

Running head: TEACHING TO A STATUE

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## Abstract

According to a Winthrop University survey conducted in 2018, 80% of White Southerners believed that Confederate statues should remain standing. Our study seeks to understand this continued support for Confederate memorials by examining the interplay between statues and Southern history textbooks published from the 1880s through the 1960s. As a case study, we chose the John B. Gordon equestrian statue located on the Georgia statehouse grounds. We found that local history textbooks evolved over time, reinforcing and accentuating the imagery on the Gordon statue. For decades, these history textbooks placed more emphasis on Gordon, a relatively obscure Confederate general, than on the wartime experiences of the enslaved. The textbooks also dedicated more words to explaining Gordon's actions at the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse—again, a relatively obscure wartime anecdote that was depicted on the statue—than to the Emancipation Proclamation. We believe that this study sheds light on the continued survival of the Lost Cause mythology, the glorification of individual Confederate icons, and the deemphasis on slavery.

Teaching to a Statue: John B. Gordon, History Textbooks, and the Creation of a Lost Cause Hero

### **Introduction**

On Saturday, May 25, 1907, the two surviving daughters of John B. Gordon stood before a crowd of 5,000 onlookers on the Georgia statehouse grounds. They were there to honor their father, the former Confederate general, United States Senator, and Georgia Governor, who had died three years prior. The two women pulled a rope that removed a silk covering, revealing an equestrian statue, rising twenty-five feet high. That was the cue for the band to play Dixie and, reportedly, the crowd let out a spontaneous rebel yell (“Statue of General John B. Gordon will be unveiled on Saturday,” 1907; “As in battle Gordon sits his charge: Equestrian statue of Georgia’s dauntless leader disclosed to the public view yesterday,” 1907; “Gordon statue was unveiled before crowd,” 1907). This ceremony honored the first statue to be placed on the current grounds of Georgia’s capital, and it remains there today, overlooking downtown Atlanta to the northwest.

At the base of the statue is a bronze relief, depicting a rather obscure moment of the Civil War. The bronze relief represents a scene from May 12, 1864, when General Gordon found himself at the center of the fighting at Spotsylvania Courthouse in Virginia. Ulysses S. Grant’s army, as the story goes, was about to break through the Confederate lines. Just as Gordon was rallying his soldiers for a counterattack, Robert E. Lee appeared. The bronze relief depicts this moment, when Gordon grabbed hold of Lee’s reigns and chivalrously ordered his commanding officer to the rear of the fighting. Gordon, therefore, saved Lee’s life while rallying his own soldiers to save the Army of Northern Virginia. Gordon was later given the nickname of “The Man of the 12th of May” (Freeman, 1934, p. 385). According to one newspaper report, the 12th of May was “an act which has figured in poetry, song and story” (“Statue of General John B. Gordon will be unveiled on Saturday,” 1907).

The 12th of May story was retold at the ceremony in 1907. The keynote speaker, General Clement Evans, did not mention slavery or race. Nor did he refer to the Atlanta race riots that had broken out the previous September (“Gordon statue was unveiled before crowd,” 1907). During the three days of the race riots, White mobs murdered over twenty African Americans because of the unsubstantiated allegations that Black men had been assaulting White women. The murders occurred on Atlanta’s downtown streets just to the northwest of the capital, the same direction that the Gordon statue faces (Bauerlein, 2002). The statue, the riots, and the story of the 12th of May all embody the Lost Cause myth. According to the Lost Cause narrative, the Civil War was a conflict over state’s rights, not slavery, and one punctuated by romantic acts of individual heroism (Gallagher, 1997; Gallagher & Nolan, 2000; Korda, 2014; Nolan, 1991; Ransom, 2005). Virginia had Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Georgia needed its hero, and Gordon’s actions on the 12th of May helped fill that void.

Speeches and statues were not the only tools through which Southern Whites constructed the Lost Cause. Education played an important role, as well, and textbooks from the era give current historians insight into how the Civil War was portrayed in Southern classrooms in the early 20th century. Therefore, an examination of local Georgia history textbooks advances our understanding of the ubiquity of the Lost Cause narrative. The romanticizing of the Civil War not only filled public spaces with statues. It also filled Georgia’s classrooms. How did statues and textbooks complement each other during the creation of the Lost Cause myth? Did textbooks reinforce the supposed grandeur and heroism of the conflict?

This study traces the evolution of Georgia’s local history textbooks from 1884 to 1968. It is part of a larger study on “mint julep textbooks,” a phrase coined by a New York publisher to describe history textbooks created for a specifically Southern audience (Bohan et al., 2019).

Here, we focus on the wartime depiction of John B. Gordon, in particular, as a case study for broader trends of romanticizing the Civil War. The story of the 12th of May is the litmus test for the degree of nostalgia in each textbook. In this study we employ content analysis to measure the emphasis placed on the 12th of May and on Gordon generally. The emphasis on 12th of May is then compared to the overall number of words dedicated to the issue of slavery during the war and the Emancipation Proclamation in particular. Our hypothesis is that the more relative weight given to Gordon and the 12th of May would reflect a higher degree of Lost Cause nostalgia. We were also curious as to whether the ratio of words dealing with Gordon and the 12th of May relative to slavery and the Emancipation Proclamation changed over time.

The findings were surprising. The emphasis on Gordon and the 12th of May did not reach its peak until the 1910s, a decade after the unveiling of Gordon's statue. Nonetheless, until the late 1960s, the story of the 12th of May remained a presence in Georgia. Even in the second half of the 20th century, Gordon's reported heroism received a greater emphasis than the issue of slavery. Considering the length and resiliency of Lost Cause stories such as Gordon's, it comes as little surprise that his statue still overlooks downtown Atlanta. Understanding Lost Cause textbooks, we argue, is one key to understanding the power and resiliency of the Lost Cause among Southern Whites still today.

### **Literature Review**

As historian David Blight (2001) discussed in *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, Southerners utilized monuments to the Confederacy as a means to declare their "victory over Reconstruction" (p. 265). So too, Southern textbooks offered another Confederate victory over the invading Northerners. As the Lost Cause became the "tonic against a fear of social change," Southern historians, writers, and politicians worked to ensure their

children received an “appropriate” view of Southern culture and history through textbooks (Blight, 2001, p. 266; Cox, 2003; Moreau, 2004; Zinth, 2005). These views included depictions of contented slaves and of a war being fought over states’ rights (Springston, 2018). Pro-South advocates even counted the textbook lines to make sure authors had provided balanced perspectives. Thus, Jefferson Davis should be mentioned as many times as Abraham Lincoln, and Robert E. Lee should be portrayed as often as Ulysses S. Grant (Cox, 2003; Rutherford, 1919).

With the growth of public schooling in the South as a result of Reconstruction, a sectional textbook industry emerged and Southern educational leaders advocated for the adoption of school materials that met the unique “circumstances of the South” (Moreau, 2004, p. 60). Rather than print their own books, however, most Southern states selected state adoption as the route to safeguard against Northern monopolies. Thus, the Southern textbook publishing industry was born in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the majority of the approximately 20 states with statewide textbook adoption policies are still located in the South (Association of American Publishers, 2015; Webb, 2016). Because authoring, printing, and distributing textbooks could be difficult and expensive, the Southern state textbook committees could control content by demanding changes to narratives, wording, and images, or by threatening to cancel book contracts, which could close down smaller publishing firms (Zimmerman, 2004).

Why do we focus on textbooks in our larger study of mint julep textbooks (Bohan et al., 2019)? As Woyshner and Schocker (2015) noted, “textbooks remain the primary source of instruction in secondary classrooms, even though problems with them are well documented” (p. 443). Textbooks have long dominated the educational landscape (Black, 1967b) and especially so in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which was long before the advent of standards-based

education and multimedia resources. Furthermore, textbooks have provided a basic roadmap of the curriculum (Dagbovie, 2014). Although textbooks were not the only medium for conveying historical information, they were certainly an important component of early 20th century teaching and learning.

Several scholars have examined the role of textbooks in the history curriculum. David Blight (2001), James Loewen (2010), Jonathan Zimmerman (2002, 2004, 2017), and Joseph Moreau (2004) provided considerable insight with respect to the influence of textbooks on history education and memory. Zimmerman's research introduced us to the concept of Lost Cause textbooks. Diane Ravitch's *The Language Police* (2003) demonstrated how special interest groups influenced textbook publishers from both the right and left. James V. Wertsch (1998) provided a framework for understanding the construction of historical narratives in Southern Georgia textbooks, including "being temporally organized, having a central subject, plot, and narrative voice, and achieving closure around a conclusion" (p. 80). In the wake of the more recent debates over the Confederate legacy, current textbook literature included representations of race and racism in Southern Black schools from 1865-1876 (Brosnan, 2016), fighting the Lost Cause (Bausum, 2017), and the teaching of Black history to White Southern students in the 1930s (Woyshner, 2018). A gap exists, however, in the analysis of late 19th and early 20th century Southern history textbooks. Our research helps to fill this gap.

Peter Novick's (1988/2005) *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* documented the professionalization of the historian in the late 19th century. Pre-professional historians did not primarily earn their living through the creation of history texts; the "gentleman amateurs" led the discipline in the pre-professional era (Novick, 1988/2005, p. 50). Pre-professional historians—apt to insert flowery language, opinion, and

controversy into their writings—were not restrained by the obsession for objectivity that later dominated professional historians. Many of these pre-professionals also saw the purpose of their work as moral instruction, not a scientific and objective search for truth. G.A. Reich (2015) explained another purpose of the pre-professional textbooks: the building of “collective memory” in order to facilitate “people’s orientation in time and place” (p. 500). At the turn of the century, professor of history at Columbia University William Dunning led the professional historical dialog regarding the Reconstruction era. Dunning’s strict and often bigoted analysis of Reconstruction promulgated the reconciliation approach to post-war historiography and the Dunning school remained dominant for two decades (Grob & Billias, 1992). His attitudes were reflected in so many scholars and writers at the time, such as James Ford Rhodes and Thomas Dixon, that it was difficult to find anyone to critique let alone contradict the reconciliation dogma (Franklin, 1980). Dixon wrote *The Clansman*, upon which the film *Birth of a Nation* was based. When African American historians Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois spoke out against the racist “objectivity” put forth by the professional historians, the Dunning school dismissed their research as being overtly biased—due to the supposed limitations of their race (Novick, 1986/2005, p. 231). The Dunning school and the racial tensions it reflected provide the broader context of the local Georgia history textbooks that we examined.

### **Research Design and Methods**

Content analysis provided data-driven information to complement the historical narrative. Klaus Krippendorff (2004) defined content analysis as the “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use” (p. 18). According to Krippendorff, replicability is the idea that multiple researchers working at different times should obtain the same results using the same techniques. Words were our units of measurement in our

content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). Similar to the methodology employed by Woysner and Shocker in their analysis of Black women in American history textbooks (Woysner & Shocker, 2015), the effect of this method is to equalize the units for quantitative comparison.

We coded references to four concepts: two more general ideas and two more specific. First, we counted the number of words dedicated to describing the military career of John B. Gordon. We decided to separate Gordon's actions during the war from his post-war political career because, we believed, his combat experiences would better reflect each textbook's glorification of Confederate heroism. Second, we counted each textbook's discussion of slavery or the perspective of the enslaved during the war. Again, we focused solely on references to slavery from the textbook's sections covering events from 1861 to 1865. We omitted references to slavery as a cause of the war, events such as the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and John Brown's Raid in 1859. We did this because we thought it would provide a clearer comparison to the combat experiences of Gordon. We wanted to find the degree to which textbooks emphasized Southern generals at the expense of the perspectives of enslaved Georgians.

We also analyzed each textbook's emphasis on more specific events: the 12th of May and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. We counted the words dedicated to describing Gordon's actions on May 12, 1864, an event that was far from historically significant, either militarily or politically. Presumably, the main purpose of retelling a story such as the 12th of May would be to provide evidence of Gordon's heroism, thus justifying his reputation as Georgia's greatest Confederate general. The Emancipation Proclamation, on the other hand, is considered a turning point in United States history. Granted there were limitations to Lincoln's executive order, e.g., freeing only the enslaved in areas of open rebellion. The document, however, ultimately led to

the 13th Amendment and it critically sent a message to the world that the Civil War was a conflict over the institution of slavery. We coded references to the Emancipation Proclamation and abolition of slavery in Georgia because this reflected the inverse of another aspect of the Lost Cause myth: a deemphasis on the importance of slavery's role in the Civil War. A lack of emphasis on the Emancipation Proclamation might provide a clear barometer to gauge the Lost Cause mentality within a textbook, especially in comparison to the words spent discussing the 12th of May.

There are flaws in this process, of course. The role of the editors, for one, might have changed word counts and therefore the original intent of the authors. Nonetheless, we hypothesized that the content analysis would reaffirm the patterns that we found in the narrative analysis. A further limitation, as Jörn Rüsen (2005) explained, was the problematic nature of comparing two different ideals of historiography especially since both hold inherent biases. We recognized that we have our own biases in interpreting the sources, and the sources selected for examination could be problematic. Furthermore, our own regional biases may have influenced our understandings, although we hail from both the North and the South. A final limitation rests with the challenge of comprehending sources written 50-130 years ago without being able to experience first-hand the Gilded Age, Progressive Era, or mid-20th century context. Such is the challenge all historians encounter.

### **The Man of the 12th of May**

Modern military historians, even those working to debunk the Lost Cause, recognize John B. Gordon as an effective commander. James M. McPherson (1988), whose *Battle Cry of Freedom* is considered the definitive single-volume history of the war, referred to Gordon as the

Army of Northern Virginia's "rising star" in 1864 (p. 726). Gordon C. Rhea (1997), an expert on Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign, wrote of Gordon:

The lanky thirty-two-year-old Georgian lacked formal military training, but he was a fighting general in every respect and ranked among Lee's most aggressive subordinates. He had an intuitive grasp of military matters and a temperament suited to audacious maneuvers. Above all, he knew how to inspire men to bold action (p. 246).

Robert K. Krick (1998), former chief historian of the Spotsylvania Courthouse battlefield, seems to agree with Rhea. He described Gordon as a "superb soldier" (p. 89). Like Krick, Joseph Wheelan (2014), an Associated Press journalist and historian, admired Gordon's lack of formal military training, which added to the mystique of the tough Confederate from the North Georgia mountains who, by the end of the war, was considered Lee's most trusted lieutenant.

Not only is there consensus among historians that Gordon was a capable division general, historians also agree that Gordon's actions on May 12, 1864, were pivotal at the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse. Gordon commanded the division at the center of the fighting that day, later known as the "Mule Shoe" or "Bloody Angle" (Freeman, 1944, pp. 402-405). Shelby Foote (1986) details the story in the third volume of his popular history of the war. Historian Ralph Lowell Eckert (1989) cites 13 firsthand accounts when he retold the "Lee to the rear" story. "Despite minor discrepancies between all these accounts," Eckert wrote in his footnotes, "the differences are not that important, for all agree on the basic storyline" (pp. 77-78). Douglas Southall Freeman (1934), albeit a great perpetuator of Lost Cause mythology, relied on the account of eyewitness W.W. Smith, a Confederate soldier writing contemporaneously, for his retelling. Another contemporary account that chronicles the story of Gordon and Lee's interaction on May 12, 1864 was an article in Richmond's *Dispatch*, appearing just a month after

the event (Krick, 1998, p. 89). Other recordings of Gordon's actions on the 12th of May followed over the decades, primarily as letters written among Confederate veterans. Gordon himself recorded his first version of the event in 1878, when he described the scene in a letter to Charles S. Venable. Venable was one of Lee's aide-de-camps and also claimed to have witnessed Gordon pleading with Lee to return to safety (Rhea, 1997).

The story, nevertheless, appears not to have entered the popular consciousness until Gordon published his memoirs, *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, in 1903. The memoir, though, lacks credibility for multiple reasons. Gary Gallagher of the University of Virginia calls Gordon's narrative "self-serving" (Gallagher, 1998, p. 14). Krick (1998) argues that Gordon's memoir was "so compromised by romantic viewpoints and purple prose that historians often do him the disservice of discounting his wartime experiences on that basis" (p. 89). However, Gordon's death in 1904 appears to be the moment when the 12th of May entered the popular consciousness of the White South. Throughout 1904 and 1905, the story appeared in eulogies and obituaries across the South (Krick, 1998). By the time that the Georgia state legislature established a commission to design and construct the Gordon statue, the romantic version of Gordon on May 12th had solidified in White Southerners' memories. The commission even interviewed Confederate veterans who claimed to have witnessed Gordon and Lee at Spotsylvania (Rhea, 1997). Their memories, however, deserve a degree of skepticism as they were recorded decades after the war and may have been influenced by published accounts of the story.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The truth of what happened on May 12, 1864 is less important to this study than how it was retold to Georgia's children for generations. Steven Terry's article (1983), "Depiction of the

Reconstruction Period in Georgia History Textbooks,” provided a helpful list of Georgia textbooks approved by the state textbook adoption committee throughout the twentieth century. His article led us to study six Georgia history textbooks. Lawton B. Evans wrote the earliest textbook in this study, publishing it in 1884. At the time, Evans was a school teacher in his mid-twenties, living in Augusta. He rose to the rank of superintendent of Richmond County schools, a position that he held until the 1930s. Evans published a second textbook in 1913 that we also coded, revealing an interesting evolution in Evans’ writing. Katherine B. Massey and Laura Glenn Wood wrote the next textbook in 1904. Their book was published in Boston by D.C. Heath, a national (not Southern) publishing company. In 1933, four Georgia women and classroom teachers—Mary Savage Anderson, Elfrida de Renne Barrow, Elizabeth MacKay Screven, and Martha Galladet Warring—published *Georgia: A Pageant of Years*. Twenty-five years later, James C. Bonner published *The Georgia Story*. Bonner was an academic historian who taught at the Georgia State College for Women in Milledgeville; he was also a member of the Georgia Historical Commission. Finally, in 1968, Bernice McCullar published *This is Your Georgia*. McCullar had a long career as a college professor, journalist, and the Information Director of the Georgia Department of Education.

Our first task was to count the words dedicated to John B. Gordon’s military career in each textbook. Prior to the unveiling of Gordon’s statue in 1907, Georgia history textbooks placed little emphasis on the Confederate general. While both the first Evans textbook (1884) and Massey/Wood (1904) mention Gordon in military contexts, the descriptions are minimal: just 27 words and 63 words, respectively. However, the data shows that the peak emphasis on Gordon’s military career came in Evans’ second book (1913), in the decade after the construction of the Gordon memorial. For the next fifty years, Gordon remained a feature of

Georgia's history textbooks. Anderson et al. (1933), Bonner (1958), and McCullar (1968) all described Gordon's military record in some detail by mentioning not only his actions at specific battles but also his lack of military training. In the early 20th century, Georgia needed its Civil War hero. Subsequent textbook authors provided that hero in the form of John B. Gordon.

After coding for references to John B. Gordon's military career, we coded for references to slavery within each textbook's discussion of the Civil War. We decided not to count the references to slavery in the buildup to the war, which included events like the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and John Brown's Raid in 1859. We wanted a contrast by which to compare the emphasis on the wartime actions of Gordon against the wartime experiences of the enslaved. Furthermore, Gordon was not a prominent leader prior to the war. So, the most balanced comparison, in our view, was to focus on 1861 through 1865 for both Gordon and the enslaved. The limited coverage of the experiences of the enslaved, we hypothesized, would also reflect a deemphasis on slavery, in general, in Lost Cause lore.

Prior to the construction of the Gordon statue, Georgia history textbooks dedicated more words to the issue of slavery during the war than they dedicated to Gordon's wartime experiences. That trend ended in the 1910s, after the construction of the statue. For over fifty years, Georgia's textbooks dedicated more words to Gordon than to wartime slavery, as depicted in Table 1. Evans (1913) wrote ten times more words on Gordon than on the enslaved population during the war; Anderson et al. (1933) wrote more than double the number of words on Gordon than on wartime slavery; for Bonner (1958) it was more than triple; finally, McCullar wrote 258 words about Gordon's military experiences and 156 words on slavery during the war.

[Insert Table 1]

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that Lost Cause textbooks defended wartime slavery. Instead of writing from the perspective of the enslaved or attempting to describe their experiences during the war, both of Evans' textbooks (1884; 1913) focused on the diminishing value of slaves and the how Georgia lost hundreds of billions of dollars of wealth as a result of the Civil War (p. 283, p. 297). Massey and Wood (1904) emphasized the myth of the loyal slave, stating that "slaves behaved remarkably well" during Sherman's march through Georgia (p. 109). "Well," in this context, refers to the enslaved who did not flee to Sherman's army. As late as the 1960s, McCullar (1968) argued that slaves remained loyal to Whites during the war, implying that slavery was therefore far from as cruel as Northerners believed (p. 511). Ultimately, an examination of context reveals flaws in the method of content analysis. The fact that a textbook contains a relatively high number of words on the topic of wartime slavery does not mean that the book minimizes the Lost Cause perspective. The meaning of the words is more important than the count.

Since the publication of these textbooks, historians have done considerable work on the wartime experiences of the enslaved. According to the 1860 census, on the eve of the war there were 462,198 people enslaved in Georgia, or 43.72% of the total population (MacKay, 2019). The responses of these hundreds of thousands of people to the events of the war was obviously a complicated one that varied by region. Joseph P. Reidy (1992) and David E. Patterson (2009) focused on the experiences of the enslaved in central Georgia. Julia Floyd Smith (1985) and Charles Joyner (1989) studied the experiences of those enslaved on coastal rice plantations. Anthony Gene Carey (2011) recently wrote a microhistory of slavery in southwest Georgia and Paul D. Lack (1989) covered slavery in Atlanta and the upcountry. W.E.B. Du Bois (1935) may have best synthesized their work decades earlier when he described a "general strike" by the

enslaved that crippled the Confederacy (p. 49). In Georgia, this phenomenon played out in unique ways, particularly because of Sherman's famous "March to the Sea" when slaves "continued to employ the skills of caution, calculation, and concealment of emotions which they had developed in bondage" (Escott, 1974, p. 101). Sherman's march culminated in Savannah and his meeting with twenty representatives and leaders of the local enslaved population. Prophetically, the chief spokesman of the group of African Americans, the Reverend Garrison Frasier, warned Sherman that freedom for the formerly enslaved could only be achieved through the ownership of land (Foner, 1998). Nowhere, though, did Georgia's history textbooks grapple with the complex and varied experiences of the enslaved.

Finally, we wanted to trace the evolution of how Gordon's 12th of May moment was depicted in Georgia's history textbooks. By way of comparison, we counted the number of words dedicated to describing Gordon at Spotsylvania Courthouse to the number of words dedicated to describing the Emancipation Proclamation. One event was an obscure combat anecdote; the other is considered by modern historians as a turning point in the history of the United States. Our hypothesis was that a Lost Cause textbook would dedicate more space to the obscure anecdote than to the Emancipation Proclamation. The results of the comparison reveal a glorification of Southern bravery with a deemphasis on slavery. These are hallmarks of Lost Cause mythology.

As shown in Table 2, two of the six Georgia textbooks dedicated more words to the 12th of May than to the Emancipation Proclamation. Three of the textbooks do not mention the Emancipation Proclamation at all. Notably, the earlier two textbooks, written before Gordon's memoirs and before the popularization of the story about the 12th of May, did not refer to the story despite lengthy descriptions of Gordon. The first reference to the 12th of May in a textbook

came six years after the construction of Gordon's statue. Evans (1913) provided the most detailed description of the event with 177 words. Both Anderson et al. (1933) and McCullar (1968) described the "Lee to the rear" event at Spotsylvania Courthouse in short paragraphs of 34-35 words; Bonner (1958) did not mention the story. After a peak in the 1910s—which, incidentally, corresponds with the height of the Lost Cause movement—the 12th of May remained an anecdote, but one that still influenced generations of Georgia school children.

The impact of the Emancipation Proclamation on the enslaved peoples of Georgia was mentioned in several textbooks but was rarely emphasized. In 1884, Evans mentioned the Emancipation Proclamation but he did so in a way that emphasized Georgia Governor Joseph E. Brown's willingness and efforts to cooperate with abolition in the closing months of the war (p. 298). Massey/Wood (1904) did not mention abolition or the Emancipation Proclamation. In 1913, Evans also ignored the topic. Anderson et al. (1933) mentioned Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation in passing with only 22 words. Her description did not deal at all with its impact on Georgia. Bonner (1958), on the other hand, referenced the Emancipation Proclamation in the following context:

Houses were pillaged and their contents stolen or given to negroes who followed [Sherman's] army. These plantation negroes, enjoying for the first time the freedom granted by Lincoln's emancipation proclamation of the previous year, proved a great hinderance to Sherman's movements. Sherman's officers frequently used drastic measures to discourage them from following the army (p. 299).

Thus, according to Bonner, emancipation led to lawlessness and the burdening of the Union army. Finally, McCullar (1968) dedicated 45 words to the topic of emancipation but, he also did not elaborate on how abolition impacted the lives of the enslaved. Ultimately, three of the

textbooks dedicate more words to the Emancipation Proclamation than to the 12th of May. This belies, however, how the textbooks characterized emancipation and abolition. All but one of the textbooks ignored the social impact of the event. Only Bonner (1958) discussed the lives of enslaved Georgians but he did so with a quintessentially Lost Cause spin.

### **Conclusion**

On Friday, April 26, 2019, Georgia governor Brian Kemp signed legislation that bans local governments from removing Confederate memorials (Jett, 2019). Kemp signed the law 112 years after the state government unveiled the Gordon memorial. During those 112 years, the statehouse grounds became a shrine to the Lost Cause. After Gordon's statue, the state capital memorialized the Confederacy's Vice President and Secretary of State, Georgia's two Confederate Senators and Governor, five more Confederate generals in addition to Gordon, a Confederate colonel, a Confederate major, a Confederate naval commander, and even a Confederate lieutenant (Joyner, 2015). The most notorious of Georgia's memorials to the Confederacy, however, is not on the statehouse grounds; it is Stone Mountain's carving of Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Robert E. Lee, which is located less than fifteen miles east of the capital. The idea for the Stone Mountain carving was originally conceived in 1909 but was not completed until 1970 (Foody, 2015). Stone Mountain, not the Gordon statehouse equestrian statue, became the focus of protests in the wake of the 2015 murders at Charleston's Emmanuel A.M.E. Church and it reemerged as a topic of public debate during the 2018 governor's race (Ellis, 2019).

White support for Confederate statues in Georgia remains strong. The bill that Governor Kemp signed into law in April 2019 was first proposed years earlier by State Representative Tommy Benton, who stated, "I'm proud of my heritage... [Removing Confederate statues] is an

attempt to have a cleansing of the Confederacy” (Joyner, 2015). According to a poll from Winthrop University, 80% of White Southerners believe that Confederate statues should remain as they are or remain with additional markers for contextualization. Meanwhile, 55% of Black Southerners said that the statues should be removed altogether (Bently, 2018). Southerners, needless to say, are deeply divided. The debate over what to do with Lost Cause memorials is far from over.

The John B. Gordon statue is not presently at the center of the controversy regarding Confederate statues. In this paper we argue, however, that examining the memory of Gordon can help 21st century readers understand the depth and intensity of the Lost Cause mythology. Governor Kemp, Representative Benton, and the millions of White Southerners who defend Confederate monuments have inherited generations of propaganda and not just in the form of public statues. For generations, White Southerners studied a version of the Civil War that all but ignored the experiences of the enslaved and that glorified the actions of men like John B. Gordon. Changing that mindset, a deeply held set of beliefs that transcends generations, will not be easy.

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Table 1

*Words Dedicated to Wartime Gordon Versus Words Dedicated to Wartime Slavery*

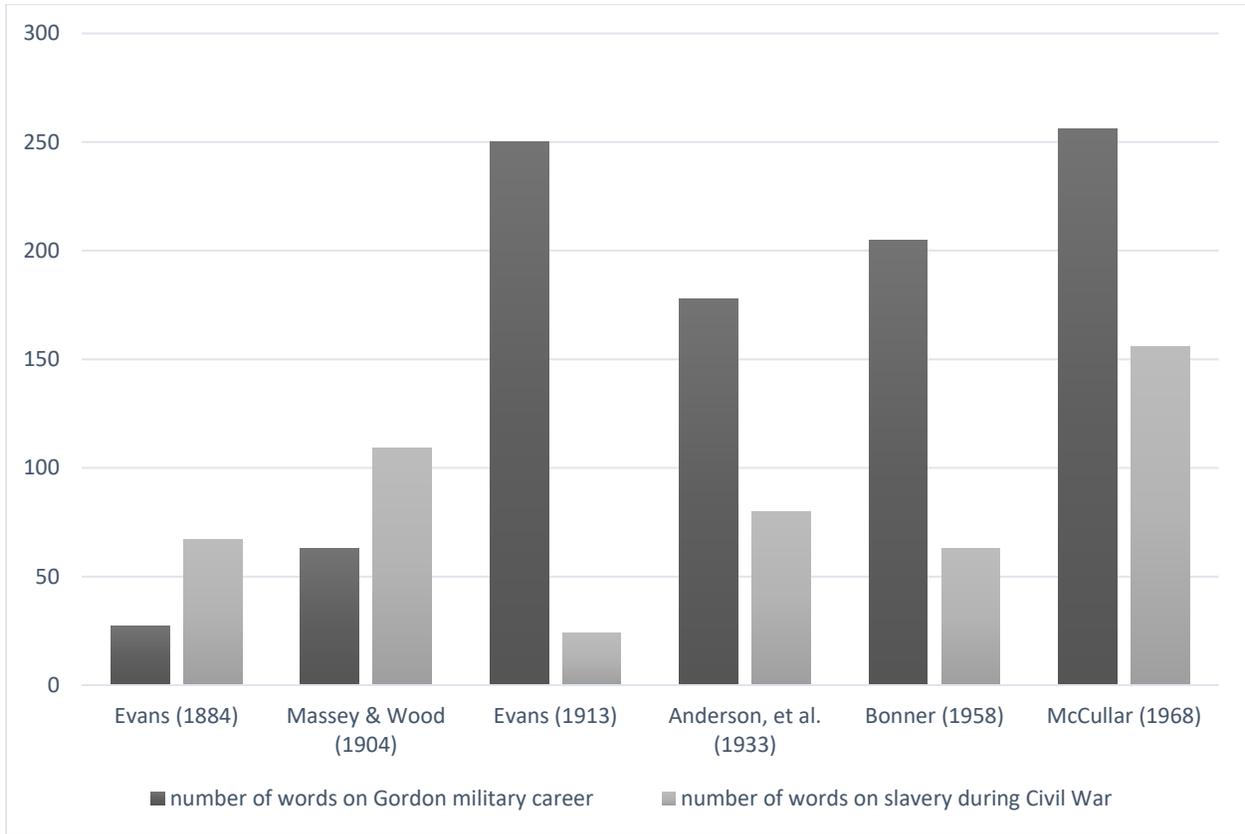


Table 2

*Words Dedicated to the 12<sup>th</sup> of May Versus Words Dedicated to the Emancipation Proclamation*

