making edits to this chapter, Killer Mike had just won three Grammys, one for his rap album, *Michael*, for having the best rap song, “Scientists and Engineers,” and for having the best rap performance. He was immediately arrested after he got off the stage for having an “altercation” with a security guard, which was later deemed a “citizens’ arrest”.

artists from the South grew a substantial fanbase of listeners who were interested in Black southern living and other Black people who lived similar experiences in the South.

To make clear, the tensions due to racism within American citizenship remains evident in Black living, especially Black southern living. For instance, my childhood, young adulthood, and adulthood have included racist and gendered experiences, especially when interacting with the police. I remember an experience from over a decade ago, when I was driving myself and a friend to the Georgia High School State Wrestling Tournament. We were both seniors in high school. Right before reaching our destination, we were stopped by a police officer who consistently subjected me to racist epithets and ridicule as he wrote me three traffic tickets during the stop. That experience and others alike influenced how I think about American citizenship and how I engage as a citizen. For me, American citizenship is an extremely complex construct, and given that I am an extremely reflective person and a former social studies teacher, I think about American citizenship often.

Johnson (2019) studied with Black boys in elementary school to explore their ideas and conceptualizations of American citizenship. In the study, Johnson (2019) used photos of American citizens of all races, genders, societal positions, and socioeconomic statuses to elicit student responses to make meaning of American citizenship. When specifically examining a photo of Colin Kaepernick, the students determined and stated that certain groups of individuals were “maybe citizens” because of their race and gender (pp. 381-382). As a result of Johnson’s (2019) analysis and the students’ usage of the phrase maybe citizen, Johnson identified a framework of, maybe citizen, that is predicated on contradictions between American citizenship and how an individual’s race, gender, or the intersections of both informs how they perceive



their access to the rights and privileges that legislation has mandated be afforded to American citizens.

In 2020, I too questioned whether certain groups within the United States were maybe citizens as I and the entire world lived through and in some cases, watched the recordings and national coverage related to the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd<sup>6</sup>. As the entire world watched the racial unrest of 2020, I once again questioned what it meant to be a citizen and how my experiences as a Black man informed my conceptualization of American citizenship. Therefore, I believe American citizenship is not merely just a position but a social construct that is informed by our personal experiences, most of which we are born into. As the world experienced a global pandemic and the racial unrest of 2020, I believe that once again tensions were made clear that American citizenship and Blackness had a mostly complex and unfortunate relationship.

During the height of the pandemic and the racial unrest of 2020, I taught middle social studies in a Georgia school district. While sitting at home during the nation-wide shutdown, I remember one day surfing Facebook when I eventually received a notification from one of my Facebook friends. I was tagged in the comments section of a post that discussed the role of schools in responding to what had happened to Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd. I have since deleted my Facebook, but I vividly remember the comment saying, “Terrance, I know your social studies classroom is going to be on 10 in the fall!” Given that I was experiencing a heavy toll from the pandemic and the racial unrest, I did not respond. However, I interpreted what my Facebook friend posted as 1) social studies classrooms, in particular, were spaces where current

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<sup>6</sup> Ahmaud Arbery was murdered on February 23, 2020, in a small unincorporated town in Brunswick, Georgia. His murder was filmed and later released during the early height of the pandemic. I watched the film that captured his death. George Floyd was murdered on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His murder was also filmed. I could not and still have not watched the film that captured his death. Both were Black men. Both were humans.

events, regardless of context, should be discussed, and 2) that there was a belief and expectation that I facilitate a conversation that could generate potential solutions to the racial unrest of 2020.

However, although many other individuals shared similar thoughts that schools were a place to discuss current events and racism, other responses suggested that schools were not the place for engaging students in discussions related to current events like the ones that occurred in 2020. Many states, specifically southern states, later passed legislation and policies to ensure that teachers would not engage in conversations related to race and other concepts that could be divisive. Therefore, as a former public school teacher and as a Black man, I am interested in how other Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South are thinking about teaching and teaching given the contexts currently shaping public education.

Therefore, going back to the question that started this chapter, “What You Know About the Dirty South,” I know that while the experiences of those who live in the American Dirty South are varied, those experiences are real. For some, Dirty South living might include the racist and oppressive experiences rapped about by Goodie Mob while for others Dirty South living might include playing a role in what causes the racism and oppression rapped about by Goodie Mob. However, regardless, I believe that all those experiences inform how an individual engages with, makes meaning of, and understands American citizenship. Second, I love the American South, and I love the American Dirty South even more. I believe the American Dirty South must play a role in the fight for social justice amid anti-Black national discourse and actions. I believe social studies classrooms are spaces in the American Dirty South that offer much potential in teaching students how to craft solutions and create social change that will eradicate all forms of racism and oppression.

However, post-*Brown*, American public schools have been a sight of Black suffering for Black students and their families, especially American public schools situated in the South (Dumas, 2013; Love, 2023). More specifically, the social studies curriculum either excludes the voices and experiences of Black people or limits their experiences to once being oppressed and then liberated (Journell, 2009) and does not include or consider the diversity of Blackness and the Black experience that is influenced by modern forms of racism (Duncan et al., 2023; King, 2020). Take again, for example, the southern lifestyle described by Goodie Mob in their song, Dirty South. When Black joy and humanity is centered within the social studies curriculum, students are better equipped to critique oppressive structures and not individual situations resulting from oppressive structures. In short, Cornel West (1993) in his book, *Race Matters*, argued that Americans must eradicate American systems that perpetuate racism and other forms of inequality. However, given recent restrictions regarding Critical Race Theory (CRT) and divisive concepts,<sup>7</sup> teachers have been placed in precarious positions regarding how and what they can teach to engage students in solution-related possibilities to eradicate racism and oppression. Nevertheless, despite historical and modern restrictions related to the teaching of oppression and racism, Black teachers, in particular, have historically (Duncan et al., in press; Givens, 2021) and within modern contexts (Duncan, 2022) enact pedagogies reaching the aim and possibility of an oppression-free and racist-free American society.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Even though Black teachers play a critical role and that Black teachers have success in teaching all students how to navigate racism and oppression (Duncan, 2022), Black teachers are,

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<sup>7</sup> I define the “anti-truth movement” as movements within American history where White supremacy operates to silence, censor, and or change the perception of the truths that exist within American society in relation to how White supremacy has worked and continues to perpetuate.

now, one of the most underrepresented groups of teachers. However, in May of 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) formally overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine adopted in 1896 by *Plessy v. Ferguson*. While the initial *Brown* ruling called for the integration of American public schools, *Brown v. Board of Education II* mandated that the integration of American public schools be implemented "with all deliberate speed." While *Brown II* did legally end de jure segregation, little is ever discussed regarding the de facto segregation implications of the ruling and how it decimated the Black teaching force in the American South. Before the ruling, Black teachers and principals worked in racially segregated schools across the nation, where they engaged in fugitive pedagogical practices to best prepare their Black students to navigate an anti-Black world (Givens, 2021a). In a talk given about fugitive pedagogy, Givens describes the practice as

More precisely characterizes the form that resistance takes place in these contexts (the Jim Crow South). Fugitivity is covert, concealed, hidden, planning and intentional strategy...And what I call fugitive pedagogy consists of African Americans, physical and intellectual acts that explicitly challenged anti-Black protocols of educational domination actions that often took place in discrete or partially concealed fashion. (Givens, 2021b)

Black teachers' implementation of fugitive pedagogy within the context of Jim Crow resisted and directly challenged subpersonhood<sup>8</sup> and the inhumane experiences Black people experienced while living within the Jim Crow south (Busey & Walker, 2017). Furthermore, the implementation of fugitive pedagogy acknowledged and humanized the educational experience of Black students despite the restrictions that legally and socially dehumanized Black students'

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<sup>8</sup> According to Charles Mills (1997), "subpersonhood" refers to an inferior status within a society or nation.

existence. To that end, the fight for social justice and humanity has been long for Black people and one, educational spaces have helped drive.

*Brown I* offered much hope that the fugitive pedagogical practices Black teachers implemented during the height of Jim Crow would take place openly and in ways where all students would benefit from the fugitive pedagogies Black teachers enacted before pre-*Brown*. Approximately 82,000 teachers in America pre-*Brown* were Black (Hudson & Holmes, 1994). With that, they made up approximately 35% to 50% of the America teaching force within states with segregated school systems, most of whom were in the South (Fenwick, 2022; Hudson & Holmes, 1994). However, *Brown II* also led to the systematic dismissal, displacing, and demotions of many Black principals and teachers from American public schools, and in the Southern states alone, 38,000 Black educators including teachers and administrators lost their jobs (Fenwick, 2022; Fultz, 2004; Hudson & Holmes, 1994). The effects of *Brown II* remain prevalent to the American teaching force given that 79.9% of American public-school teachers identify as White, while less than 6.1% identify as Black or African American (Taie & Lewis, 2022). To add, as of 2022 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), reported that almost 76.6% of American public-school teachers identify as being female, while a little over 23.4% identify as being male. Currently only approximately 1.4% of American public-school teachers identify as being Black men (NCES, 2023).

While Black men make up the second-smallest distribution of teachers, research has suggested that their pedagogical practices are beneficial for all students. Hayes et al. (2014) conducted a narrative study with two Black men teachers who taught in a Mississippi public high school before and after *Brown*. The Black men teachers indicated that their goals as teachers included challenging students to think critically to make the best-informed decision to

"eradicate" the problems of society (Hayes et al., 2014). Brown (2011) conducted a study with Black men secondary teachers who taught in the Midwest and found that the Black men teachers used their varied experiences in their approach to teaching and that they were largely drawn to the profession to be social change agents by helping students develop skills to disrupt, critique, and challenge oppression. For this reason and others, nationwide calls have been made to increase the number of Black teachers in American public schools with specific calls and initiatives for recruiting more Black men (Glover, 2023; Jones et al., 2019; Leroy, 2023).

While nationwide recruitment efforts to recruit more Black men to consider and choose careers in education have, in my opinion, been well-intentioned. Black men who serve as social studies teachers are still tasked with navigating nationwide discourse and policies surrounding disciplinary concepts that must be taught to eradicate racism and drive other forms of social change (Parker, 2023). In 2013, after the killing of Trayvon Martin, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement began. BLM is a social movement “whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes,” (Black Lives Matter, 2024). The movement also took a stand against the racial unrest and police brutality witnessed in 2020 during the height of a global pandemic. As a result of the movement’s ability to mobilize large quantities of people who are committed to speaking out against racism, many different organizations in 2020, ranging from businesses to schools, released statements regarding their commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or antiracism. When included as part of the social studies curriculum, BLM provides opportunities for students to engage in conversations about race, racism, and critical patriotism (King et al., 2016). However, critics of BLM have considered and labeled the movement as divisive and having no place within education (Furrey, 2023).

Therefore, while some schools, states, and districts indicated that they would diversify their curriculum to include the teaching of Black history, other states, especially southern states aligned with former President Trump Donald Trump Executive Order 13950. That executive order prohibited federal contractors from implementing training that promoted divisive concepts (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020). This executive order, in my opinion, provided states with a model for local and state legislatures to pass legislation that restricted the teaching of CRT, divisive concepts, and controversial issues in American public schools and universities. Even where legislation is pending or has not yet been passed, the nation remains impacted and divided by the discourse it has generated (CRT Forward Tracking Project, 2024). For instance, in Alabama, the state where this dissertation was conducted, there had been several attempts since 2021 to pass legislation that restricted the teaching of CRT and divisive concepts. However, a bill was not passed until the 2024 Alabama legislative session. I will discuss this bill more in Chapter 3. To that end, I argue anti-CRT legislation and the discourse surrounding it mirrors the anti-Black legislation that shaped the sociopolitical climate of the American South during Reconstruction and immediately following the *Brown* ruling.

As a former public-school teacher who taught in the south during the height of COVID-19 and the racial unrest surrounding the murders of George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery, I believe America is experiencing yet another social movement for racial equality. Unfortunately, the movement currently undergoing in America is extremely like the social movements for racial equality that occurred during Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) era. Therefore, I am interested in how other Black men are describing American citizenship, social studies education, and teaching for social justice given the context established by anti-CRT legislation and discourses. This dissertation study described and interpreted what Black men secondary

social studies who teach in the American Dirty South conceptualize about American citizenship, their views of social studies education and the extent to which they are teaching for social justice amid actions and discourses within Alabama that has restricted the teaching of race and other divisive or controversial concepts.

### **Research Questions**

Given the current context of American public education regarding the teaching of race and race-related concepts, my personal teaching experiences, and intentional efforts to recruit more Black men to the field of education, I have asked and explored the following question:

**What are the pedagogical beliefs and practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in public schools in the American Dirty South amid national discourse and in some cases, legislation or policies restricting the teaching of race, controversy, and divisive concepts?** The question includes and the study, specifically, explored the three

questions listed below:

1. What do Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South describe as important to know about American citizenship?
2. What do Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South view as the role of social studies education within current society?
3. To what extent do Black men secondary social studies who teach in the American Dirty South use their pedagogical practices to teach for social justice?

### **Purpose of the Study**

America's current sociopolitical climate, especially within the American Dirty South, has placed many restrictions on how social studies teachers can teach and engage students in certain topics. While the curriculum and what students should learn in schools has always been political



(Evans, 2004), the legislative strides many states have taken, and in some cases ultimately passed, to resist the teaching of race, controversy, or divisive concepts largely mirrors the legislative strides that criminalized Blackness within the context of Jim Crow. Therefore, this study described and interpreted how Black men, a small demographic of secondary social teachers, thought about their pedagogy and implemented their pedagogy amid anti-CRT legislation, policies, and discourses.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

I have provided the following definitions to better assist with the reader's understanding of the terms and the researcher's usage of some of the terms included in the dissertation. Specifically, I selected and defined terms selected that were critical to better understand the context of the study and supplement with better understanding the research questions being asked in the dissertation. Although most of the definitions listed below will be accompanied by a citation, a few terms will have definitions conceptualized solely through my personal experiences and perspectives as a researcher.

***American Dream*** in this study referred to the American Dream as described in James Truslow Adams (1931) book, *The Epic of America*. The concept considers America as the land of opportunity and a place where all individuals have equal access to prosperity and success. The American Dream is derived from the idea of American exceptionalism which is defined as the “...idea that the United States of America is unique and even morally superior for historical, ideological, or religious reasons (Volle, 2023, n.p.).

***The American South*** in this study referred to the states making up the southeastern border of the United States. This included all states that are below the Mason-Dixon Line. These states included Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland,

Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

***Anti-Black racism or Anti-Blackness*** in this study referred to “the beliefs, attitudes, actions, practices, and behaviors of individuals and institutions that devalue, minimize, and marginalize the full participation of Black people or people who are perceived to be of African descent” (Comrie et al., 2022, p. 74).

***Black*** in this study referred to participants that self-identified within the larger modern African Diaspora, which can include and is not limited to participants who identified as being African American, Black American, Black European, Black Latino, Black Caribbean (Zezeza, 2005).

***Black Critical Patriotism*** in this study referred to both belief and action. First, it referred to the belief that an individual’s country was never intended for Black persons and other persons of color and are therefore deemed subpersons (Busey & Walker, 2017). Second, it referred to the actions of resistance to that subpersonhood, which could include Black political thought, Black physical resistance, Black intellectualism (Busey & Walker, 2017).

***Black Joy*** in this study referred to “anything that inspires, supports, or uplifts the Black community,” (Black Bruin Resource Center, 2024).

***Citizenship*** in this study referred to what individuals described as informing their understanding regarding what it meant to live within America. While I do understand and acknowledge what the 14th Amendment says about the position of American citizens, I believe citizenship is more of a construct than it is a position. Furthermore, citizenship in this study also referenced the types of citizenship, such as failed and participatory, as suggested and researched by James Banks (2017). I discussed Banks (2017) typologies of American citizenship in Chapter 2 of the dissertation.

***Controversial issues*** in this study referred to issues that divide communities and are subject to sometimes intense debate and disagreement. However, I want to note that what might be controversial to some might not be controversial to others.

***Critical Race Theory*** in this study referred to the theory that originated in the 1970s as a concept used by legal scholars to analyze and make sense of how race and racism was perpetuated throughout American law and the American criminal justice system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). It also referred to Ladson-Billings' and Tate's (1995) analysis regarding the need for CRT to be a method of analysis within education to better understand systemic oppression, racism and other inequality that exist within education.

***Dirty South*** in this study referred to a very specific geographical region within the southeastern border of the United States and described a very specific lifestyle. First, the term was popularized in the 1990s by the Atlanta, Georgia hip-hop group, Goodie Mob, who brought awareness to and critiqued oppression within southern lifestyle. From a geographical standpoint, the Dirty South referred to states within the Southeastern border of the United States, but that included Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina. As it relates to lifestyle and through a lens of citizenship, the Dirty South referred to a specific lifestyle that is marked by racism and oppression creating complex understandings and relationships for many people of color who live in America. Therefore, the term Dirty South is often used as a term of endearment among Black people as a source of pride, connection, and reclamation to a geographic region that continues to perpetuate anti-Black racism. I align and agree with that definition.

***Divisive concepts*** in this study referred to historical or contemporary issues related to power, oppression, race, gender, or socioeconomic status that some people do not want to discuss or largely resist discussing due to their privilege. More specifically, in this study, divisive

concepts referred to race. However, I want to note that what might be considered divisive to some might not to others.

***Dehumanization*** in this study referred to the failure (direct or indirect) of recognizing and acknowledging the complexities and differences in human experiences.

***Dominant conversations*** in this study referred to the propaganda regarding the recruitment/need for Black men teachers to serve as mentors and role models for students (Brown & Thomas, 2020). This propaganda can be written, verbal, or differently expressed.

***Interpretative case study*** in this study referred to the qualitative methods being employed in this study. Interpretative case studies “...are used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering” (Merriam, 1998, p.38). These case studies can be either descriptive or explanatory. According to Yin (2018), descriptive case studies describe a case in detail in its real-world context.

***Fugitive Pedagogy*** in this study referred to how Black teachers taught to restore the humanity of Black people within the context of Jim Crow. As a form of teaching, fugitive pedagogy challenged and resisted anti-Black protocols through their teaching and the intentional effort they took in preparing their students to navigate a racist society (Givens, 2021).

***Man/Men*** in this study referred to a specific gender expression. This gender expression normally accompanies a certain set of roles, behaviors, and characteristics associated with masculinity (Reeser, 2020). Therefore, the terms man/men in this proposed study will also refer to those who are adults, young or old.

***National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)*** in this study referred to the national organization that supports and advocates for social studies education throughout the United States.

*National discourse* in this study referred to current conversation related to anti-CRT legislation and legislation alike that detail what can and cannot be taught within education. I believe this discourse disproportionately impacts teachers within social studies.

*Patriotism* in this study referred to how citizens practice and engage in their beliefs regarding American citizenship. Patriotism can be displayed in more common and traditionally accepted forms, such as authoritarian or democratic (Westheimer, 2009). However, patriotism can also be nontraditional.

*Pedagogical beliefs* in this study referred to the thoughts, beliefs, and definitions Black men secondary social studies teachers had about citizenship and social studies education.

*Pedagogical practices* in this study “...referred to a literal and symbolic moves, articulations, and objects, premised on a set of personal and professional attributes, to achieve educational goals, purposes, and outcomes” (Tang & Pua, 2021). In this study, pedagogical practices specifically referred to the unique set of practices Black men employ to accomplish the purposes associated with their understanding of social studies education. Practices such as how the participants taught, and the decisions made while teaching were the focal points in this study.

*Race/Race-related concepts* in this study referred to direct references about Black people and the teaching about the Black experience.

*Secondary social studies* in this study referred to classes in the social sciences from grades 6-12. These classes included history (world and U.S), sociology, psychology, African American Studies/Black history, Civics/Government, Religion, and any other Humanities course. In addition, the NCSS (2024) defines social studies as ...the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provide coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and

natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world,” (n.p.).

*Social justice* in this study referred to the ways Black men teachers challenged and prepared their students to question, challenge, and critique racism and oppressive societal structures located within their local community, state, nation, or internationally. I also want to note that there is no universal definition of social justice when used in education (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011).

### **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation study described and interpreted the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers amid national discourse and legislation restricting the teaching of race, controversy, and divisive concepts is organized in the following chapters:

Chapter 1 described the sociopolitical context informing the study, the problems associated with the context informing the study, and the questions being explored in the study. Chapter 2 reviewed literature related to the purpose of social studies education, the introduction of controversy and race within social studies education, and empirical studies regarding the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men across all disciplines and those who teach social studies. Chapter 3 explained the theoretical framework used and the selection of methods used to generate data for the study. Chapter 4 provided a descriptive narrative of each teacher who participated in the study. Chapter 5 outlined the findings of the study with connections to the theoretical framework. Chapter 6 discussed the implications of the findings, limitations of the study, and directions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“The South Got Something to Say...”

– (Benjamin [Andre 3000], 1995)

### Overview of Literature Review

This chapter began with a brief overview related to the early purposes of social studies education from the late 19th century up until the middle of the 20th century. An early overview of social studies education was provided to review who was mostly responsible for the decision-making within social studies education. Next, I reviewed literature related to the formal introduction of Black history education within American public schools and the early Black teachers who taught Black history curriculum pre-and-post *Brown*. Then, I reviewed literature related to when race was officially introduced within the social studies curriculum. Lastly, I concluded by reviewing empirical studies related to the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men teachers<sup>9</sup> who teach social studies and where this study adds to social studies literature.

### The Purpose of Social Studies Education

What students learned and who decided what students learned in social studies has always been contentious (Evans, 2004). Prior to 1861, the purpose for social studies education was to help students appreciate classical literature, become law-abiding citizens, and to instill students with discipline (Evans, 2004). Up until the late 1890s, the early social studies curriculum included content and classes about the “1) myths and legends of Ancient Greece, 2) Rome, 3) heroes of the American Revolution, 4) discovery of the New World and 5) patriotism” to teach citizenship and obedience (Evans, 2004, p. 5). However, the early social studies

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<sup>9</sup> In this chapter, the terms African American/Black male or African American/Black man will coincide with the term that was used in the study being reviewed.

curriculum had critics, and those critics felt that the early social studies curriculum was inadequate and chaotic. Therefore, different social studies committees were formed to discuss, organize, and decide upon the purposes of social studies education and what would be taught in social studies classes (Saxe, 1991). The Committee of Ten was formed by the National Education Association (NEA) in 1892 and was made of mostly social elites who were all White men.

The Committee of Ten was later replaced by The Committee of Seven in 1896, and both committees were the primary decision-makers regarding the purposes of social studies education and social studies education curriculum (Evans, 2004). The Committee of Seven suggested that the purpose of social studies education was to help boys and girls become aware of their environment, to think “correctly,” and for them to “become intelligent citizens” (Evans, 2004, p. 12). The Committee of Seven mandated that the social studies curriculum include the study of, 1) ancient history; 2) medieval history; 3) English history; and 4) American history (Evans, 2004). Early social studies teachers used textbooks, written work, maps, and minimal primary sources to teach each block’s content, and the curriculum established by The Committee of Seven became known as the “traditional history curriculum” (Evans, 2004, p.14). However, in the early 1900s, intense debates occurred regarding the effectiveness of the traditional history curriculum. Opponents of the traditional curriculum called on the social studies field to redefine the purpose of social studies and to change who decided what and what students learned in social studies. To find and implement the best solution to move social studies forward, the NEA established a Committee of Social Studies in 1916 (NEA, 1916).

The Committee of Social Studies was established by the NEA in 1916 and released the *Social Studies in Secondary Education* report, which outlined what they believed were the



purposes of social studies education and the curriculum that would be taught in social studies. The Committee of Social Studies suggested the purposes of social studies to be a “subject matter relating directly to the organization and development of human society and to man as a member of social groups” and aimed to “afford peculiar opportunities for the training of the individual as a member of society...to develop an appreciation of the nature and laws of social life, a sense of the responsibility of the individual as a member of social groups, and the intelligence and will to participate effectively in the promotion of social well-being" (NEA, 1916, p. 9). The *Social Studies in Secondary Education* report also outlined a social studies curriculum where geography was taught in seventh grade, followed by history in eighth grade, civics for ninth and tenth, and the three remaining years to include 1) European history; 2) American history; and problems with American democracy (NEA, 1916).

### ***Education Reform and the Establishment of the National Council for the Social Studies***

The early debates related to social studies education consisted of disagreements among different “camps" (Evans, 2004, p. 32). Committees, such as The Committee of Seven and the Committee of Social Studies, were the primary stakeholders who were engaged in the mainstream social studies wars that occurred in America during the early 1920s. Social studies content, the role of the student, and the purpose of social studies education were the major points of contention in the early social studies wars (Evans, 2004). The crux of early social studies debates centered around if social studies curriculum should simply be the memorization of facts to teach obedience, or if social studies should develop critical thinking skills to prepare future citizens to solve democracy’s problems. The Committee of Seven believed social studies education content should be mostly history-focused with the sole purpose of teaching obedience

while the Committee of Social Studies believed that social studies education should play a more active role in preparing students to solve the problems of American democracy (Saxe, 1991). However, according to Jorgenson (2012), the Committee of Social Studies received outside influence from John Dewey, and Jorgenson (2012) used the documents of the Committee of Social Studies and the theories of Dewey to pinpoint how Dewey influenced the decision-making of the Committee of Social Studies and the role those decisions had in creating arguably the most contested academic discipline within education.

John Dewey and Harold Rugg were early American education reformers and theorists. John Dewey is widely considered the “Father of Progressive Education” given that he believed American public schools should be democratic and reflect the social setting of students (Williams, 2017). Harold Rugg was associated with Dewey and the progressive education movement, and their alignment with the progressive education movement influenced American public schools and social studies education (Mraz, 2004). For instance, in 1899, John Dewey released *The School and Society*, which were a series of lectures that called for American public schools to serve a different purpose as America moved into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this series of lectures, Dewey specifically critiqued the idea that schools were set up to teach obedience, which was an idea consistent with the original Committee of Ten and the Committee of Seven (Dewey, 1899). Dewey’s vision for schooling was one where the school:

Had a chance to affiliate itself with life, to become the child's habitat, where he learns through directed living, instead of being only a place to learn lessons, having an abstract and remote reference to some possible living to be done in the future. It gets a chance to be a miniature community, an embryonic society. This is the fundamental fact, and from this arise continuous and orderly streams of

instruction. (Dewey, 1899, p. 15)

Dewey believed schools had more to offer than simply teaching obedience. Dewey believed that schools served as just one place where a child could learn and therefore, the curriculum implemented in the school should center the life experiences that students learned in spaces outside of the school. In short, Dewey believed schools should address both subject matter and students.

Dewey's shift in educational philosophy was accompanied in 1921 by the release of Harold Rugg's, *Man and His Changing Society*, which were a series of educational pamphlets. Rugg's educational pamphlets detailed America's social problems and were written for teachers to include when teaching about and thinking through how to solve America's problems (Evans, 2007; Winters & Rugg, 1967). Given that Rugg's educational pamphlets were mostly written for instructional purposes, by 1929 they were converted into school textbooks and were the most common and widely circulated textbooks used within American public schools during the early portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Moreau, 2003). The content included in Rugg's textbooks marked the first time America's problems were ever introduced as a legitimate topic to teach within American public-school classrooms (Dorn, 2008). However, Rugg's materials were not without criticism as many opponents of Rugg's textbooks believed their content promoted a socialist agenda, so much so that during WWII, parents, school administrators, and the American Legion fought to ban the usage of Rugg's textbooks in American public school (Rippa, 1958). The opponents of Rugg's textbooks felt that the textbooks did not promote traditional ideals of patriotism.

Therefore, the social studies wars that occurred in between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the early to mid-20th century are best classified as a war between the traditionalists and the

progressives. In 1921, during the midst of this social studies war, the National Council of Teachers of Social Studies, which later changed to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), was established (Evans, 2004). NCSS was designated to serve as the mediator between the philosophies of the traditionalists and the progressives and had a specific purpose to “bring about the association and cooperation of teachers of social studies and of administrators, supervisors, teachers of education and others interested in obtaining the maximum results in education for citizenship through social studies” (The Historical Outlook, 1921, p. 144). NCSS established an executive board and immediately became one of the primary stakeholders in the debates related to the purposes of social studies and the social studies curriculum (Nelson, 1995). Nelson (1995) explained that by the end of 1930 NCSS became the forefront regarding the purposes of social studies with the ideas of John Dewey, Harold Rugg, and the progressive education movement playing influential roles regarding the council’s decision-making. However, while the ideas of Dewey, Rugg, and progressive education challenged what had originally been accepted as the purposes of education and social studies education, the content included in Rugg’s textbooks did not include racism as one of America’s problems during the early 20th century (King et al., 2012).

### **Race and Early Social Studies Education**

Although race was not acknowledged as a social problem of the 20th century within the mainstream social studies wars, Frederick Douglass and other early Black scholars such as William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B) Du Bois and Booker Taliaferro Washington wrote about race and how the remnants of enslavement were going to be social problems of the 20th century. To be clear, while Du Bois and Washington had different ideas regarding the solutions to racism, they both acknowledged racism as a problem that would need to be addressed after the American

Civil War. With that, King (2022), a social studies education scholar, argued that the ideas and writings of Du Bois and the work of Washington were the first originators of social studies. For instance, Booker T. Washington, Samuel Armstrong, and Thomas Jesse Jones were all influential in the early establishment of Hampton Institute<sup>10</sup>, an historically black college or university (HBCU), that was founded in 1868 (Hampton University, 2024). Hampton University had an early mission of:

Training selected Negro youth who should go out and teach and lead their people first by example, by getting land and homes; to give them not a dollar that they could earn for themselves; to teach respect for labor, to replace stupid drudgery with skilled hands, and in this way to build up an industrial system for the sake not only of self-support and intelligent labor, but also for the sake of character.

(Hampton University, n.d.)

Samuel Armstrong, Booker T. Washington, and Thomas Jesse Jones believed that schools had a role to play in determining America's best course of action regarding how to move forward in a society without legalized chattel enslavement.

To add to that, in 1881, Frederick Douglass wrote about the "color line" and described prejudice as something that at one point "inflicted all nations" (Douglas, 1881, p. 567). However, specifically within America, he said that prejudice toward Black people had confronted every facet of American life. The ideas of Douglass and his emphasis about the color line influenced the ideas and writings of Du Bois. In 1903, Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk*, and when addressing the color line within *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois indicated that the color

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<sup>10</sup> Hampton Institute was established after the American Civil War by Black leaders, such as Washington, and White leaders, such as Samuel Armstrong who was a Union general and later President of Hampton Institute (Hampton University, 2024). Hampton Institute later became Hampton University.

line created a need for Black Americans to use a “veil” and develop a “double consciousness” and to navigate anti-Black racism that existed within America following the American Civil War (Du Bois, 1994/1903, p. 2). In chapter one, *Of Our Spiritual Strivings*, Du Bois explained double consciousness as:

This sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois, 1903/1994, p. 2)

The work of Washington in establishing Hampton Institute and the writings of Douglass and Du Bois laid the foundation in creating a movement within American public schools that included and called for race to be taught as part of the curriculum to eradicate racism within American society. Within that, Carter G. Woodson also led a movement of Black teachers, White teachers, Black people, and Black communities in addressing the inadequacies of the mainstream social studies wars that many had categorized as progressive yet progressive still did not consider racism as a social problem during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

### ***Carter Godwin Woodson and the Rise of Black History Education***

Carter G. Woodson was one of seven children born on December 19, 1875, in New Canton, Virginia to previously enslaved parents who later turned sharecroppers. During Woodson’s early childhood, he also worked as a sharecropper to help and support his family (Goggin, 1997; Romero, 1971). As a result of working as sharecropper, Woodson was mostly unable to attend formal school, but he attended self-run schools run by his uncles while continuing to work to help and support his family. However, it was not until Woodson’s family

moved to West Virginia that he was able to formally attend school, and in 1895, Woodson, at the age of twenty, enrolled in Frederick Douglass High School, which was the first all-Black segregated high school within Huntington, West Virginia (Romero, 1971). From there, he briefly attended Berea College and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania (a HBCU) before transferring back to Berea College and then, attending the University of Chicago, where he earned a bachelor's degree and master's degree in 1903 and 1908, respectively (Goggin, 1997).

Four years later, in 1912, Woodson received a PhD in history from Harvard University, becoming the first Black man born to formerly enslaved parents and the second African American at Harvard to earn a PhD (Givens, 2021; Goggin, 1997). Nevertheless, Woodson spent his entire life researching and advocating for a black history curriculum. In 1915, Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), which is now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) (Givens, 2021; Goggin, 1997). The organization became a pillar for the study of Black history, Black people, and the Black experience. It published the *Journal of Negro History* and the *Negro History Bulletin* to further highlight the accomplishments of influential Black people and to make their accomplishments known nation-wide and world-wide. Grant et al. (2015) explained the traditions and ideas of early Black scholars such as Carter G. Woodson must be critically examined to better respond to modern day educational issues and larger societal issues, such as anti-Black racism.

Nevertheless, Woodson was also a devoted member of his local community and was a member of many different civic organizations, such as Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, a Black Greek Lettered Organization (BGLO). Omega Psi Phi Fraternity was founded on November 17, 1911, on the campus of Howard University (Dreer, 1940; Hobson, et al., 2024). With the support of a

faculty advisor, Ernest Just, three undergraduate students, Oscar Cooper, Edgar Love, and Frank Coleman, founded the fraternity. The three undergraduates selected manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift as the fraternity's cardinal principles and deemed "Friendship is Essential to the Soul" as the fraternity's motto (Dreer, 1940; Hobson et al., 2024). In 1917, Woodson became an elected honorary member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (Gill, 1963). Woodson used the fraternity as a space and platform to bring awareness to and call for the teaching of Black history. For instance, at the 1920 Grand Conclave,<sup>11</sup> which was held in Nashville, Woodson delivered a speech entitled, "Democracy and the Man Far Down."<sup>12</sup> In that speech, Woodson strongly criticized "the Negro's neglect of his history, in fact the ignorance of it, and urged college men to give less attention to social affairs and devote more time to the study of Negro life" (Dreer, 1940, p. 153). In response to Woodson's speech, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity established Negro History and Literature Week to be held in April of every year and by 1921, the fraternity mandated all fraternity chapters, undergraduate and graduate, to participate in the initiative (Dreer, 1940).

Omega Psi Phi fraternity continued to support the initiative, but no Negro History and Literature celebration occurred in 1925 due to the fraternity shifting its focus mostly to infrastructure and to the growth of its national prominence (Givens, 2019; Dreer, 1940). Therefore, in February 1926, Woodson, with the assistance of ASNLH established Negro History Week which marked the first public initiative devoted to the celebration of Black history. The week coincided with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two key figures in the early history of Black people. It was through ASNLH and with the help of Omega

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<sup>11</sup> The Grand Conclave is the international meeting of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

<sup>12</sup> The complete transcript of Woodson's speech, "Democracy and the Man Far Down" has not been located (Hobson et al., 2024).



that Woodson led a grassroots movement to increase the celebration of Black history in public schools and throughout the Black community. As a result of Woodson's efforts and collaborations, by 1931, 80% of Black high schools celebrated Negro History Week (Dabney, 1934). Negro History Week later became Black History Month (BHM) in 1976 (Givens, 2019). Woodson, his ideas, and the organizations he established provided professional development and advocacy for Black teachers very similar to that of NCSS during the height of the mainstream social studies wars (Givens, 2021).

Carter G. Woodson also wrote and published textbooks that centered Blackness and the patriotism of early Africans and other influential Black people (Thomas et al., 2023). Furthermore, King et al. (2012) conducted a critical content analysis of Rugg's and Woodson's textbooks to examine how each detailed America's problems during the early 20th century. King et al. (2012) analyzed Rugg's textbooks to include, but not limited to, *A History of American Civilization* (1929), *A History of American Government and Culture* (1930), *An Introduction to Problems of American Culture* (1931), and Woodson's textbooks *The Negro and his history* (1922), *Negro Makers of History* (1928), *African Myths, Together with Proverbs* (1928). King et al. (2012) found that although Rugg's textbooks were extremely progressive given the time and context of the American landscape upon their release, they rarely mentioned racism. On the other hand, King et al. (2012) found that the textbooks written by Woodson deliberately challenged and revised the ontological meanings associated with Blackness and Black people by highlighting their achievements in all walks of life (King et al., 2012, p. 377). Therefore, the textbooks written by Woodson and Rugg, which were published around the same time as each other, offered competing narratives regarding if race mattered enough to have been considered a problem in American society during the 1930s.

It is also important to note that Woodson's work to incorporate Black history as part of the school's curriculum also served as a resource to White teachers and White administrators in the South who wanted to incorporate Black history into all-White segregated schools from 1928 through 1943. Educational historian Christine Woysner (2012) used teacher reports, correspondences, and student projects to explore the efforts of the Commission of Interracial Cooperation (CIC). The CIC was a committee established in response to the race riots that occurred during the early 1900s and was a group primarily of well-intentioned White southern liberals who opposed lynchings and wanted to overall improve race relations (MacLean, 1995). To accomplish those aims of improving race relations, the CIC advocated for the incorporation of Black history in all-White segregated schools.

According to Woysner (2012), Will Alexander, who was the leader of the CIC, met with Woodson to discuss ideas regarding the best way for segregated all-White schools in the South to teach Black history. Given the collaboration between Woodson and the CIC, the CIC sponsored the "Tenth Man Contest," which was a contest named in reference to Robert Eleazer's survey, *America's Tenth Man* (Woysner, 2012). Eleazer's survey was an early acknowledgement of the role Black people played in American history, and the Tenth Man Contest provided an opportunity for White students to display their knowledge of Black history and for "White activist teachers to change the attitudes and behaviors" that perpetuated racial inequality (Woysner, 2012, p. 4). However, while the White activist teachers described by Woysner were able to teach Black history openly in schools that embraced Black history, early Black teachers in the Jim Crow south found covert ways to teach and incorporate Black history amid racially restrictive structures that controlled segregated Black schools.

***Early Black Teachers in the American South Pedagogy as Activism and***

## *Conformity*

Educational historian Jarvis Givens (2021) published *Fugitive Pedagogy, Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching*, which provides a historical account into the life of Carter G. Woodson, his work within the education field, and the impact his work had on early Black teachers during the years of Reconstruction and Jim Crow. The book used archival data, diaries, and primary sources to detail the life of Woodson and his work related to Black history education and Black teacher professional development. The book began with a powerful narrative of Tessie McGee, an African American teacher who taught history at a segregated African American secondary school in Louisiana in the early 1900s. Givens (2021) described how Miss McGee would “revise the mandatory curriculum” by reading passages written by early Black scholars, such as Du Bois, while knowing and understanding the consequences of doing so (p. 1). Givens used this narrative to better situate and theorize what he described as “fugitive pedagogy,” which he explained as being multifaceted yet accomplished through the incorporation of Black joy with planned and intentional critiques of White supremacy.

The bulk of the narrative, however, explained the life of Woodson. In the book, Givens (2021) provided a detailed account of Carter G. Woodson’s familial heritage and early professional life. Givens (2021) further highlighted and detailed Woodson’s role in establishing the ASNLH, which Givens described as an organization established “to transform the representation of black life and culture in Western knowledge” (Givens, 2021, p. 63). Givens explained that the organization and professional development it offered set the foundation for teachers to engage in and employ fugitive pedagogy within the context of Jim Crow. Furthermore, Givens explained how Woodson believed African Americans should “appeal to boards of education for the adoption of Negro history textbooks, or to induce libraries and

schools to purchase Negro literature and pictures of notable men of the race" (Givens, 2021, p. 77). Doing so, Woodson believed, would improve African American students' self-identity, which was the biggest implication and goal of fugitive pedagogical practices.

With that, the pedagogy employed by Black teachers during reconstruction and throughout the Jim Crow South continued as America moved into the formal years of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). However, there are tensions within the research literature as historians disagree regarding the extent to which Black teachers who taught in the American South used their teaching as a form of activism. While historian Adam Fairclough (2000) agreed that Black teachers challenged Jim Crow within classrooms, he did not categorize their classroom pedagogy as activism or as having played a significant role in dismantling White supremacy before or during the movement. Fairclough suggested the way early Black teachers challenged White supremacy was indirect, which required Black teachers to "conform to the humiliating etiquette of white supremacy" (Fairclough, 2000, p. 75).

Furthermore, Fairclough suggested that Black teachers were mostly scared to directly participate in the CRM out of fear of losing their jobs and because early Black teachers depended upon White support to do their jobs (Fairclough, 2000). As a result of fear and depending upon White support, Fairclough categorized early Black teachers during the CRM as privileged leaders of the Black community who wanted to obtain White approval and support. However, Fairclough's analysis only considered traditional forms of activism which characterized the collective efforts of Black teachers within the CRM and not the individual efforts that the Black teachers demonstrated within their classrooms that made them Black civic actors.

Educational historian Derrick Alridge (2020) used oral history to study with three teachers who taught during the CRM before and after public school integration. In that project,

Alridge described Johnnie Fullerwinder, a Black woman science teacher who integrated the faculty at George Washington High School in Virginia. During the interview, Fullerwinder described herself as a “pioneer, a trailblazer” and felt she "had to do an exceptional job to show that Black people are capable of being able to teach" (Alridge, 2020, p. 10). Lastly, Alridge discussed how Black men teachers, such as Walter Ridley and James Wright, prepared college and high school students to participate in the movement. Based upon the accounts provided by those teachers, Alridge argued that activism during the CRM should not be limited to traditional forms of activism such as participating in a march or sit-in but that activism should also include how Black teachers served as advocates of social justice by teaching students how to engage and challenge racism and oppression that was occurring and was the purpose in fighting the CRM (Alridge et al., 2023; Alridge, 2020). The research conducted by Alridge demonstrated that Black teachers used teaching as a form of activism during the CRM era.

Another example is Birmingham, Alabama which is a city and state located within the American South. Education historian Tondra Loder-Jackson (2015) examined the role Black teachers played in the Birmingham Civil Rights struggle. This work primarily used narrative inquiry methodology by exploring the life stories and oral histories of early Black teachers who taught in Birmingham. Loder-Jackson (2015) also analyzed the biographies and autobiographies of early Black teachers who taught in Birmingham before and during the movement as well. Narrative inquiry uses the stories of individuals to make meaning of how the individual’s experiences inform their world views (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Loder-Jackson (2015) explained:

Many educators have used the classroom to teach powerful lessons about freedom, justice, and democracy, which have stirred younger generations of

students to action. The subtle contributions of many African American educators during the long civil rights movement may be characterized as “intellectual activism” or acts of “intellectual resistance” and subversion in the classroom and school. (Loder-Jackson, 2015, p. 8)

Loder-Jackson (2015) also explained that Black teachers in Birmingham participated in “conventional” and “unconventional” forms of activism during the movements (p. 7). Some teachers directly participated in marches and public protests, while others helped register their students to vote and prepared them for the questions they would be required to answer and pass to become registered voters. Loder-Jackson (2015) indicated that modern educational contexts between Black educators and Black people born during the time of the Civil Rights Movement and the “hip-hop generation,” and therefore, calls for more investigation informing new strategies to resist “poverty, inequitable education, police brutality, homicide, and environmental racism” (Loder-Jackson, 2015, p. 12). This dissertation described the extent to which Black teachers are similarly teaching for social change within modern educational contexts that are shaped by anti-CRT discourse and legislation. Regardless of the tensions within the literature that suggest that Black teachers resisted and conformed to White supremacy, segregated Black schools were still staffed with Black principals, teachers, and staff members and were sources of pride within Black communities (Fenwick, 2022; Love, 2023).

***Brown v. Board of Education and the Systematic Dismal of Black Principals and Teachers***

Fenwick (2022) used archival data and oral history to tell the story of Black teachers before *Brown*. Early Black teachers were the most highly qualified group of educators within the American South but were later dismissed by less qualified White teachers during the

implementation of *Brown II* (Fenick, 2022). Along with teaching in segregated school systems, early Black teachers who taught in the American South before *Brown* were also excluded from attending Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Therefore, early Black teachers who taught pre-*Brown* had to attend other institutions, most of whom were in the North, to obtain a higher education. To add, many state legislatures in the American South set aside appropriations for Black teachers to obtain those degrees (Fenwick, 2022). Even when Black people used federal courts to desegregate PWIs in cases such as, *Murray v. Pearson* (1935) and *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada et al.* (1938),<sup>13</sup> PWIs in the South still denied admission to qualified Black students (Harper et al., 2009).

It is important to note that, up until 1944, Tennessee and North Carolina were the only two states in the American South that had a state-allocated appropriation set aside for Black students who wanted to obtain graduate education (Jackson, 1944). Nevertheless, state appropriations that were set aside in Southern states made it possible for many Black teachers who taught in the American South to attend Ivy League and other extremely prestigious institutions, such as Brown University and Northwestern University, respectively. Despite state-appropriated funds, Black stakeholders within in the American South still resisted and were able to lobby southern state legislatures which eventually led to increases in state funding for HBCUs, such as the Tuskegee Institute and Alabama State Teachers College to offer state-supported graduate school education at HBCUs for Black students (Jenkins, 1947). Black people being denied access to higher education institutions within the Jim Crow South demonstrated that the racist history of America was still at work but Black people's commitment to attend northern

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<sup>13</sup> Lloyd Gaines, the plaintiff in this federal case, disappeared shortly after the ruling, and his disappearance up until this day remains a mystery. As a result of his disappearance, he never graduated from the University of Missouri Law School (Fenwick, 2022). He was a Black man. Most importantly, he was a human.

institutions demonstrated their belief in education. This dissertation study described how Black men teachers who taught social studies in the American South thought about citizenship amid prevalent racial tensions in the South that mirror the racial tensions of the South in the early 20th century.

In addition, similar to the findings of Alridge (2020) and Loder-Jackson (2015) who studied the activism of early Black teachers pre- and post-*Brown*, Fenwick (2022) suggested that Black teachers and principals pre- and post-*Brown* were highly valued and helped establish schools within their local communities and that segregated all-Black schools served as a source of community pride, taught lessons of racial pride, and acknowledged the full humanity of Black students. However, the implementation of *Brown II* completely altered and, to a degree, eradicated the community pride Black people found within segregated all-Black schools.

Many of the schools built for Black students were closed, and Black students who attended segregated all-Black schools had to attend the newly integrated schools that were once exclusively for White children. To add, in some cases, the segregated schools that were built in the Black communities had much better facilities than the ones that were integrated (Fenwick, 2022). Once segregated all-Black schools were closed, Black principals and the Black teachers who worked at the schools were mostly dismissed, demoted, or displaced (Thompson, 2022). Figure 2.1 provided an early quantitative number regarding the number of Black teachers who taught pre-*Brown* and the number of those who were dismissed after post-*Brown II*. Furthermore, it predicted, in 1994, that Black teachers would make up less than 5% of the teaching force by 2000.

### **Figure 2.1**

*Loss of African American Teachers Post-Brown*



**TABLE I**  
*The Loss of African American Teachers Following Brown v. Board of Education:  
 A Snapshot*

Pre-1954	Approximately 82,000 African American teachers were responsible for the education of 2 million African American children.
1954	The <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> decision was handed down.
1954–1965	More than 38,000 African American teachers and administrators in 17 southern and border states lost their jobs.
1975–1985	The number of African American students majoring in education declined by 66%.
1984–1989	An estimated 37,717 minority candidates and teachers—including 21,515 African Americans—were eliminated as a result of newly installed teacher certification and teacher education program admissions requirements.
By 2000	Only 5% of the teaching force will be of minority background, while 35% of the student population will be people of color.

*Note.* From, Missing Teachers, Impaired Communities: The Unanticipated Consequences of Brown v. Board of Education on the African American Teaching Force at the Precollegiate Level,” by M. Hudson and M. Holmes, *The Journal of Negro Education*, 63(3), 388–393. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2967189>. Copyright 1994 by The Journal of Negro Education.

Although Figure 2.1 made predictions regarding the number of Black teachers who were dismissed after *Brown*, a recent study indicated that the actual number of Black teachers who were dismissed in the American South post-*Brown* was higher. Using archival data from 781 school districts in the American South, Thompson (2022) found that between 1964 and 1972, segregated school systems that transitioned to integrated school systems resulted in a 41.7% reduction in the Black teaching force. Therefore, an estimated total of 100,000 Black educators in the South lost their jobs post-*Brown II* (Fenwick, 2022). This substantial reduction in the Black teaching force in the South was mostly due to dismissal. However, some Black teachers displayed resistance and resigned from their positions in lieu of teaching at the newly integrated schools. Black teachers who were dismissed or resigned mostly entered other lower-paying jobs in fields other than education, and some Black teachers even migrated from the American South.

The transition to different fields, along with the migration away from the South, decimated the Black Southern middle class and many local Black communities. The Black community is estimated to have lost over one billion dollars of wealth because of desegregation (Fenwick, 2022; Thompson, 2022).

On top of the financial loss, Black students lost access to Black teachers who employed a type of pedagogy that instilled racial pride and stirred Black students to facilitate social change within their local and national communities (Alridge, 2020; Givens, 2021; Loder-Jackson, 2015). Even with the mass dismissal of Black teachers from the American South, by 1990, the American South still had twice the representation of Black teachers than other geographic regions (Oakley et al., 2009) However, the number of Black teachers in the American South continues to decrease while the number of Black teachers in other geographic regions continues to increase (Oakley et al., 2009). As a result, research that centers the voices of Black teachers who teach in the American South is needed as the number of Black teachers in the South continually decreases.

Although the number of students who attend American public schools continues to diversify, the American public school teaching force has not and still remains a White-dominated field (Taie & Lewis, 2022). Even with slight a decrease in recent years of White teachers who have chosen careers in education, become teachers 80% of the American teaching force identifies as White while a little above 6% identifying as Black making the effects of *Brown II* still prevalent within modern educational context relating to American public school teacher demographics (Taie & Lewis, 2022). Therefore, the number of Black teachers making up American teaching has never recovered since *Brown*. Given that, the underrepresentation of Black teachers and other teachers of color has, in recent years and currently, called for

widespread recruitment efforts and initiatives. This dissertation studies with Black teachers who are the subject of widespread recruitment efforts and initiatives.

### **Race and Modern Social Studies Education**

In 1995, Ladson-Billings and Tate introduced a theory into education, Critical Race Theory (CRT), to better analyze and understand the role race plays in perpetuating school inequity. CRT, when used to understand school inequity, is rooted in the following beliefs: 1) that race plays a critical role in determining social inequality in America; 2) American society is based on property rights, which from the onset of America's founding was exclusive to White men; and 3) the intersection of race and property rights presents a method to understand school and social inequality (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 48). Numerous other articles have followed this initial article, explaining and positioning CRT's purpose within the education field.

Ladson-Billings (1998) explained that one way to use CRT was to examine the intersections between race and citizenship and how citizenship was predicated upon being White and owning property, which heavily nuances Black peoples and other peoples of color conceptualizations of American citizenship (Johnson, 2019; Vickery, 2017). Ladson-Billings further argued that CRT helps understand and explain why stories related to African Americans and other people of color are oftentimes excluded from the curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Ladson-Billings also explained that CRT helps explain and understand how deficit thinking among teachers negatively impacts the educational experiences of Black students and other students of color and how inequitable school funding was a direct result of institutional racism. However, it was not until 2003, that Ladson-Billings called for and challenged social studies to center race within the field.

Ladson-Billings (2003) indicated that “race is an ever-present concept in social studies—

in the curriculum, the profession, and its policies and practices,” but even at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the incorporation of race was completely absent within social studies curriculum and policies adopted by NCSS (p. 2). Ladson-Billings (2003) also indicated that racially diverse groups were excluded from the social studies curriculum. Even when the social studies curriculum included the study of racially diverse people and events, such as Martin Luther King and the CRM, the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) conducted a nationwide survey that indicated that topics related to race are mostly limited to one or two lessons (NMAAHC, 2016).

Jones (2022) used CRT as a theoretical framework and critical discourse analysis methods to analyze how Whiteness dominated the Virginia United States History Course standards. Critical discourse analysis is a method of qualitative inquiry that describes how discourse legitimizes social inequalities within society (Mullet, 2018). Jones (2022) found that, within Virginia United States History Course standards, fear was an emotion that was used to justify or explain the actions of White historical actors. For example, Jones (2022) found that the Virginia standards required students to learn that the fear of abolition was the reason why the South seceded from the Union while never mentioning how the suffering of enslaved persons constituted Black fear. To add, Jones (2022) found that the Virginia standards used abolitionists, such as William Lloyd Garrison, and the violation of Christian principles as reasons behind abolition and not because enslavement was a fearful and inhumane system for the Black bodies that were subjected to it. Seegar et al. (2022) conducted a study like Jones’ and used CRT to analyze the same Virginia United States History Standards. Seegar et al. (2022) found that the racial representation of the Virginia state standards was skewed to favor White men. The researchers quantified that 70% of the Virginia state standards were devoted to White men.

Seegar et al. (2022) also found that the Virginia state standards portrayed Black people as monolithic and did not include topics speaking to the diversity of the Black experience.

Nevertheless, Ladson-Billings (2003) also pointed out that although other disciplines within the educational field, such as English, adopted position statements related to race, up until 2019, social studies did not. For instance, Marshall (2003) conducted a content analysis of NCSS policies and NCSS position statements from 1983 to 2003. Marshall (2003) found that from 1983 to 2003 NCSS did not issue a position regarding race, racism, or the role race should play to better inform citizenship education. Marshall (2003) characterized NCSS policy and position statements as being colorblind and suggested that NCSS's colorblind rhetoric was due to the exclusion of people of color from the decision-making process related to NCSS's position and policy statements. To add to that, Demoigny (2020) examined NCSS position statements from 2004 to 2018 and found findings like Marshall's (2003) study. Demoigny (2020) found that NCSS position statements from 2004 to 2018 were mostly evasive of race and Demoigny indicated that the NCSS between 2004 and 2018 either did not name racism, minimized America's racist legacy, and continued with the colorblind narrative as indicated by Marshall (2003). However, Demoigny (2020) did find that one position statement, Towards Responsibility issued in 2018, critiqued racism and called for the decentering of whiteness in social studies education.

In 2019, the NCSS Board of Directors discussed the need for a statement regarding the teaching of race and racism, but that official statement did not become adopted until November 2023. In 2023, the NCSS issued the following statement:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the National Council for the Social Studies issue a position statement on teaching about race and racism in the social studies classroom as an essential aspect of preparing future citizens who will be informed

advocates in an inclusive and equitable society; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the National Council for the Social Studies continue to promote the importance of teachers and pre-service teachers to be active participants in the goal of combating racism, xenophobia, and other forms of bigotry in their social studies classrooms. (NCSS, 2023)

NCSS suggested that social studies classrooms served as a space where students can become racially literate citizens who will go on to combat racism within society.

King (2022) published an edited volume, *Racial Literacies and Social Studies*, in response to the murders of George Floyd in Minneapolis and Breonna Taylor, Black people who were killed by the police. In the introduction of the book, King (2022) emphasized the importance of centering race within the school curriculum and within the field of social studies. Even though social studies is pushing toward racial literacy and has adopted a NCSS position statement on racial literacy, social studies still lacks or inaccurately misrepresents race within the social studies curriculum (Jones, 2022; Seegar et al., 2022) and lacks diversity amongst its teaching ranks (Fitchett, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2003). More specifically, the lack of diversity amongst social studies faculty is not to suggest that the teaching of race should exclusively be the work of Black teachers or other teachers of color, but research suggest that Black teachers have historically (Alridge, 2020; Duncan et al., in press; Loder-Jackson, 2015) and still employ pedagogies to help their students navigate racism and to fight oppression.

Duncan (2022) used narrative inquiry to study with four secondary teachers and used CRT as a theoretical framework to better understand how the teachers included in the study taught about racism and helped their students navigate racism. Narrative inquiry, as a qualitative methodology, seeks to elicit the stories of participants to understand how their stories inform

their viewing of the world (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). All the teachers who participated in Duncan's study taught in the American South. Duncan (2022) found and suggested that the teachers who participated in the study saw racism as an inevitable component of American society and therefore, sought to acknowledge that inevitability by having "real talk moments," which were conversations that involved open and honest dialogue about racism, which deviated from what was expected to be taught (Duncan, 2022, p. 987). Duncan (2022) also found that the teachers who participated in the study used their classrooms to encourage and foster spaces where student voices that critiqued oppression were welcomed. However, with that, only one of the teachers who participated in Duncan's study taught social studies, which aligns with Fitchett's (2010) and Ladson-Billings's (2003) claim regarding the lack of Black teachers and other teachers of color within social studies. While Duncan's study investigated how Black teachers helped their students prepare for and navigate racism, it did not include a specific focus on social studies teachers. Given that social studies have a proclaimed purpose of preparing future citizens (NCSS, 2024) and that anti-Black racism remains an unfortunate component of American society (Banaji et al., 2021), more research that specifically focuses on Black social studies teachers adds to the body of literature regarding the extent to which social studies is a space where Black teachers can teach for social change.

More specifically with social studies, Ladson-Billings (2003) criticized and critiqued the lack of teachers of color and challenged the social studies field to do more to recruit and retain diverse teachers. According to Love (2023), after *Brown*, "White educators largely erased Black students' culture and community and placed them in classrooms with White teachers who had low expectations of their intellectual capacity" (p. 21). To add to that, Black teachers were also not hired for newly created positions post-*Brown* (Fenwick, 2022; Thompson, 2022), and since

the implementation of *Brown*, Black teachers have not made up more than 10% of the American teaching force (Love, 2023). Therefore, while the calls to recruit and retain diverse teachers are not exclusive to social studies, Black teachers and other teachers of color are nearly nonexistent within social studies as the field is currently dominated by White men (Fitchett, 2010).

Therefore, more research is needed that speaks to the experiences and perspectives of men who identify as being of color and who teach social studies. This dissertation study highlights the voices of Black men within social studies.

## **Empirical Research Studies on the Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices of Black Men Teachers**

### ***Efforts to Recruit Black Men Teachers in Education***

With the calls to recruit more Black teachers, the dominant discourse related to teacher recruitment has included more specific initiatives and calls geared directly toward Black men (Jones, et al., 2019). For instance, in 2009, during a policy address given at Teachers' College, Columbia University, Arne Duncan, the then United States Secretary of Education, stated, "Nationwide, more than 35% of public-school students are Hispanic or African American, but less than 15% of our teachers are black or Latino... It is especially troubling that less than 2% of our nation's teachers are African American males." While this statement brought to the mainstream the recruitment of Black men teachers, Brown and Thomas (2020) suggested that this call and other calls specifically regarding the recruitment of Black men teachers were rooted in discourses that limit the uniqueness of Black men and their purposes for becoming teachers. Brown and Thomas (2020) conducted a study that examined 60 recruitment materials related to the recruitment and retention of Black men teachers. Brown and Thomas (2020) found that most



of the analyzed materials included discourse surrounding one of two concepts, the notion of the “two percent” or the “one teacher phenomenon.”

Brown and Thomas (2020) explained that the two percent concept was derived from national demographics that reflected the lack of Black men who made up the American teaching force, which in 2009 was sitting right at about 2% (NCES, 2010). Brown and Thomas (2020) further explained that the one teacher phenomenon was linked to a research study that was conducted in 2017, which suggested that same-race teachers have higher academic achievement rates and were therefore, the best teachers to teach students who were of their same race (Gershenson et al., 2022). Brown and Thomas (2020) explained how the same-race teacher research study made an explicit connection between Black teachers as being the best teachers to teach Black students and how that connection fueled the narrative that drove teacher recruitment efforts for Black teachers and Black men.

Nevertheless, Brown and Thomas (2020) indicated that the two percent and the one teacher phenomenon limit the uniqueness of Black men and oversimplify their roles and values as teachers and created dominant discourse that influences public pedagogies, which in return impacts the education field. For instance, Thomas et al. (2022) used a critical public pedagogy framework, to help explain and understand what the films *Lean on Me* and *Major Payne* were teaching its viewers and the public about Black men teachers. Thomas et al. (2022) found that the Black men teachers who were depicted in the two films, *Lean on Me* and *Major Payne*, were perceived as only being able to save students from death and deviance or being a source of motivation for students who were lazy or irresponsible. While Thomas et al. (2022) did not necessarily characterize the depictions of the Black men teachers from those films as problematic, it oversimplified the role and value that Black men have as teachers, which plays a

role in generating problematic thinking and discourse regarding Black men teachers' recruitment in education. Therefore, this dissertation studies seeks to describe and interpret the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men teachers that go beyond the oversimplification of their roles evident in recruitment literature and public pedagogies.

### *Secondary Black Men Teachers Pedagogical Beliefs and Pedagogical Practices*

#### *Across All Disciplines*

While the primary research question being explored in this proposed study centered on the pedagogical beliefs and practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers who taught in the American Dirty South, I also reviewed studies of Black men teachers across all disciplines and from all geographic regions to further make clear where this dissertation enters and advances current conversations about Black men secondary social studies teachers within the research literature. Upon a cross-disciplinary review, I characterized three dominant themes regarding the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices related to Black men teachers emerging from the research. Most of the studies speaking to the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men teachers explored their work within urban settings outside of the South, the interactions Black men teachers had with Black boy students, and most of the studies used culturally responsive frameworks to understand, explain, and interpret their pedagogical practices.

Much of the early research related to Black men teachers' pedagogical beliefs and perspectives was mostly contextually and geographically confined to urban school districts and northern school districts, respectively (Anyon, 1997; Foster, 1997; Milner, 2007; Silver, 1973). For instance, Lynn (2002) conducted a study to nuance and challenge the stereotypes associated with the roles of Black teachers, specifically Black men, who taught in the Los Angeles Unified

School District. Lynn (2002) used CRT to understand how Black men teachers' racialized citizenship experiences within the United States informed their purposes for choosing a career in education. Lynn (2002) interviewed 36 Black men teachers of all grade levels who taught in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Lynn (2002) reported that the Black men teachers viewed themselves as agents of change, thought they were able to relate to the students they taught, and saw teaching as a contribution to their community. Lynn (2002), however, did not describe specifics regarding how he defined social change.

Recently, DonorsChoose collaborated with the Center for Black Educator Development to survey teachers regarding their professional experiences (DonorsChoose, 2024). Over 5,000 teachers responded to the survey, and 32% of the respondents were Black men teachers. The DonorsChoose survey indicated that Black men who graduated from HBCUs created caring, nurturing, and caring environments for their students, and they reported spending more time with students outside of the classroom (DonorsChoose, 2024). Furthermore, Black men teachers were more likely to report entering the teaching profession because they wanted to teach a curriculum that affirms the identities of students of color (Donors Choose, 2024). The DonorsChoose survey also indicated that Black men who became teachers after 2010 were more likely to choose and saw teaching as an opportunity to engage in social justice work. Lastly, the DonorsChoose survey indicated that Black men teachers experience a higher "invisible tax" than other teachers. The "invisible tax" refers to the amount of additional time in which Black teachers are subjected to working with Black students, which within a K-12 space mostly involves disciplining Black boys (Givens, 2016).

Along those same lines, Brown (2011) used an instrumental case study to examine and explain some of what African American men teachers draw upon when teaching Black boy

students. Brown (2011) examined how the life experiences of Black men influenced the practices, beliefs, and interactions that African American men teachers had with Black boys. Brown (2011) used Eddie Guade's (2007) framework of Black experience and how varied Black experiences plays a role in how Black people choose or choose not to enact change within their realities. Brown (2011) studied with five African American male secondary teachers who all taught at the same school, Crispus Attucks, which was in Midwest urban school district. In the study, Brown (2011) found that African American male teachers used experiences from the military, fraternities, Christianity, martial arts, and hip hop to inform their beliefs about and practices working with Black boys. Furthermore, while Brown's study did study with Black men who taught secondary grades, this dissertation directly described and interpreted the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men who specifically teach social studies, a field with the purpose of developing citizens.

Since Ladson-Billings (2003) called for race to be centered in social studies curriculum and research, very few research studies have explored the pedagogical experiences and pedagogical practices of Black men teachers who taught or teach in the American South. However, Hayes et al. (2014) conducted a study exploring the teaching philosophies of two Black men teachers who taught in rural Mississippi post-Brown. Hayes et al. (2014) used CRT to analyze the oral histories of the two Black participants and the success they had teaching Black students. Hayes et al. (2014) conducted interviews and follow-up conversations after the initial interviews were conducted. The researchers also conducted member checks with the participants since two members of the research team did not identify as being part of the Black community. Hayes et al. (2014) advanced and suggested that the Black men teachers offered examples of transformative pedagogy, "an approach or philosophy of teaching accompanied by practices that

enable students to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to navigate within, provide sociopolitical critique of, and foster democratic change within conditions of historical white supremacy" (p. 9). Hayes et al. (2014) also found that both teachers had similar goals in seeing their purpose and role as being change agents for their students. To add to that, both participants in the study indicated that "developing students' ability to critically think" was an important skill for students to encompass to make the informed decisions as citizens (Hayes et al., 2014, p. 5). Hayes et al. (2014) only relied upon interviews and conversation. Therefore, research that also includes observations is needed to better understand the extent to which Black men secondary studies teachers are teaching for social change amid anti-CRT discourse and legislation. Also, neither of the two participants from Hayes et al. (2014) study taught social studies.

With that, Milner (2016) employed a single case study methodology to explore the beliefs and the culturally relevant pedagogy of a Black man teacher who taught middle school math and science. Milner (2016) used culturally responsive pedagogy as the theoretical framework to examine how the Black man teacher thought about his pedagogical practice. According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching centers on multiple cultural frames of reference in classroom instruction, and culturally responsive teaching views cultural frames as assets and not deficits. Milner (2016) used interviews, observations, and artifacts to collect data for the study, and he found that the Black man participant who participated in the study immersed himself in the lives of students, believed that his students were the experts in their own experiences, and connected with them through music. Milner (2016) suggested his culturally relevant pedagogical practices were informed by his learning with and from his students. While Milner's study did include interviews, observations, and artifact collection as methods for collecting data, the study only included one participant, which creates a need for more research regarding how Black men

secondary teachers teach and think about teaching in other content areas. This dissertation study directly studies the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men who teach social studies.

### ***Pedagogical Beliefs of Black Men Social Studies Teachers***

Dumas (2013) suggested traditional American schools have been a site of suffering for Black students, and Duncan et al. (2023) suggested that the traditional social studies curriculum is deeply rooted in anti-Blackness. For instance, within social studies, Black people and other people of color are either largely excluded from the curriculum (An, 2022; Journell, 2008) or when attempts are made to include the history of diverse groups, it is often limited, inaccurate, or prioritizes Whiteness (Jones, 2022; Seegar et al., 2022). Although social studies education is in a prime position to be a space that fosters Black joy, it historically has not especially within the American South (Duncan, et al., 2023; Wiggan et al., 2022). Therefore, only literature specifically related to Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in public schools in the American South will be reviewed in this section and the next.

Brown (2009a) conducted the earliest study exploring the ideological discourses of Black men secondary social studies teachers related to social justice and Black boys. In this study, he used an instrumental case design and interviewed seven Black men teachers who taught at a school in the American South that served predominantly students of color. Brown (2009a) conducted the study to provide "a more in-depth analysis of how African American teachers made sense of and employed their pedagogical practices" (Brown, 2009a, p. 475). Brown (2009a) found three things: 1) Black men's secondary social studies teachers drew upon different theories and life experiences in their pedagogical beliefs about Black boys, Black young men, and the notion; 2) Black men secondary social studies teachers were not monolithic; 3) Black

men secondary social studies teachers had multifaceted definitions and ideas about social justice. However, Brown's (2009a) explored the thought and practices of Black men teachers specifically as it pertained to their thoughts about teaching Black boys but not what Black men teachers viewed as the purposes of their classrooms. Brown's (2009a) study created a need for more research regarding how Black men social studies teachers describe the purposes of social studies education, and this dissertation described and interpreted what Black men secondary social studies teachers believed were the purposes of social studies education.

With that, the purposes of social studies education continue to be debated. In 2015, Hess and McAvoy published *The Political Classroom*, which reported on a mixed-methods study that explored how secondary social studies teachers taught political issues within their classrooms. Hess's and McAvoy's (2015) found and indicated that all teacher-decisions were political regardless of whether a teacher decided to teach or not to teach a particular topic. Hess and McAvoy suggested that social studies teachers and social studies classrooms should be "political" and become a space where all students can discuss and debate on issues that help answer questions and find solutions toward how citizens should live together. The former was not stated to suggest that the teaching of race or other divisive concepts is political, but within modern sociopolitical contexts, it has most definitely been politicized. The National Coalition against Censorship (2021) defined divisive concepts as "a broad term for ideas about race and sex that challenge the dominant narrative of America's founding and history". Ladson-Billings (2004) suggests that it is "impossible to talk about citizenship without understanding the epistemological foundations on which citizenship in a particular nation is predicated," and within the American South, especially the American Dirty South, citizenship was predicted based upon an individual's race (p. 101). National discourse and recent restrictions regarding the teaching of

divisive concepts are in tension with what social studies has recently proclaimed to do, which is developing racially literate and responsive citizens. This dissertation described and interpreted how Black men secondary social studies teachers describe the purpose of social studies given current tensions between the purposes of social studies and modern educational contexts.

As a result of citizenship being predicated on individuals' race, Banks (2017) described that citizenship is complex and therefore, offered four different typologies for contextualizing and understanding the different types of citizenship. According to Banks (2017), failed citizenship exists when individuals who are born within a nation or those who migrate to it feel excluded from and do not internalize the values of the nation. Recognized citizenship exists when a state or nation recognizes an individual or group as legitimate and provides those individuals with full rights and opportunities within that nation or state (Banks, 2017). Participatory citizenship refers to the actions exercised by individuals and groups who have been granted recognized citizenship (Banks, 2017). Transformative citizenship requires and refers to the actions citizens take to implement change(s) related to human rights, social justice, and equality within a nation or state. Banks (2017) suggested that schools and social studies classrooms are primed positioned to provide students with a transformative civic education. However, within the research literature, the voices of Black men teachers and the extent to which they use their pedagogy to teach for transformation remains limited.

The review of the literature yielded only one empirical study that explored how Black secondary social studies teachers conceptualized or described citizenship. Vickery (2017) used qualitative research methods to study with five African American women secondary social studies teachers to explore their perceptions of American citizenship and how the participants' perceptions of citizenship informed their pedagogies within the classroom. Vickery (2017) used



a Black feminism framework to analyze the data to understand the citizenship experiences of the African American women participants. Black feminism centers the voices of Black women to understand how the intersections of race and gender perpetuate systemic oppression and racism, but it also informs the resistance of Black women (Collins, 2009). Vickery's case study was conducted over a three-year period (2011–2014) at two different sites, and data collection included interviews, field observations, and artifacts such as lesson plans and student work.

Vickery's (2017) found that the five African American women secondary social studies teachers who participated in the study believed that American citizenship and the rights associated with American citizenship were never meant for African American women. Given that the African American women teachers from the study believed American citizenship was never meant for them, they sought to use their classrooms as a place where American citizenship could become more inclusive, relational, and empowering (Vickery, 2017). For example, the African American woman who participated in the study created welcome and warm environments, created classroom community policies that emphasized respect, and created a "communal notion of citizenship" (Vickery, 2017). Given how the African American women social studies teachers from Vickery's (2017) study viewed traditional notions of citizenship, more exploration is needed that speaks to how black men secondary social studies teachers conceptualize American citizenship, describe the purposes for social studies education, and how they are teaching social studies.

The research literature yielded only one study that specifically explored the pedagogical beliefs of a Black men secondary social studies teacher. Milton-Williams and Bryan (2021) used life history methodology to specifically examine the pedagogical beliefs of a middle school social studies teacher. Life history methodology explores the individual life experiences of

research participants to examine how their life experiences are shaped by society (Foster, 1997). Milton-Williams and Bryan (2021) captured how those contexts affected his life experiences and how they informed his work as a middle school social studies teacher. Milton-Williams and Bryan (2021) suggested the participant as being part of a "Cultural Continuum of Black Male Pedagogy," which they describe as the critical reflection of an individual's life experience that plays a role in influencing how they enact culturally relevant pedagogy (p. 47). While Milton-Williams and Bryan's (2021) study captured the pedagogical beliefs of a Black man secondary social studies teacher, it did not specifically explore or describe what the Black man teacher who participated in the study viewed as the purposes of social studies education. To add, Milton-Williams and Bryan's (2021) study only used the collection of artifacts and interviews as the primary data collection method, which creates a need for more understanding regarding what is being reported and what is being observed.

### ***Pedagogical Practices of Black Men Secondary Social Studies Teachers***

Research literature specifically speaking to the pedagogical practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in public schools in the American South yielded two studies. Brown (2009b) observed nine Black men secondary social studies teachers over a two-week period in hallways and classrooms to explore and understand the different pedagogical practices Black men secondary social studies teachers enacted during their interactions with Black boys. Brown contextualized the pedagogical practices, which he called "performances," of Black men secondary social studies teachers as "how teachers talk to students, including the day-to-day decision-making they employ to address any number of academic and/or school-related issues" (Brown, 2009b, p. 418). In Table 1, Brown (2009b) suggested the following regarding the pedagogical performances of Black men secondary social studies teachers with whom he

studied. Brown’s (2009b) study explored the Black men teachers’ pedagogical practices as the teachers related to and interacted with their Black boy and Black young men students.

Furthermore, it classified the pedagogy displayed by the Black men who participated in the study as “performances,” and it did not specifically explore how the Black men secondary social studies taught content within the social studies.

**Table 2.1**

*Performance Styles of Black Men Teachers with Black Boys*

Style	Performance
“Enforcer”	The “enforcer style” of performance seeks abrupt and immediate enforcement of the defined expectations in the classroom and throughout the school. This teacher generally holds a standard for behaving and executing an action and the expectation is for students to follow this defined standard.
“Negotiator”	The “negotiator style” of performance is more prone to asking questions, probing for answers and listening to students’ perspectives. This approach attempts to resolve conflict and to motivate the students.
“Playful”	The “playful style” of performance occurs within different school contexts (e.g., classroom, hallways, cafeteria). These teachers exchange jokes, debate ideas and share personal experiences. This approach generally occurs within informal learning contexts. However, sometimes teachers use this approach in class to break the monotony of schoolwork and motivate students.

*Note.* Adapted from “Brothers Gonna Work It Out: Understanding the Pedagogic Performance of African American Male Teachers Working with African American Male Students,” by A.L., Brown, *The Urban Review*, 41(5), p. 424. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-009-0123-4>. Copyright 2009 by Springer.

King and Brown (2014) explored the pedagogical practices of secondary social studies teachers during Black History Month (BHM). King and Brown’s (2014) multiple-case study

design consisted of interviews, observations, and artifact collection from three teachers, two of whom identified as Black (one male and one female) and one who identified as White (male). King and Brown (2014) used the ideas from Carter G. Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, as a conceptual framework to understand how the three teachers who participated in the study taught Black history during BHM. Their findings suggested the teachers taught Black History in both critical and noncritical ways. When specifically analyzing the Black man teacher, the findings from the study conducted by King and Brown (2014) suggested that the Black man, Charles, who participated in the study, challenged his students to think critically about history and that Charles wanted the curriculum to move away from traditional narratives in Black history such as the study of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. King and Brown (2014) only studied with one Black man secondary social studies teacher in this study, and the study specifically was designed to examine how the participants in the study taught Black history during BHM. Therefore, more research is needed regarding how Black men secondary social studies teachers teach history in their class outside of BHM.

### **Pilot Study**

To better inform the questions I asked in this study, I conducted a pilot study in the fall of 2022 and the spring of 2023. With the help of my advisor, I created and distributed a survey to a nationwide random sample of secondary social teachers (1,110) who taught in public and private settings to capture factors impacting the teaching of Black history given the current sociopolitical climate restricting the teaching of race, controversy, and divisive concepts (CRT Forward Tracking Project, 2024). I determined that survey methodology was the best method of data collection because I wanted to capture a census and quickly obtain information from a large sample of individuals (Ponto, 2015, p. 168). I used the National Center for Education Statistics to

generate the list of schools that were invited to participate in the study. I searched for four schools from each state within the United States: a public and private high school and a public and private middle school. After I generated a list for each state, I used a random number generator to select the school. For example, if there were 287 public schools generated for a state, I would set parameters for the random number generator to generate a number between 1 and 287. If the random number generator generated 59, the 59th school on the list was invited to participate in the study. I located the teachers' emails on their school's website, and each teacher was emailed the survey. If a school that was generated did not have a website or did not have the teacher's emails listed, I used the same method to generate another school until I found a school that had the teacher's emails listed. Furthermore, I used the same method to generate the schools for the other states. The teachers were emailed the survey twice over a two-week period.

The response rate and the characteristics of the respondents informed the questions being explored in this proposed study. First, only 39 (a 3% return rate) teachers completed the survey. However, it is important to note that almost a third of the emails did not go through. This could have been due to school districts blocking emails that are flagged as research or other forms of spam. Furthermore, it is also important to note that 111 surveys were opened but not completed. As I created the sample of teachers who were invited to participate in the study, I antidotally noted a lack of representation among Black teachers, specifically Black men, among the social studies departments of the schools that were generated and invited to participate in the survey. The teachers who were invited to participate in the study were asked to self-identify. Only two teachers of the 39 identified as being male, one White and one Bi-racial. White participants and White "females," in particular, dominated the responses. Lastly, while public school teachers (54%) made up the majority of teachers participating in the survey, private school teachers

(38%) had the higher response rate given that they only made up 27.2% of the original sample of 1,100 teachers. However, the faculties of the private schools were much smaller than the faculties of the public schools.

Therefore, my personal experiences, professional experiences, and this pilot study and survey research caused me to want to explore other questions and inform the questions being asked in this dissertation study. First, I became interested in why there were a disproportionate number of responses between public and private school teachers. Given that this pilot study was conducted immediately following the national discourse and legislation that restricted anti-CRT and the teaching of divisive concepts, I began to question how social studies teachers were teaching given national discourse, policies, and, in some cases, legislation regarding content restrictions. Next, I also became interested in Black men who were teaching social studies. I asked myself how they were conceptualizing citizenship and social studies given the racial unrest that occurred in 2020, how they were understanding the purposes behind teaching social studies, and the extent to which they were teaching for social change. Given the current sociopolitical context teachers are currently navigating, my interest in studying with Black men who teach social studies, and the tensions that exist between race and American citizenship, I decided upon using qualitative methods to explore those interests.

### **Summary of Research**

First, the purposes of social studies education and who decides what is taught within social studies have always been contested and contentious, yet its purpose has evolved with time (Evans, 2004; Saxe 1991). However, the official purposes of social studies education have not until recently adopted position statements regarding teaching about and against racism (Demoigny, 2020, NCSS, 2023). Although the NCSS has only recently adopted statements related

to the importance of teaching against racism, early Black educational scholars, such as W.E.B. Dubois and Carter G. Woodson called for and used Black history to interrogate racism more within the K-12 curriculum even though it was not officially included (Givens, 2021). The work of Woodson inspired a generation of Black teachers across the nation, especially the South, who used Woodson's approaches to teach students about racism (Givens, 2021; Grant et al., 2015). However, unfortunately, after the implementation of *Brown* many of the Black teachers in the American South were dismissed, displaced, or demoted from their teaching positions (Fenwick, 2022). As a result of the number of Black teachers who were lost post-*Brown*, the American public school teaching force remains heavily dominated by White women (Taie & Lewis, 2022) with the field of social studies being heavily dominated by White men (Fitchett, 2010). As a result, Black teachers and more specifically Black men teachers are severely underrepresented within education, within social studies, and their voices remain mostly absent from research literature within social studies.

More specifically, Black men teachers within current society teach to practice and engage in social justice work (DonorsChoose, 2024). However, dominant conversations related to their purposes and roles in education often limit their uniqueness and purposes as instructional leaders within the field. Therefore, a dearth of research literature exists within social studies that describes and interprets the pedagogical practices and pedagogical beliefs of Black men secondary school teachers who teach in the American south. To add to that, the American South is currently experiencing an unfortunate yet expected amount of legislation regarding what teachers can and cannot teach within the classroom (CRT Forward Tracking Project, 2024). However, this project described and interpreted how Black men who teach secondary social studies are conceptualized citizenship, understood the purpose(s) of social studies education, and

taught for social justice given the South's racist legacy and its modern sociopolitical context within education that restricts the teaching of truths.

Therefore, going back to the statement, "The South Got Something to Say," that opened this chapter. At the 1995 Source Awards in New York City, OutKast had just won the Best New Artist award. Instead of the crowd celebrating, the upcoming group was booed by the crowd and fellow rap artists. When Andre 3000, one of the members of OutKast, approached the microphone, he stated,

It's like this though. I'm tired of these closed-minded folks. It's like you got a demo tape and don't nobody wanna hear it, but it's like this...the South got somethin' to say. That's all I gotta say. (Benjamin, 1995)

Andre made this statement to highlight the geographic divisions among hip-hop music and emerging southern hip-hop artists. Andre's statement brought awareness to a new way and style of doing music, which for southern hip-hop artists included critiquing systems of racism and oppression that Black men and other people of color were experiencing within the American South. Therefore, this study sought to highlight the voices of Black men secondary social studies teachers who taught within the American Dirty South. As America, particularly the American Dirty South, continues to experience the anti-truth movement and other contemporary forms of racism, this dissertation study delved into the beliefs and practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers and the extent to which they implemented their believed purposes of social studies education within contemporary educational and societal contexts.



## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

“Da Art of Storytelling’ (Pt. 1)”

**-(OutKast, 1998c)**

### **Purpose of Study**

This dissertation study described and interpreted the pedagogical beliefs and practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in public schools in the Dirty South amid national discourse restricting the teaching of race, controversy, and other concepts. This chapter began with a discussion regarding the assumptions I bring to research. Then, I detailed how my assumptions and life experiences related to the project informed the selection of the theoretical framework for the study. Then, I provided a detailed overview of the design, context, setting, participants, data generation methods I used to carry out this case study.

### **The Dirty South**

The Dirty South served as the context for this case study which has mostly geographic and political implications. Geographic in the sense that the Dirty South is composed of a certain set of southern states, such as Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. However, the Dirty South is also political and has social implications due to its racist history towards Black people. Those social implications still perpetuate in many ways, and I believe and suggest that the anti-CRT movement and the movement to restrict the teaching of historical truths serve as modern example. Nevertheless, the Dirty South is also an expression of endearment among Black people that is often used to center and acknowledge Black traditions as legitimate within the larger story of the American South that nuances its commonly accepted, White-centered traditions. I further discuss the context of the Dirty South later in the chapter.

### **Researcher Positionality**

This chapter began with the title of a song, 'Da Art of Storytelling' (Pt. 1), which was a song released in 1998 from OutKast's album, *Aquemini*<sup>14</sup>. The namesake of this album is derived from the blending of two zodiac signs, Aquarius and Gemini, which were, respectively, the zodiac signs of Benjamin "Big Boi" Patton and André 3000 (OutKast, 1998a; Satriano, 2007). For context, this was the third album released by OutKast, and it centered around their life experiences being Black men who grew up and lived in the American Dirty South. However, after their second album, *ATLiens* was released in 1996, those who listened to their music believed that the duo had become too distinct to continue to successfully make the music they had in the early 1990s. However, from the album, *Aquemini* and in the course of the song, *Aquemini*, OutKast rapped:

Even the sun goes down, heroes eventually die  
Horoscopes often lie and sometimes, "Y"  
Nothin' is for sure nothin', is for certain, nothin' lasts forever  
But until they close the curtain (y'all know)  
It's him and I, Aquemini. (OutKast, 1998b)

In the course of this song, OutKast did acknowledge and accept that nothing lasts forever, but they also reassured their commitment to making music with each other until they believed that their time making music had passed. Furthermore, OutKast uses the line "horoscopes often lie and sometimes, 'y'" to quiet rumors regarding the group's separation. I also interpreted that line to mean that everything that appears on the surface is not always reality. In short, there is nuance to everything. In my work and role of a researcher, I bring a critical eye to my work and seek to

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<sup>14</sup> In OutKast's song, 'True Dat', from their album *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*, they explained that letters making up the word "OutKast" was interpreted to mean Operating under the crooked American system too long (1994).

analyze if and where the data I generate during research projects exposes a nuance or a larger existing power dynamic. The assumptions I bring to research and my role as a qualitative researcher is best described with OutKast's song, 'Da Art of Storytelling' (Pt. 1), which serves as the namesake of this chapter.

The song 'Da Art of Storytelling' (Pt. 1), OutKast tells two differing stories regarding their encounter with a fictitious promiscuous woman, named Suzy Skrew, in a ghetto in the Dirty South. Along with being a promiscuous woman, Suzy Skrew also frequently abused drugs. It is important to note that this song and album were released when drug addiction was extremely prevalent in the many economically poor locations, especially within the Dirty South. However, it is also important to note that drugs were distributed throughout many different low-income communities as part of the American government's efforts to win the War on Drugs (Levine, 1990). Nevertheless, in the first verse of the song, Big Boi explained how he perceived Suzy Skrew as a woman who engaged in sex work but had low standards. However, he was surprised to figure out that, while she did engage in sex work, her standards were higher than what he had originally assumed. In the second verse of the song, André 3000 describes lying down, looking at the stars, dreaming with Suzy Skrew's friend, Sasha Thumper, within a chaotic Dirty South hood.

When discussing their futures, Andre 3000 rapped about how he wrestled with the assumptions he had made about Sasha's experiences of being a sex worker. Andre 3000 raps

We on our back, starin' at the stars above (Aww, man)

Talkin' bout what we gonna be when we grow up (Mm)

I said, "What you wanna be?" She said, "Alive"

It made me think for a minute, then looked in her eyes

I coulda died, time went on, I got grown  
Rhyme got strong, mind got blown  
I came back home to find lil' Sasha was gone  
Her mama said she with a nigga that be treatin' her wrong (Man)  
I kept on singin' my song and hopin' at a show  
That I would one day see her standin' in the front row  
But two weeks later, she got found in the back of a school  
With a needle in her arm, baby two months due  
Sasha Thumper. (OutKast, 1998c)

While Sasha was a sex worker, when she said that she simply wanted to be “alive” in the future, I interpret that to mean that she engaged in sex work as a method of survival, which is oftentimes not the story commonly associated with people who engage in sex work. Furthermore, as André 3000 achieved a level of fame and success, he wanted to share in that success with Sasha, but before he could, it was too late. Sasha died from overdosing while pregnant. This song foreshadowed larger oppressive structures of power that exist that are oftentimes not interrogated when considering a person’s experiences, especially Black people and other people of color. Therefore, the song, *Da Art of Storytelling* (Pt. 1), helps explain who I am and who I hope to continue to become as a researcher. *Da Art of Storytelling* (Pt. 1) highlights the complexities of humans and how varied life experiences plays a role in that complexity. As a researcher, I seek to analyze, highlight, and make sense of that complexity.

With that, I, first, believe that all research is political and that the research questions asked by researchers are directly informed by the experiences and perspectives of the researcher. However, I resist the urge to and do not classify my subjectivities as biased. Given that, I am,

however, extremely upfront and transparent regarding the specific assumptions and subjectivities I am bringing to this research project. According to Denzin (1989), “interpretive research begins and ends with the biography of self of the researcher” (p.12). I am a social constructivist, and I approach research with a critical epistemological lens that is directly informed by my experiences as Black man who has always lived in the Dirty South, some of which I discussed in Chapter 1 of the dissertation. Therefore, I do not believe that research has a purpose to find an “absolute truth” nor do I believe that knowledge is “discoverable” through the application of research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). I believe that knowledge is constructed through the worldviews of the researcher.

Again, my worldviews have been shaped by my personal and professional lived experiences growing up a Black boy and now living as a Black man in the American Dirty South. Living as a Black man in the Dirty South has caused me to directly question and challenge that societal institutions such as education, policing, and politics sustain and perpetuate racism, sexism, ageism and other forms of oppression. For context, in many of the spaces I have navigated throughout my life, I have often been the only Black person, the only man, or the youngest person within the space. Those experiences directly inform my conceptualization of American citizenship and how I practice citizenship. According to Johnson (2017), patriotism normally denotes an attachment to one’s country or nation, but due to police brutality and other forms of anti-Black racism, many Black people, including myself, have complicated understandings and relationships with what it means to be patriotic.

Therefore, to be transparent, I see myself as a “dual citizen,” where I belong to both the “American nation” and the “Black nation”<sup>15</sup> but how I practice patriotism within both nations have the same goals of liberating Black people (Johnson, 2017). Johnson (2017) describes a dual citizen as a Black person who feels attached to America while also feeling a special attachment to Black people because of shared racial oppression. With that, I do, however, feel more connected to the Black nation than I do the American nation. Nevertheless, within the American nation, I practice more traditional forms of patriotism, such as voting and attending city council meetings. However, my patriotism within the Black nation might include volunteering to speak about college to Black youth at a local Black church or with a local Black youth mentoring group.

My dual citizenship typology also presented itself when I worked as a public-school teacher in the Dirty South. For example, I ensured I taught the standards required by the state because that was what I was “supposed to do” in my job as a teacher. However, I also challenged and encouraged my students, mostly those of color, to read books such as *The Miseducation of the Negro* by Carter G. Woodson and *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington. After reading those books, we had conversations about the books mostly before school began and very quickly during the transition to their next class. Therefore, based upon what I reviewed in the literature and what I practiced while being a secondary social studies teacher, I am coming into this case study with the assumption that Black men enact pedagogies that disrupt and eradicate longstanding systems of oppression and racism.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

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<sup>15</sup> To be clear, when I refer to “Black nation,” I am referring to the nation of Black people, to whom I also owe allegiance. That nation includes, but is not limited to, my fraternity, my family, Black churches, and other Black people with whom I might interact with.

Given my experiences as a Black man and my belief that patriotism is both what you say and what you do, I used Busey and Walker's Black Critical Patriotism (BCP) framework as a theoretical lens to analyze the data generated from in study. Busey and Walker (2017) explained that early conceptualizations of BCP centered democratic acts of patriotism. In short, early conceptualizations of BCP, according to Busey and Walker (2017), centered how an individual responded to injustice, racism, or oppression before centering personhood and before it wrestled with the way subpersonhood sparked the specific democratic response. Busey's and Walker's (2017) BCP framework centers on personhood and acknowledges how anti-Black racism and other forms of anti-Blackness have dehumanized and denied Black people full access to the rights and privileges of American citizenship. Busey and Walker explain that when considering:

Black people throughout history have been murdered, imprisoned, and socially maimed for similar acts of free speech, dissent, or civil liberty that brought hero[ine]-like status to various White figures. As a result, Black critical patriotism obscures the standard of White men as purveyors of American patriotism and offers a racialized version of U.S. citizenship.... Moreover, Black critical patriotism as a uniquely defined theoretical construct reserves discursive space in social studies curricula for Black people, which, if limited to traditional conceptualizations of citizenship, would continue to uphold the patriotic actions of White men. Consequently, Black critical patriotism repositions Black people as equal rather than inferior regarding historical narratives of citizenship, patriotism, and race. (Busey & Walker, 2017, pp. 459-461)

In short, BCP helps understand that the denial of humanity to Black people is a threat and possibility of the denial of humanity to all people. Therefore, BCP "is concerned with how Black

people, individually and collectively, resisted White supremacy, systemic racial oppression, and racial domination and includes three tenets: Black physical resistance, Black political thought, and Black intellectualism (Busey & Walker, 2017, p. 461). Figure 3.1 displays the tenants of BCP. With that, each tenant of BCP is predicated upon the belief that Black people and Blackness has been dehumanized in spaces, such as America that has proclaimed to afford the full possibilities of American citizenship to all people.

Black physical resistance refers to the way Black people have used their physical bodies as a means of resisting racial oppression (Busey & Walker, 2017; Grant et al., 2016). According to Busey and Walker (2017), Black physical resistance consists of, but is not limited to, how Black people use their physical bodies as “self-liberation from enslavement,” “revolts,” and “the self-placement of Black bodies in White-intended spaces” (p. 462). I believe that the ways Black physical resistance was used to resist enslavement and during the CRM are well documented. However, little is known about how Black people who chose to self-place themselves in White spaces, such as being the only Black teacher in a public or private school, is a display of BCP. Therefore, Black physical resistance goes beyond revolts or marches and includes instances of using the Black body to restore the full humanity of Black people as patriotic.

Black political thought refers to the ways Black people and other people of color historically thought about racial oppression and used traditional and nontraditional democratic avenues, such as voting and music, to resist or challenge systemic racial oppression. However, Black political thought in action begins with a belief(s) that questions and challenges racial oppression that dehumanizes Blackness and Black people. More specifically, Busey and Walker (2017) indicated that Black political thought disrupts and challenges America and its notion of political egalitarianism that is “morally bankrupt” and that “activism becomes a byproduct of

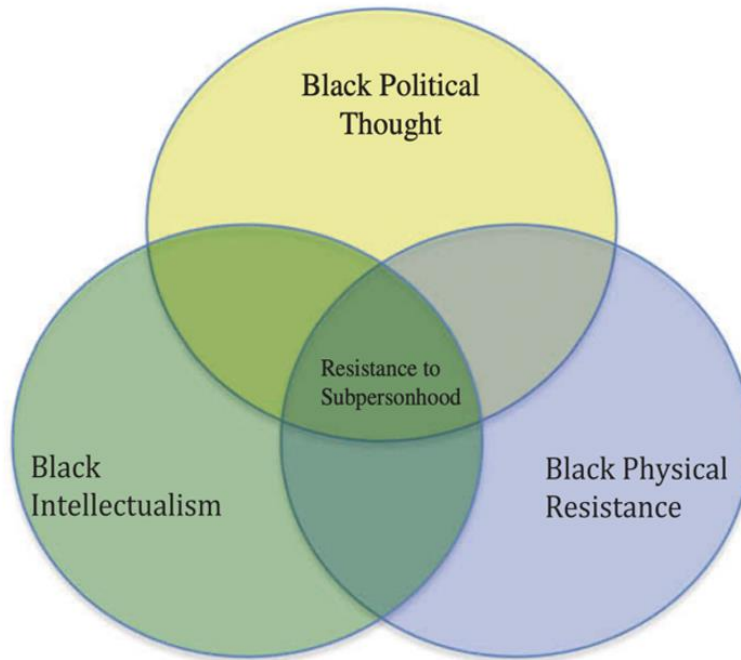


Black political culture” (463). In short, Black political thought is a form of activism that seeks to restore the complete humanity of Black people by consistently interrogating how systems perpetuate inequality and racism that deny humanity.

Busey and Walker (2017) indicated that Black political thought and Black physical resistance are not separated from Black intellectualism and described Black intellectualism as both philosophical and practical approaches to challenging racial oppression that dehumanize Black people and Blackness. I personally believe that Busey and Walker (2017) emphasized that there was no separation between Black political thought and Black intellectualism for two reasons. First, I believe they wanted to move beyond a binary surrounding what was and is considered intellectual, as that binary does not completely capture the many ways Black people and other people of color seek to restore the complete humanity of Black people. Second, I believe that Busey and Walker (2017) indicated that there could not be a separation between Black political thought and Black intellectuals to make it clear that all forms or displays of Black resistance must be seen as intellectual for them to restore the full humanity of Black people. However, those are my interpretations and understandings of the framework, and my personal interpretations and understandings of the framework might or might not align with Busey and Walker (2017).

### **Figure 3.1**

*Tenants of Black Critical Patriotism*



*Note.* “Tenants of Black Critical Patriotism”, by Busey and Walker, 2017, *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 45(4), p. 462, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2017.1320251>. Copyright 2017 by College and University Faculty Assembly of the NCSS.

It is also important to note that Busey and Walker (2017) did not suggest that the BCP offered by them was fixed and indicated that more research should be conducted to better holistically capture how Black people practice resistance to fight for and gain full citizenship within society. Nevertheless, in this study, I used BCP as a framework to analyze, describe, and interpret the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the Dirty South, which has historically been and continues to be a space of anti-Blackness, anti-Black racism and dehumanization.

### **Design of Study**

This case study was designed as an interpretive case study in education (Butler et al., 2024; Merriam, 1998; Selman, et al., 2024). This interpretive case study described the pedagogy

of two Black men secondary social studies teachers who taught in the American Dirty South amid anti-CRT policies and anti-CRT discourse. Interpretive research is not neutral, so I have already previously acknowledged how my positionality and reflexivity influenced this study. According to Merriam (1998), “qualitative research in education seeks to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved,” (p. 11).

More specifically, education is the process when conducting interpretive case studies (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, the focus of this case is the pedagogy of Black men secondary social studies teachers. I drew upon BCP during data collection and data analysis to make meaning of how the teachers thought about American citizenship, what they believed were the purpose(s) of social studies education, and the extent to which they used their pedagogical practices as a form of resistance. Furthermore, this case is bounded by time and location to Black men who were and currently are teaching amid widespread anti-CRT discourse and policies that were passed throughout the American south shortly after the racial unrest of 2020.

The primary question explored in this study was, **what are the pedagogical beliefs and practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in public schools in the American Dirty South amid national discourse and in some cases, legislation or policies restricting the teaching of race, controversy, and divisive concepts?** The question included and the study, specifically, explored three questions listed below:

1. What do Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South describe as influencing their conceptualization of American citizenship?
2. What do Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South view as the role of social studies education within current society?

3. To what extent do Black men secondary social studies who teach in the American Dirty South use their pedagogical practices to teach for social justice?

### *Context of Case*

To further contextualize the Dirty South, I want to provide a brief discussion of southern hip-hop, Atlanta, Georgia and early the hip hop groups, Goodie Mob<sup>16</sup> and OutKast. Music serves as one of the most common forms of communication and consists of many genres, such as classical, Rock and Roll, Jazz, and Rap. However, no genre of music references and exchanges thoughts regarding American political systems as much as hip-hop music. Hip-hop music and hip-hop culture emerged from early rap music in the 1970s in the Bronx, New York City, and featured loud music, block parties, and rhymes largely performed by disc jockeys (DJs) or master of ceremonies (MCs) who used music as an expression to respond to and understand the deindustrialization, white flight, and urban renewal occurring in the Bronx (McCoy, 2017). While DJ Kool Herc (Clive Campbell) is largely credited as the father of hip-hop music and culture, many early DJs such as Grandmaster Flash, Run DMC, and DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince dominated hip-hop music and culture in the northeastern United States during that time (Boyd, 2003).

However, the early emergence of rap and hip-hop music was geographically confined but very quickly spread to other different geographic regions within the United States. Like the emergence of rap music and hip-hop culture in the north, hip hop artists from the South find their own voice and style within hip hop culture within the late 1980s and early 1990s. According to Bradley (2021), "the hip-hop South combines cornerstones of the past using hip-hop to carve out space where the complexity of experiences in the post-civil rights era can breathe" (p. 6). The

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<sup>16</sup> "Goodie Mob" stands for "Good Die Mostly Over Bullshit" (Sarig, 2007).

word "breathe," I believe, directly alludes to voice and how, through southern hip hop, the stories and citizenship experiences of Black people and other people of color living in the Dirty South were made known and humanized (Bradley, 2021).

Atlanta, Georgia, was the center of the southern hip hop movement and continues to be the epicenter of southern hip-hop. However, the history of Atlanta is critical in understanding the approach and style of southern hip-hop. In 2017, Hobson published *The Legend of Black Mecca*, which is a history that detailed how class and politics made Atlanta, Georgia, into a thriving city in the American south. According to Hobson (2017), Atlanta was unique because it was home to four HBCUs that served as an "incubator" for generating Black wealth and Black leaders who served in key political roles within the city. Maynard Jackson, the first Black mayor of Atlanta and any major American southern city, was an example. Jackson, who was a graduate of Morehouse College<sup>17</sup>, was elected mayor of Atlanta in 1974, serving two terms, and was elected for a third term in 1990. Maynard Jackson and others who graduated from one of the four HBCUs epitomized why Atlanta became the "Black Mecca" (Hobson, 2017).

However, Maynard Jackson and others who graduated from one of the HBCUs in Atlanta were only one side of the Black Mecca. When Maynard served as mayor, Atlanta was also one of the most economically poor cities for Black people and other people of color who did not, and because of systemic oppression, could not attend one of the four institutions within Atlanta. Therefore, while some Black people in Atlanta, like Maynard Jackson, used politics to find their voice, other Black people from the South used hip-hop and other forms of music to find theirs (Hobson, 2017). Black southern hip-hop artists used that platform as an avenue to challenge and

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<sup>17</sup> Morehouse College was one of the five HBCUs that made up the Atlanta University Center (AUC). Spelman College, Morris Brown College, Clark College, and Atlanta University were the other four. However, Clark College and Atlanta University later combined and became Clark Atlanta University. Morehouse School of Medicine which was established in 1975 later became a member institution of the AUC.

critique the tensions associated with the American Dream and how race as well as class predicated who could and who could not achieve it. The tensions created by race and class played a role in the contextualizing what many Black southern hip-hop artists began calling the Dirty South.

Goodie Mob and OutKast were two Atlanta-based hip-hop groups that brought the term Dirty South and the experiences of the Dirty South mainstream. Both groups were part of the Dungeon Family, which consisted of a group of Atlanta hip hop artists who were produced by Rico Wade<sup>18</sup>. They were called the “Dungeon Family” because the music they produced was produced in Wade’s mother’s basement, which was in Lakewood Heights, a Black neighborhood in Southwest Atlanta. According to Sarig (2007), “OutKast portrayed the Southern streets; Good Mob aimed to capture the entire existential struggle of the Black man trying to get by on the land where his ancestors had been enslaved” (p. 137). More specifically, the term Dirty South refers to the region’s “corrupt political nature” and “racial legacy” that have negatively impacted Black people and other people of color, especially those who were poor in finances (Westhoff, 2011).

In this study, I used the Dirty South to first describe a very specific region of the American South that has historically dehumanized Black people and other people of color (Owusu-Bempah, 2017). More specifically, I used the Dirty South to illustrate how southern states have weaponized their state legislatures and other policies to restrict and limit the teaching of divisive concepts, controversial issues, and the truth about America’s racial history. Therefore, the weaponization of southern state legislatures has created tensions between the recently adopted NCSS racial literacy position statement and the discourse, policies, and legislation that determine what is appropriate to teach in the Dirty South. Therefore, I also used the Dirty South

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<sup>18</sup> While I was writing this report, Rico Wade died on April 13, 2024, due to congestive heart failure (Abrams, 2024).

to describe a position when educational policies and discourses are in tension with current NCSS position statements and with the changes that many Americans thought were forthcoming after the 2020 racial unrest caused by the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd (Buchanan et al., 2020).

## **Setting**

### *State.*

This study was conducted in Alabama, which is within the American Dirty South. Most states within the Dirty South that are Republican led have taken legislative or policy actions to restrict the teaching of divisive concepts, controversy, or race. Alabama is a Republican-led state where every elected executive officer identifies as a member of the Republican party. While Alabama had not yet passed a bill regarding restricting the teaching of race and controversy at the time I began this study, bills were introduced during the 2021, 2022 and 2023 legislative sessions. However, those bills failed at various places within the legislative process. At the beginning of the 2024 legislative session, Alabama Senate Bill 129 was introduced, which stated:

This bill would prohibit certain public entities, including state agencies, local boards of education, and public institutions of higher education, from maintaining a diversity, equity, and inclusion office or department or sponsoring any diversity, equity, and inclusion program or program that advocates for a divisive concept.

By late February of 2024, the Alabama State Senate passed the bill, and the bill was being worked through the Alabama house of Representatives.<sup>19</sup> Once again, although the Alabama

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<sup>19</sup> On March 20, 2024, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey signed an Alabama House bill that bans diversity, equity, and inclusion in Alabama public schools, universities, and state agencies (Chandler, 2024). Furthermore, the law prohibits the teaching of “divisive concepts” or that “fault” or “blame” should be assigned based upon race and gender. To be clear and transparent, I am a person who is extremely critical of DEI offices and programs because I believe many of them are performative and reactive instead of authentic and responsive. However, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that I am a beneficiary of DEI programming and efforts. For instance, I question if

State Legislature had not officially passed a bill regarding the restriction of divisive concepts, race or controversy when the study first began, the Alabama State Board of Education in 2021 had an adopted policy regarding the teaching of racism. The policy adopted by the Alabama State Board of Education stated:

WHEREAS, concepts that impute fault, blame, a tendency to oppress others, or the need to feel guilt or anguish to persons solely because of their race or sex violate the premises of individual rights, equal opportunity, and individual merit, and therefore have no place in professional development for teachers, administrators, or other employees of the public educational system of the State of Alabama. (Alabama State Board of Education, 2021)

Once again, the National Coalition against Censorship defined divisive concepts as “a broad term for ideas about race and sex that challenge the dominant narrative of America’s founding and history” (2021). To be clear, although I do not consider the discussion of or the teaching of race a political topic, recent national discourse regarding the teaching of race has made it political. As a result of legislation, whether passed or proposed, policies, and national discourse regarding the definition of divisive concepts and anti-CRT, the current sociopolitical climate I believe has made teaching social studies extremely difficult and, to an extent, impossible. In addition to policies or legislation regarding restricting divisive concepts in schools, I believe anti-CRT policies are in tension with what the entire world observed in 2020 with the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd and the BLM protests that followed and the social justice-related

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I would have ever been admitted to Auburn to obtain my PhD if it had not been for DEI programming. With that, I want to be clear in noting that while I might have been a beneficiary of DEI, I still worked hard for and earned everything that I received. Therefore, when I say that I am critical of DEI offices and programming, I do not believe DEI offices do enough to fight against racism, sexism, and ageism that exist and continue to be perpetuate within society and higher education. This, I argue, further demonstrates my definition of the Dirty South. If Gov. Ivy and her administration “have and will continue to value Alabama’s rich diversity,” I question how, when policies, procedures, and national discourse have suggested otherwise.



initiatives and discourses (Nguyen et al., 2021) that many organizations had said they were, and some did implement. In fact, the protests and social justice-related initiatives that occurred in 2020 are being considered the largest movement for social justice and fight against racism in American history (Buchanan et al., 2020). Therefore, Alabama was the setting for this case study given its anti-Black racist history and its current sociopolitical climate and education climate that has been shaped by national discourse, proposed legislative efforts, and policies regarding the restriction of teaching divisive concepts.

### *Towns.*

This study was conducted in two Alabama towns. I used pseudonyms to name the towns where this study was conducted to protect the schools and teachers that agreed to participate in the study.

**Tuneville:** The city of Tuneville was incorporated in 1923. It is the largest city within its county. The city is mostly rural and neighbors a smaller city where a regional four-year university is located. Given the town's proximity to a major river system, the early industry of the city was industrial, such as plant-style or mill work. However, those jobs later vacated the town when the mills and plants closed due to industrial restructuring. Additionally, Tuneville has a long history of music and was a hub for the recording of early country, rock, soul, and blues artists. Hometown musicians from neighboring cities close to Tuneville ran a local studio from 1969 to 1985 when the studio was sold to a record label company. According to the 2020 census, Tuneville has a population of approximately 16,334 people. Whites make up the largest racial or ethnic group at 76.9%, while blacks make up 14.7% and Hispanics make up 4.9% of the population. The median family income of Tuneville, based upon the 2020 census, was \$70,483. The median age was 38.9. Tuneville runs its own school system that is independent of the county

in which it is located. Tuneville City Schools has a pre-kindergarten program, three elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, and a career academy that serves interested students who attend the high school. This study was conducted with a teacher who taught at Tuneville High School.

Given the context of the study, I also conducted a policy review of the policies governing Tuneville City Schools. Because of the current sociopolitical climate and the recent attempts in the Alabama State legislature to restrict the teaching of divisive concepts, I wanted to determine if the local board of education for the Tuneville City Schools had passed a local policy that restricted teaching race, controversy, or divisive concepts. My policy review did not yield any policies that restricted or allowed the teaching of race, controversy, or divisive concepts. The school demographics of Tuneville High School are listed in Table 3.1.

**Railway:** The city of Railway was chartered in 1854. It is the second-largest city within its county. Railway is a small city that neighbors the largest city within the county, which is home to a major research-intensive university. The major industry within Railway was textile manufacturing, but that industry was vacated due to industrial restructuring. The early history of Railway included serving as a major transportation hub for transporting cotton because of the railroads that ran through the city. According to the 2020 census, Railway has a population of approximately 30,800 people. Whites make up the largest racial or ethnic group at 53%, while blacks make up 36.6% and non-Hispanics make up 2.48% of the population. Based upon the 2020 census, the median family income of Railway was \$51,074, and the median age was 40.7. Railway runs its own school system that is independent of the county in which it is located. Railway City Schools has three primary schools, three intermediate schools, one sixth grade school, one middle school, and one high school.

Similar to the policy review I conducted for the Tuneville City Schools, I conducted the same review for the Railway City Schools. However, my policy review for Railway City Schools yielded different results. Upon my review, I found that Railway City Schools adopted, in 2004, policy, I-17 CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, for the stakeholders served by the Railway City Schools. The policy states:

The Railway City Schools Board recognizes that controversial issues are an inherent part of our democratic tradition and that knowledge and understanding of controversial issues are an indispensable part of education for citizenship.

Therefore, professional employees shall have the freedom to deal with controversial issues in the public-school curriculum so long as the following guidelines are observed:

- Teachers shall adapt the study of controversial issues to the age, maturity and academic background of pupils.
- Teachers shall place major emphasis on HOW to think rather than WHAT to think.
- Pupils shall have access, insofar as possible, to all materials that are relevant and educationally significant to the issues at hand.
- Pupils shall have the opportunity to express their opinions within the limits of decency, good will and respect for the opinions of others.
- Teachers shall teach pupils the principles and techniques of the scientific method and shall provide opportunities for practice in applying established facts to specific problems.
- Teachers shall seek to develop in pupils the ideals of truth and honesty.

- Teachers shall seek to create an atmosphere in which differences of opinion can be voiced without fear and hostility but with mutual respect for all viewpoints.
- Teachers shall seek to develop in pupils a sense of responsibility for their beliefs, opinions and attitudes and shall encourage pupils to base the same on research, tested experience and knowledge as recorded in our cultural heritage.
- Teachers shall encourage the suspension of judgment and conclusions until all relevant and significant facts have been assembled, critically examined and checked for accuracy.
- Teachers shall take a neutral position in the classroom during the discussion of controversial issues. (Railway City Schools, 2004)

The policy also issued provisions for teachers to follow, such as adapting the study of controversial issues by age and maturity, focusing on teaching students how and not what to think, and ensuring that the classroom environment fosters respect for differing opinions. However, I did not find any explicit mention of race or divisive concepts. This study was conducted with a teacher who taught at Railway High School. The school demographics of Railway High School are listed in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**

*Tuneville and Railway High School Demographics*

School Name	Total Enrollment	Racial Demographics (percentage)	Total Economically Disadvantaged (percentage)	Total Free Lunch (percentage)	Title One

Tuneville High School	868	<b>White:</b> 70.4 <b>Black:</b> 15.1 <b>Hispanic:</b> 6.7 <b>Bi/Multi Racial:</b> 4.1 <b>Asian:</b> 2.6 <b>Native:</b> 0.9 <b>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:</b> 0.1	20	17	No
Railway High School	1,420	<b>Black:</b> 54.2 <b>White:</b> 29.8 <b>Hispanic:</b> 12.4 <b>Bi/Multi Racial:</b> 1.8 <b>Asian:</b> 1.3 <b>Native:</b> 0.3 <b>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander:</b> 0.2	43	41	No

*Note.* Adapted from <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12>. Copyright 2024 by U.S. News & World Report. The exact website addresses from where I extracted this data is not included in this note to refrain from disclosing the schools I collaborated with in this project. However, I used the aforementioned link to search and obtain the demographics summarized in this table.

**Participants**

This study recruited Black men secondary social studies teachers who self-identified as being Black men. More specifically, this study recruited Black men who:

1. were critical in their reflection of their practice and/or oppressive societal structures,
2. who believed systems negatively impact some of their students' willingness and/or timeliness to learn yet manage to find strategies to meet objectives and have high expectations for students,
3. who had non-traditional views of schooling and believe education involves more than simply preparing students to take tests, whether class-specific or state-specific,

4. who had unique approaches in their interactions with students and are critical in their approach to teaching.

This study used purposeful sampling and convenience sampling to recruit the teachers. As a requirement for my graduate assistant position, I was constantly in the local area schools conducting intern observation visits, working with schools during lab placements, and working with in-service teachers. Therefore, I first tried to recruit the Black men secondary social studies teachers who taught in the schools closest to the university where I was enrolled. However, there were only two Black men secondary social studies teachers that I knew who taught in the local area schools or that I could find after surfing the websites of other schools in the local area. One of those teachers did participate in the study, but the other did not for reasons beyond his control. In addition, I conversed with several superintendents within Alabama when I was in the early conceptualization of the project. However, I was sad to hear many of those superintendents indicate that there were very few Black men teaching social studies within their districts. This lack of representation of Black men teachers aligns with national statistics regarding the number of Black men who teach (Tai & Lewis, 2022) and the number of Black men who specifically teach social studies (Fitchett, 2010). In short, I felt the lack of representation of Black men teachers when trying to recruit them to participate in my study.

Nevertheless, I knew that I wanted to study with more than one teacher, so I continued to leverage my personal and professional networks and sent them the information letter for my study to share with their contacts. By sharing the information letter with other professional networks, I was able to successfully recruit another teacher. I also canvassed the websites of different schools within the American Dirty South, and when I saw a teacher who I perceived met the requirements of the study, I then emailed them a script (Appendix A) and the approved-

IRB Informed Consent Letter (Appendix B) to the project. To add, I also sent the information letter directly to other school superintendents. Over the course of my almost three months of recruiting, I sent close to 50 emails, mostly to school superintendents within the American Dirty South. By directly sending emails, I did receive a response from one Black man who taught social studies in Alabama who was interested in the study. However, he was being considered for a promotion to an administrative position before the study began. Therefore, I was only able to recruit two teachers. Both teachers agreed to participate, and both teachers went through the entire study. After the teachers agreed to participate, I worked with them and their districts to receive approval for the lesson observations. Table 3.2 provides more descriptive demographics of the Black men secondary social studies teachers who participated in the study.

**Table 3.2**

*Descriptive Data of Teachers*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Placement</b>	<b>Classes Taught/Sports Coached</b>	<b>Years of Experience/Credentials</b>
Edward	44	Tuneville High School	<b>Classes:</b> 9th Grade World History (3), Football weightlifting (1) <b>Sports Coached:</b> Football	<b>Years of experience:</b> 11 <b>BA:</b> Social Science Education <b>Masters:</b> Social Science Education <b>Undergraduate program:</b> Traditional Teacher Education
Dominique	29	Railway High School	<b>Classes:</b> 9th Grade (honors) World History (1), 10th Grade United States History to 1877 Class (2) <b>Sports Coached:</b> Football	<b>Years of experience:</b> 5 <b>BA:</b> Social Science Education <b>Masters: (currently enrolled at the time of study)</b> Education <i>Leadership</i> <b>Undergraduate program:</b> Traditional Teacher Education

*Note.* The data summarized in this table is based upon questions I asked the teachers throughout the course of the project.

A detailed written profile for each teacher is included in Chapter 4 of this study.

### **Data Sources**

According to Yin (2018), there are six most used data sources when conducting case studies and this research used 1) artifact collection, 2) interviews, and 3) observations to generate data for the questions being asked in this case study. Table 3.3 provides an overview of the data source(s) used to generate claims and warrants for the questions being asked in this research study.

**Table 3.3**

*Research Questions and Sources of Data*

Research Questions	Data Sources
What do Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South describe as influencing their conceptualization of American citizenship?	Interviews
What do Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South view as the role of social studies education within current society?	Interviews, Artifacts, and Field Observations
To what extent do Black men secondary social studies who teach in the American Dirty South use their pedagogical practices to teach about and for social change?	Field Observations and Interviews

*Note.* I drew upon the theoretical framework to code all data. However, I specifically grouped and analyzed data chunks based on each research question.

### *Artifacts.*



Artifacts served as one source of data for this research project. According to Bhattacharya (2017), “documents offer contextual and deep understanding of the topic being studied” (p. 146). Therefore, after I gained access and consent and before the introductory interview, I asked the participants for artifacts related to their classes, such as class syllabi, parent letters, or any other information that the participant created detailing information related to the course. Throughout the study, I also asked the participants for their lesson plans and other lesson materials for each of the three lesson observations. Collecting artifacts added an additional data set for me to analyze to provide a deeper and more nuanced description of the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices.

### *Teacher Interviews.*

I also conducted interviews. Qualitative interviews assisted me in meaning making by interpreting the stories that were shared by the teachers (Josselson, 2013). I conducted two interviews for this case study. I conducted the first interview before any classroom observations. The first interview served as an opportunity for me and the teachers to develop a relationship with one another. I asked questions during the first interview to elicit rich stories about the participants' life histories, educational histories, and beliefs regarding social studies education. I conducted the final interview after conducting the three observations with each participant. I waited until after I finished all my observations to conduct the final interview for two major reasons. First, I wanted to continue to build relationships with the participants I worked with, and I did not want the study to seem evaluative. Second, I wanted to generate data from the observations that I could ask about and that we could discuss during the final interview. During the final interview, I also asked the teacher about their routes into education, the Dirty South,

activism, and social justice. The interview protocols for the first interview (Appendix C) and the second interview (Appendix D) are provided.

### ***Field Observations.***

Lastly, I conducted field observations during this case study. Given that this case study was designed to describe and interpret the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South amid anti-CRT and divisive concept discourse, I was not looking to observe any specific lesson per se. Also, given the current anti-CRT and divisive concept discourse, I did not make it known to the districts or the teachers that the American Dirty was the context of the case. I did disclose that the focus of the case was the pedagogy of the teachers. Once I completed the entire study, I did disclose more about the context of the case study. I did that for two major reasons. First, being a Black man, I did not think I would have gained access to do observations in schools within the Dirty South had I been upfront about the context, especially since many southern states have already passed anti-CRT laws. Second, I did not think Black men teachers would be willing to participate in the study out of fear of retaliation from their administrators or other job complications had I been completely upfront about the context of the case study.

With that, the participants from the study decided when they wanted me to come and observe their classes. Field observations were selected by the teacher in an attempt to "maximize opportunities to observe teachers in their most intellectually challenging instruction" (Saye & Social Studies Inquiry Research Collaborative, 2013, p. 109). I determined that three observations allowed for a more "integrated understanding" of the pedagogical practices of participants and according to Saye et al. (2018), three observations are enough to get a sense of what teachers normally did in the classroom (Saye & Social Studies Inquiry Research

Collaborative, 2013, p. 109). Table 3.4. includes an overview of each grade, topic, and the instructional material and strategies Edward and Dominique used during our classroom observations. During the field observations, I also collected field notes. I collected field notes to describe and interpret the social interactions that I observed (Van Maanen, 2011). My field notes described the pedagogical practices of the teachers and the culture of their classes. The observation form (Appendix E) is provided.

**Table 3.4**

*Overview of Lesson Observations*

<b>Edward</b>				
Observation	Grade	State-Standard	Topic	Instructional strategies/materials
One	9th	<b><u>ASSWH13:</u></b> Explain challenges of the post-WWI period	The Mafia	Lecture/Videos/Photo Analysis/Discussion
Two	9th	<b><u>ASSWH14:</u></b> Describe causes and consequences of WWII	Pearl Harbor	Lecture/Video/Discussion
Three	9th	<b><u>ASSWH2:</u></b> Describe the role of mercantilism and imperialism in European exploration and colonization in the sixteenth century, including the Columbian Exchange.	Mercantilism/enslavement	Lecture/Videos/Rap/Discussion
<b>Dominique</b>				
One	9th	<b><u>ASSWH9:</u></b> Describe the impact of technological inventions, conditions of labor, and the economic theories of capitalism, liberalism, socialism, and Marxism during the Industrial Revolution on	Distribution of labor	Socratic Seminar/Primary Source Analysis/Reflection Activity

		the economies, societies, and politics of Europe.		
Two	10th	<b>ASSAH1:</b> Compare effects of economic, geographic, social, and political conditions before and after European explorations of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries on Europeans, American colonists, Africans, and indigenous Americans.	Intro to Jamestown	Document-Based Question/Modeling /Video
Three	9th	<b>ASSWH6:</b> Identify significant ideas and achievements of scientists and philosophers of the Scientific Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment.	Enlightenment thinkers	Lecture/Primary Sources

*Note:* ASSWH(#) stands for Alabama Social Studies World History Standard and the number as it is listed on the Alabama Course of Study. ASSAH(#) stands for Alabama Social Studies American History Standard and the number as it is listed on the Alabama Course of Study. In Alabama, World History is taught in the 9th grade, and the first United States History class is taught in the 10th grade. All the standards listed were taken from Alabama Course of Study. (2010). Social Studies. Alabama Department of Education.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis for this project was continuous and occurred after I completed the first interview until all data was coded and analyzed. During data generation and data analysis, I separated all data by teacher. For instance, I printed three copies of all the transcribed interviews, the collected artifacts (syllabi, lesson plans, and other scaffolds), and my field notes. After printing three copies of all the generated data, I assigned a binder to each teacher, Edward and Dominique. All the data analysis for this project was conducted in either my office or at home. The binders containing the teacher’s data were secured using a two-lock system. For instance, after analyzing the data in my office, I locked my office and placed each binder in a secured filing cabinet. After analyzing the data in my home, each binder was kept in a secured safe in my

home, which was also secured when I locked the door to my home. I printed three copies of the data because, before data analysis occurred, I read the entire data corpus three times. I read the data three times to best determine which pieces of the data I would report upon to answer the questions I had asked in the study. All the data used to answer the questions in the study was coded individually, analyzed within, and themes were identified for the case. For this project, I used Values coding to code all the data.

### ***Values Coding.***

According to Saldana (2021), Values coding is appropriate for studies “that explore cultural values and belief systems, identity, intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies, appreciative inquiry, oral history, critical ethnography, sociology, and longitudinal qualitative studies” (p. 132). Saldana (2021) also indicated that Values codes can be either a priori codes or codes that are constructed during the coding process. Both a priori codes and generated codes were used to code the data in this study. Given that this study was informed by Busey’s and Walker’s (2017) BCP theoretical framework, I used a priori directly from and informed by that framework. First, I reread Busey’s and Walker’s (2017) where they discussed the theoretical underpinnings of the framework and the codes they had used to conduct that study.

Busey and Walker (2017) used BCP to analyze each American states’ elementary school social studies to understand if and how Black intellectualism, Black political thought, and Black physical resistance were included in the standards. When analyzing the data, Busey and Walker (2017) indicated that they looked for if and where the “standards referenced Black agency, activism, or Black resistance to subpersonhood,” (p. 467). Therefore, Black agency, activism, and Black resistance to subpersonhood were immediately determined as codes. Since BCP seeks

to center personhood while resisting subpersonhood, an idea from Charles Mills (1997), I assigned “subpersonhood” its own code to gain a better understanding and make sense of when and if the participants displayed resistance. Each code was also assigned a color. Table 3.5 provides a small snapshot of my codebook for one of the three research questions from the study. I have included my complete codebook for the first research question in Appendix F. I used the same format to create a codebook for each research question.

After coding all the raw data for each of my research questions, I began to notice that each question informed the other. Therefore, I created a circle map for each participant to better organize the data. I also created circle maps for each participant to better understand and identify themes in the data that was connected to the focus of the case. For instance, I counted the number of times participants said the same word and used sticky notes to designate the word and the number of times it was used during their responses to the interview question. This circle map also allowed me to better organize the data that did not fit with BCP, the theoretical framework of the study. Data that did not fit within the theoretical framework was posted outside of the circle map. After following the same procedure for each question, I identified themes for the case. In Appendix G, I included photos of the circle maps I used to organize the data and to make sense of the claims I shared in the findings section of the study.

**Table 3.5**

*Terrance Data Code Book: Research Question One*

<b>Edward</b>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
Black Agency (BAG)	“philosophical and practical approaches to how Black Americans responded to racialization and the limited	Interview	America can be great if we all realize that, "You know what? We're all flawed,

	citizenship opportunities in the United States” (King, 2014, p. 89)		
Activism	“...Proving one’s worth as a citizen and that one can emancipate oneself, that one deserves freedom.” (Dawson, 2001, p. 260)	Interview	In fact, when I'm teaching about the 13 colonies, I always tell people, "America wasn't diverse on day one, but it was by day two. America's always been diverse and we have to embrace that." Anytime I think about American citizenship, I think about that.
Black Resistance to Subpersonhood (BRS)	“Black people, individually and collectively, resisted White supremacy, systemic racial oppression, and racial domination.” (Busey & Walker, 2017, p. 461)	Interview	Also, on top of that, even though we've had some major reasons why this country has been labeled great because we have turned the other cheek, and we have pushed forward.
Subperson (SP)	Inferior social status due to racism and White supremacy (Mills, 1997)	Interview	I think American citizenship is to realize that America's flawed and that America has an ugly history
<b>Dominique</b>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Warrants</b>
Black Agency (BAG)	“philosophical and practical approaches to how Black Americans responded to racialization and the limited citizenship opportunities in the United States” (King, 2014, p. 89)	Interview	I would say, it's important to understand it.  But understanding that and how you can move forward, understanding those dynamics of how all of a diverse group of people got here and how you're heading out, so to speak. For me, it's important to understand that and I would like all students to see from their perspective where they come from and the background, that's

			what makes America interesting though.
Activism	“...Proving one’s worth as a citizen and that one can emancipate oneself, that one deserves freedom.” (Dawson, 2001, p. 260)	Interview	When we talk about a lot of different things, I want my students to get their own understanding of it, I want to give them the facts, I don't want to sugar it, I don't want to word it now, I don't want to be biased, I want them to know, and then, hey, they have their opinion, they have their outlook on everything.
Black Resistance to Subpersonhood (BRS)	“Black people, individually and collectively, resisted White supremacy, systemic racial oppression, and racial domination.” (Busey & Walker, 2017, p. 461)		I'll just say freedom, equality, and some of those things that I know there are ongoing issues, persistent issues that people face every day.
Subperson (SP)	Inferior social status due to racism and White supremacy (Mills, 1997)	Interview	For me as a black African-American. Faced with teaching kids of the same race, the same upbringing, some of them same upbringing. I come from some of them, a little different, and it's tough because we have such a history that's not nice, it's unfiltered, the truth

*Note.* This is the very first interaction of my codebook upon coding the raw data that I collected during the project. This table is only pictured to demonstrate how I coded the data in this dissertation study. Therefore, please do not cite any of the data included in this table without the permission of the author.

**Threats to Data and Efforts to Mitigate**

This study presented several threats to the teachers that participated. However, I planned for and communicated those threats to the teachers that participated. I implemented many efforts



to protect the anonymity of the teachers. First, both teachers were assigned pseudonyms that I used to refer to them during the data generation process and in the final report. I also assigned pseudonyms to refer to the towns where they taught and the schools they taught at. Never will the real names of the teachers be associated with the data I collected or will present in future reports or conferences. Furthermore, all data was and will continue to be secured on a password-protected, secure server endorsed by Auburn University. All hardcopy data, such as my observation data, was kept in a locked filing cabinet in Haley Center 5052, the office of the researcher. I will destroy all hard copy data that I kept in the binders once the dissertation has been defended.

Second, to account for any assumptions related to the subjectivities of the researcher, I included a detailed positionality statement acknowledging the subjectivities I brought to this project. I also kept a reflection journal where subjectivities during the data collection were documented, analyzed, and interrogated if something needed to be written about in the final report of the dissertation or future publications. I also journaled in the footnotes at several portions of this project. Lastly, my dissertation advisor and I had frequent communication regarding my questions and any possible threats to the data collected in the study.

### **Summary of Procedures and Summary**

I began generating data for this study in the fall of 2023. Data generation was concluded early in the spring of 2024. Table 3.6 includes the summary of procedures for this study:

**Table 3.6**

*Summary of Procedures*

<b>Approval of IRB</b> July 28, 2023
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<b>Procedure(s)</b>	<b>Dut(ies)</b>
<b>Recruitment of Participants:</b> July 28-October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emailed informational letter to district superintendents/teachers</li> <li>● Distributed informational letter among personal and professional networks</li> </ul>
<b>Initial Teacher Interview:</b> September 2023- October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generated data regarding life history, American citizenship view(s) of Social Studies Education</li> <li>● Transcribed interviews</li> <li>● Journalled about research process</li> </ul>
<b>Ongoing Analyzing of Data:</b> September 2023 - April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generated questions for final interview</li> <li>● Coded data</li> <li>● Created circle maps</li> <li>● Identified themes</li> <li>● Worked with dissertation through data generating</li> <li>● Prepared final report</li> </ul>
<b>Field Observations:</b> September 2023 - February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Observed teaching practices</li> <li>● Generated data regarding teaching practices</li> <li>● Thought through questions for final interview</li> </ul>
<b>Final Teacher Interview:</b> January 2024-Feb 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Generated data regarding teachers' routes into teaching, definitions of social justices, Dirty South, and questions generated from observations</li> </ul>
<b>Final Analysis and Final Report</b> February 2024 – May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Finalized my analysis</li> <li>● Wrote final report</li> </ul>
<b>Dissertation Defense</b> June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Defended dissertation</li> <li>● Uploaded final report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Will disseminate report</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*Note.* This table was finalized on June 21, 2024.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I explained the assumptions I brought into this research project and how those assumptions informed the theoretical framework and design of this interpretive case study. Then, I discussed the design of this case study, how I generated data for the case study, and how I analyzed the data that was generated in this case study.

## **Chapter Four: Teacher Narratives**

“The South is not the South for everybody...there are two different halves, ours and theirs”

**-Edward, social studies teacher at Tuneville High School**

“The Dirty South...It is either Black or it is White”

**-Dominique, social studies teacher at Railway High School**

In this chapter, I discussed each teacher separately. There are two primary reasons why I discussed each teacher individually. First, I wanted to provide a detailed written description of each teacher before presenting and discussing the findings of the study. Second, and most importantly, I wanted to discuss and highlight the diversity in experience of each teacher so that I and the readers could make their own analyses and interpretations regarding what the teachers shared and how it can inform their specific contexts. With that, each teacher narrative followed the same structure and format as closely as possible.

### **Edward**

Before meeting Edward in person, our communications were limited to several email conversations, one phone call, and one Zoom meeting. Our first in-person meeting occurred during the first observation I had with Edward. When I arrived at Tuneville High School and checked into the front office, I was informed that Edward was doing morning breakfast duty. The front office clerk instructed me to walk right across the hall to meet Edward in the cafeteria. I was immediately able to spot Edward because he was the only Black man adult in the cafeteria. Our initial interaction went like this:

Edward: \*Grading papers talking with students\*

Terrance: Mr. Edward

Edward: Yes, that is me. \*Daps up each other\*<sup>20</sup> What is your name again man?

Terrance: Terrance

Edward: You all give us a second (speaking to the students). You are from Auburn, right  
\*Enters a conversation about me, the drive to from Auburn to Tuneville High School, and  
the Dissertation project until the bell rings for the first class\*

Edward: Now, my classroom is on the other side of the world [of the building]. \*Share a  
laugh as we are walking\*

Upon immediately walking into Edward's classroom at Tuneville High School, college football memorabilia and personal artifacts made up much of the aesthetics in his classroom. For instance, pictures, banners, flags, and other forms of Miami Football memorabilia hung from the ceilings and the wall. During every observation, Edward allowed me to sit close to his desk. Given my proximity to his desk, I was also able to see pictures of former football teams that he had coached. The pictures that were displayed included the records of the teams he had coached. None of the photos I observed had teams with losing records. Every picture indicated winning records, with some even indicating a region championship with a deep run in the Alabama High School playoffs. During our initial interview, when I asked Edward about his route into education, he explained<sup>21</sup>:

I have always been a football junkie. Football has always been my passion, and I found that out when I was working an aerospace job. I put the dots together, and I said that I think I want to coach football. Then, I began to figure out how I could do that and get paid. Well, I got to teach. That was when I decided to go to school

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<sup>20</sup> "Dapping" up someone is a form of endearment that goes beyond the traditional gesture of a handshake. It is a form of endearment that has been popularized in the Black and African American community, especially among Black men.

<sup>21</sup> All interview data was slightly amended for grammatical clarity and flow.

to become a teacher. At first, I was like, I am going to do physical education[PE] because that is probably the easiest thing. However, I always loved history, and that was what I decided on.

I also observed photos that he had taken with his family throughout the years, more specifically photos of his daughter. During our initial interview and when we had conversations during lesson observations, Edward consistently made mention to his family, most specifically his grandmother. When talking about his grandmother, Edward said:

My sisters and I come from a single-parent household, but we had the help of my grandma. She passed away when I was a senior in high school, but I thank God so much for her because I do not know where I would be without her. My mom was stressed every day just trying to make ends meet and my grandma just filled the void in so many different ways.

Edward is from a community that neighbors the current community where he taught. He described that his home community was made up of multiple "projects." However, the community where he taught was not made up of any projects. Nevertheless, Edward further explained how football gave him the opportunity to enroll in a traditional teacher education program at a university that was extremely close to his community and family. When I asked Edward about his transition from the aerospace job to teaching, he said:

I graduated with my undergrad in 2007, and that is when I started coaching at Tuneville University [pseudonym]. I started out voluntarily coaching high school football for about three years. Then, I went to Tuneville University, and started coaching college football. I left Tuneville University because the money just was not there like I thought it was going to be. I went back to high school and got a

high school coaching job. From there, I am still here teaching and coaching high school football.

While coaching football, Edward also mentioned that he was able to receive his master's degree in social science education. His undergraduate degree is also in social science education from Tuneville University. However, Edward first majored in physical education. When discussing his transition from physical education to social science education, Edward said

I was a PE major at first. However, one of the trainers at Tuneville University, an old guy, told me that if I majored in PE, I was not going to ever find a job....He said that I might want to try one of the other core subjects. That was when I chose to do history because I always loved history.

When asked about his goals and aims as being a classroom teacher, Edward said:

I want to be in a position where I can do God's work. To me that means I can help these kids in every way that they need to be helped. I do not want to be only a teacher or a coach, but I want to make an impact. I want to be in a position to make an impact.

Edward was born, raised, and currently lives in the South. When I asked him to describe the Dirty South, he said:

The first thing I think about is pride. It is funny they say Deep South, we say Dirty South. So, to me, I think we have taken ownership by saying this is our part of the South because the South is not the South for everybody. There are two different halves, the one that is ours and one that is theirs. However, we all play on the same dirt. Still, when I hear the term Dirty South, that is a sense of pride as far as where we [Black people] are from.

For Edward, the Dirty South was a source of pride for Black people. Specifically, he mentioned how the South for Black people is not the same as the South for White people. However, with that, he also mentioned how both Black and White people still play on the “same dirt,” which poses a question regarding how both sides of the South can work together to create a South that recognizes and values the diversity of all who make up the South.

### **Dominique**

Before the study began, I supervised undergraduate students at Railway High School. Therefore, I knew of Dominique before the study began. During the recruitment phase of the study, I reached out to Dominique via email to set up a phone conversation regarding the study. During our initial phone conversation, we spoke about the project, the purposes of the project, and the project’s requirements. Also, during the fall of 2023, which was the beginning of the study, Dominique served as the collaborating educator for one of the social studies interns in the undergraduate program of the university where I was enrolled. Therefore, I worked collaboratively and simultaneously with Dominique during the internship experience for that intern and for the study. My first time entering Dominique’s classroom was for the initial internship introduction meeting, which was before the study began.

Immediately upon walking into Dominique's classroom at Railway High School, Railway High School pride beamed from and through the aesthetics of his room. Railway High School posters and athletic schedules were on the wall, along with a Railway High School football helmet, which was close to Dominique's desk. When I moved closer to Dominique's desk, I observed pictures of his family, more specifically of his wife and daughter. Like Edward, Dominique described family and football as one of the routes and reasons why he became a teacher. Not only are members of his family currently serving as educators, but his father, who is



a preacher and businessman, encouraged him to choose a career that he loved and one that would make him happy. When I asked about his family, Dominique said:

One of the reasons I got into education was my dad's side. His younger sister is an educator. She has been teaching for 20-plus years. My first cousin is an assistant superintendent. Those two have really been an influence and are mentors that I look up to in education. A lot of people have always asked why I did not take over the family business, but my father never pressed that on me. He always told me to do what I wanted to do and to do whatever makes me happy. Do something that I loved. He always said I love doing heating and air so that is what I love. If you love coaching or teaching, you go with what you love."

I also noticed that Dominique used the board to communicate with his students. For instance, there were portions of the board dedicated to the "essential question" and "persistent issue" for the unit of study. One side of the board was devoted to the 9th grade course of study, and the opposite side was devoted to the 10th grade course of study. During our initial interview, when I asked Dominique about his specific route to social studies education, he said:

Actually, I started off wanting to go to physical therapy school, so I started off at Railway Community College [Pseudonym] taking classes for that. Then, I changed it when I got interested in wanting to coach football, which also led me to change my major to education. First, I changed it to PE until I decided that I really wanted to be more of in the classroom. When I transferred to Railway University [Pseudonym], I met with my advisor, and I switched over to social studies education.

When I asked Dominique about his aims and goals as serving as a classroom teacher, he said:

Overall, I have always told my students that I want them to walk away from my classroom knowing something, whether it is from the lesson I teach or whether it is a life lesson...I want you to remember the first seven presidents, but I also want you to know just something that you can take out into the real world too.

During the interview, Dominique consistently used the term "real world." To better understand what he defined as the real world, I asked him to elaborate a little further. When I asked him to elaborate on how he defined the real world, he said:

I would say a space where it is not going to matter whether or not you know. At some point it may depend on what career or whatever, but for some it may and for some it may not.

Dominique was also identified as Black man who taught secondary social studies. Our conversation about the real world set up the next conversation about the Dirty South. When I asked Dominique to define the Dirty South, he said:

The Dirty South...it is either Black or it is White. As I am getting older, I just feel like there is nothing that... I feel like Whites will not ever understand what it is like to be Black person. They may have empathy or sympathy, but they will not understand because they have not experienced it.

For Dominique, the Dirty South has a very clear distinction along racial lines. In his description of the Dirty South, he described a place where White people will never understand what it is like to experience Southern living as a Black person. He also mentioned how Black agency through voice has been and continues to be censored in the context of the Dirty South. For instance, Dominique indicated:

For some people, either you have a voice, or you don't. If you use your voice, just also know it's going to be some sacrifices or some repercussions behind that.

When I asked Dominique to further unpack that statement, he said:

If you are Black in a Black and White setting and if you are too opinionated or if you have your idea, you might become blackballed? They may hinder your success or prevent you from climbing up the ladder. For me, I want to have my opinion. I want to have my idea. I do not know everything, but I want to be valued as a person.

Dominique mentioned that his agency and humanity transcends direct or indirect subjection to subpersonhood within White spaces that abide by the racial contract.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided a narrative for each teacher that studied with me in this project. with whom I studied. By providing each narrative, I wanted to give voice to the teachers I studied with to highlight the diversity in their experiences as Black men and as secondary social studies teachers who live and navigate within the American Dirty South.

## Chapter Five: Findings with Discussion of Theory

“Born into these crooked ways”

-(Goodie Mob, 1995b)

In this chapter, I presented the findings from the case analysis. The questions from the case study built upon each other. Therefore, I continuously addressed subsequent research question(s) while presenting the findings for the discussed question. I drew upon BCP during the analysis of the data and interwove BCP in my discussion of the findings.

**Research Question 1:** What do Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South describe as influencing their conceptualization of American citizenship?

*America’s past and current racial legacy as well as the Possibilities for Reconciliation*

When I asked Edward and Dominique about their conceptualizations of American citizenship, both described how America’s racist history toward Black people influenced their conceptualization of American citizenship. They described America as having had a “flawed” and “not nice” history specifically describing the history of anti-Black racism and the dehumanization of Black people. Edward consistently referred to and used the word flawed when describing America’s history. When I asked Edward to describe his thoughts of American citizenship, he said<sup>22</sup>:

I think American citizenship is to realize that America is flawed, and that America has an ugly history. However, America can be great if we all realize that we are all flawed. We are all damaged in certain ways, some more than others. If we can be accepting of each other, we can move this flawed country in the right direction. Therefore, citizenship for me means acceptance more than anything.

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<sup>22</sup> All interview data was slightly amended for grammatical clarity and flow.

Edward began his description of American citizenship by referring to the fact that America is not perfect, and he specifically mentioned America's past as the reason behind why America is a flawed country. Edward also pointed out how some people had been “damaged” more than others within America. In interpreting Edward’s description of America being a flawed country given the damage it has caused its inhabitants, especially when asked about American citizenship, I found that Edward’s description of America being flawed was directly related to how groups, such as Black people, have been treated within America. The historical and systemic denial of fundamental rights, such as the right to vote and other privileges associated with American citizenship provides reasons behind Edward’s description of America being flawed. Therefore, I interpreted Edward’s description of America being flawed to mean that American citizenship for many Black people (Johnson, 2017; Vickery, 2017) begins with an interrogation of how American citizenship has been denied to Black people. When I asked Edward to further contextualize and explain what he meant by America being flawed, Edward said:

Well, it is like the movement today to erase our history. They call it Critical Race Theory [CRT], but they are trying to rewrite history. You can rewrite history, but that does not make it right. However, that is the way that I look at it. America has flaws, and of course, I am talking about when it comes to my own race. However, it is okay to say that we have done you and others wrong because Black folks and Native Americans, we have had it bad in America.

Edward began with a modern-day reference to CRT and the movement to censor or erase history. I interpreted Edward’s usage of the anti-CRT movement to his usage of CRT to explain how the flaws of America continue to subject Black people to a subperson status within modern

American society. From Edward's perspective and in my interpretation, I found that Edward viewed the anti-CRT movement as a movement that directly attacked Blackness and Black people. The anti-CRT movement and other attempts to censor the truth regarding America's racist history communicates that the history of Black people does not matter or deserve a space to be included within the larger narrative of American history. However, Edward's conceptualization of American citizenship was twofold. First, Edward had a belief that Black people were historically and still subjected to subperson status within modern American society. However, Edward also mentioned how the possibilities of what America could be also informed his conceptualization of American citizenship.

For instance, although Edward specifically mentioned that America was a flawed country, he also mentioned that America could move past those flaws if American citizens were willing to understand and accept each other for who they are. In interpreting his consistent usage of the word understanding and acceptance, I found that Edward believed that America could be a place where Black Americans and Native Americans can still feel welcomed and a part of society if America and other Americans were willing to reconcile and accept each other. Reconciliation is defined as "the process of making two people or groups of people friendly again after they have argued seriously or fought and kept apart from each other, or a situation in which this happens," (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Edward specifically acknowledged how the acceptance of human differences was critical to American citizenship which aligns with the process of reconciliation.

Like Edward, Dominique described how America's "unfiltered" history informed his conceptualization of American citizenship, yet he also repeatedly used the word "understand"

when discussing American citizenship. When I asked Dominique about his conceptualization of American citizenship, Dominique described:

It is tough. However, I would say that it is important to understand it, especially for me being African American. I am faced with teaching kids of the same race, the same upbringing...some of them have the same upbringing as myself and some, a little different. Therefore, it is tough because we have such a history that is not nice and unfiltered, but it is the truth. Therefore, understanding that and how you can move forward, understanding those dynamics of how all of a diverse group of people got here is key to move forward.

Dominique began his description of American citizenship by emphasizing that it is important to understand American citizenship. However, he further explained that it is exceptionally important for his students who are Black to understand what American citizenship had historically meant for those who identified as Black. In interpreting the first part of his statement, I found that Dominique's explicit connection to African Americans and America not having a nice history was a direct reference to America's racist legacy toward Black people. Furthermore, he followed up by saying that America's history toward Black people, while raw, was the truth. Given America's racist legacy and by being a Black man, Dominique indicated that it was his duty to teach that truth to his students, especially his students who are African American. Like Edward, Dominique described America's racist legacy regarding the dehumanization of Black people as informing his conceptualization of American citizenship and viewed teaching as a form of resistance to restore the full humanity of Black people.

When I asked Dominique to further elaborate on what he meant about America having a history that is "not nice," he said:

I will just say freedom, equality, and some of those things that I know are ongoing issues and persistent issues that people face every day. Therefore, I feel like, when you understand that dynamic a little bit more, it is not that you agree or whatever but you just understand it a little bit better.

Dominique also highlighted how America's racist legacy is an ongoing and everyday experience for Black people who are subjected to the remnants of America's racist legacy. Furthermore, he mentioned how understanding America's racist legacy was key for the country to move forward. By indicating that America's history is the truth and unfiltered, Dominique emphasized that America's racist legacy was undebatable, persistent, and something that Black people faced every day. However, Dominique also mentioned that while the remnants of America's racist legacy toward Black people persists, understanding how those remnants still exist was one of the first steps in "moving forward" and to restore the humanity of Black people.

Like Edward, the process of understanding one another was viewed as a form of patriotism that informed his conceptualization of what it meant to be an American. Therefore, I interpreted and found that Edward and Dominique indicated that American citizenship was a continuous construct, a process, that required knowing the history of Black subpersonhood to recognize and understand when to reconcile when modern forms of subpersonhood threatens the full possibilities associated with being an American citizen. Therefore, knowing the history of subpersonhood and reconciling subpersonhood were forms of resistance that informed Edward's and Dominique's conceptualization of what it meant to be an American citizen.

**Research Question 2:** What do Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South view as the role of social studies education within current society?

***Social Studies education as sites for historical interrogations of subpersonhood and to practice reconciliation to eradicate modern forms of subpersonhood***



Edward's and Dominique's conceptualizations of American citizenship mostly aligned with what they described as the purpose of social studies education. When I asked Edward and Dominique to describe the purpose(s) of social studies education within current society, both described how social studies education should teach students how far America had come and how America's past will continue to shape the present day. For instance, when Edward described the purposes of social studies education, he said:

When you want to figure out, for example, why this country is the way that it is, you have to know your history to basically dictate your future. In order to write your future, you first have to read about your history.

Edward emphasized that understanding history is important in understanding a country, and I also interpreted that statement to mean that knowing the history of the country where one claims allegiance, or lives is a form of patriotism. Drawing upon BCP, I also interpreted Edward's mention of knowing a country's history to write a better future to mean that knowing history includes knowing all histories, the ones that are glorious and the histories that are not. Furthermore, Edward concluded by saying that reading was one way to learn about one's country and that social studies served as spaces where students could do that. I interpreted Edward's usage of the phrase "read about your history" to be equated to any activity that requires an investigation of historical events, which includes but is not limited to reading books, researching, and analyzing historical documents. To add, I interpreted and positioned Edward's description of social studies education to be a form of resistance by being an incubator of resistance by students learning about historical occurrences of resistance and to better understand when modern forms of resistance are needed to rewrite a better future for all Americans. This interpretation of the

classroom and social studies education aligns with Baldwin's (1963) belief regarding how the classroom becomes a site of resistance by modeling resistance.

James Baldwin (1963) wrote an essay to teachers about the need for teachers to use their position and classroom as a space to prepare their students to understand the myths and realities of America. In that essay, Baldwin wrote:

In the attempt to correct so many generations of bad faith and cruelty, when it is operating not only in the classroom but in society, you will meet the most fantastic, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance. (Baldwin, 1963, n.p.)

Baldwin indicated that the classroom becomes a site of resistance when teachers use the classroom to explain why correction is needed and to formulate steps to form both the teacher and classroom space becomes a site of resistance.

Dominique shared something similar. He emphasized that social studies education had a purpose to help students understand how things had been in the past to better understand their modern working. Dominique specifically mentioned that knowing the history of the American government system was extremely important. In short, for Edward and Dominique, knowing the truths regarding America's history was not viewed as divisive, it was viewed as patriotic.

Nevertheless, when Dominique described the purpose of social studies education, he said:

Going back to what you asked about citizenship, where every person can live with each other, have the knowledge of what being a productive citizen means and understanding of how things have been and how they work for us, especially the government. That is what I would say is the purpose of social studies education.

Dominique referenced our previous discussion of race and reconciliation to explain what he believed were the purposes of social studies education and described a connection between citizenship and social studies education. Therefore, I interpreted Dominique's mention about everyone living together to specifically allude to why historical interrogations of subpersonhood are needed to best understand everyone's opinion regarding politics and the real world, as Dominique consistently called it. To add, I interpreted Dominique's usage of the term "productive citizen" to be a citizen who had knowledge of how America had not afforded fundamental rights to certain groups and who had the willingness to understand why having that knowledge was important to consider when living among each other. Therefore, a productive citizen, to Dominique and in my interpretation, is not merely a position but a disposition that allows a person to investigate and acknowledge differences of opinion and perspective to best live among one another. The disposition described by Dominique is different from the dispositions of Authoritarian Patriotism and Democratic Patriotism, which currently dominate social studies instruction (Westheimer, 2009).

Dominique's emphasis on students having "knowledge" of citizenship and the government aligns with Delpit's (1988) idea that teachers must teach students the explicit and implicit rules of power to understand the "culture of power" and how that power exists and works with American society. For instance, Delpit (1988) indicated:

Teachers, who are the most skillful at educating Black and poor children do not allow themselves to be placed in "skills" or "process" boxes. They understand the need for both approaches, the need to help students to establish their own voices, but to coach those voices to produce notes that will be heard clearly in the larger society. (p. 296)

Dominique believed social studies education was a space where teachers could assist and help students with establish their own voices while respecting the voices of others with whom students lived.

Dominique and Edward's description regarding the purpose of social studies education regarding teaching students to believe that the United States is a flawed nation as the first step in the intent to make it a better one for all people. This view of social studies aligns with Parker (2023) call for civic education to prepare students for a liberal democracy. In a liberal democracy, Parker (2023) indicated that:

Members will voice their opinions vigorously and take the adversarial function of the opposing interests seriously, but they will do so within the context of civic consciousness and a willingness to live by the community's decisions. (p. 7)

Parker (2023) suggested that disciplinary knowledge of history is the first step in civic education for a liberal democracy. Edward and Dominique indicated that disciplinary knowledge was not only needed but how it was also patriotic.

With that, Edward also explained how social studies education had a purpose to engage students in understanding the "why's" of America. When specifically describing social studies, Edward said:

Why things are going on in the world is history related. Nobody looks at the news and says that something is messed up, and it must be because of that math problem. Or, that something is messed up because of that science experiment that did not go right. Nobody is saying that because people are looking at history to why the world is in the shape that it is now.

Edward specifically mentioned that social studies had the purpose to help people interrogate the problems of the world. More specifically, he mentioned that knowing and understanding history provides the foundation to understand current and modern issues within society. Furthermore, Edward mentioned how only social studies education could engage students in tough interrogations to help students explain how historical events have modern implications. Edward and Dominique also described that the purpose of social studies education was to teach understanding and acceptance, which I believe are key to reconciliation and resistance to subpersonhood (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). When describing social studies in comparison to other subjects regarding the teaching of human difference, Edward said:

I think history is the most important subject because history is the only subject that teaches you the whys and how to understand each other. I do not mean that English, Science, and Math does not teach you things, but history teaches you more about people than any other subject does.

Furthermore, Edward mentioned that social studies was a space that teaches the value and importance of human difference. First, I interpreted Edward's statement to mean that social studies education had a purpose to teach students how to interrogate historical events and the role that humans played in those historical events. Second, I interpreted Edward's statement to mean that social studies education had a purpose to teach students how those historical events inform the differences in opinions among human perspectives. Lastly, I interpreted Edward's statement to mean that social studies education had a purpose for students to discuss those differences to better understand each other. For some students (Johnson, 2019) and Black Americans (Johnson; 2017; Vickery, 2017) that begins with acknowledging and understanding how certain groups

have been excluded from benefiting from the full possibilities associated with being an American citizen.

Dominique described something similar. He described how social studies education had a purpose to engage students in understanding each other through conversations and debates.

When describing the value of conversation, Dominique said:

Also, some of the things that come with social studies is being able to have a debate and understand people through an educated conversation. Another thing that comes with social studies is being able to express ideas and opinions, and being able to read and write...

In Dominique's statement, he described that social studies education had a purpose to teach students how to converse with each other. Furthermore, he indicated that social studies education had a purpose to model how students should engage in the exchange of ideas and opinions. I interpreted Dominique's statement to mean that while differences of opinions and ideas are inevitable, social studies education has the purpose to engage students in understanding and accepting human differences.

Dominique followed up that same statement by explaining how learning to converse with each other and knowing how to read and write had value to what students might experience in real life. He said:

I think that is just the education [inside of the classroom] side of it, I also like for my students to grasp strategies and traits. When students say coach, we don't want to learn about this, I tell them that we are still going to learn about it because I want you to be able to see how it correlates into the real world.

I interpreted Dominique's statement to mean that social studies education had a purpose for students to practice the skills he believed taught students how to listen, acknowledge, and understand how to move collaboratively despite human difference. In drawing on BCP, I further interpreted this statement to mean that social studies education had a purpose to model how students should respond to the realities of human differences of experience as those experiences occur throughout a student's lifetime. To add, I interpreted that Dominique and Edward viewed social studies education as a space of resistance (Duncan et al., 2023) to subpersonhood because it had the purposes to intentionally and explicitly engage students in historical interrogations of subpersonhood and how it positioned the need for continuous reconciliation when modern forms of subpersonhood presents itself within American society. To put it simply, the debate over the purposes of social studies education (Evans, 2004) and the assertions made by Edward and Dominique that these purposes are not fixed could best describe social studies education as a field whose purposes must change over time. More research is needed.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in the American Dirty South use their pedagogical practices for social justice?

***Suspicious of traditional Democratic processes believed to achieve social justice***

To begin, social justice in this study referred to how Black men secondary social studies teachers challenged and prepared their students to question, challenge, and critique racism and oppressive societal structures. Edward and Dominique had varied and complex responses when I asked them to describe how they defined social justice. Although they both believed social justice was possible, Edward and Dominique had suspicions regarding the likelihood of social justice efforts that relied on traditional democratic processes, such as voting and protesting. For instance, when I asked Edward to define social justice, he said:

We are chasing it, and it seems like we are getting closer. However, we are not. To achieve social justice we [Black people] have to end up in those positions where we can have an impact whether it be judgeships or holding political offices. For example, when Obama was elected, it was believed that everything was going to change because that was what his platform was. While it is a great thing that Obama got elected, you have to look at the makeup of Congress. Look at what he is fighting against. So to me, it is the same thing with social justice.

Edward believed that social justice was something that America is still chasing. While he did make mention and acknowledged that it appeared America is getting closer to achieving social justice, he used the election of Barack Obama to demonstrate that America was not getting closer to ever achieving social justice, if Black Americans did not have a significant representation in common Democratic positions. Love and Tosolt (2010) conducted a study where the election of Barack Obama signaled to Americans that racism had ended, and that America was entering a post-racial period. I also interpreted Edward's mention of Barack Obama to be associated with the mean the end of racism and therefore, the end of subpersonhood status within America.

However, Edward denied the likelihood of America ever being able to achieve social justice given the current implementation of traditionally accepted Democratic processes. When contextualizing Black physical resistance, Busey and Walker (2017) mentioned that "the self-placement of Black bodies in White-intended spaces are all acts of patriotism" (p. 462). Therefore, Edward's mention of Black people becoming judges and holding political office began with his belief that traditional forms of Democratic patriotism (Westheimer, 2009) was never intended for Black people, and therefore, did not work when Black people, such as Barack Obama entered a space that aligned with Democratic patriotism because the space was at one



point solely intended for White people, specifically White men. Edward's suspicions are consistent with many of Black Americans who doubt that social justice will ever be achieved for Black Americans if social justice efforts are predicated upon the currently used democratic process, such as through the legislative process (Pew Research Center, 2022). For instance, Edward specifically questioned how Barack Obama could fulfill the promises of his presidential platform if the makeup of Congress did not support his platform.

Similarly, Dominique had suspicions regarding using traditional and accepted democratic processes to achieve social justice. When I asked Dominique to define social justice, he said:

Social justice is doing what is right. However, it is also making sure that everyone has equal opportunities and that the playing field is even across the board. It is also fighting for what is right, and I think that happens a lot in teaching. For example, when teaching the government, if we say that all men are created equal, then we should be doing that, right? That is what the government and our founding fathers wrote about, but why are we not? Going back to activism such as protesting and boycotting. Why is it frowned upon when other races do it, or other groups do it. However, you [Early Europeans] did it because Great Britain taxed you for some tea. They also burnt down tax collectors, and they killed people because of tax.

In Dominique's definition of social justice, he described what it was and how we could get there. He specifically pointed out that teaching is used in the fight toward social justice. I interpreted Dominique's mention of teaching to be twofold. First, I interpreted his mention of teaching to include how Black people have always used education to resist subpersonhood (Alridge, 2020; Duncan, 2022; Givens, 2021a; Loder-Jackson, 2015). However, Dominique also highlighted and

questioned how education teaches ideals and actions that align with Democratic patriotism (Westheimer, 2009), yet they also pointed out how the ideals and actions associated with Democratic patriotism are viewed differently when enacted by Black people and other people of color to achieve social justice. He specifically cited and referenced how the resistance of early Europeans is oftentimes viewed as patriotic, but how the same act of resistance, when used by Black people and other people of color, are viewed as problematic. According to Mills (1998), Authoritarian and Democratic patriotism do not interrogate or consider how such forms of patriotism were initially only intended for White men and excluded the participation of Black people and women. Using BCP, I interpreted that Dominique's and Edward's suspicions regarding social justice efforts that are predicated upon Democratic patriotism are directly connected to how forms of Democratic patriotism and Authoritarian patriotism have historically been used and are continually used to subject Black people and other people of color to subpersonhood status with American society (Busey & Walker, 2017).

### ***Teaching as resistance to subpersonhood***

While both Edward and Dominique believed that social justice predicated upon democratic patriotism was not likely, they both mentioned how teaching was one way they engaged as American citizens. For instance, when I asked Edward how he practiced citizenship, he said:

By treating all my kids the same. One thing I always tell my parents is that I am going to treat every kid like they have my last name. That is what I can do as far as for my country is to teach these kids that we got to be accepting of each other.

Edward's conceptualization of American citizenship and purposes of social studies education also informed how he viewed his role as a citizen and teacher. I interpreted his view of teaching

and his willingness to teach students how to accept each other as a form of patriotism that resists subpersonhood and restores the humanity of Black people by recognizing the humanity of all his students and teaching them to accept one another for who they are. Also, although Edward has a suspicion about traditional Democratic patriotism, he still believed in education.

Dominique shared something similar. When I asked Dominique how he engaged as an American citizen, he said:

I try to stay on top of things with all the news. However, I feel like one of the ways I engage is by teaching and being a social studies teacher. As I said, try to deliver content as accurately as possible and unbiased as possible. I also try to teach in an engaging and creative way where students also express their ideas and opinions.

Dominique also viewed and described how he used teaching as a form of patriotism. More specifically, Dominique also viewed teaching social studies as the place where he could teach his students how to engage with each other regardless of their opinions and ideas. While Dominique and Edward had suspicions regarding social justice that is predicated upon democratic patriotism, they still described how their position as a teacher was a position of patriotism. Drawing upon BCP, Edward's and Dominique's explanation of teaching as patriotism is a form of Black physical resistance and Black intellectualism for multiple reasons. First, one must consider how Black men teachers and other Black teachers were systematically fired and removed from their positions as teachers and principals during the implementation of *Brown II* and that Black teachers were replaced with under qualified White teachers (Fenwick, 2022). The systematic removal of Black teachers and Black principals created a vastly majority White teaching force and communicated that even Blackness that was credentialed was still subhuman.

Therefore, Edward's and Dominique's courage to self-decide to serve as history teachers is an act of Black agency that was stripped from Black people after *Brown*.

Edward and Dominique also described their teaching as a form of activism. For instance, when I asked Dominique to define activism, he said:

I think people always think it has to be something people see on the worldwide news or something like that. Activism is every day. Every day you are fighting. You should be doing what is right. Every day you should be doing what is right for each and everybody.

When I asked Dominique what "everyday" activism looks like for him, he said:

Teaching every kid, and preparing them for outside of the classroom, whether it is through coaching or teaching. I would also say teaching what is right, teaching the truth, and teaching every kid that what you see is what it is.

I interpreted Dominique's suspicions regarding social justice and Democratic patriotism to inform how he described and challenged traditional notions of activism. Dominique emphasized that activism was not always and did not always need to be something that was wide scale or known to everyone. From Dominique's point of view every day is a fight and a new day to do what is right. He characterized his teaching as one of the ways to teach and model what everyday activism could look like. Dominique further explained that preparing students to become activists was predicated upon treating his students right [respecting their humanity] and teaching them historical truths [teaching], so that they are best prepared for life outside of his classroom. Drawing upon BCP, I interpreted Dominique's description of how he modeled and taught activism as a form of Black intellectualism because of how he viewed and used teaching as a form of resistance despite being suspicious of social justice that was predicated upon Democratic

patriotism. To reemphasize, Busey and Walker (2017) suggested that Black political thought and Black physical resistance are all forms of intellectualism because of its goal to restore the denied humanity of Black people and Blackness.

Edward shared something similar when I asked him to define activism. When I asked Edward to define activism, he said:

When I am teaching, I tell my kids that there are a lot of people who might feel a certain way, but when you act out on it, that is when you believe in a certain way. For example, there are so many things that we see on the news that we may have empathy for, we may feel sorry, but it only becomes activism when you actually say I am going to do something about that. You are actively getting up and you are doing something about it.

Like what Edward mentioned as one of the purposes of social studies education, he indicated that he uses teaching to teach students about activism and to teach students how to practice activism. According to Ladson-Billings (2006), patriotism and activism is not only what someone believes or says regarding what is wrong, but it is also about what they do about. Like Dominique, Edward using his teaching to teach students about activism and how to practice activism is a form of Black intellectualism and Black agency. Like Dominique, Edward viewed and made an intentional-autonomous decision to use his position as a teacher as a nontraditional form of activism by modeling activism, teaching his students about activism, and explaining to his students how to practice activism.

***The teaching for social justice = Operating with and within the confines of state-required standards***

When I observed the three teacher self-selected lessons, I identified two themes. First, although Dominique and Edward both described teaching as a form of patriotism and as a form

of activism, they taught for social justice only when the Alabama state-required standards explicitly included or made room for social justice-related topics. Second, Edward and Dominique both indicated being forced to work and navigate within the confines of the language of state-required standards to teach about current events, racism, and social justice.

### ***Operating with the confines of state-required standards***

Only one of the standards-based lessons I observed in Dominique's or Edward's classroom explicitly called for the teaching of social-justice related content. During Dominique's second lesson observation, I observed his tenth grade United States history course. During this observation, Dominique taught the Alabama state-required standard that had an instructional goal for students to be able to compare the effects of European exploration on the colonists, Africans, and indigenous. The exact standard is below:

Compare effects of economic, geographic, social, and political conditions before and after European explorations of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries on Europeans, American colonists, Africans, and indigenous Americans. (Alabama Course of Study, 2010)

During this lesson, Dominique used a Document-Based Question (DBQ) to teach this standard. When I walked into Dominique's class, I observed the following agenda on the board:

Essential Question: Why did so many colonists die?

Agenda:

1. Background Essay
2. Jamestown Video
3. DBQ Activity (Documents A, B, C, D, E)
  - a. Answer question with elbow partner
4. Guided Essay Outline
5. Type Essay Tomorrow

Shortly after sitting down in the back of Dominique's class, Dominique handed me a copy of the DBQ that he used for the lesson. As students were working on the bellringer, I quickly looked

through the DBQ. The DBQ began with a short background essay that required the students to answer five questions. All the questions associated with the background essay were surface-level and basic comprehension questions. The background essay was followed by five documents with comprehension tasks. The following documents were:

- Document A: Jamestown's Environment
- Document B: Rainfall in Jamestown
- Document C: Occupation List of the First Settlers
- Document D: Grain Trade With the Powhatans
- Document E: Chronology of English Mortality

Once again, for this study, I defined social justice as how Black men secondary social studies teachers challenged and prepared their students to question, challenge, and critique racism and oppressive societal structures. During data analysis, I found that none of the DBQ documents required students to interrogate racism, such as why Africans were not considered early colonists of Jamestown. With that, I did find that the DBQ required students to interrogate the relationship between early colonists and the Native Americans that were in Jamestown. However, the document that required students to interrogate the relationship between the colonists and Native Americans depicted the Natives as violent murderers who killed hundreds of colonists. While the killing of early colonists by Native Americans is historically accurate, the DBQ as designed did not have students interrogate or think about possible reasons behind why the Natives would use physical resistance against the colonists. Therefore, I found that while the DBQ did not require students to investigate racism or other forms of oppression, the activity was directly aligned with most of the Alabama state-required standards related to European exploration.

One component of the lesson, however, did require students to learn about enslaved Africans who arrived with early colonists in Jamestown. After reading through the background

essay with students and giving the students time to answer the questions associated with the background essay, Dominique showed a portion of *America: The Story of Us*. *The Story of Us* is a documentary series that tells a comprehensive history of America. The documentary's first episode, *Rebels*, featured content about European exploration. Dominique only showed about seven minutes of the episode. The episode began with a review of much of what students read in the DBQ background essay. However, toward the end of the clip, the documentary did mention and include content regarding enslaved Africans who arrived in Jamestown with early colonists to forcefully work on tobacco farms. Dominique ended the clip roughly one minute into the discussion of enslaved Africans.

I did not interpret Dominique's ending of the clip as him not wanting the students to learn about enslaved Africans because learning the experience of Africans was included in the standard. I interpreted Dominique's decision to end the clip because of the video clip's alignment with the documents included in the DBQ, which did not include any investigation of enslaved Africans. After Dominique showed the clip, there was no discussion. The students spent the rest of the class working collaboratively through the DBQ. If students completed the DBQ before the class period ended, they were required to focus on their unit essays. Therefore, based upon what I analyzed from the lesson and during the observation, I found that Dominique worked with the state-required standard to teach this standard that explicitly called for a concept related to social justice.

### ***Operating within the confines of state-required standards***

Even though only one of the standards-based lessons I observed in Dominique's or Edward's class included teaching racism or oppression, I observed one lesson where Edward made room to teach about the history of racism and resistance. During Edward's last lesson,



observation, Edward taught a lesson that required students to explore European exploration and imperialism. The exact standard is below:

Describe the role of mercantilism and imperialism in European exploration and colonization in the sixteenth century, including the Columbian Exchange.

(Alabama Course of Study, 2010)

During this lesson, Edward used a lecture, a rap, and primary sources to teach this standard. The central question for this unit was “How are Europeans making money off of the New World?” Edward began with a lecture that discussed Jamestown, the Mayflower, and diversity of America. When describing the diversity of America, Edward said, “America has always been diverse. Maybe not by day one, but definitely by day two.” Then, Edward showed the students a rap that discussed the history of Colonial America. The rap had several lines that spoke to the experience of enslaved Africans during the colonization of America in the sixteenth century. After a couple students performed the rap, the little that they could remember, Edward used a relevant topic to make room discuss racism, enslavement, and resistance within the discussion of colonization.

When I analyzed Edward's syllabus, he indicated that in his class, he would use relevant topics to make connections to and for students to better understand historical events. At the very bottom of Edward's syllabus before the parent signature section, he included the following line:

While this class focuses on the events of the past it will be the instructors endeavor to relate these teachings to current events whenever possible. Students often find that this makes the history much more relevant and are able to tie the abstract events of the past to the concrete events of present day. This may lead to discussions that on the surface seem far removed from the lesson; however, they are always with the intention of providing relevance to an abstract idea or event.

During the last observation, I observed Edward introducing a discussion that was not explicitly mentioned in the standard within the Alabama 9th grade standard related to colonization.

However, Edward introduced the topic to make a connection to the history of colonization and the enslavement of Black people. After having students perform a rap about the history of colonial America, Edward taught about the Black experience within the history of colonial America. Edward prefaced the lesson by saying:

**Edward:** I know we talk about a lot of things in this class that for the most part is extremely lighthearted. However, sometimes we must talk about some things in this class that are not lighthearted. Therefore, for the rest of class, we will be talking about slavery. You do not have any choice but to put your mature caps on.

**Students:** *\*Eyes are locked in on Edward\**

**Edward:** I want to open this up by asking you a question. Who in America is generally seen as the best athletes? *\*a brief silence\**

**Students (more than half):** Black people.

**Edward:** Yes, Black people. I know that might not seem politically correct to say Black people, but that is the general consensus. I do not think anyone would argue anything other than that.

**Edward:** Has anyone ever thought about why that is?

**Sarah<sup>23</sup> (White girl student):** Does it not have something to do with their muscles?

**Edward:** No... *\*shakes his head\**

**Sydney<sup>24</sup> (White girl student):** Yea, I thought it was something to do about that as well.

Edward started this opener by asking students to think about athletics and race. To provide further context, Edward taught this lesson approximately a week prior to Superbowl LVIII. First, drawing upon BCP, Edward's courage to discuss this topic within a space of majority White students was a form of resistance. Second, by Edward simply discussing race, he challenged the notion that discussing race was a divisive or political concept. Students' initial responses indicated that beginning this topic was courageous on Edward's part, but also risky. I interpreted the two students' initial responses as discourse regarding the Black male body.

According to Brown (2017), current discourse regarding the Black male body is deeply rooted in

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<sup>23</sup> While this is a pseudonym for the student who responded, the racial and gender identity was solely based upon my perception, which may or may not align with that student's actual identity.

<sup>24</sup> While this is a pseudonym for the student who responded, the racial and gender identity was solely based upon my perception, which may or may not align with that student's actual identity.

Western scientific thought in that Black men's "capacity to think and self-govern was defined by pathologies in their blood, genes, bones, and skull" (p. 9). Brown (2017) asserts that Western scientific thought forms the foundation of this discourse. Therefore, before another student could respond, Edward said:

**Edward:** Well, I am going to tell you why. It is a story of genetics that is directly connected to the Transatlantic slave trade. Also, let me say this. During the slave trade, no White man went into Africa, kidnapped Africans, and introduced them to slavery. It did not happen like that. Africans sold each other into slavery. In that process, today we call it human trafficking, it is just like any other commodity. So, when these slave traders arrived into Africa, they bought the biggest, the fastest, and the healthiest. Both men and women. Then, they were forced to breed. So today, you see by products of that breeding.

During this portion of the lecture, Edward taught students about how the Black body was not genetically superior but that the Black body was exploited during the Transatlantic slave trade. He continued by explaining to students how enslaved Africans were also exploited by being forced to procreate to produce more enslaved Africans. I interpreted that Edward used athletics and race to first point out the history of Black dehumanization within America. He followed up by teaching students about the harsh and brutal conditions that Africans were subjected to while being shipped to America. When discussing the Middle Passage, Edward informed the students:

**Edward:** The death rate in itself was 50 percent which means that half of the Africans were going to die. Africans were stacked on top of each other. Africans ate oats from the hands. Also, in the same position and place, Africans urinated, defecated, or vomited from getting sick.

However, when teaching through the experience Africans faced while experiencing the Middle Passage, Edward made sure to teach about the forms of resistance. When teaching about African resistance, Edward said:

**Edward:** Some Africans would jump overboard because they did not know what was happening to them and some starved themselves as a form of resistance.

Edward continued the lesson with two more slides, explaining to the students how Africans who survived the Middle Passage lost their identities upon arriving in America. Therefore, during this observation, I found that Edward taught within the state-required standard to teach students about racism, enslavement, and resistance. As previously mentioned, Edward's intentional effort to teach these concepts within a state standard that did not explicitly mandate these topics be taught is a form of Black political thought, and connecting the topic to a modern idea is a form of Black intellectualism. Edward's display of Black political thought and Black intellectualism displayed his commitment to using teaching to restore the humanity of Black people, even though he was confined to working within the state standard.

### *Confines of state-required standards*

During the final interview of the research study, I debriefed with Edward and Dominique about their lessons. I explicitly asked them how the racial unrest of 2020 and the current sociopolitical educational climate surrounding anti-CRT impacted their decisions in teaching for social justice. Edward mentioned that he is only able to discuss race when he taught enslavement and that he was forced to operate within the state-required standards to cover everything as directed by the Alabama Course of Study. When I asked Edward about current events and how current events have influenced his approach to teaching, Edward said:

I only have a couple of times when I can talk about slavery. In ninth grade history for example, there are not a lot of opportunities to teach why race is important. When I taught US history for example, I spent a couple of weeks on Reconstruction. That whole time period would have been a perfect segue going into like Black Lives Matter regarding how we are still fighting those types of

laws. And, all the stuff they did to keep us on the plantation. However, I am not in that position because I still have a lot to cover.

Edward explicitly stated that the Alabama state-required standards for when a teacher can teach about race are extremely limited. Edward also mentioned that when the state-required standards do present possibilities to teach race, he takes advantage. Drawing upon BCP, I interpreted Edward's characterization of state standards as twofold. First, Edward acknowledged that larger power structures within the state-required standards limit teaching race, yet his belief regarding why the teaching of race is still important is a form of Black political thought. Second, his willingness to still operate within the confines of the state-required standards to teach a lesson on enslavement when enslavement was not explicitly mentioned in the state-required standards is a form of Black intellectualism.

Dominique shared something similar when I asked him about how recent current events influenced his approach to teaching. When discussing the racism, Dominique said:

Although we do not necessarily teach about it, I think it is important for my students to know that racism still exists. No, we are not in slavery, but it still exists. So a lot of the current events are evidence that history repeats itself, but you try to teach it so that it does not. However, I do not think we do a good job at doing that.

First, even though Dominique noted limitations regarding teaching racism, he still emphasized that he wants his students to know that it still exists. Dominique's belief regarding the existence of racism is a form of Black political thought, and his mention of teaching about racism so that it is eradicated is a form of Black intellectualism. When I asked Dominique a follow-up question regarding whether the social studies curriculum allowed room for the teaching of racism, he said:

It can, but we do not allow it. We do have a program with local police officers who come in and just teach people about their rights and things like that. I guess if you can tie that in and say what happened and what went wrong with this situation that the police did not do or that the citizen did not do. So, you could, but it is not feasible.

Like Edward, Dominique mentioned that the social studies curriculum can allow room for teaching about race and racism, but there are larger power structures that do not make that possible. When Dominique stated, “It can, but we do not allow it,” I interpreted the “we” to be a direct reference to the power structures that are responsible for drafting the state-required standards. In response to the racial unrest of 2020, Dominique indicated that a Black woman and a local community member worked with the district office to bring in a program where local police officers discussed individual rights with students. Although it's possible to utilize that program for teaching about racism, Dominique stressed that it is not the most practical approach. I interpreted his statement about using that program to teach about racism as a direct critique of the social studies curriculum because the program was reactive to the racial unrest of 2020, whereas the social studies classroom could possibly serve as a proactive response to racism. However, the limitations of the current Alabama state-required standards made that possibility difficult.

### ***Language of the state-required standards***

Although an analysis of the state-required standards was beyond the scope of the project, based upon the three observations I had with each teacher and the final interview, I found that the state-required standards directly informed Research Question 3. For instance, all the lessons I observed were based on state standards. However, secondary social studies teachers in Alabama

have some degree of autonomy regarding the topics they teach to satisfy the state-required standard. First, Edward’s and Dominique’s decisions and selection of topics were a display of Black agency and were therefore an enactment of Black physical resistance and Black intellectualism (Busey & Walker, 2017). With that, my observation revealed that Edward and Dominique's instruction on racism and social justice received minimal attention and was not the lesson's intended focus. Based upon the final interview, Edward and Dominique mostly attributed not being able to teach racism to state-required standards or the overall content making up the course. However, my observation yielded a tension between what Edward and Dominique stated and the language of the state-required standards.

For instance, during observation one, when Edward used the Mafia to satisfy ASSWH13, Edward could have centered the racial reasons for prohibition just like he could have centered how Pearl Harbor generated prevalent racism against the Japanese when satisfying ASSWH14. The same is true for Dominique. When fulfilling the requirements of ASSWH9, Dominique could have focused on how an inequitable distribution of labor negatively impacted and continues to impact Black people and other people of color. Similarly, when fulfilling the requirements of ASSWH6, Dominique could have highlighted how racism excluded Black enlightenment philosophers and thinkers such as Joseph Sidney and Maria Stewart. Once again, Edward’s and Dominique’s ability to decide what topic to teach and how to teach that topic is Black agency. However, I do not consider the evasion of racism in their choice of topic to be an indictment against their willingness to teach for social justice.

**Table 5.1**

*Lesson Observations: Standard and Topic(s)*

Observation	State-Standard	Topic
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<b>Edward</b>		
One	<b><u>ASSWH13:</u></b> Explain challenges of the post-WWI period	The Mafia
Two	<b><u>ASSWH14:</u></b> Describe causes and consequences of WWII	Pearl Harbor
Three	<b><u>ASSWH2:</u></b> Describe the role of mercantilism and imperialism in European exploration and colonization in the sixteenth century, including the Columbian Exchange.	Mercantilism/ enslavement
<b>Dominique</b>		
One	<b><u>ASSWH9:</u></b> Describe the impact of technological inventions, conditions of labor, and the economic theories of capitalism, liberalism, socialism, and Marxism during the Industrial Revolution on the economies, societies, and politics of Europe.	Distribution of labor
Two	<b><u>ASSAH1:</u></b> Compare effects of economic, geographic, social, and political conditions before and after European explorations of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries on Europeans, American colonists, Africans, and indigenous Americans.	Intro to Jamestown
Three	<b><u>ASSWH6:</u></b> Identify significant ideas and achievements of scientists and philosophers of the Scientific Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment.	Enlightenment thinkers

*Note:* ASSWH (#) stands for Alabama Social Studies World History Standard and the number as it is listed on the Alabama Course of Study. ASSAH (#) stands for Alabama Social Studies American History Standard and the number as it is listed on the Alabama Course of Study. All the standards listed were taken from Alabama Course of Study. (2010). Social Studies. Alabama Department of Education.

Drawing upon BCP, I found that even though much of the language of the state-required standards that informed the lesson I observed was vague and could have centered racism in the choice of topic, the language of the state-required standard did not explicitly call for an investigation into how racism has denied the humanity of the people subjected to it. BCP begins by centering the humanity of Black people and interrogating how racism has subjected Black people and other people of color to a subhuman status within American society (Busey & Walker, 2017). Although none of the lessons I observed explicitly centered on racism, I resist the



urge to say that Edward and Dominique were afraid to teach about racism and were therefore not teaching for social justice. My findings explicitly critique the language that establishes the boundaries of state-required standards, necessitating teachers like Edward and Dominique to consider how to center the teaching of racism. This is because the power structures responsible for creating these standards can make the teaching of racism clear and explicit. In short, it would be remiss to mention what Edward and Dominique could have done without interrogating the same for those who are responsible for creating state-required standards. With that, more research is needed that explores the tensions between language and state-required standards and how that informs how teachers, specifically Black teachers, approach teaching. Or, the state-required standards can explicitly center teaching racism.

### **Summary**

This chapter began with the quote, “Born into these crooked ways,” which is a line from the song I Didn’t Ask to Come from Goodie Mob’s album, *Soul Food*. This song, I Didn’t Ask to Come, details the experiences of Black people, more specifically Black men, who lived in the America Dirty South. The song touched on Black-on-Black violence, corruption within law enforcement, and Black dehumanization. For example, in the song, Goodie Mob rapped:

Born into these crooked ways  
I never even ask to come so now  
I'm living in the days  
I struggle and fight to stay alive  
Hoping that one day I'd earn the chance to die. (Goodie Mob, 1995b)

In the course of the song, Goodie Mob pointed out that Black people were born into a world that was crooked. I began Chapter 1 of the dissertation by explaining the world I was born into and the world currently existing within America. Nevertheless, continued by also pointing out that the Black-on-Black violence, police corruption, and the Black dehumanization they rapped about

in the song were not at fault of their own because Black people never asked to come to America. Lastly, Goodie Mob indicated that every day is a struggle to stay alive and that one day there is hope that Black people will earn the chance to die.

Edward and Dominique both described America's racist history as informing who they are as citizens, but they also remain hopeful in their imaginations regarding what America could be for Black people. Like Goodie Mob, Edward and Dominique described how America remains crooked in how Black people and other people of color conceptualize citizenship. However, Edward and Dominique indicated that the purpose of social studies education was to not only interrogate America, but it was also a chance to rewrite America's future. To add, just as Goodie Mob indicated that Black people did not ask to come to America, which forces them to navigate and live within the confines of America, Dominique and Edward did not choose what they were required to teach students. However, even the "struggle and fight" of the Alabama state-required standards that Dominique and Edward must navigate, they viewed and used their teaching as a form of activism to work toward the America they imagined for all citizens.

## Chapter Six: Implications, Discussion, Limitations, Future Research and Conclusion

“In Due Time...”

-(OutKast, 1997a)

In this study, I found that the Black men teachers' thoughts about American citizenship aligned with their descriptions regarding the purposes of social studies education and how they used their pedagogy as a form of activism to achieve their perceived purposes of social studies education. In this chapter, I provide implications, limitations, directions for future research, and a conclusion related to the research study.

### Implications and Discussion

In autobiographical notes of *Notes of a Native Son*, James Baldwin described his love for America and making it better as one of his life's interests. More specifically, Baldwin (1955) said:

I love America more than any other country in the world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually. I think all theories are suspect, that the finest principles may have to be modified, or may even be pulverized by the demands of life, and that one must find, therefore, one's own moral center and move through the world hoping that this center will guide one aright. (p.9)

Baldwin's quote about his love and criticism of America served as the foundation for one of the two implications I have drawn from this study. First, recognizing and teaching how racism and oppression still exist within America and does not directly equate to teaching a loss of love or allegiance to one's country. Considering this, I believe that criticizing something or someone for their wrongdoings, while still loving and engaging with them, requires the highest form of love,

known as agape love. Baldwin (1955) posited that we must consistently examine all modes of knowledge and potentially modify our methods to foster a better world for everyone. To make it simple, I strongly believe that it is impossible to profess a strong love for something or someone without being willing to criticize and point out how that something or someone can be made better. Therefore, my second implication is simply that social studies classrooms are one of the major factors in the equation of building a better and more socially just United States of America.

While some Americans often describe or perceive America as a perfect country, the first research question suggests that others might think about how racism and other forms of oppression make the country imperfect. To add, the first research question suggests that historical examples and personal experiences with racism might also shape one's conceptualization of American citizenship. Therefore, going back to the song from Chapter 5 of my dissertation, I didn't Ask to Come, if individuals continue to be "born into the crooked ways" of America, America must continually acknowledge and work to address all forms of racism or oppression, regardless of how big or small those instances of racism or oppression might be. Drawing from the first implication, love for America should not be based on the dichotomy of whether it is a perfect or imperfect country. Thinking on either side of this binary does not significantly improve conditions for those who may experience America's flaws, nor does it enhance a person's ability to empathize with those who may not experience America's flaws. Therefore, if America is ever going to become a country where everyone, regardless of difference, can experience the full possibilities of American citizenship, thinking beyond the notion of America being solely flawed or solely great will be needed to achieve full possibilities for everyone.

The second research question suggests that the purpose of social studies education is to teach the truth about all aspects of America's history while also teaching students how to understand and work with each other. According to the Pew Research Center (2024), most teachers (64%) indicated that students should learn about racism, and most students (79%) indicated that they are ready to learn about racism in America. However, an earlier study by the Pew Research Center (2021) revealed partisan divide among Americans, with Republicans (46%) indicating that teaching about racism is bad or very bad, while Democrats (78%) indicated that it is good or very good. Baldwin (1955), however, also mentioned that:

The Negro problem in America cannot be discussed coherently without bearing in mind its context; its context being the history, traditions, customs, the moral assumptions and preoccupations of the country; in short, the general social fabric.  
(p. 8)

Therefore, the second research question suggests that the purpose of social studies education was to engage students in rigorous examinations of America's racist history, enabling them to understand the reasons behind and the current context of America. However, the second research question also suggests that engaging students in tough interrogations regarding America's racist history can occur simultaneously with teaching students how to be patriotic, either in traditional or nontraditional ways. In short, the focus of social studies education should be a process that consistently addresses and responds to the concerns of all Americans. Therefore, I believe the focus of social studies education should shift from whether students should study racism in America to devising a balanced curriculum that enables them to understand both historical and contemporary instances of racism and the progress America has made and must continue to make regarding its race relations.

The last research question demonstrated two things. First, according to the Pew Research Center (2022), 44% of Black Americans do not believe that existing American institutions designed to govern the nation will ever eradicate racism or achieve equality for Black Americans. Therefore, the feelings expressed by Dominique and Edward are consistent with those of many Black Americans. Despite their suspicions, Edward and Dominique continued to operate within a crucial American system, education, to advocate for the change they desired to see in America. As two Black men who are serving as teachers amid an era of anti-Blackness, the pedagogy of Dominique and Edward demonstrated that education still offers a glimmer of hope and an avenue for America to offer the full possibilities of American citizenship to all its citizens. And, if America does not offer those full possibilities, the pedagogy of Dominique and Edward offers hope that teachers will continue to find ways to teach for a better American society for everyone, even if state-required curriculum makes that type of teaching difficult. In short, the work of using classrooms to educate about and eradicate racism will continue and is critical in the fight against racism and all other forms of oppression.

### **Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study that set the need for two of the future research studies I explain in the next section of the dissertation. First, this study was only able to recruit Black men secondary social studies teachers who taught in Alabama. If I could do this study over, I would want to study with more teachers to add to the data I was able to generate with Edward and Dominique. Also, this study unintentionally excluded other Black men teachers throughout the American Dirty South who have also been impacted by anti-CRT legislation and discourse. Therefore, if I could do this study again, I would want to study with other Black men secondary social studies teachers from other states within the American Dirty South. Second,

while not by design, this study only recruited Black men teachers who taught in single-high school districts that were considered suburban. Therefore, Black men who taught in rural and urban school districts within the American Dirty South were unintentionally excluded from this project. If I could do this study again, I would want to study with other Black men secondary social studies teachers who taught in a variety of school contexts. Third, this study was only able to recruit two teachers. Lastly, if I could do the study again, I would want to complete more than three observations. Despite acknowledging the limitations, the study did not aim to generalize the thoughts or pedagogy of all Black men secondary social studies teachers. However, the findings from this research study offers transferable ideas that will hopefully be considered when making decisions regarding how to advance the field of social studies education and how to help improve the opportunities for all who live and work in America.

### **Directions for Future Research**

As a result of this research, I will conduct two studies. First, I will conduct a similar study with other Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in contexts different from Edward and Dominique. I want to conduct a similar study, not to draw comparisons but to explore the nuances of contexts different from Edward and Dominique's. More specifically, I am referring to studying with Black men secondary social studies teachers who teach in urban spaces or in schools or districts that are made up of more than one Black man teacher within the social studies department. Second, I have become interested in state social studies standards. Therefore, another study I will conduct is an analysis of the social studies standards in one of the states within the American Dirty South. I am specifically interested in how or if state standards create space for the teaching of social justice. For example, I am interested in knowing if state social studies standards are calling for teachers to teach social justice as something that America never

needed, needed but has now gained, or making room for students to interrogate the ways social justice remains a current need within American society, especially within the American Dirty South.

## **Conclusion**

This study left me with more questions than answers. This study also left me with feelings of pessimism but also optimism. I am pessimistic because I believe America has a long way to go in providing everyone with the full possibilities afforded to American citizens. However, I am optimistic in my belief that one day everyone will experience the full possibilities associated with American citizenship. However, I am not sure what the cost will be. I and others believed that the expense within modern contexts was the racial unrest experienced in America in 2020, but I believe the anti-CRT movement demonstrates otherwise. Nevertheless, the title of this chapter began with the title of an OutKast song, “In Due Time.” This song was recorded in 1997 and was part of a soundtrack for the movie, *Soul Food*. *Soul Food* centered the lives of a Black family who kept their family traditions alive through the trials and tribulations of life. More specifically, it highlighted the importance of understanding and accepting the difference of opinion while also continuing to love one another. In the course of the song “In Due Time,” Cee-Lo Green rapped:

Just keep your faith in me  
Don't act impatiently  
You'll get where you need to be  
In due time  
Even when things are slow  
Hold on and don't let go  
I'll give you what I owe  
In due time. (OutKast, 1997b)

The course of this song makes an indirect reference to the Bible verse, Psalm 37:34, which states, “Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land:



when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it,” (King James Bible, 1611). This scripture emphasizes the importance of trusting in God and believing that God will eventually respond to individual triumphs with great fortune. This course was fitting for the movie *Soul Food*, given the role religion has played in allowing Black Americans to display resilience amid the racism and other forms of oppression they have faced in America. Nevertheless, soul food, the term, is both literal and figurative. The literal meaning of soul food describes a type of southern cuisine that caters to an individual's physical needs, whereas the figurative meaning of soul food describes an individual's emotional, psychological, and mental health needs. I firmly believe that a social studies education can and does nourish one's soul. Therefore, although the time when America offers the full possibility associated with American citizenship is long overdue, in due time, America will get there. However, in the meantime, social studies education and the social studies classroom are two of the only hopes for ever achieving what is currently only imaginable within America. More specifically, when one thinks of the American South, W.E.B. Dubois once stated, "As the South goes, so goes the nation." Therefore, as America continues to wrestle with contemporary forms of racism and other forms of oppression, social studies classrooms in the American Dirty South are what will make that imagination a reality.

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## Appendix A

### Recruitment Letter to District/Central Office/Principal

**To:** District/Central Office/Principal/Teacher

**Subject:** Doctoral Student Dissertation Recruitment: Please Consider

**Body:**

Hello Mr/Mrs/Dr/Ms,

I hope all is well with you! I am Terrance Lewis, a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Auburn University. I am a student principal investigator (PI) performing research activities under the supervision of a faculty PI, Dr. Jesus Tirado. Dr. Tirado is an assistant professor of social science education at Auburn University. I am completing my dissertation on the pedagogical beliefs and pedagogical practices of Black men secondary social studies teachers (those who coach are strongly encouraged to participate). Specifically, I am looking for Black men secondary social studies teachers who:

1. Are reflective practitioners;
2. Have extremely high expectations for students/athletes;
3. View education as an opportunity to prepare students/athletes for life beyond school;
4. Have unique pedagogical approaches and strategies with students.

I am looking to explore how the pedagogical beliefs of Black men secondary social studies influence the pedagogical strategies they employ with the students and athletes they serve. With this study, I hope to highlight how Black men secondary social studies teachers employ strategies that lead to humanizing experiences for students. To that end, this study seeks to challenge current narratives regarding the need and recruitment for Black men teachers.

Participation in this study will include two interviews, one at the beginning of the study and one at the end of the study. The study will also require five to seven in-person observations so that field notes can be collected regarding their or your pedagogical style and approach. I will also collect artifacts such as lesson plans, social media posts, lesson activities, class syllabi, or information sheets as another source of evidence regarding the questions being explored in the study. Three written reflections will also be required.

Your total time commitment will be approximately 8 hours over the span of the entire study. There will be no compensation for participation in this research study. There is no cost to participate in this study. This study will be used to inform future studies and add to the body of literature regarding the work of Black men teachers (teacher-coaches). Potential risks, benefits, and other information are included in the Informed Consent Letter attached to this email. If you have any other questions or are interested in participating, please contact Terrance Lewis at [tjl0049@auburn.edu](mailto:tjl0049@auburn.edu) or Dr. Jesus Tirado at [jat0088@auburn.edu](mailto:jat0088@auburn.edu).

**Signature:**

In Service,

Terrance J. Lewis, M.Ed. (He/Him/His)  
Presidential Research Fellow and Graduate Assistant (GA)  
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Auburn University  
Auburn, AL 36849  
762-208-8458 (cell)  
[tjl0049@auburn.edu](mailto:tjl0049@auburn.edu)



**Appendix B**  
**Approved-IRB Information Letter (See next Two Pages)**

# COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

## CURRICULUM & TEACHING

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS AN APPROVAL STAMP WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

### Informed Consent

#### for a Research Study entitled

*"An Exploratory Case Study of the Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices of Black Men Secondary Social Studies Teachers"*



You are invited to participate in a voluntary research study to learn more about and explore how the pedagogical beliefs of Black men secondary social studies influence the pedagogical strategies they employ with the students and/or athletes they serve. To qualify to participate in this study you must identify as a Black man over the age of nineteen who teaches social studies. The study is being conducted by Terrance Lewis, a student principal investigator (PI) performing research activities under the supervision of a faculty PI, Dr. Jesus Tirado. Dr. Tirado is an assistant professor of social science education at Auburn University.

**What will be involved if you participate?** Participation in this study will include two interviews, one at the beginning of the study and one at the end of the study. The study will require three observations, and it will collect artifacts such as lesson plans, social media posts, lesson activities, class syllabi, or information sheets as another source of evidence regarding the questions being explored in the study. One of the observations will be video and audio recorded. The recorded observation will occur in the classroom. Recordings will be destroyed upon the completion of the written report. Student artifacts, selected by the participant, will be collected. Student artifacts will be copied, deidentified and originals returned to the participant. Your total time commitment will be approximately 8 hours over the span of the entire study.

**Are there any risks or discomforts?** The risks associated with participating in this study include a loss of confidentiality. There might be discomfort when interview questions are asked and when observations are conducted.

**Are there any benefits?** There are no direct benefits of choosing to participate in this study. However, by choosing to participate in this study you will help add to the body of literature regarding the work of Black men secondary social studies teachers (teacher-coaches).

**Will you receive compensation for participating?** There will be no compensation for participation in this research study. There is no cost to participate in this study.

**If you change your mind about your participation,** you can withdraw from the study at any time. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn if it is identifiable. Your decision about whether to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Curriculum and Teaching, or the College of Education.

Version Date (date document created): \_\_\_\_\_

5052 Haley Center  
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334-844-5785

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The Auburn University Institutional  
Review Board has approved this  
Document for use from  
07/27/2023 to \_\_\_\_\_  
Protocol # 23-336 EP 2307

# COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

## CURRICULUM & TEACHING

**Your privacy will be protected.** Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain *confidential*. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym. All data collected for this study will be locked and/or stored in a password-protected database and/or building at Auburn University. The student investigator and the faculty investigator will be the only individuals listening to and transcribing the interviews and examining other data related to the study. Information obtained through your participation may be published in professional journals, books, research briefs, or essays and presented at a professional meeting.

A copy of this document will be given to you to keep. If you have questions about this study, please ask them now or please contact Terrance Lewis at [tjl0049@auburn.edu](mailto:tjl0049@auburn.edu) or Dr. Jesus Tirado at [jat0088@auburn.edu](mailto:jat0088@auburn.edu).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at [IRBAdmin@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBAdmin@auburn.edu) or [IRBChair@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBChair@auburn.edu).

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.

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Auburn, AL 36849-5212

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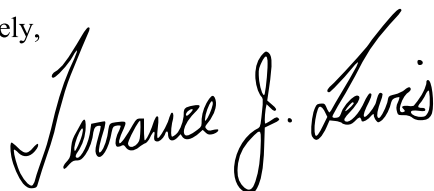
\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature                      Date      Investigator Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name                                      Date      Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Building Principal Name                      Date      Building Principal Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Co-Investigator                                      Date      Printed Name

Sincerely,



Terrance J. Lewis

The Auburn University Institutional  
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Protocol # 23-336 EP 2307

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## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol #1

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your family.
3. Tell me about your education experience. You can start from as early as you remember.
4. When did you know that you were a Black man in America?
5. What does American citizenship mean to you?
6. What does American citizenship look like for you?
7. What do you think is the role of education (social studies) within current society?
8. What do you view as your role in achieving that purpose?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share?
10. Do you have any questions for me?

#### Possible Probes:

- Tell me more.
- Can you elaborate?
- Can you use other words so I can better understand?
- Can you explain that?

## **Appendix D**

### **Interview Protocol #2: Closing (Edward)**

1. How would you describe your route to the field of education?
2. What is your goal in serving as a teacher/coach within current society?
3. How would you describe the Dirty South?
4. How do you define activism?
5. What does activism look like for you?
6. How do you define social justice?
7. How have recent current events within society and throughout education influenced how you approach teaching?
8. I noticed during my observations that you have more personal interactions with students outside of the classroom or after class. Can you elaborate on that a little more?
9. I remember you saying that your classroom was your pulpit. Can you dissect that a little more for me?
10. Why do you believe that your methods of instruction are the best for you students?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share?
12. Do you have any questions for me?

### **Interview Protocol #2: Closing (Dominique)**

1. How would you describe your route to the field of education?
2. I remember you saying that your father is a pastor. To what extent has faith contributed to you entering the field of education?
3. What is your goal in serving as a teacher/coach within current society?
4. How would you describe the Dirty South?
5. How do you define activism?
6. What does activism look like for you?
7. How do you define social justice?
8. How have recent current events within society and throughout education influenced how you approach teaching?
9. I noticed during my observations that you have more personal interactions with students outside of the classroom or before/after class. Why do you think that this? Can you elaborate on that a little more?
10. Also, you mention the word relationships a lot. Tell me more about that...how do you build relationships and what impact do you think it has on your views of teaching and how you teach?
11. I remember during our first observation the students participated in a Socratic Seminar. What was your purpose for including Socratic Seminars as an instructional strategy?
12. Why do you believe that your methods of instruction (lecture, Socratic seminar, DBQs, Frayer Models) are the best for you students?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share?
14. Do you have any questions for me?

**Appendix E**  
**Observation Field Notes Scaffold**

<b>Classroom</b>	<b>Hallway</b>	<b>Athletic</b>	<b>Community</b>
<b>Date:</b>			
<b>Questions/Jottings:</b>		<b>Observations of Activities:</b>	

## Appendix F

### *Terrance Data Code Book: Research Question One*

<b>Edward</b>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Exemplar</b>
Black Agency (BAG)	“philosophical and practical approaches to how Black Americans responded to racialization and the limited citizenship opportunities in the United States” (King, 2014, p. 89)	Interview	<p style="color: green;">America can be great if we all realize that, "You know what? We're all flawed,</p> <p style="color: green;">But citizenship, I think for me that word more or less means acceptance more than anything that's what citizenship truly means to me</p> <p style="color: green;">One of my classes is a prime example of that, we have a bunch of different colored faces in there, and that's America to me, so before I even think about being patriotic, before I even think about loving that country, I always think about just acceptance, accepting the fact that we are different, and it's okay to be different...so that's what I see, anytime I see that word, just citizenship.</p> <p style="color: green;">I understand the way that you feel, the way that you do, how can I be a better me, so that you could forgive me.</p> <p style="color: green;">It's like we have to accept the fact that we made some mistakes, and I'm not trying to say you got to cater to us, but at the same time, and I'm just using us as an example, and you can apply it to anything, but just accept the fact that we're different, we're flawed, and like America has made some serious mistakes, but it's okay to admit that.</p>
Activism	“...Proving one’s worth as a citizen and that one can	Interview	<p style="color: purple;">In fact, when I'm teaching about the 13 colonies, I always tell people, "America wasn't diverse on day one, but it was by day two. America's always been diverse</p>

	<p>emancipate oneself, that one deserves freedom.” (Dawson, 2001, p. 260)</p>		<p>and we have to embrace that." Anytime I think about American citizenship, I think about that.</p> <p>Treating all my kids the same. One thing about it and I always tell my parents this I'm going to treat every kid that I teach and I coach like their last name is my last name. That's what I can do as far as my country to teach these kids that we got to be accepting of each other.</p> <p>They can say, 'Hey, you know what Edward? He showed me two things. Number one, how to be a man, and number two, how to dog on treat people right. How to treat people fair." I guess you can say. The way that they're supposed to be treated across the board, no matter who they were</p>
<p>Black Resistance to Subpersonhood (BRS)</p>	<p>“Black people, individually and collectively, resisted White supremacy, systemic racial oppression, and racial domination.” (Busey &amp; Walker, 2017, p. 461)</p>	<p>Interview</p>	<p>Also, on top of that, even though we've had some major reasons why this country has been labeled great because we have turned the other cheek, and we have pushed forward.</p> <p>But we have to realize it's okay to have uncomfortable conversations. It's okay to have uncomfortable conversations and agree to disagree a lot of times because then that's the</p>
<p>Subperson (SP)</p>	<p>Inferior social status due to racism and White supremacy (Mills, 1997)</p>	<p>Interview</p>	<p>I think American citizenship is to realize that America's flawed and that America has an ugly history</p> <p>We're all damaged in certain ways, some more than others.</p> <p>this flawed country in the right direction.</p> <p>America has flaws, and of course, I'm talking about my own race, but it's okay to say, "Yeah, we've done you all wrong because other people have been done</p>



			<p>wrong, too." Black folks and Native Americans, we've had it bad.</p> <p>when I say America's flawed, and it always will have flaws, and those flaws, a lot of times, they'll continue to happen.</p> <p>I guess that's what I mean by that it's flawed. We have to accept the fact that we are flawed.</p>
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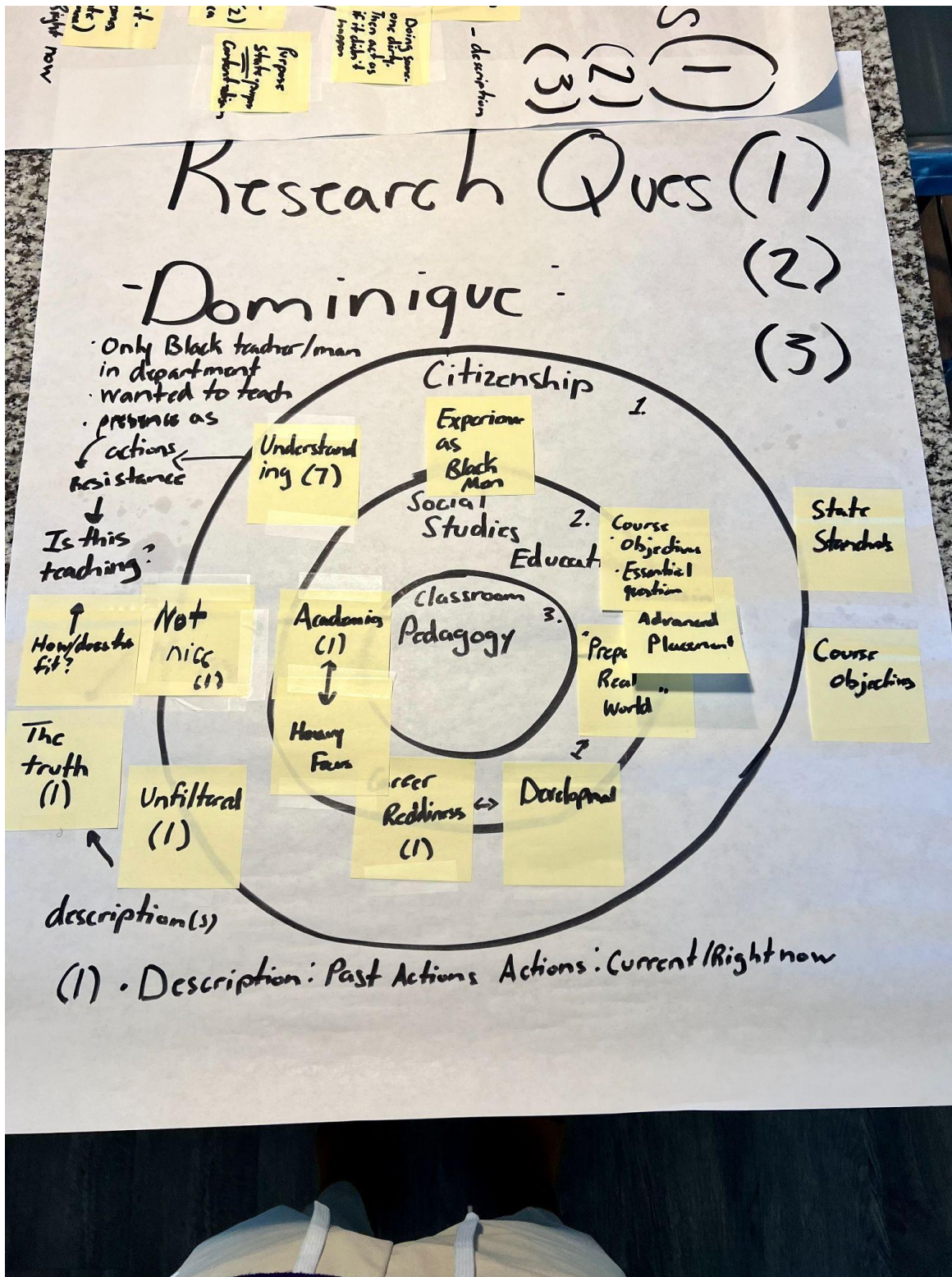
**Dominique**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Warrants</b>
Black Agency (BAG)	“philosophical and practical approaches to how Black Americans responded to racialization and the limited citizenship opportunities in the United States” (King, 2014, p. 89)	Interview	<p>I would say, it's important to understand it.</p> <p>But understanding that and how you can move forward, understanding those dynamics of how all of a diverse group of people got here and how you're heading out, so to speak. For me, it's important to understand that and I would like all students to see from their perspective where they come from and the background, that's what makes America interesting though.</p> <p>understand that dynamic a little bit more or the American history and citizenship and understand, not that you agree or whatever but you just understand it a little bit better.</p>
Activism	“...Proving one’s worth as a citizen and that one can emancipate oneself, that one deserves freedom.” (Dawson, 2001, p. 260)	Interview	<p>When we talk about a lot of different things, I want my students to get their own understanding of it, I want to give them the facts, I don't want to sugar it, I don't want to word it now, I don't want to be biased, I want them to know, and then, hey, they have their opinion, they have their outlook on everything.</p> <p>I feel like, one of the ways I engage is by teaching it, about being an educator, about being a social studies teacher. As I said, try</p>

			to deliver content as accurately as possible and unbiased as possible in an engaging way, in a creative way where students also express their ideas and opinions.
Black Resistance to Subpersonhood (BRS)	“Black people, individually and collectively, resisted White supremacy, systemic racial oppression, and racial domination.” (Busey & Walker, 2017, p. 461)		I'll just say freedom, equality, and some of those things that I know there are ongoing issues, persistent issues that people face every day.
Subperson (SP)	Inferior social status due to racism and White supremacy (Mills, 1997)	Interview	For me as a black African-American. Faced with teaching kids of the same race, the same upbringing, some of them same upbringing. I come from some of them, a little different, and it's tough because we have such a history that's not nice, it's unfiltered, the truth

Appendix G

Circle Map for Dominique





Appendix G

Circle Map for Edward

