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A Conversation Too Late: An Examination of Early-Career Teachers' Experiences With New Social Studies Standards

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Abstract
Research suggests that when teachers do not support education policy or there is incoherence and inconsistency in teachers' interpretation of policy, it is unlikely that policy will be implemented with fidelity and/or lead to desired impacts. As more states revise their social studies standards in ways that emphasize inquiry and disciplinary thinking, the ambitious pedagogy articulated within those documents will only be realized if individual teachers choose to reflect upon and alter their practice. This qualitative study examined how four early-career middle/secondary social studies teachers perceived and implemented the 2019 South Carolina Social Studies College- and Career-Ready Standards. Findings revealed support for the instructional vision of the standards tempered by concerns about their preparedness to fulfill that vision. Teachers' engagement in professional learning influenced their perception and implementation of the standards. Evidence from this study suggest actions teacher educators, school leaders, and individual teachers can take to ensure more successful enactment of the 2019 Standards and similar reforms.

Keywords: content standards, social studies, early-career teachers

Anyone who has spent time in a teachers lounge or faculty meeting has heard animated chatter about education reform. Sometimes the conversation conveys enthusiastic support for new initiatives. Other times the conversation expresses frustration over additional, unreasonable demands. School reform efforts are often conceived by people outside the classroom, but the degree to which they are implemented ultimately comes down to teachers. Teachers are curricular and instructional gatekeepers (Thornton, 2005), and research suggests that when teachers do not support policy or there is incoherence and inconsistency in teachers' interpretation of policy, it is unlikely that policy will be implemented with fidelity and/or lead to desired impacts (e.g., Spillane, 2001; Spillane, Reiser, & Gomez, 2010).

The introduction of new content standards is a valuable opportunity to examine policy implementation, especially if the proposed standards significantly alter educational structures and expectations. South Carolina adopted the Social Studies College- and Career-Ready Standards in 2019 (hereafter referred to as 2019 Standards), which illustrate a substantial shift in social studies curriculum and instruction, both through the inclusion of new courses (e.g., middle-level geography course) and the centering of disciplinary skills and inquiry. Effective implementation of these standards requires considerable change, which can prove difficult for teachers whose personal philosophy or pedagogical preferences may not align with the vision in the standards. This article explores how middle and secondary social studies teachers perceived and implemented the 2019 Standards. Thematic analysis revealed three key findings:

1. Teachers believed the 2019 Standards' focus on skill and perceived flexibility have the potential to improve student engagement and learning; however, they felt overwhelmed by the degree of change and choice.
2. Many teachers did not receive significant training on the 2019 Standards and had to advocate for support and guidance.
3. The differences among teachers' interpretations and access to professional learning opportunities manifested in varied approaches to implementing the 2019 Standards

Evidence from this study suggest actions teacher educators, school leaders, and individual teachers can take to ensure more successful enactment of the 2019 Standards and similar reforms.

Theoretical Framework

This study is framed by *zones of enactment*, which Spillane (1999) defined as "the space in which [teachers make] sense of, and operationalize for their own practice, the ideas advanced by reformers" (p. 159). Spillane identified six external factors that influence enactment: policy sector, professional sector, pupils, public, and private sector (p. 164). The intersection of external and personal factors (e.g., prior knowledge, interpretation of reform language) further shape enactment. Spillane placed "personal resources" at the center of the model, claiming enactment only occurs if teachers "notice opportunities for learning…and such noticing is not automatic" (p. 169). Spillane also emphasized the importance of collegial collaboration to enactment, suggesting ongoing investigation, practice, and reflection were essential to "get beyond surface dimension of practice" (p. 161). This study aimed to investigate the ways in which participants mobilized personal and external resources and how those factors influenced participants' enactment of the 2019 Standards.

Literature Review

Teachers encounter numerous reform initiatives during their careers. Whether a school-wide instructional technology program, a state-mandated assessment, or a national push to revitalize civic education, teachers are continuously engaged in some degree of education reform. The introduction of new content standards is an important way to examine policy enactment because they, theoretically, prompt large groups of teachers to reflect upon and significantly alter their practice. Content standards often reflect contemporary philosophical, social, and pedagogical debates about education. Throughout the Twentieth Century, expectations for social studies oscillated between those who envisioned a curriculum built around relevant, multidisciplinary problems and those who desired a curriculum rooted in more narrow facts and skills (Evans, 2004). More recently, state legislatures and school districts around the country are fervently debating "critical race theory" and the inclusion of race, gender, and social justice more broadly in curriculum (Pollock et al., 2022). In some cases, these debates may not influence the eventual standards document but may still influence teachers' attitudes about the standards. In others, these debates may spur a dramatic change in standards, which undoubtedly spurs reflection and adaptation from teachers. The standards initiatives discussed below reflect significant shifts in instructional expectations that resulted from some stakeholders' demands for more rigor and accountability.

Common Core State Standards

Following the release of the Common Core State Standards (hereafter referred to as CCSS) in 2010, multiple studies examined teachers' perceptions of the CCSS and its implementation, concluding that teachers' perceptions of the CCSS were influenced by grade level, experience level, and self-efficacy (e.g., Matlock et al., 2016; Troia & Graham, 2017); teachers' confidence with implementing the CCSS differed across contexts (e.g., Davis et al., 2017; Martinie et al., 2016); and feelings of marginalization influenced teachers' attitudes and actions toward the CCSS (e.g., Endacott et al., 2015; Martinie et al., 2016).

Martinie et al.'s (2016) narrative analysis of high school math teachers' implementation of the CCSS revealed four zones of enactment (p. 661-664). Hardcore Adopters believed the CCSS aligned with their personal philosophy of mathematics instruction and would improve their pedagogy. They were vocal advocates of the benefits of the CCSS and worked to aid their colleagues' transition to the new standards. Anxious Adopters wanted to believe in the potential of the CCSS but were overwhelmed by the expectations it presented for students and the instructional changes it required. Cautious Adopters went along with district's implementation efforts but were confused by the language of the CCSS and doubted if the CCSS would improve students' experiences. Critical Adopters viewed the CCSS as another poorly-conceived initiative crafted by people unfamiliar with classroom realities. They did not believe the CCSS would positively impact student learning and, in some cases, had no intention to revise their practice in response the CCSS.

Even though many teachers from the studies discussed above reported participating in CCSS-related professional development, few were satisfied with its quantity or quality (e.g., Davis et al., 2017; Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2013; Troia & Graham, 2017). Investigations into the implementation of CCSS emphasized that administrators cannot assume teachers are aware of, feel positively about, or are committed to content standards. Successful implementation requires administrators to consider the diverse attitudes and needs of teachers and design professional development that meets teachers where they are.

Social Studies Standards

Considering the reputation of social studies as a fact-driven curriculum, several studies have focused on the enactment of ambitious practice *despite* standards (e.g., Grant & Gradwell, 2010; Heafner & Norwood, 2019), but with the publication of the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (NCSS, 2013) and subsequent revision of social studies standards in many states (see New et al., 2021), the current landscape is one in which the enactment of state social studies standards *should* mean the enactment of ambitious practice, notably inquiry. As with the CCSS, teachers convey varying levels of commitment and preparedness to implement inquiry. Thacker et al. (2016) found that middle and secondary social studies teachers can define inquiry but are not effectively integrating it into instruction. Teachers supported the ideas in the *C3 Framework* but needed substantial support and professional development to shift their instructional practices. Mueller's (2018a, 2018b) examination of secondary social studies teachers' conceptions of compelling questions found that teachers may interpret core concepts within standards documents differently, which ultimately impacts their implementation of standards. van Hover et al. (2016) found that teachers may interpret standards documents in ways that promote limited and prescribed curriculum, especially if the standards are paired with high-stakes assessments. They argued that teachers must be prepared to

approach policy documents more critically and exercise their autonomy to "make the standards 'better', broader, and more coherent" (p. 57).

Early Career Teachers

Several studies have identified the unique experiences of early-career teachers regarding enactment of education reform. Early-career teachers tended to express a more positive view of the CCSS (Matlock et al., 2016) and were more open to change (Zhang, 2014). The early-career teachers in Martinie et al.'s (2016) study tended to be Anxious Adopters who demonstrated a positive attitude but were full of questions. Zhang (2014) concluded that early-career teachers had difficulty interpreting the CCSS but believed their confusion would lessen with time and experience, though some complained about the expectation to "go forth and teach" (p. 472) without sufficient training.

Early-career social studies teachers have expressed similar challenges implementing ambitious pedagogy. van Hover et al. (2007) found early-career teachers could define historical thinking but could not elucidate how to incorporate historical thinking into their instruction. Martell (2020) found early-career teachers believed in the value of inquiry-based instruction but struggled to implement it in their classrooms because they lacked practical tools. In both studies, the teachers were often too preoccupied with other challenges commonly faced by new teachers.

Significance of the Study

South Carolina implemented the 2019 Standards in Fall 2021, following a two-year bridge period. The state's social studies standards had not been revised since 2011, and the 2019 Standards represent a significant change from the previous document, both in how courses are organized and the emphasis on inquiry-based instruction and disciplinary skills. This study sought to examine how early career teachers are reacting to the 2019 Standards, specifically:

1. How do they perceive the 2019 Standards?
2. How are they learning about the 2019 Standards?
3. How are they implementing the 2019 Standards?

Whereas several studies have examined teachers' adjustments to new standards through surveys and other single-point-in-time measurements, this study took a longitudinal approach in hopes of capturing if/how teachers' views and needs change over time. The literature suggests professional development is more effective when it is sustained and targeted (e.g., Desimone, 2009), and longitudinal data may indicate ways in which professional development efforts should evolve over the course of an academic year or professional career. Additionally, this study focused on the experiences of early-career teachers, who are handling this change in tandem with other challenges typically faced by beginning teachers. Considering the forthcoming wave of teacher retirements, it is especially important to understand the experiences of early-career teachers so teacher preparation and induction programs can respond in ways that increase the likelihood of teacher excellence and retention.

Methods

This study followed a qualitative research design (Yin, 2016) and was informed by phenomenological principles. Phenomenology attempts to understand the lived experience as described

by the participants (Creswell, 2009) in order to "construct an animating, evocative, description of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences" (van Manen, 1990, p. 19). Through this year-long study, I strove to listen closely to the four participating teachers in order to effectively relay their unique experiences and identify common themes that emerged.

Participants and Teaching Context

Four social studies teachers (two middle and two secondary) from four different public schools in three different school districts in South Carolina participated in the study. All four are early-career teachers, defined as less than five years of experience. I recruited teachers using a purposeful sampling method (Patton, 1990). Because the study required several in-depth interviews, selection was informed by my working relationship with participants. I originally approached these four participants because they historically taught different social studies subjects and could speak to course-specific aspects of the 2019 Standards (e.g., teaching a brand new course, teaching a state-assessed course); however, 2020-2021 course assignments were different than expected for select participants. These four participants served as information-rich cases (Glesne, 2011) who would "most likely illuminate" (Yin, 2009, p. 26) my research questions. Table 1 provides additional information about the participants and their teaching contexts.

Table 1
Participant Profiles

Name	Grade Level	Subject(s) Taught	Experience
Chipper	Secondary	Geography; Govt/Econ; World History	2
Elizabeth	Middle	South Carolina History	4
Mark	Secondary	Geography; Govt/Econ; Envt. Studies	3
Sandy	Middle	Geography	2

Note. Pseudonyms are used for all participants.

It is important to note the impact of COVID-19 on participants and their teaching contexts. The 2019 Standards were approved by the state legislature in Spring 2019 and originally scheduled for full implementation in Fall 2020. Schools could choose to continue teaching the 2011 Standards or move to the 2019 Standards during the 2019-2020 bridge period. In light of the additional challenges of teaching in a pandemic, the bridge period was extended a year, meaning schools were not expected to fully implement the 2019 Standards until Fall 2021. Participants' teaching schedules were also impacted by COVID-19. Sandy historically taught Geography and was assigned to teach this course in 2020-2021, but a few days before the school year began she was re-assigned to virtual instruction and responsible for teaching all subjects to 7th graders participating in her school's virtual academy. Mark also had virtual instruction responsibilities in 2020-2021, which he had to balance with his in-person course load.

Data Sources

Interviews served as the primary data source for this study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with each teacher at four points in the 2020-2021 academic year: August, November, February, May. Each interview was conducted using Microsoft Teams and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Interview 1 explored their approach to teaching, their school context, their initial impressions of the 2019 Standards, and their expectations for the forthcoming year. Interviews 2, 3, and 4 followed a similar structure of reflecting on challenges and successes since the last interview, follow-up questions related to topics from previous interviews, and specific steps they had taken to learn more about and implement the 2019 Standards. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed for accuracy. In May, each participant completed a "Standards Timeline" on which teachers summarized steps they took to familiarize themselves with the 2019 Standards at seven points in time (Spring 2019, Summer 2019, Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Fall 2020, Spring 2021). Teachers were asked to describe when they first learned about the 2019 Standards, informal and formal professional development experiences, collegial collaborations, and school/district supports.

Data Analysis

Throughout the study I took intentional steps to analyze my observations for meaning (Glesne, 2011), primarily through researcher memos that captured my reflections, questions, and research decisions. The memos also informed subsequent interview topics. At the conclusion of data gathering, I employed a five-phase approach common to qualitative studies: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2016). Using an open coding process (Glesne, 2011), I examined the data generated by a single participant in three waves. On first pass, I noted key phrases. On second pass, I coded data as guided by the three subquestions – perceptions, professional learning, implementation. On third pass, I compared interview data to the participant's timeline and updated the three main categories. I then compiled categorical data, which I further analyzed to identify major themes. Data were re-examined within and across interviews, participants, and themes (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I also crafted thematic memos that allowed me to better articulate the properties of each theme (Seidman, 2006).

Several steps were taken to improve trustworthiness. I participated in "prolonged engagement" with the teachers (Yin, 2016, p. 86). I conducted member-checking (Glesne, 2011) by sharing summaries from previous interviews and asking participants to confirm or revise my conclusions. To address content validity, two secondary social studies teachers not involved in the study reviewed the Timeline template prior to dissemination (Creswell, 2009).

Findings

Content standards are designed to encourage some degree of consistency across the student experience, which is complicated by the personal nature of policy enactment. In what follows I discuss how teachers perceived the 2019 Standards, were learning about the 2019 Standards, and were implementing the 2019 Standards. What emerges is a common desire to live up to the ambitious tenets of the 2019 Standards but differences in readiness for and openness to significant changes to their practice.

How do they perceive the 2019 standards?

Teachers communicated positive perceptions of the 2019 Standards but with varied degrees of enthusiasm. Descriptions of their first impressions ranged from "I don't have a problem with them" (Elizabeth, Interview 1) to "I love them" (Sandy, Interview 1). Teachers liked the focus on disciplinary skills and inquiry as well as the flexibility and choice they perceived in the 2019 Standards. Teachers saw the potential of these aspects to improve student engagement and learning. Chipper explained, "I think that gives teachers a little more freedom because they can give that student choice" (Interview 1).

Teachers' enthusiasm for the 2019 Standards was countered by uncertainty as to what these changes mean for practice. They were unsure how to begin revising their instruction and felt overwhelmed by the degree of change. Sandy said that even though she found the "flexibility awesome" that "it's overwhelming to have to choose" (Interview 1). Chipper attributed some of his concern to his lack of experience, "I feel it's my role to guide [students] along the right path and in the right direction, and sometimes I feel, as a new teacher, I don't know what that right direction is" (Interview 3). Elizabeth also desired affirmation and clearer expectations,

> I know this is all this content information. This is what you want me to teach. I just think it's just how should it be implemented. If you want students to know this, if you're trying to get to this end goal, what's my part in getting them to the end goal (Interview 4).

Teachers said the degree to which the content changed influenced how overwhelmed teachers felt, with Sandy and Elizabeth noting that their 6th and 7th grade colleagues, whose courses were significantly revised, were struggling the most. These teachers demonstrated the potential for educators to support the values and visions of a standards document while also feeling unprepared to make the changes they believe will positively impact student learning.

How are they learning about the 2019 standards?

The findings revealed a significant disparity in participants' knowledge of the 2019 Standards. Sandy represented one extreme, having attended multiple professional development workshops led by the South Carolina Department of Education and served on curriculum-writing teams. Mark represented the other extreme. He could not offer a clear assessment of the 2019 Standards until our last interview, citing limited time and opportunity to investigate the document. Elizabeth and Chipper had working knowledge of the 2019 Standards, but, as discussed below, this was not necessarily the product of intentional preparation offered by their schools and districts.

Teachers were often left to their own devices and had to advocate for support and guidance from administration. Sandy recounted an incident from her job interview when she learned her principal and school leadership were unaware the social studies standards were changing,

> One of my first questions was which standards are we going off of…I was the only one who knew that there were new standards. It was kind of interesting to see how things like standards, new standards, can get lost in education. It that seems like pretty important information that a school would be aware of, but nobody knew. (Interview 1)

Because Sandy worked with the 2019 Standards in her teacher preparation program, she became a de facto trainer at her school - as a first year teacher.

Elizabeth's administrators were aware of the 2019 Standards and appointed Elizabeth to a curriculum writing team tasked with developing support materials, but she said they received no training on the new document, "No one came in and said 'this is what this is.' It was, 'hey, just look at it and get together and make something'" (Interview 1). She indicated recent interactions on her Instagram account were a more significant influence on her professional learning, "I had somebody just send me a message…they worked with the state of South Carolina creating units, inquiry units on these standards, so she shared those with me and pointed me to those. So we've been looking at that" (Interview 1). Elizabeth acknowledged gaps in her understanding and even reached out to administration for more support, with little success,

> We've talked with [the assistant principle] a little bit about the standards and how we feel like we didn't know things, and he was just like "Oh, well. That kinda sucks. Sorry. We can maybe try to figure something out". That hasn't really happened. (Interview 2)

Elizabeth's and Sandy's commitment to their professional learning is commendable, but it is disappointing that teachers did not mention intentional actions taken by their departments, schools, or districts to prepare them for 2019 Standards implementation during the entire 2020-2021 academic year.

Although the teachers had not received substantial support, they had clear opinions about the forms they believed it should take. Teachers expressed preference for school-level professional development. For Chipper, this approach during training he attended in the 2019-2020 academic year provided a level of comfort that allowed him to be more honest,

> I was in a setting that I knew, not some random auditorium somewhere with people I didn't know, and being a new teacher, especially last year, that was really helpful that I didn't have to worry about not looking smart or being afraid to ask a question in front of a group. (Interview 4)

Teachers were critical of past one-size-fits-all professional development, especially school or district initiatives that seemed irrelevant to social studies, so they believed support should be flexible and personalized. According to Elizabeth, teachers usually know what they need but need help getting started, so administrators should "personally ask the question and don't try to put me through something that's maybe generic, for everybody. Just more, let's follow up, this is what we see, is what we have, here are some resources" (Interview 4). Sandy, who demonstrated the deepest understanding of the 2019 Standards, emphasized this process takes time and collaboration, "A lot of reflection was probably the best teacher of the standards for me….It took a lot of meetings for me to understand it" (Interview 1).

Teachers also expressed a desire for instructional examples but were not equally aware of existing resources. Prior to the 2020-2021 academic year, the South Carolina Department of Education posted Alignment Guides and Sample Units on their website. During 2020-2021, a series of informational videos were added to the website. Sandy was familiar with these resources, and Elizabeth encountered them through her social media, but neither Chipper nor Mark knew about them. This may be a product of limited desire to take responsibility for professional learning, but it is important to acknowledge the unique challenges teachers encountered in 2020-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More pressing issues often took precedence. As Chipper explained, for many teachers, the 2019 Standards were "out of sight, out of mind" (Interview 4). Teachers mentioned their schools intentionally

limited professional development and focused on issues related to technology and virtual learning; however, the absence of professional development about the 2019 Standards may have left those teachers trying to prepare for implementation feeling isolated and others woefully underprepared. As example, Elizabeth said her administration's delayed response to her request for help was "a conversation too late just because at that point, it's like, I've figured it out to an extent or I've said 'this is what I'm doing and we'll just kind of roll with it'" (Interview 4).

How are they implementing the 2019 standards?

Schools were not required to implement the 2019 Standards until the 2021-2022 academic year, but some schools opted to transition as early as Fall 2019. The participants represent schools that transitioned at different speeds and with different levels of commitment. Though Sandy said her administration was unaware of the 2019 Standards until her interview, her school implemented the standards in 2019-2020. Chipper's school implemented the 2019 Standards in select subjects (e.g., Human Geography) in 2019-2020 with plans to implement the standards across the curriculum in 2020-2021; however, Chipper said the school opted to return to the old U.S. History standards "to ensure U.S. History [state test] scores would not plummet" (Standards Timeline). Elizabeth and her colleagues voiced their preference to stick with the old standards until 2021-2022, but her school administration made the decision to implement the 2019 Standards in 2020-2021. Mark's school waited to implement the 2019 Standards until 2021-2022.

Despite the variety in implementation timing, all schools had substantial time to prepare for the transition. Teachers said much of the bridge period was dedicated to departmental efforts to "align" the 2019 Standards with previous standards. Mark explained,

> We had a spreadsheet or chart where we had the unit that we standardly teach…and then we had the new standards, and we had to see where that was covered….It was a lot of stretch of making things align just to have the box filled. (Interview 1)

In many cases, the alignment process focused on identifying areas where content overlapped, with less attention paid to the integration of skill or inquiry, which are emphasized in the 2019 Standards. This may be because teachers' instruction already centers disciplinary skills or because teachers struggled to shift their conception of curriculum from content-focused to skill-focused or because the more teachers could "retro fit" (Chipper, Interview 1) their instruction, the less change they must endure. Teachers did not communicate departmental intentions to use the 2019 Standards as impetus to re-envision the curriculum

The focus on content influenced implementation on the individual level as well. If teachers did not perceive significant changes to the content, they also did not anticipate significant pedagogical change. When asked about how the 2019 Standards would influence her instruction, Elizabeth explained, "Our standards didn't really change. We're still teaching the same content…. I think a lot of similar lesson plans, lesson ideas that I've done with the older standards, because, like I said, ours just fit right back in" (Interview 1). Sandy believed the focus on content reflected a misunderstanding of the 2019 Standards, which might lead to misapplication of the document. She said,

> A lot of the teachers are taking it as "I have to cover all this information" and the number one thing I've ever said to somebody is, "you don't have to cover all this information." That's the whole point of it, is you don't have to cover all this content. But you do have to create lessons that are diving deep into concepts. (Interview 3)

Elizabeth represents another way that focus on content might hinder implementation. The indicators within the 2019 Standards are built around "Deconstructed Skills" and do not present the content in chronological fashion. This was very confusing for Elizabeth, who was accustomed to approaching a standards document in linear fashion (e.g., teach indicator 1.1, followed by 1.2). She believed the old standards "flowed, time wise" whereas the 2019 Standards "goes backwards in time and then jumps back forward and goes backwards and jumps forward" (Interview 1). She assumed she had to teach the Indicators in order and struggled with how that would impact her practice, "If I'm gonna teach something, why would I talk about 'Yeah, we have our colonists. They're coming into America; they're taking over land; they're taking it from Native Americans. Who are they? Well, we'll talk about them later.'" (Interview 1). Elizabeth assumed the 2019 Standards would reflect the chronological organization of the previous standards, and her struggle to shake that preconception caused confusion and anxiety.

Professional learning, or lack thereof, also shaped implementation. The many trainings Sandy attended inspired her to teach geography thematically instead of regionally. Through personal exploration and our conversations, Elizabeth eventually recognized the 2019 Standards did not have to be taught in the order listed, but a more powerful example of the influence of professional learning was Elizabeth's discovery of sample units, which reshaped her perception and implementation of the 2019 Standards. She said, "That changed the way I was teaching. Before that, I was just more 'OK, this is what I see the standard says. I know what the old standards used to say. How do they compare?'" (Interview 4). The sample units provided Elizabeth much-needed clarity and the confidence to "start to do something different from the original stuff. I felt 'hey, you know I could probably do this right now'" (Interview 4).

Discussion

Education policy does not implement itself. Policy is enacted by teachers, whose attempts to "[make] sense of, and operationalize" (Spillane, 1999, p. 159) reforms are shaped by their willingness to "question, unlearn, and discard much of their current, deeply-rooted understandings" (p. 154). These four teachers reflect how one's approach to this challenging work is influenced by professional development, collaboration with colleagues, administrative support, teaching experience, and personal dispositions.

As the literature predicted, the participants were familiar with the 2019 Standards and held a relatively positive view of them; however, they felt unprepared to implement the standards and desired additional professional development. All had access to resources provided by the South Carolina State Department of Education, but their willingness to engage with those supports depended on their personal resources, notably the urgency they felt to adapt and the time they had to focus on upcoming changes, which was particularly difficult due to COVID-19. Those who did take advantage of professional development were most significantly impacted by opportunities that emphasized collaboration and deliberation, which were harder to find during the 2020-2021 academic year due to reductions in formal

professional learning activities. Fewer opportunities for collective sense-making, experimentation, and reflection led to greater feelings of confusion and complacency.

The literature suggests that early-career teachers are more receptive to educational reform. Martinie et al. (2016) found that early-career teachers tended to be Anxious Adopters who felt positively about new standards but were full of questions. This was true of each participant, but application of Martinie et al's categories reveal how fluid the zone of enactment can be among novice educators (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Participants' Zones of Enactment

Critical	Cautious	Anxious	Hard Core
		Chipper	
			Sandy
	Mark		
Elizabeth			
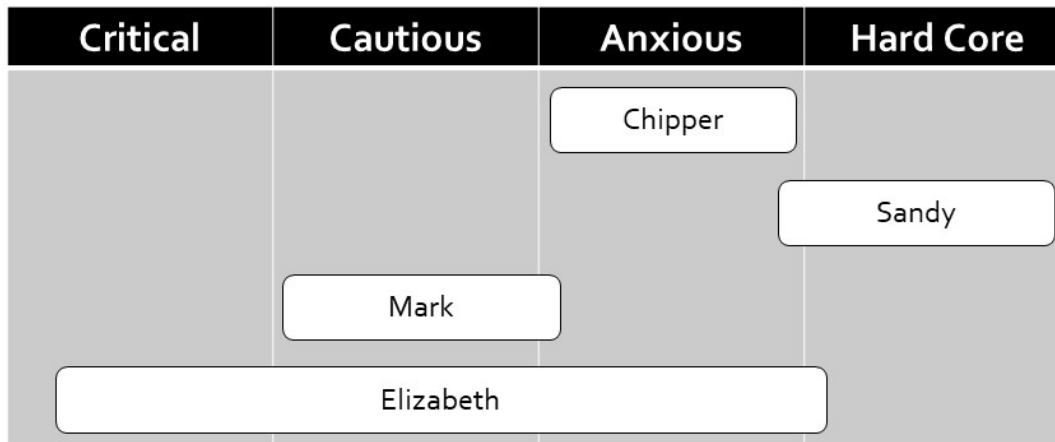
Note. Categories derived from Martinie et al. (2016).

Chipper is most fully categorized as an Anxious Adopter. He was hopeful that the 2019 Standards would positively improve social studies teaching and learning but was unsure about how to implement them and heavily reliant on others to guide his professional learning. Though Sandy expressed desire to deepen her understanding of the 2019 Standards, she displays more characteristics of a Hard Core Adopter, notably her firm belief that the 2019 Standards reflect necessary changes in social studies instruction and the responsibility she has taken to train herself and others. For most of the year, Mark displayed traits of a Cautious Adopter, feeling limited urgency to learn about or implement the 2019 Standards, but he eventually communicated positive perceptions and a commitment to engage in more professional learning. Elizabeth demonstrated elements of each enactment zone. She initially communicated a desire to continue using old materials and to implement the 2019 Standards to the degree she thought best, which reflect the Critical Adopter. Over time, Elizabeth expressed positive perceptions of the 2019 Standards but needed greater clarity on her role in fulfilling their intentions, which reflect the Cautious Adopter. By the time Elizabeth found the sample units, she expressed a better understanding of the intentions of the 2019 Standards and openness to altering her instruction but desired greater support, which reflect the Anxious Adopter. By the end of the year, Elizabeth had implemented some of the sample units and planned to recommend that her 8th Grade colleagues use the sample units as the foundation for their planning moving forward, which reflect the Hard Core Adopter.

Access to timely, high-quality professional support seemed to influence each participant's enactment zone. Sandy took advantage of many opportunities, both those presented to her and those she sought out. She positioned herself as an engaged leader, and even though she communicated some initial

nerves, she quickly developed into a vocal advocate for the 2019 Standards. Chipper had access to professional development but tended to rely on his more experienced colleagues to take the lead and do the work. Preparing for the 2019 Standards did not appear to be a priority at Mark's school, so he was not motivated to reflect or act. Elizabeth's progression across the zones of enactment aligned with her professional learning. Though driven by her own efforts, Elizabeth transitioned from doubting the 2019 Standards to seeing their potential to dramatically altering her instruction. As Spillane (1999) suggested, these teachers demonstrate that without "individual capacity to appreciate the core reform ideas and access to rich array of social and material resources to support their learning, external reform initiatives alone are unlikely to bring about substantial changes in the core of practice" (p. 171).

Though all four participants are early-career teachers, it is interesting that the teachers most clearly categorized as Critical or Cautious Adopters had more experience (3-4 years) than the teachers most clearly categorized as Anxious or Hard Core Adopters (2 years). That may be a reflection of experience with the 2011 standards. Elizabeth and Mark began their careers under the old document, so the 2019 Standards mark a significant shift occurring at a time when, as new teachers, they are still learning to "be a teacher" and may lack professional confidence. It also suggests that hesitancy toward reform manifests quickly.

These trends suggest the sociology of education may be a useful lens for future analysis. This study focused on individual teachers, but the data indicate their perceptions and actions are influenced by interactions (or lack thereof) with colleagues, educational leaders, and structures that shape professional learning. Woulfin (2019) applied an occupational perspective to examine the macro, meso, and micro factors that influence how different educator roles (e.g., instructional coach) enact policy reform. Woulfil's argument that teachers' approaches are influenced by, for example, standardized assessments (macro), social learning opportunities (meso), and prior experiences (micro) are reflected by these participants. Chipper explained his department's return to the old standards because of anxiety about the end-of-course exam. Elizabeth's openness to instructional change was spurred by interactions in online communities. Sandy's introduction to the 2019 Standards during college contributed to her confidence in leading her school's transition. Considering the distinct approaches among the participants, one might also consider how the interactions among occupations (e.g., working with a clued-in v. clueless principal) and organizational factors (e.g., district mandated professional development) shape enactment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There are limitations to this study. The data were based on self-reports of a small sample of teachers, and the working relationship I had with the teachers may have influenced their candidness. Additionally, COVID-19 influenced the 2020-2021 academic year in numerous ways, including an unexpected extension of the bridge period, and it is difficult to discern the degree to which pandemic-related stressors impacted teachers' perception and implementation of the 2019 Standards. Nonetheless, evidence from this study suggest actions teacher educators, school leaders, and individual teachers can take to ensure more successful enactment of education reforms.

Teacher educators must stay on the forefront of education reform efforts and support teacher candidates in developing the skills to direct their own professional learning and the confidence to take on leadership early. Teacher leaders must advocate for their colleagues (e.g., ensuring adequate time and training).

They often set the tone and trajectory for enactment, especially for early-career teachers who rely heavily on trusted colleagues. School administrators must stay informed and look to develop flexible professional development approaches that allow teachers to personalize their learning, especially with changes that may impact only a subset of teachers (e.g., social studies teachers). Teachers of all experience levels must trust themselves. They must acknowledge their personal responsibility for professional growth but also advocate for themselves, as they might have a deeper understanding of the proposed reform than school leadership. Successful implementation of education reform requires awareness, proactive leadership, and ongoing collaboration among stakeholders. It is important to support teachers over the lifetime of the reform, but structured support leading up to the reform is critical. A conversation too late can spur apathy and confusion, but a well-timed conversation can energize and inspire.

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An Egalitarian Path To and From the 1619 Project

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Abstract
The United States is divided philosophically regarding the use of Critical Race Theory as a pathway to study the role of racism within the history of the United States. This article attempts to provide an intervention that is both positivist and non-biased in its approach. Secondary students (9th to 12th grades) are directed to evaluate the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution, the 1619 Project, criticism of the 1619 Project and analyze the tremendous contributions of the enslaved to the culture and economic well-being of the United States. The pedagogy emphasizes the use of historical thinking skills and empathy to provide historically marginalized students a pathway to promote greater democracy. The culminating project highlighted invites students to create a faux game to promote a more egalitarian story of the promotion of social justice in the United States.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, Preamble of the U.S. Constitution, 1619 Project, historical thinking, empathy

The recent reckoning regarding the historical consequence of non-egalitarian systems that undermine the promise of the "more perfect union" espoused by the United States Constitution provides teachers a platform from which to reimagine teaching the history of our nation. That process of pedagogical development provides thoughtful instructors an opportunity to build lessons that promote goal-centered learning that combines historical awareness with identity, self-efficacy, and social justice informed activism (Anyon, 2009; Muhammad, 2020; Paris, 2012; Paul & Elder 2012).

Delgado and Stefancic (2017), argue traditional social studies instruction has failed to instruct students about the impact of racism upon people of color throughout the history of our nation. Hannah-Jones et al. (2019) wrote a highly controversial exposè to promote conversation about that instructional deficit. The publication was given a Pulitzer Prize, and many schoolteachers began utilizing the *The 1619 Project Curriculum* within their classrooms (Pulitzer Center, 2020).

Response among many parents regarding the 1619 Project and Critical Race Theory (CRT, henceforth) has been harsh (Ray & Gibbons, 2021; Serwer, 2021). As of January 31, 2022, Chalkbeat has reported 36 of 50 states have attempted to restrict education pedagogy that policy makers view as biased or racism themed. Only 17 states are attempting to expand education on racism (Stout & Wilburn, 2022). In my home state of Alabama, several gubernatorial candidates have expressed support for restricting such instruction, with current Governor Kay Ivey proclaiming, "We don't teach CRT in Alabama" (Smith, 2022).

The stark contrast between these two schools of thought demonstrates how cultural, social, regional, political values, biases and beliefs influence and shape the way people discuss and construct solutions to public issues (Nunez, 2018). VanSledright (2014) and Wineburg (2001) offer an approach to historical thinking and provide the potential to discuss CRT and the 1619 Project in important ways.

Teaching controversial issues within our current polarized climate has become so divisive that compromise within the laboratory of our republic is nearly lost. Discussion of controversial topics is an essential pathway from which to build a more vibrant community where ideas are respected rather than ostracized. Providing instruction and practice within the classroom is key for driving emotional learning that fosters the critical thinking from which to build a theoretical framework to justify civic action (Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Journell, 2010).

A key to successfully implement identity-driven pedagogy is motivating students to engage within learning contemplatively. Providing students identity-driven instructional models promote self-efficacy from which to inspire social justice activism. Empathy is an essential method from which students can build a learning platform that promotes self-awareness and compassion (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Endacott, 2014).

This article attempts to demonstrate how teaching the controversial 1619 Project and ideas expressed by CRT can be utilized to advocate a different vision of conversation for controversial issues like race. This article will encourage teachers to use equity and assent-based pedagogies that counter the harm done to marginalized citizens (Ramos-Brannon & Muhammad, G., 2021). The pedagogy I propose fosters instruction for utilizing the C3 Framework to promote social justice (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013).

Within this article, I describe a three-step lesson regarding the 1619 Project written by Hannah-Jones et al. (2019). Students examine the primary source documents from which to evaluate the work of Hannah-Jones and her colleagues. The unit is constructed in a manner that fosters the goals of the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013) that insists students must utilize history to problem solve and to be equipped to be civic minded citizens.

A Brief Overview of Controversial Issues

Contemporary discussions regarding controversial issues are often heated rhetoric that too often fail to provide a model of conversation within democracy that students should emulate (Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Journell, 2010). Providing students with an alternative method of dialogue offers an option to what fuels much of today's divisive conversation about our nation's history. Utilizing instructional strategies like the activity outlined within this article allow students to examine and empathize with different perspectives about the failure of the United States to live up to the ideals of "a more perfect union" (Nunez, 2021). Discussing controversial topics also provides a pedagogical framework that invites a broader participation of voices in the United States. As explained by CRT, these voices have been marginalized by White male

hegemony which, in turn, has promoted a racial and economic hierarchy benefitting a privileged group (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Contextualization

Seixas and Peck (2004) argue the present-day interpretation of significant historical events provide context regarding historical tensions that made a great impact on people over a long period of time. Seixas (2017) contended that continuity and change serve to question how concepts and customs have evolved over time. Cause and consequence are defined as the interplay of human action within and against other social organizations that have co-existed over time. Seixas (2017) defined contextualization as a determination made by students to question how one can understand the thinking of people who lived in worlds much different from their own. Finally, Seixas (2017) posited civil and human rights are ethical dimensions of history that students must analyze (Anyon, 2009; Paul & Elder, 2012). These dimensions include judging an actor's actions of the past and dealing with mistakes that led to injustice. Seixas (2017) argued that contemporary society has an obligation to right the wrongs committed in the past. Contextualization also provides perspectives of how interactions of the past also affect people in the present. Understanding how events occurred and the way people of the past negotiated tensions of an event requires time for students to reflect on background knowledge about an event or person (Reisman & Wineburg, 2008). The use of open-ended guiding questions and explicitly modeling contextual thinking are essential to the promotion of what Reisman and Wineburg (2008) called a rich and dynamic portrait of history (Nunez, 2021).

Point of View

Understanding conflicting points of view about history is an essential benefit of historical thinking. These analyses of past actions and of those directly involved with these historical events teach us about how individuals process information. More particularly, having students investigate point of view reveals how agents developed a particular position on an issue, how they negotiated, and how an ultimate solution was reached regarding the tensions surrounding a controversial event (Hynd et al., 2004). The C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013) argues particular attention should be paid to relevant and credible sources that differ in points of view. Such examination ultimately leads to a spiraling process of inquiry (Nunez, 2021).

Causation

This intervention provides a window into historical thinking that invites students to understand history in context through greater understanding of the causation of a particular event, the conflict that emerged within the event, and how society has since continued to wrestle with this historical tension. Hess and McAvoy (2015) argued for teaching approaches that promote discussion, self-reflection, and inquiry skills. The development of research skills that are focused upon investigating the cause of an event helps students to learn why specific decisions were made and why individuals committed certain acts that gave rise to historical

tensions. These historical research disciplines promote greater emotional investment in students. Greater emotional investment promotes empathy, providing students a safe space from which to develop respect for how citizens contend with the tensions associated within democracy.

Empathy

Historical empathy is the ability to understand the past and those who lived in it by the examination of evidence and the understanding that people were affected by the social, political, and cultural landscapes of the period (Yancie & Nunez, 2022). Yeager and Foster (2001) believe historical empathy requires students to make conclusions based on evidence. Empathic-minded teachers motivate studentss to connect emotionally with historical figures and attempt to understand how feelings, beliefs, and values influenced their decisions. Pedagogy that employs empathy allows students to understand that, although past perspectives were different, when placed in historical and social contexts, these views were valid and understandable to people who lived during a certain time (Barton & Levstick, 2004; Endacott, 2014).

Muhammad (2020) argued marginalized students can experience joy through the critical analysis of problems of the world and insisted the development of literacy practices that are grounded within a positivist instructional structure can improve learner perceptions regarding the value of education. Muhammad (2020) added that all students, particularly those who have been historically marginalized, benefit from learning practices that foster knowing self. Muhammad (2020) argued students who acknowledge differences between themselves and others might become change agents to help prevent societal oppression and promote a civic ideal of love and egalitarianism within the realm of diversity.

The 1619 Project Activity

The 1619 Project activity is targeted toward secondary education students between ninth and twelfth grades and will require between 225 and 450 minutes or approximately ten 45-minute class periods to complete (see Table 1 for activity outline). The activity aligns with the following indicators for history in the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013): D2.His.1.9-12., which describes how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts; D2.His.4.9-12., which encourages students to analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras; and D2.His.9.9-12., which illustrates the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.

Table 1

Visual Summary of Egalitarian Path to and from the 1619 Project

The Steps	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4
Step 1: Understanding the Preamble	Preamble Graphic Organizer	What is a "Perfect Union" Analysis & Discussion	Preamble Point of View Analysis and Discussion	Summative Questions
Step 2: 1619 Project Evaluation	1619 Reading Project (Pre-Remediated) 1619 Project Criticism (Pre-Remediated)	1619 Project Evaluation Graphic Organizer 1619 Project Criticism Evaluation Graphic Organizer	1619 Project Poster 1619 Project Criticism Poster	Venn Diagram Point of view 1619 Project and Criticism
Step 3: "A More Perfect Union Synthesis Project	Group Discussion re: Respecting Points of View	Building America Review	Internet Research Project Re: Giants of Unity	Game of Life Creation

Throughout the steps in this activity, students explore three essential questions. The first question asks students, "*Is the United States systematically racist*?" This inquiry forms a basis from which to provide a context to explore the 1619 Project. The examination also invites reflection that centers upon Preamble of the U.S. Constitution, specifically the phrase, "a more perfect union." As the students analyze lines in the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution, they use the theoretical framework of our republic as a particular point of view that stands in direct opposition to systematic racism.

The second inquiry asks, "*Is the foundation of America absolutely racist*?" Students are asked to focus upon what historians and the primary documents written by the Founding Fathers that the 1619 Project claims defended slavery. The students investigate an alternative perspective in conflict with the 1619 Project's theories concerning systematic racism. This step of the activity provides an inquiry arc that deals with the historical thinking discipline of causation and point of view.

Finally, students consider the kinds of contributions slaves made to the establishment and early success of the colonies. Additionally, the studentss investigate the various White and Black Americans that worked on behalf of social justice and equality throughout the history of the United States. This final arc of inquiry asks, "*Can we talk civilly about the United States' imperfect past/ history to create a more perfect union?"* This provides an inquiry arc that deals with the historical thinking discipline of continuity.

Step 1 Preamble Analysis

Within the first step, groups of four students read the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution. They are provided a guided-reading graphic organizer (Figure 1) and are instructed to seek out the main idea and key details of the Preamble. This allows students to organize the beliefs that

inspired the creation of the U.S. Constitution. The pedagogy also promotes the consideration of cultural, social, regional, political values, biases and beliefs influence and shape the way people discuss and construct solutions to public issues (Nunez, 2018; VanSledright 2014; Wineburg, 2001).

Figure 1

Next, students are asked to consider if "a more perfect union" included the diverse population as it existed in America in 1789 were called upon to participate in the quest to achieve equality. There were many different peoples who existed within the U.S. that not only included different races and cultures, but also people who were differentiated by class and wealth. Students are provided a five-columned chart to organize their thoughts regarding the myriad voices who all felt they had a stake in the Preamble of the Constitution (Figure 2). This segment of the lesson allows students to become emotionally invested as they are encouraged to think about different Americans who were marginalized from the dominant power structure that existed at the time the U.S. Constitution was written. This is at the heart of empathic learning because it allows students to consider why certain decisions were made and why individuals committed certain acts that ultimately gave rise to historical tensions (Barton & Levstick, 2004; Endacott, 2014; Yeager & Foster, 2001; Yancie & Nunez, 2022). While the students are answering these questions, the teacher walks around the classroom to assist students where needed. Some things to consider are how do students think about unity, particularly when so many adolescents form groups that are often particular of who is in or out of the group. The ethic may inspire greater conversation among participants of the group and help to define what community unity looks like within a healthy democracy.

Figure 2

Graphic Organizer (T-Chart) Preamble Project
Based upon the Preamble of the United States Constitution

Question	White Males View	African Americans and Slaves View	Disenfranchised White Females View	Native Americans View
What does a perfect union look like?				
What is justice?				
How is domestic Tranquility Achieved?				
Who participates within the common defense?				
What is general welfare?				
How are the blessings of liberty secured?				

After the small groups complete the reading assignment and answer the questions in the graphic organizer, there should be a class debriefing. Students add onto their graphic organizers based on peers' responses. Through guiding this discussion, the teacher's focus is on having students support their responses with evidence. The teacher may also ask students some extension questions designed to help them gain a deeper understanding regarding perspectives of a segment of marginalized citizens and the perspectives of African Americans who still view the Constitution as racist. Some possible extension questions may include the following:

1. What does each group believe is the possibility of "a more perfect union" in United States when the Constitution was written?
2. What does each group believe is the possibility of "a more perfect union" in the United States today?

These two questions enable students to gain a better understanding of the intention of the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution – particularly as it relates to civic responsibility of promoting these principles as participants within democracy. The two questions attempt to provide perspective of the marginalized communities of the 1790's as well those who are frustrated with the failure of reaching the goal of perfecting the union today. This class discussion allows students to gain experience engaging in meaningful dialogues with contemporary issues (Blevins et al., 2016). The teacher needs to emphasize the importance of enumerating students' answers

with text evidence. Asking for text evidence not only gives the instructor an assessment of the students' thinking enumerated in the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013), but is an effective evaluative tool that will help with the culminating activity described later in this article. The questions in Figure 2 and those addressed during the debriefing enable the students to gain a better understanding of whether America has, is, and will always be systematically racist. Students also see the root origins for Black and White perspectives about essential unity promoted within the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution.

Step 2 The 1619 Project Evaluation

Next, students examine and evaluate the New York Times Magazine article commonly referred to as "*The 1619 Project*" (Hannah-Jones et al, 2019). This will be an independent project. Those students with greater reading skills will be urged to read the entire article found on pages 14-22. The students are provided what I term "look-fors" to guide their instruction. The guiding question is: "*What evidence does the 1619 Project provide that America is systematically racist*?" Other guiding questions include:

1. What does the 1619 Project argue was the reason why colonists revolted against England?
2. What does the 1619 Project argue was the reason why Thomas Jefferson supported the idea of revolution?
3. What does the 1619 Project argue is the basis to support its view America was established in the year 1619?

It may be necessary to provide a brief lesson concerning the causes of the American Revolution. This intervention may be used within the first half of instruction of early U.S. History, however, this particular lesson is ideally suited for an extension activity in which students are familiar with the facts related to the cause of the American Revolution.

For classes in which there are struggling readers, paraphrased quotes from the 1619 Project (Hannah-Jones et al, 2019) might be used as an adaptation for struggling readers. Utilizing the previous "look-for" questions, struggling readers may use the previous key detail/ main idea and insert the following quotes into the 3 key detail boxes shown in Figure 3:

1. "I want to point out that one of the most important reasons the colonists decided to declare their independence from England was they wanted to protect the institution of slavery."
2. "Thomas Jefferson attempted to convince others like him to break off from England so he could continue benefitting from the dizzying wealth brought about by slavery."
3. "Ten of the United States first 12 Presidents owned slaves. I argue this nation was not a democracy but a slavocracy."

Figure 3

Story Name: Our democracy's founding ideas were false

Author: Nicole Hannah-Jones	Target Audience: New York Times Readers
Main Idea:	Key Detail: 1. 2. 3.

Upon completion of the graphic organizer (Figure 3), the students are instructed to summarize their evidence into the main idea. The teacher will walk around the class to check their responses as a formative assessment. The execution of this sequence is well suited for classes utilizing computers and Google Classroom because teachers can make instant corrections to ensure a summary of the main idea is supported by evidence. Teachers will want to look for those students who speed through the execution of the assignment. Students often want to rush through specific steps required for an exercise. This step is particularly important to emphasize the accurate use of quotations within history research.

Next, the students are allowed to break into their original four-member groupings and are assigned a poster making project that highlights the results of their analysis of the 1619 Project. Instruct the groups to make a banner at the top of the poster, and to provide 3 essential details from the 1619 Project they find most important. The questions on the graphic organizer and the poster activity enable the students to understand the unique perspective Hannah-Jones et al. (2019) offer regarding her belief the United States was created as what she termed a "slavocracy." The groups share their research findings with the class. Class members add to their notes.

This exercise encourages student to think about history contextually (Wineburg, 2001). Exploring the 1619 Project in this way emphasizes the historical thinking skills of causation, that is essential for honest civic participation with democracy. Marginalized students also benefit from what Muhammad (2020) termed learning practices that foster knowing self. Muhammad (2020) argued students who acknowledge differences between themselves, and others might become change agents to help to prevent societal oppression and promote a civic ideal to promote love and egalitarianism within the realm of diversity.

Next, students are directed to evaluate a critique of the 1619 Project written by historian Leslie M. Harris, a professor of history at Northwestern University, to oversee the historical

accuracy of Hannah-Jones et al.'s (2019) narrative. The title of the work is "*I helped fact-check the 1619 Project. The Times Ignored Me*" (Harris, 2020). This step of the lesson will be nearly identical to the intervention used for the 1619 Project including independent learning supported by "look-for" questions that are provided below:

1. What does Harris argue that Hannah-Jones got wrong about the start of the American Revolution?
2. What does Harris say about other historians' criticism about the 1619 Project?
3. What did Harris say was the true attitude of slavery among colonists?

Paraphrased quotes from Harris' (2020) article might be used as an adaptation for struggling readers. Utilizing the previous "look-for" questions, these students should use the previous key detail/ main idea and insert the following quotes into the 3 key detail boxes shown in Figure 4:

1. "I was asked to edit Nicole Hannah-Jones work because I am a historian of African American life and slavery. She wrote, colonists wanted to revolt because they were attempting to protect slavery in the colonies. I disagree forcefully…slavery was not the main reason for the revolt."
2. "A letter signed by 5 major historians claims the 1619 Project has major errors. They have demanded the New York Times issue corrections on these points. So far, the paper has refused to do that."
3. "It is true White Southerners may have wanted to preserve slavery for their plantations, but many Northerners struggled with slavery."

Figure 4

Story Name: *I Helped Fact-Check the 1619 Project. The Times Ignored Me.*

Author: Leslie M. Harris

Target Audience: Historians

Main Idea:

Key Detail:
1.
2.
3.

Upon completion of evidence now collected within the graphic organizer, the students are instructed to summarize their evidence into the main idea (see Figure 4). The teacher will walk around the class to check on responses as a formative assessment. The execution of this sequence is well suited for classes utilizing computers and Google Classroom because teachers can make instant corrections to ensure a summary of the main idea is supported by evidence.

Next, the students are allowed to return to their original four-member groupings and are assigned a Venn Diagram (Figure 5) in which students must place they key deals of their research within the appropriate locations within the diagram. The banner at the top of the diagram asks the question, "*Has the United States devolved into a place in which the quest for 'a more perfect union' is now impossible*?" The teacher will walk around the room and visit with each group, acting as a facilitator to encourage students to discuss the competing opinions presented by Hannah-Jones et al. (2019) and Harris (2020). The teacher should encourage students to "dig" into the disagreements and emphasize that point of view does not have to be "right or wrong", but valuable within constructive debate about what is best for the growth of the nation.

Figure 5

Has the United States devolved into a place in which the quest for a "perfect union" is now impossible?"
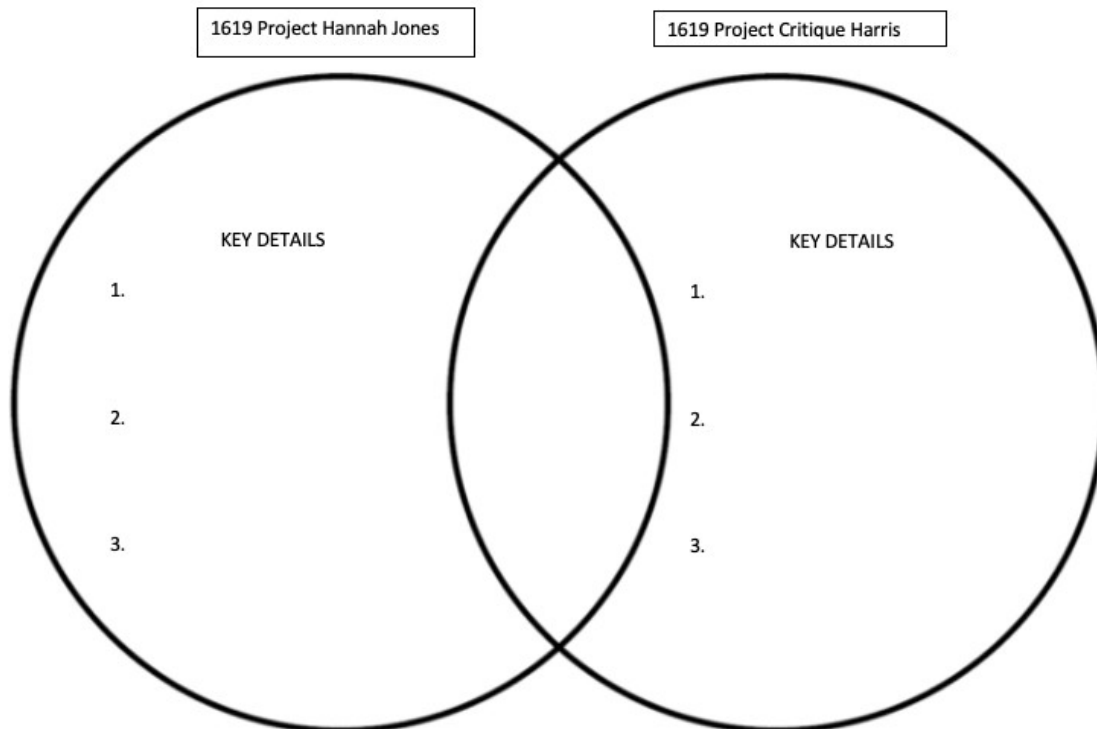
The groups are then instructed to share their research findings with the class. Class members add to their notes. This exercise encourages student to think about history with a view toward point of view. Researchers who advocate for developing historical thinking skills argue point of view is essential to understand historical events in context as well enabling students to

develop civic minded ways in which to communicate within a democratic society (Monte Sano, 2012; VanSlederight, 2002; Wineburg, 2001).

### Step 3 Synthesizing What Was Learned

Next, the students identify ways for people to discuss varying point of views in a way to promote "a more perfect union." Ask the groups to come up with three ways these varying points of views can be respected equally. This Venn Diagram (see Figure 5) can be used to guide discussion. The teacher will walk around the room and visit with each group, acting as a facilitator to encourage students to discuss how these two perspectives can co-exist. The teacher might need to act as an advocate for one position or another. This role-playing function is critical in providing leaners how to advocate for a belief as a template from which to participate within conversations involving people who have differences of opinion. The teacher should ask each group to place their ideas within the center of the Venn Diagram (see Figure 5). After the four-member groups complete the Venn Diagram, the teacher should lead a class debriefing. Students add to their graphic organizers based on peers' responses. The debriefing is offered as an important transition to the culminating exercise and to clarify any lingering questions.

Within the culminating step of the activity, students create a game that emphasizes contributions by Black and White citizens to promote an egalitarian society. The class remains assigned within the same group assignments as earlier. The primary instruction given is for students to create a game patterned after Milton Bradley's Game of Life™ I have called "The Equality Edition" (Figure 6). The goal of this activity is to give students an opportunity to provide a voice to those who made contributions to make America "a more perfect union." The activity allows students to critically examine evidence about White and Black Americans highlighted in the game. The students contextualize and corroborate evidence from historical research to help build their reasoning and argument skills (Monte-Sano et al, 2014). The faux game also serves as a summative assessment that is designed to demonstrate students' understanding of the complexity of participants and their actions that played a role in shaping our nation's quest to achieve a "more perfect union." The idea for the assessment is that students will use their imagination and critical thinking skills to argue who they believe made the greatest contributions for an egalitarian society.

The teacher sets up the faux game culminating activity by reviewing the article, "*Building America: Contributions of African American Slaves*" that outlines the enormous contributions of African Americans to the "discovery" of North America, as well as their economic and cultural contributions of our nation to the present (Derousselle, NA). The students are assigned an internet research project investigating: Crispus Attucks; the 1843 National Convention of Colored Citizens; Henry Highland Garnett; Frederick Douglass; Booker T. Washington; W.E.B. DuBois' "*The Souls of Black Folk*" (1903)*;* Dr. Martin Luther King's, "*Letter from the Birmingham Jail*"(1963); and Malcom X. Additionally, students are given an internet research project to study: Benjamin Franklin's "*Petition from the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery*" (1790); William Lloyd Garrison*;* Henry David Thoreau's *"Civil*

Disobedience" (1849); Abraham Lincoln's Peoria Speech (1854); Brown v. Board of Education (1954); Browder v. Gayle (1956); Dwight D. Eisenhower; Lyndon B. Johnson's "*Great Society Speech"* (1964). The most efficient way for the research to be accomplished is to allow each small group to jigsaw the assignment so that each group member can focus on one African American and one White advocate promoting equality. This benefits students by allowing them to collaborate and engage within discussion and possible debate regarding who should be highlighted within the game.

Figure 6
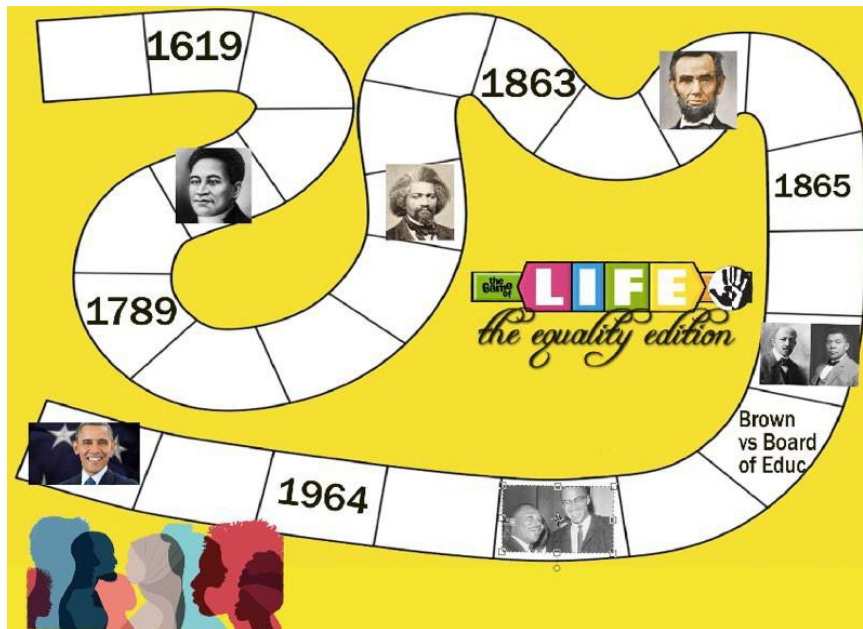
As the small groups create their game, the teacher visits each group to encourage creativity and discussion. This step is critical to ensure the students demonstrate a "summative" understanding of the lesson. The teacher may need to review for the group the previous steps that have been undertaken during the project. The teacher may also have to remind the groups of the goal of the game which is to promote those individuals and /or groups that made significant contributions to bring about social justice.

Each group will have an opportunity to play their own game to completion. Next, the students will share their game with another group, to allow play and collaborative learning. As the final step is completed, students will be allowed to debrief and discuss the original guiding question, "*Is America systematically racist*?" The instructor might want to encourage the students to share the game with their family – offering a community-focused social justice project. The students might also be urged to write a letter to a local, state or national politician to tell them about the game they have created. They might also urge the person they are writing to re-think the value of teaching the 1619 Project as a positivist approach of promoting equality.

Conclusion

The activity utilized in this article serves as a gateway to instruct students about controversial issues. The study of the 1619 Project provides students a mechanism of discussing key social issues because these structures and visuals give them a more complete picture of a time period (VanSledright, 2014). Utilizing the student evaluation of conflicting evidence regarding the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution, the 1619 Project, the critique of that project, and researching the participants within the construct of social justice that is designed to bring forth "a more perfect union" as well as the practice of weighing differing perspectives about CRT, helps students to develop their own beliefs (Barr, Barth & Shermis, 1977; Engle, 1960; Hess, 2018; NCSS, 2013). Finally, this activity provides a mechanism to build students' civic identities—particularly for those who have been historically marginalized—by imagining what a diverse society that encourages participation of all stakeholders might look like (Muhammad, 2020).

Political discussions in 2022 are often heated rhetoric that too often fail to provide a model of conversation within democracy that students should emulate. Providing students an alternative method of dialogue offers a better option than what fuels much of today's conversation about race in America. Utilizing instructional strategies like the one proposed in this article allow students to examine and empathize with different perspectives about race of the past, present and a far more egalitarian future.

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Summative Assessment Template
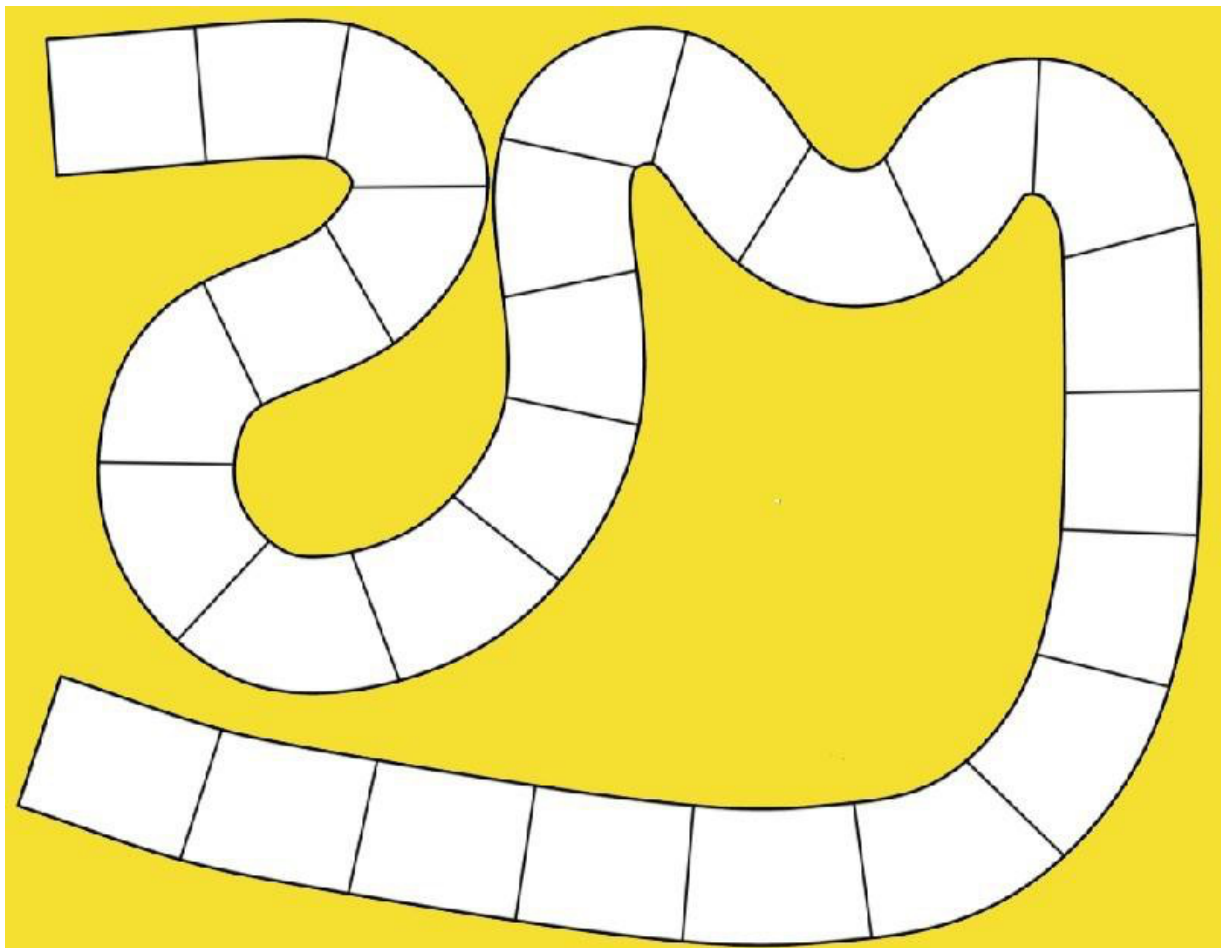
Civic Agency: The Lifeblood of a Healthy U.S. Democracy

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Abstract
In this article, I discuss an activity for the middle grades social studies classroom exploring the civic agency used by Hubert Humphrey to cause change at the 1948 Democratic National Convention. First, a brief historical overview of the Civil Rights Movement after World War II is provided. Then, the article transitions to give a brief synopsis of best teaching practices in civic education. Finally, an activity is focused on where middle grades students analyze the impact of Hubert Humphrey's speech leading to a civil rights plank to the 1948 Democratic Party Platform. The steps and resources needed to implement this activity are provided.

Keywords: Agency; C3 Framework; civic thinking; Hubert Humphrey; civil rights issues

Many Americans are skeptical about the impact that their voices can have on the U.S. political discourse. They see how the political hyper-partisanship over the last 30 years has caused public policies to be stalled in Congress and resulted in issues being kicked down the road with little being accomplished (Dovere, 2021; Halperin & Heilemann, 2013; Kornacki, 2018). On top of this, public policies over the last 40 years have disproportionally benefited the most affluent in U.S. society, with poorer Americans' wages often being stagnant (Bartels, 2016; Frank, 2004; Halperin & Heilemann, 2013; Perlstein, 2020). Regardless of these issues, social studies teachers should design classroom activities to show middle school students that their voices can lead to change. This is a key part of undoing the quagmire of contemporary American politics. Middle school students need learning opportunities where they can see historical and contemporary Americans causing positive change. One ideal historical example that might be examined is Hubert Humphrey's speech at the 1948 Democratic National Convention resulting in a civil rights plank being added to the party platform.

In this article, I provide an activity for the middle school social studies classroom examining the agency used by Hubert Humphrey to cause change at the 1948 Democratic National Convention. First, a brief historical overview of the Civil Rights Movement in the aftermath of World War II is given. Then, the article shifts to focus on a synopsis of best teaching practices in civic education. Finally, an activity is discussed where middle school students examine the impact of Hubert Humphrey's speech leading to a civil rights plank to the

1948 Democratic Party Platform. The steps and resources needed to implement this activity are provided.

The Civil Rights Movement in the Aftermath of World War II

World War II reenergized the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. The hypocrisy that the United States would fight for freedom abroad while having racial segregation laws at home was a glaring contradiction. Returning African American servicemen were determined through the Double V campaign after winning the war for freedom abroad to win their freedoms at home. Unfortunately, the entrenched Jim Crow segregation laws in the South and de facto segregation laws throughout the United States would not be removed so easily (Caro, 2002; Mann, 1996; McCullough, 1992). It would take a coordinated effort by civil rights activists and U.S. politicians to address racial discrimination in the 1940's (Pietrusza, 2011).

The Democratic Party in the wake of World War II faced an existential identity crisis with the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. FDR had minimalized in-fighting among factions within the Democratic Party until his death in 1945. The warring factions within the Democratic Party, civil rights activists and Southern segregationists, were bound to be at odds sooner than later (Caro, 2002; Mann, 1996; McCullough, 1992; Pietrusza, 2011). For President Truman, this came sooner when a relatively unknown Minneapolis mayor and Democratic Senate candidate in Minnesota at the time took the stage at the 1948 Democratic National Convention.

Hubert Horatio Humphrey built a reputation within Minnesota as an advocate for equality by working to curve anti-Semitism as the Mayor of Minneapolis (Humphrey, 1976; Solberg, 1984). Humphrey's speech at the 1948 Democratic National Convention went against the political grain of the time by advocating for the Democratic Party to support civil rights over states' rights. Despite potentially causing President Truman to lose the 1948 presidential election, Humphrey eloquently argued that the adoption of the civil rights plank was consistent with the values and principles espoused by the Democratic Party (Humphrey, 1976; Offner, 2018; Solberg, 1984). Humphrey's 10-minute speech was so moving that the Democratic Party added a civil rights plank to its party platform. Humphrey's short, but pivotal, speech played an important role with starting the Democratic Party on the path of advocating for civil rights.

Best Teaching Practices in Civic Education

Best teaching practices in civic education over the last decade have been largely defined by arguments found in the C3 Framework by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). The C3 Framework is focused on developing K-12 students' disciplinary thinking, literacy, and argumentation skills in the four core social studies disciplines: civics, economics, geography, and history (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013; Swan & Griffin, 2013). Historical thinking has received much attention over the last several decades as scholars

have argued that social studies teachers need to help their students engage in the heuristics employed by historians to examine the root causes of issues, explore an historical figure's values, biases, and perspectives, and to contextualize the dynamics within a time period (Nokes, 2013; VanSledright, 2014; Wineburg et al., 2011). What has been underexplored is how to develop K-12 students' civic thinking skills.

Civic thinking does not mean the same thing as historical thinking. Civic thinking is focused on developing students' ability to apply the heuristics of a political scientist (Clabough, 2018; Journell, 2017; Pearcy & Clabough, 2020). For example, a political scientist can deconstruct arguments within presidential commercials designed to sway voters to support a candidate, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of public policy plans, and apply their agency to draw attention to and help address an issue in their community.

One of the most misunderstood parts of civic thinking is grasping the agency of democratic citizens. Agency is the idea that democratic citizens possess the power to impact and cause change in social, cultural, economic, and political institutions through their actions (Barton, 2012; Levstik & Barton, 2015). This is one of the fundamental tenets that U.S. democracy was built upon. The United States was born from colonists taking civic action to oppose Great Britain's policies that they believed curtailed their democratic rights and liberties. There are numerous functions within U.S. democracy that are dependent upon democratic citizens applying their agency. Some of these functions include democratic citizens electing officials to public office, voting to pass or reject issues on a local ballot, and leading rallies to draw attention to social injustices in their communities. The idea of leading rallies to draw attention and address social injustices is especially important because the U.S. has not lived up to the democratic principles outlined in our founding documents. Slavery in U.S. democracy is a contradiction but nonetheless existed at the founding of this country. Women were treated as second-class citizens, as they were denied the vote for much of U.S. history. Unfortunately, U.S. history is replete with numerous other examples and even in contemporary society where the United States has not lived up to its democratic principles and values. Therefore, social studies teachers need to design learning opportunities where students are equipped with the skills and knowledge to address issues in their community (Barton, 2012; Clabough, 2018; Journell, 2017).

In the next section, I provide an activity showing how Hubert Humphrey used his agency to impact the party platform at the 1948 Democratic National Convention. Humphrey's speech provides middle school students a straightforward example of how a citizen's agency leads to change. Students need to examine examples like this to see concrete situations where historical figures' actions caused positive change. The steps to implement the activity are discussed.

Exploring Hubert Humphrey's Agency to Advocate for Civil Rights Issues

First, students explore the push within the African American community during and after World War II to address civil rights issues. Handout 1 in the Appendix contains a flyer during

World War II explaining why African Americans should march for their rights. In pairs, students read Handout 1 and answer the following analysis prompts:

1. What is the meaning of A. Philip Randolph's phrase, "Winning democracy for the Negro is winning the War for Democracy"? Use evidence to support your arguments.

2. Why would A. Philip Randolph use the phrases, "Free from want! Free from fear! Free from Jim Crow!" in the flyer? Use evidence from the flyer to support your arguments.

The examination of the flyer in Handout 1 and answering the two analysis prompts helps students to conceptualize arguments espoused by African Americans during and after World War II to end racial discrimination. Specifically, Randolph's statements capture how World War II impacted civil rights activists' thinking. It also shows how civil rights activists articulated the contradiction of fighting for democracy abroad while being denied basic democratic rights at home. As the flyer points, African Americans are "Americans too," which means that they are entitled to the same basic rights and privileges that all democratic citizens enjoy.

After students read Handout 1 and answer the analysis prompts, there is a class discussion. Students add onto their responses based on peers' comments. The teacher asks the following extension question. What was the purpose of creating this flyer? This extension question allows students to discuss how Randolph is trying to recruit other civil rights activists to take civic action to win the war for African Americans' rights.

With this background knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement during and after World War II, students are ready to examine how Hubert Humphrey's speech helped to serve as the impetus for the Democratic Party to assume a leadership role on civil rights issues. They read excerpts from Humphrey's speech found in Handout 2 in the Appendix and answer the following analysis prompts. Students can also listen to the entirety of Humphrey's speech at American rhetoric (https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/huberthumphey1948dnc.html).

1. How does Humphrey argue that advocating for civil rights issues is consistent with the identity of the Democratic Party? Use evidence from the speech excerpts to support your arguments.

2. One famous quote from Humphrey's speech is that, "The time has arrived in America for the Democratic Party to get out of the shadow of states' rights and to walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights." How would this quote from Humphrey's speech cause members of the Democratic Party to want to support civil rights issues?

The examination of the excerpts from Humphrey's speech allows students to explore how he passionately argued for civil rights issues. The discussion of the first analysis prompt above helps students grasp how Humphrey aroused a sense of pride and purpose for the Democratic

Party to be true to its character and values by adding a civil rights plank to the party's 1948 platform. Students need learning opportunities like this to deconstruct a politician's public policies in order to see whether an elected official's policy solutions are in the best interests of their local communities (Journell, 2016; Oliver & Shaver, 1966).

After pairs read the excerpts from Humphrey's speech and answer the analysis prompts, there is another class discussion. Again, students add onto their responses based on peers' comments. Then, the teacher asks the following extension question. How can people's words cause others to take positive action? This discussion allows students to grasp how people's words can motivate others to take action to address unresolved issues (Levinson, 2012).

People's words can have ripple effects that lead to change in American society. In this case, Humphrey's words played an instrumental role in leading to the 1948 Democratic Party Platform containing a plank supporting civil rights. Students in the same groups as earlier read Handout 3 in the Appendix and answer the following analysis prompts. Handout 3 contains excerpts from the 1948 Democratic Party Platform that focus on civil rights issues that were discussed in large part due to Humphrey's speech.

1. How did Humphrey's arguments directly shape the wording of the Democratic Party platform on civil rights issues? Use evidence from Humphrey's speech and the 1948 Democratic Party platform to support your arguments.

2. Why is it so important that the Democratic Party platform contain this language about civil rights in 1948, and how can this section on civil rights impact future Democratic Party platforms?

The examination of Handout 3 allows students to see how Humphrey's speech impacted and shaped public policies with civil rights issues for the Democratic Party during the 1948 presidential election. In this way, students also develop the ability to corroborate similar arguments found across multiple sources (Nokes, 2013). This learning experience helps students grasp the importance of democratic citizens exercising their political voices by seeing the change that is possible (Journell, 2017).

After pairs complete this activity, hold another class discussion centered on how Humphrey's words impacted the civil rights plank for the 1948 Democratic Party Platform. The teacher can ask the following extension question. What does Humphrey's impact on civil rights issues say about how democratic citizens can impact their country? This extension question helps students use evidence across multiple sources to see how like Hubert Humphrey they can positively impact and cause change.

Finally, students use evidence from sources examined to complete the following summative writing prompt to summarize the impact that Humphrey's speech had on the Democratic Party and civil rights issues in the United States.

Assume the role of a newspaper writer in Philadelphia that is covering the 1948 Democratic National Convention. Summarize the civil rights plank in the 1948 Democratic National Convention along with how Hubert Humphrey's speech played a vital part in getting this plank added in a short newspaper story. Use evidence from primary sources examined in your newspaper story. Your newspaper story should be a half page in length.

Students draw on evidence from sources examined to complete this summative writing prompt. The steps of this activity are designed to allow students to grasp the cause and effect relationship of Humphrey's speech to the civil rights plank in the 1948 Democratic Party Platform. By completing this writing prompt, students are able to articulate the impact that an unknown politician at the time made on shaping public policies (Levinson & Levine, 2013; VanSledright, 2013).

Afterthoughts

Hubert Humphrey's speech and the addition of a civil rights plank to the 1948 Democratic Party Platform caused some Southern Democrats to form an independent party, the Dixiecrats. The Dixiecrats focused its campaign on states' rights to preserve segregation laws throughout the United States. Strom Thurmond was nominated as the presidential candidate for the Dixiecrats but was unsuccessful with President Harry Truman being reelected in 1948. The Dixiecrats returned to the Democratic Party after the 1948 presidential election, but this was a preview of what was to come as many Southerners left the Democratic Party with the passage of civil rights legislation in the 1960s (Feldman, 2015; Frederickson, 2001).

Mainly through Congress, Southern Democrats would use the 1950s to block progress on civil rights issues (Caro, 2002; Fite, 1991; Mann, 1996). Regardless of this fact, Hubert Humphrey's speech put the Democrats on a collision course with a political reckoning about civil rights issues that could not be avoided. This collision course would realign the U.S. political landscape and play an instrumental role in turning the South into a Republican stronghold (Carter, 2000; Perlstein, 2008). It is important to remind students that change does not just happen. Instead, change occurs as people use their agency to advocate for issues as generations continue to address the changing contours of a public issue (Clabough, 2021; Hess & McAvoy, 2015).

Middle school social studies teachers can create learning opportunities for their students to examine other lesser known historical and contemporary figures that influenced the outcome of events through not only their words but their actions. For example, students can examine Jumal Tarbir and others that protested for the employees of McDonalds to get a pay raise to $15 an hour in 2016 and how this movement that started in New York City spread to other parts of the country (Sanders, 2018; Smith, 2016). This protest has been instrumental in drawing attention to the minimum wage and setting in motion President Biden signing an Executive

Order that federal contractors have to pay workers a $15 an hour minimum wage (Clark, 2021; Wise, 2021). It also shows that change can occur not only by eloquent words as demonstrated by Hubert Humphrey but by being actively involved to challenge public policies as the McDonalds' workers were.

Agency to impact and change U.S. society is not reserved for the more affluent. All democratic citizens have agency, regardless of the color of their skin, income level, religious beliefs, gender, or sexual orientation. Middle school social studies teachers need to set up learning activities that allow their students to analyze issues and take part in developing a democratic society that is equitable to all its citizens (Ochoa-Becker, 1996). In order to accomplish this, middle school social studies teachers have to allow students to see historical and contemporary examples of how people's actions can cause change to help address public issues. After all, democratic citizens applying their agency is the lifeblood to ensure a functioning and healthy U.S. democracy.

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Appendix

Handout 1: Flyer *Why Should We March*?

"Why Should We March?" March on Washington fliers, 1941. A. Philip Randolph Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (8–8) *Courtesy of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Washington, D.C.*

Handout 2: Excerpts from Hubert Humphrey's 1948 Democratic National Convention Address

From the time of Thomas Jefferson, the time when that immortal American doctrine of individual rights, under just and fairly administered laws, the Democratic Party has tried hard to secure expanding freedoms for all citizens.

My friends, to those who say that we are rushing this issue of civil rights, I say to them we are 172 years late. To those who say that this civil-rights program is an infringement on states' rights, I say this: The time has arrived in America for the Democratic Party to get out of the shadow of states' rights and to walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights.

Hubert Humphrey, *1948 Democratic National Convention Address* (Philadelphia, PA: July 14, 1948).

Handout 3: Excerpts from 1948 Democratic Party Platform

The Democratic Party is responsible for the great civil rights gains made in recent years in eliminating unfair and illegal discrimination based on race, creed, or color.

The Democratic Party commits itself to continuing its efforts to eradicate all racial, religious, and economic discrimination.

We call upon the Congress to support our President in guaranteeing these basic and fundamental American Principles: (1) the right of full and equal political participation; (2) the right to equal opportunity of employment; (3) the right of security of person; (4) and the right of equal treatment in the service and defense of our nation.[1]

Democratic National Party, *1948 Democratic Party Platform* (Philadelphia, PA: July 12, 1948).

A Government for Distracted People Isn't by Distracted People: Re-Examining Technology Use in Terms of Active Citizenship.

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Abstract
In 2020 I got rid of my smartphone and social media to help me stay more connected to the world in front of me. However, I soon realized that there was more to learn about teaching, learning, and citizenship than I had expected. Therefore, in this paper I discuss my technology journey and put it in the context of teaching and learning social studies. I conclude by discussing the dangers of being distracted in terms of developing active citizenship in the students we teach.

Keywords: Digital minimalism; citizenship; civic duty; distractedness

> *In my experience, most people who struggle with the online part of their lives are not weak willed or stupid. They're instead successful professionals, striving students, loving parents; they are organized and used to pursuing hard goals. Yet somehow the apps and sites beckoning from behind the phone and tablet screen—unique among many temptations they successfully resist daily—managed to succeed in metastasizing unhealthily far beyond their original roles. (Newport, 2019, p. 8)*

In 2020, as an educator I found myself digitally oversaturated due to the fact that essentially 100% of my job responsibilities had shifted from in person to online due to COVID-19. Due to this oversaturation, I made a well thought out decision to trade my smartphone for a flip phone and I also deleted all social media accounts. I wrote an article that documented these decisions and resulting experiences (see Mullins, 2020). I received many inquiries from people inside and outside of the field of education, about my experiences with minimalizing technology during a time when everyone was expected, if not required, to be online the majority of their waking hours. I have been asked numerous times, "What have you learned from doing this and have you stayed on the same trajectory since making this change almost two years ago?" Therefore, in this article, I am going to reflect on the past two years and connect my experiences with my role as a social studies teacher educator. I will also make connections to the role this journey has played in helping me to re-examine teaching for citizenship in light of technology use.

Reflecting Back

In the first several months after getting rid of my smartphone, I admittedly thought I had made a bad decision. I did not have maps when I travelled, I did not have an ability to search questions I needed answered throughout the day, I could not lookup phone numbers of businesses, and texting with T9word was a headache. If not for stubbornness, I would have probably gotten my smartphone back and admitted defeat. However, after around five months, I had developed a new way of doing things. For example, I bought a cheap navigation device for long trips, I memorized locations and wrote directions for short trips, I stopped wanting my random questions answered, I memorized phone numbers of places I frequent, something I had not done in years, and I almost altogether quit texting, preferring instead to talk on the phone.

At this point, I realized that there were other areas of my life related to technology that probably needed revisited. For example, my email use was still very frequent. Most days, I would leave the email tab open all day, which similar to my smartphone, would inhibit me from deeply focusing on work that I needed to complete. After reading more literature on the benefits of focusing, such as *Deep Work* (2016) by Cal Newport, I realized that even though I had been able to effectively live without social media or a smartphone, my focus was still suffering. Therefore, I started setting rules for myself about email use. For example, I decided to only check my email three to four times a day, instead of leaving it in the background where it could interrupt my focus at any given moment. Also, I established parameters with my students by developing a policy where I will not respond to emails after 5:00 pm or on the weekend. This is different than being inaccessible and my students still found me accessible but respected those windows as times when they could not get in touch with me.

Additionally, even though I had given up my smartphone, I realized I still needed to set parameters around how I used my phone at home. So I invested in a cheap land line phone and started cutting my phone off in the evenings to fully focus on being present when I came home from work each day. I realize that some will read this and find it to be extreme. However, I would encourage the reader to ask instead, what was the result of all of these drastic measures? In terms of work, my professional work has flourished and resulted in more opportunities to publish and present than I had previous to getting rid of my smartphone and social media. In fact, at my current university I was asked to provide a series of talks on work/life balance in terms of a healthy approach to technology use. In terms of personal relationships, my relationships are more fruitful and rewarding than they ever were before when I had social media and a smartphone because it has forced me to authentically engage with others. For example, I cannot like a post of a new home someone buys, so if I want them to know I am happy for them, I either have to call them or send a letter to them, both of which are more meaningful than a simple click on a social media post. You still may be wondering, however, what does this have to do with teaching or teacher education? That is where I will turn my attention to next.

Teaching and Learning

Issues of Poverty

Every university I have worked at, has been in an area that has a large number of economically disadvantaged students. While I have made a choice to refrain from using certain technologies, I think it is easy to forget that some students do not have access to some technologies at all and do not have the fiscal ability to make such a decision to either refrain from certain technologies or to purchase certain technologies. COVID-19 magnified issues of poverty that many of our students experience, by expecting them to be online and have devices. As COVID-19 starts to transition into an endemic, perhaps we as educators need to step away from keeping all of our instructional materials online and start realizing that this is inhibiting, if not preventing, many of our students from succeeding. I know that most educators would be willing to make accommodations should a student struggle with issues of accessibility, but requiring students to approach educators and ask for those accommodations due to financial difficulties is what Gorski (2017) refers to as asking students to perform their poverty. In essence, the students have to admit to a superior that they are too poor to be able to purchase what they have been asked to purchase. Therefore, if at all possible, educators need to ensure that any technology access that is needed is provided to the students by the school and if it is not, then that assignment or expectation needs revised and reimagined so that students do not have to struggle with issues of access to complete homework/outside of class assignments.

Civic Engagement

If we want students to develop the dispositions required for civic duty, this cannot be effectively accomplished in a distracted state. However, constant technology use has produced a type of constant distractedness that has become common place. As Newport (2019) notes:

> No one, of course, signed up for this loss of control. They downloaded the apps and set up accounts for good reasons, only to discover, with grim irony, that these services were beginning to undermine the very values that made them appealing in the first place; they joined Facebook to stay in touch with friends across the country, and then ended up unable to maintain an uninterrupted conversation with the friend sitting across the table. (p. XIII)

Those uninterrupted conversations can be understood as democratic discourse, and without that occurring on a regular basis, we, as a society, are not engaging in conversations to a degree that we are learning from each other. When writing about the need of people with disabilities engaging in discourse, Mullins (2019) argued:

> Consideration of participation in the societal discourse of individuals with disabilities must be recognized as essential to the inclusion of such individuals in the democratic

> process and, for one to be included, he or she has to be able to explain to others, to the fullest extent possible, his or her needs, desires, and aspirations. (p. 8)

The same holds true for *all* people. If we as individuals are not able to sit down with others, uninterrupted and explain our desires and needs to each other, how can we really know how to be good citizens to one another?

So then, the question may arise, what are the solutions to such problems? It is not easy, but it is simple. The philosophy of digital minimalism provides insight to what a perceived solution could be. Newport (2019) notes, that digital minimalism is "A philosophy of technology use in which you focus your online time on a small number of carefully selected and optimized activities that strongly support things you value, and then happily miss out on everything else" (p. 28). The key is teaching students that technology is a tool that should be used to support values and learning, not a central focus of the classroom. As Dontre (2021) notes,

> Given the general lack of consensus in the literature, it is reasonable to suggest that digital devices are not all bad or all good; they are merely tools that may benefit students or interfere with learning, depending on how they are used. (p. 380)

The idea here is that for learning, technology should be approached as a tool. That being said, sometimes tools prove to not be very effective. It is at that moment, that the tool should be scrapped, and another tool should be put into its place. If the old tool (technology) proves to be more effective, then the teacher should hold strong to the old tool and not replace it because the technology appears as a shiny new Christmas bauble (Hicks et al, 2020). A few digital minimalist guidelines one could implement in the classroom are:

1. For upper grades, have a specific spot for students to place cell phones in the classroom when they walk into the room. A shoe rack that hangs on the door works very well for this purpose.
2. Although many schools are moving everything to Google Classroom or other online formats, push against the norm and have times when students have to use paper and pencil and not be consumed with being online with every activity.
3. Focus on building discussion skills by implementing specific research supported strategies, such as Structured Academic Controversy (SAC, see https://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/21731). This is especially important in a world where most students do not get these skills because they communicate almost entirely online.
4. Focus on project-based learning, where students create a tangible project at the end of a unit/lesson (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2010). The current norm is that students consume hours of digital material without ever being a producer of material themselves (Newport, 2016). Expecting the students to create something tangible can help upset this trend.

5. With every activity/instructional decision, educators should always question if the analog way of doing this activity works better or if it is only being conducted online/with technology to keep students' attention. If the answer is that it works better without technology, then push the technology aside for that particular activity.

The previous guidelines, although simple, can produce major changes in a world where students almost never have face to face discussions, create products, or engage with non-digital materials.

Concluding Thoughts

It is interesting that the same people who create these new technologies for teachers and students do not want their own children learning while focused on technologies. For example, the Waldorf School in the Silicon Valley, that educates many tech moguls' students, states the following on their website in regards to how they use technology in the classroom:

> Brain research tells us that media exposure can result in changes in the actual nerve network in the brain. This can affect such things as eye tracking (a necessary skill for successful reading), neurotransmitter levels, and how readily students receive the imaginative pictures that are foundational for learning. Media exposure can also negatively affect the health of children's peer interaction and play.

> Waldorf educators believe it is far more important for students to interact with one another and their teachers, and work with real materials than to interface with electronic media or technology. By exploring the world of ideas, participating in the arts, music, movement and practical activities, children develop healthy, robust bodies, balanced and well-integrated brains, confidence in their real-world practical skills and strong executive-function capabilities.

> In the high school curriculum, Waldorf embraces technology in ways that enhance the learning process, by using it as a tool, rather than replace the role of the teacher. Students quickly master technology, and many Waldorf graduates have gone on to successful careers in the computer industry. (Waldorf, 2022, Media and Technology Philosophy)

One can see that the same people producing the technology that most teachers use in their classroom also believe that students should not be using so much technology. As a matter of fact, down further in their philosophy they state, "Exposing children to computer technology before they are ready (around 7th grade) can hamper their ability to fully develop strong bodies, healthy habits of discipline and self-control, fluency with creative and artistic expression and flexible and agile minds" (Waldorf, 2022, WSP Media and Technology Philosophy). However, as teachers, most of us are forced to give our students those materials MUCH younger than seventh grade.

Elite schools such as the Waldorf School are focused on developing civic skills and discourse, but in the mainstream classroom this is not all that present. Therefore, we as a society are continuing to produce an aristocratic ruling class because those that are being prepared to lead this nation are developing these deep civic values, while other students are being educated by the technology, rather than by real people. As Shlain (2019) notes, "Schools in lower-income areas with poor teacher-student ratios will increasingly rely on tablets while better-off students get more human attention both in and out of the classroom, and inequalities will only grow" (p. 45). We are stuck in a cycle where teacher shortages and a lack of high-quality teaching materials are trying to be resolved by throwing more technology at teachers and students, which is perpetuating the problem, not solving the problem. Students need teachers, not more technology.

What started out as a journey in developing myself led to my eyes being open to the greater need of society in terms of discourse and civic development. We are, unknowingly, continuing to produce a distracted society while the bourgeoise of society is continuing to produce a class of people to rule the distracted. As teachers, teacher educators, and citizens, we need to take a stand against this constant technology focused world. Some of the elite have already taken such a stand as evidenced in the Waldorf schools, but this is at best producing a top-down approach to citizenship. If our republic is supposed to be for the people and by the people, then the people have to engage with full focus. Parker (1996) argues, "it is not so much 'we the people' who govern in these fledgling democracies as it is power elites that govern" (p. 182). As Mullins (2019) similarly states,

> Therefore, the argument that everyone has the potential to be a leader is an argument for the disruption of the status quo present in modern politics and in education, too, because it infers that government can and should not only be constructed for the people, but also by the people, which is in line with ideals stated in the founding documents of the United States of America but not yet actualized in the conduct of the American society. (p.11)

It is time to actualize what was written so many years ago. Everyone has the potential to be a leader, but it is time to refocus on being focused.

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