

Mundane Documents, American Exceptionalism, and Savannah’s “Unique” History: A Comparative Rhetorical Analysis of the Confederate Memorial Task Force’s Reports

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Abstract: This article analyzes two recommendation reports that were used to determine outcomes for the Confederate monument in Forsyth Park in Savannah, Georgia. Through a comparative rhetorical analysis, I evaluate each report’s “Historical Context” section, analyze the phrase “Savannah’s unique history” to decipher its rhetorical impact, examine and critique the survey methods, and compare the ways in which each document presents specific and measurable ways to support truth-telling efforts pertaining to the city’s Black, Muscogee, and Yamacree history.

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Introduction

Nearly 150 years after the end of the Civil War, the United States belatedly began questioning the impact of Confederate memorials and monuments within the nation's public memory. This reckoning, motivated by ever-increasing white supremacist activity, as well as the murder of countless Black and brown people, inspired the removal of 160 Confederate monuments in the United States (Treisman, 2021, para. 1). However, more than 704 memorials and monuments still remained at the end of 2020 and hundreds more roads, signs, schools, and parks bear the names of Confederate soldiers (para. 4). One such monument, known simply as the Confederate Monument¹, still stands in Savannah, Georgia's historic Forsyth Park (see Figure 1). In 2017, shortly after neo-Nazis marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, Mayor Eddie DeLoach created the seven-member Confederate Memorial Task Force (CMTF) to address local concerns about the Confederate Monument. After assessing the results of a public survey that spanned October-December 2017, the CMTF composed a formal recommendation report, *Confederate Memorial Task Force Final Report*, where they determined eight recommendations for Savannah's City Council regarding the Confederate Monument—none of which removed the actual monument.² A few years passed, and in June 2020, shortly after George Floyd was murdered by a police officer, the new mayor, Van Johnson, a Black Democrat, directed the City Council to reconvene the CMTF to consider supplementary signage around the Confederate monument (Civil War Memorial Task Force, 2020, p. 4). This direction, what the Civil War Memorial Task Force (CWMTF) referred to as “renewed community interest” (p. 4), was actually a result of the monument being vandalized twice between June and September of 2020 (Congedo, 2020, para. 1) with phrases like “Justice 4 Breonna” and Black Lives Matter” (see Figure 2).

¹ The Confederate Monument in Forsyth Park has recently been changed to the Civil War Memorial, per the recommendations of the Civil War Memorial Task Force, which was previously named the Confederate Memorial Task Force from October 2017-October 2020. This name change is an obvious attempt to distance Savannah from controversies about Confederate monuments in the nation.

² I make the rhetorical choice to refer to the artifact as a Confederate monument because it more accurately represents it, and it also speaks to the ideological implications of its existence.



Figure 1: Confederate Monument in Forsyth Park. Photograph by the author.



Figure 2: Base of Confederate Monument with residual tagging; “Justice 4” remains visible.
Photograph from the author.

The 2017 *CMTF Final Report* and its successor, the 2020 *CWMTF Additional Recommendations Final Report*, illustrate two distinct paths taken in a technical document. The *CMTF Final Report* demonstrates the prevalence in which technical communicators transmit and interpret data to the public without an intentionality towards ethics and justice (Jones & Williams, 2018; Katz, 1992; Williams, 2010). Both reports disclose their research methods, but only the 2017 document actually performed a public survey. This survey, however, is riddled with flaws, including a lack of standardization of the survey portals, no explanation of how the freeform responses were coded to align with the online survey responses, and no clear attempts to elicit responses from the City's Black residents. In terms of how each report relates historical narrative, the *CMTF Final Report* elides a full account of the racism and segregation that has haunted Forsyth Park and obfuscates conversation about the city's current white-centric public memory system (Congedo, 2020). While still lacking in key ways, the *CWMTF Final Report* does provide a more honest rendering of Savannah's history of racism. It describes the segregation of Savannah's parks (especially Forsyth Park) and the subsequent battle for Black residents' civil rights in the early 1960s. Along with these decidedly different historical narratives, both reports also repeatedly use the phrase "Savannah's unique history" as a signifier of American Exceptionalism and to avoid making recommendations to remove the monument. The 2017 report offers perfunctory recommendations that do not address widespread grievances about Confederate monuments in public spaces and places, but the 2020 report calls for a comprehensive shift in Savannah's public memory system that invites a diverse coalition of residents to participate in a Culture, History, & Education Committee, and proposes recommendations that provide a framework for the public to understand the monument and space to change or remove the signage or the monument if/when state law allows.³ A comparison of the reports demonstrates how technical documents are not neutral and objective; technical communicators have the choice to recognize, reveal, reject, and replace injustice or to circumvent equity and justice (Shelton, 2020; Walton, Moore, and Jones, 2019; Walton and Agboka, 2021).

In recent years, scholars in rhetoric studies and cultural geography have more closely studied the racialized implications of public memory sites and artifacts, which include historical marker texts, monuments, memorials, and tours of historic buildings (Alderman, 2012; Bright et al., 2020; Dickinson et al., 2006; O'Brien, 2018; Poirot & Watson, 2015; Tell, 2019). Until recently, though, these conversations have not extended into technical and professional communication (TPC) scholarship. As part of TPC's social justice turn, recent scholarship in TPC has examined the tactics used by Equal Justice Initiative, as communicated via their *Community Remembrance Project Catalog*, to bypass state historical commissions who generally oppose the placement of HMTs that deal with issues of racial terror violence (O'Brien and Walwema, 2022). Likewise, O'Brien (2021) positions HMTs as informational reports that frequently reinforce white supremacy by suppressing minoritized and marginalized histories. Thus, the study of the *CMTF Final Report* and its successor, the 2020 *CWMTF Additional Recommendations Final Report*, demonstrates a significant and necessary intervention of TPC scholarship into public memory documentation.

Extending the work of TPC scholars who interrogate the role of racism in regulatory writing (Williams, 2010), teaching (Haas & Eble, 2018; Shelton, 2020), job ads (Walwema &

³ Georgia State Law, which was strengthened in 2019 by Governor Brian Kemp, does not allow cities or other local municipalities to damage or remove any monuments, statues, flags, or memorials (Campbell, 2020).

Carmichael, 2020), the field's methods and methodologies (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016; Walton & Agboka, 2021), and historical commissions (O'Brien, 2021), I analyze both recommendation reports through the lens of social justice-driven TPC research. As seemingly innocuous mundane documents (Blythe, 2007; Bordelon, 2012; Rivers & Weber, 2011), these reports can either bring about social change or maintain the status quo. I was guided by the following research questions in my comparative rhetorical analysis of both reports:

- How do the reports communicate Savannah's public memory, including Lost Cause ideology, the role of citizen-activists, injustice towards the Black community and Muscogee and Yamassee people?
- How is the phrase "Savannah's unique history" used as a rhetorical justification for not removing the Confederate Monument?
- What were the limitations of the first study's methods and findings and how might a new survey promote equity through a wider response rate?
- To what extent does either report present specific and measurable ways that Savannah's public memory sites and artifacts can include narratives of Black individuals, Muscogee and Yamassee people, and white women?

In what follows, I discuss public memory and the theoretical framing of my study. Next, I map out the study's methodology, present results, discuss the findings, and conclude with some interventions offered by TPC scholarship.

Exclusionary Public Memory

The abundance of public memory research that deals with its intersection with race, gender, and class confirms the fact that public memory artifacts, sites, and spaces tend to exclude marginalized voices. Similarly, public memory spaces often present lies or half-truths about both dominant cultural groups and people of color and avoid addressing any memories that would conflict with American Exceptionalism. For example, Lueck (2021) demonstrates how public memory is gendered with regard to bodies, spaces, and stories, as evidenced in how Sarah Winchester's ethos and positionality are intertwined via the Winchester Mystery House tour in San Jose, California (p. 116). While Winchester is the focus (and not excluded from the tour's narrative, as with many women and people of color), Lueck argues that as a result of the tour's conflation of the home and the human being—Winchester—both are dismissed as "anomalies and spectacles for consumption rather than subjects worthy of genuine inquiry and historical remembrance" (p. 114-115). Consistent with this line of reasoning, Bright et al.'s (2020) study of historic roadside markers in Tennessee demonstrates that there are more markers devoted to Nathan Bedford Forrest, founder of the Ku Klux Klan, than "all of white women and Native Americans combined" and "only five more African American markers across the whole state than those dedicated solely to Forrest" (p. 15). In Texas, a state with 16,000+ historical markers, only 142 directly deal with Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and many of these 142 communicate negative and derogatory details about Native Americans and Chinese Americans (O'Brien, 2021, p. 8). These studies, though, are not an aberration. Scholarship across rhetoric, technical communication, cultural geography, history, and tourism studies illustrates our nation's failure to honestly address evils like colonization, slavery, racial terror lynching, and Jim Crow segregation and likewise, a lack of public memory that illustrates "just representation" of white

women and people of color (Alderman, 2012; Dickinson, Ott, & Aoki, 2006; Loewen 1999; O'Brien, 2018; Poirot & Watson, 2015; Tell, 2019).

Social Justice In Technical Communication

While the “social justice turn” has become more prevalent over the last decade (Haas & Eble, 2018), as Walton and Agboka (2021) point out, scholarship that engaged with social justice concerns appeared as early as the early 1990s (p. 3). This “turn,” though, is more about action than just analysis, which was more common in 1990s cultural studies (p. 3). Social justice-motivated action in TPC extends into methodologies, pedagogies, theories, institutional policies, practices, and community work; thus, a hallmark of many of recent scholarship incorporates both why and how. Social justice methods and methodologies include: incorporating a narrative-based approach, understand and mitigate structural inequalities that women of color experience in academia (Gonzales, Walwema, Jones, Yu, & Williams, 2021), applying queer usability to address the needs of a wide range of users before crafting a document (Ramler, 2020), and introducing visual participatory research action methods to work with communities to solve wicked problems (Carlson, 2021). Some TPC scholars interrogate the field itself for injustices and inequalities. For example, Walwema and Carmichael (2020) examine how many TPC job ads use exclusionary language toward international scholars, and in some cases, require documents that are inconsistent with U.S. labor and immigration laws. In their critique of the misuse of decolonial frameworks and methodologies in TPC, Itchuaqiyag and Matheson (2021) clarify that “social justice” is not synonymous with “decolonial” and remind TPC scholars that decolonization is not a metaphor but must engage with the lived experiences of Indigenous people (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Social justice research has also focused more explicitly on documents that promote inequality, including Jones and Williams’ (2018) study of literacy tests that were used to disenfranchise Black voters for decades—and with ripple effects that still are evident in contemporary voter restriction laws. Similarly, Balzhiser, Pimentel, and Scott (2018) evaluate and critique the 2010 U.S. Census form for design and usability issues that deal with race and Hispanic origin, which likely led to inaccuracies with the census findings. In a study that merges visual and textual documents, Li (2019) assesses the U.S. *Statistical Atlases* from the late 19th and early 20th century to understand the writers’ visual strategies that delineate Chinese immigrants as the least desirable immigrant group during that time. Although previous TPC research has studied the intersection of race/racism, injustice, and technical documents, it is only a recent shift that has moved TPC scholarship into race and public memory. Indeed, there are many intersection points between TPC and public memory, including studying historical marker texts (HMT) as informational reports, examining the processes that state and county-level historical commissions determine if/how an HMT will be approved, and exploring the tactics that the Equal Justice Initiative uses in their Community Remembrance Project catalog to promote truth-telling in communities through readings, marches, and the placement of an EJI-funded HMT (O'Brien, 2021).

Mundane Documents

Following the path of this previous TPC scholarship that addresses social justice concerns, technical documents, and public memory, this article focuses on two formal recommendation reports. These reports can be considered “mundane documents” (Blythe, 2007; Bordelon, 2012; Rivers & Weber, 2011), which include the documents and communication that are easily overlooked. Whether because of their ubiquity, brevity, or repetitive nature, mundane documents do not typically capture the public’s attention; they are not “visible as the rhetorical fireworks of more obvious public documents” (Rivers & Weber, 2011, p. 188). Some other examples of mundane documents could include meeting minutes, internal memos, or reports—many technical documents could easily be categorized as “mundane.” However, because a document is mundane does not mean that it is unimportant or that it does not contribute to social change. Bordelon (2012) examines how educators Rewey Belle Inglis and Ruth Mary Weeks, who served as the first and second white women presidents of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1929 and 1930, modified the organizational structure of NCTE via their use of the President’s Book, a mundane document that served as a how-to manual for incoming presidents. Inglis and Weeks, though, intervened in the manual to discuss how to “resist the status quo” (p. 335). Bordelon (2012) argues that these tactics are often used by “muted rhetors,” or those who have been marginalized and silenced by dominant cultural voices. Likewise, Rivers and Weber (2011) highlight the newsletters, internal memos, proposals, and strategy documents of the Civil Rights movement that do not receive the same attention as the more popular speeches and letters. They contend, though, that “meetings and meeting minutes become as rhetorically influential as the actions they spawn, and the rhetoric that gets an audience to a speech and motivates them afterward must be considered as important as the speech itself” (p. 197). As these scholars assert, we must attend to the lesser-known documents to be able to track momentum and changes, especially because social change is slow and incremental. It is easy to assume that nothing has changed in Savannah because after several meetings of the task force, a public survey, and two formal reports, the Confederate monument still stands in Forsyth Park. However, as I will highlight in this article, many things *have* changed, but we must pay attention to the “ripples” that begin with an analysis of these reports and careful study of other documents (Bordelon, 2012, p. 349; Rivers & Weber, 2011, p. 195).

Methodology

This paper is guided by a social justice framework that locates the *CMTF Final Report* and the *CWMTF Additional Recommendations Final Report* as technical documents that reveal the work of oppression and justice. Jones and Walton (2018) define social justice research in technical communication in the following way: “[It] investigates how communication, broadly defined, can amplify the agency of oppressed people—those who are materially, socially, politically, and/or economically under-resourced” (p. 242). Likewise, as Katz (1992) and Jones and Williams (2018) remind us, technical communication without an attention to ethics and justice can be harmful to people. Thus, technical communicators are particularly poised to critique these documents considering the knowledge that many public memory issues are also technical communication issues. In a previous study, I established that artifacts like historical marker texts (HMT) are brief, public-facing information reports that are plagued with white supremacist overtones.

In this study, I identified the *CMTF Final Report* and *CWMTF Additional Recommendations Final Report* that were used to determine outcomes for the Confederate monument in Forsyth Park. I conducted a comparative rhetorical analysis of the documents using the following criteria: (1) I focused on the similarities and differences in each report's "Historical Context" section and noted the amount of detail that each focused on Savannah's Black and Indigenous history. (2) I analyzed the phrase "Savannah's unique history" to decipher its rhetorical impact. (3) I examined and critiqued the *CMTF*'s discussion of their survey methods. (4) I paid attention to the "Recommendations" section of each document and noted the revisions and additions that were made from the 2017 report and the 2020 report. I also compared the ways in which each document presents specific and measurable ways to support what Bryan Stevenson's Equal Justice Initiative (2021) calls "truth-telling efforts" about the city's Black, Muscogee, and Yamassee history.

My analysis of the *CMTF Final Report* and *CWMTF Additional Recommendations Final Report* incorporated three steps. The steps build on each other with increasing granularity for an optimal understanding, analysis, and application of my research questions. First, I performed a surface-level reading of the reports where I highlighted/underlined portions that addressed my research questions. In this reading, I did not attempt to apply concepts from other scholars, compare the documents, or form any conclusions. The purpose of the first reading was to locate the sections that attend to my research questions. Second, I performed a second reading of the reports using the four research questions: the communication of public memory, use of the phrase "Savannah's unique history," the task force's methods, and recommendations that deal with a plan to expand the conversation to include people of color. I coded the sections of the report that connected with public memory in blue, the phrase "Savannah's unique history" in yellow, the task forces' methods in red, and the recommendations in green. Third, I performed a comparative rhetorical analysis of the reports that specifically addressed the four criteria. For example, I considered the similarities and differences in how each report discussed the city's public memory with a specific focus on instances of a Lost Cause narrative, the presence or absence of remembrance about the city's Black community or the Muscogee and Yamassee people, and the role that people should play in public memory. Likewise, since both reports repeat the phrase "Savannah's unique history," I studied the context in which this phrase is used and to what end. The *CMTF Final Report* used a public survey to determine public opinion about the monument, and the *CWMTF Additional Recommendations Final Report* does not—but the writers do share their plan for future feedback. These areas are an important site of analysis, both in terms of the methods used and how/why the second report does not seek public survey results. The last part of my comparative rhetorical analysis focuses on the recommendations and how these recommendations are either strengthened, revised, or new recommendations are created between the first and second reports.

Results

Communication of public memory

The 2017 *CMTF Report* could not be more different from the 2020 *CWMTF Report* in terms of each's depiction of Savannah's public memory. This difference is evident by the focus of each document's historical background, what the *CMTF Report* calls "Historical Timeline" and the

CWMTF Report calls “Historical Context.” For example, the 2017 report is 15 pages in length, which includes the table of contents but does not include the additional appendix pages (with images of the monument). Of those 15 pages, nine of them are devoted to a “Historical Timeline” that begins on February 18, 1867, and ends on February 8, 1910. In contrast, the 2020 report is also 15 pages in length (again, not including the title page and appendix), and six pages focus on “Historical Context.” From a cursory glance, it appears that the 2017 report might be more exhaustive in its discussion of historical events simply because this report writes three more pages about history—60 percent of the 2017 document is about Savannah’s history. However, the amount of pages that the 2017 report allocates to Savannah’s public memory is misleading. Even though the document dedicates more than half of the report to retell the timeline of the Confederate monument, the writers avoid mentioning the wider historical context, which includes the colonization of Muscogee and Yamacree land, the city’s role in transporting enslaved Black individuals from the port to the surrounding areas, the number of people of color who were lynched in and around Chatham County during the Reconstruction period and beyond, the overt segregation of Savannah’s spaces—which includes Forsyth Park—or the impacts of the Civil Rights Movement on Savannah’s physical spaces. Conversely, the 2020 report carefully positions the Confederate Monument within a more expansive historical framework: “It [the Confederate Monument] was erected at the tail end of the Reconstruction Era, altered at the beginning of the Jim Crow Era, and additional monuments to Confederate leaders were added to its grounds at the height of the Lost Cause interpretation of the Civil War” (p. 6). Where the 2017 report avoids the larger cultural context, the 2020 report addresses some of the above-mentioned absences. The 2020 report primarily addresses Forsyth Park’s symbolism during the Jim Crow era; namely, that it was a notable site that centralized the racism of Savannah. Savannah’s recreational spaces were subject to segregation even though the Fourteenth Amendment prohibited segregation—the writers of the 2020 report explain the ways that the city still managed to keep Black people out of the city’s parks and playgrounds through local and state codes (p. 8). The 2020 report highlights a landmark Supreme Court case, *Wright v. Georgia*, where they overruled the Georgia Supreme Court that argued against a case that indicted seven Black men for playing basketball in Daffin Park, which Georgia Supreme Court argued that they were “creating a disturbance,” which was one of the codes that kept Savannah’s parks segregated (p. 9). However, as the 2020 writers explain, “Old habits proved hard to break [. . .] and Forsyth Park served as a staging ground, particularly for . . . members of the Cavalcade of White Americans, the White Citizens Council, and the Ku Klux Klan” (p. 10). The 2020 report concludes with a 1964 law, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, that desegregated spaces at a federal level, which superseded any state laws.

Alternatively, the 2017 report does not include any of this information. Instead, the writers focus on the work of the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association, a group that explicitly argued for and espoused a Lost Cause ideology and joined with the larger United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) in 1897 (Hinnant, 2015). In place of the history of Savannah’s racism and segregation, the 2017 report uses Lost Cause language without vilifying it or putting it in context:

- “Our wide Southern land . . . the mother they valiantly strove to defend” (p. 5)
- “The women of the South . . . have sought to save their memory from perishing” (p. 5)
- “Causes which I do not wish forgotten” (p. 5)

While the 2017 report devotes more space to a historical narrative, the writers avoid contextualizing the Confederate Monument within a wider cultural situation where people of color, including Black and Indigenous people, are absent from the narrative. The 2020 report brings more context into the discussion, especially in terms of discussing segregation and the fight for use of the city's parks and recreational facilities, but this report does not include a thorough contextualization, which would include addressing the colonization of Muscogee and Yamassee land and the role of slavery in Savannah's economic development. However, the 2020 report does address the need to include these stories, which they address in the Recommendations section.

Use of "unique history"

Both reports use this term twice each for a total of four times (see Table 1). In three out of four of those cases, the concept of "Savannah's unique history" is linked with preservation. Two times, the phrase "preserving Savannah's unique history" is used together (Confederate Memorial Task Force, 2017, p. 2; Civil War Memorial Task Force, 2020, p. 4), once the idea is connected to the city's "dedication to the principles of preservation and her recognition of history" (Confederate Memorial, 2017, p. 13), and once the phrase "the many stories and histories that make up our unique city" is used (Civil War Memorial, 2020, p. 5).

Phrase	Context	Report
"Preserving Savannah's unique history"	Located in the introduction of the report called "Task Force Purpose"	<i>CMTF Final Report (2017)</i>
"Preserving Savannah's unique history"	Located in the introduction of the report called "Task Force Purpose and Methodology"	<i>CWMTF Final Report (2020)</i>
"Preserving the artifact in situ as part of Savannah's unique history [...] the spirit of Savannah, her dedication to the principles of preservation, and her recognition of history"	Located in the "Task Force Recommendations" section; just prior to the list of recommendations	<i>CMTF Final Report (2017)</i>
"The many stories and histories that make up our unique city"	Located in the introduction of the report called "Task Force Purpose and Methodology"	<i>CWMTF Final Report (2020)</i>

Table 1: Uses of the phrase "unique history" in the *CMTF Final Report* and *CWMTF Final Report*.

Task force's methods

The methods differ in each report. The task force members in the 2017 report set out to uncover public opinion about the Confederate Memorial, so they crafted a public survey. They partially explain the findings in the *CMTF*, and from those partial findings, composed a series of recommendations. In the *CWMTF Report*, the task force members wrote their recommendations without the inclusion of public engagement, but they did propose a series of “next steps” which include three different levels of public engagement. The writers of the 2020 report also recommend a specific committee to continue to work with these ideas for the future. In the 2017 report, the task force members report about their methods for obtaining public opinion:

In order to gauge the Savannah community's opinions about the Confederate Memorial and what its future should be, the City of Savannah issued a call for public comment during a two-week period from October 30, 2017, 5:00pm through November 13, 2017, 5:00pm. Three portals were available to the public to submit their feedback, including postal mail, email, and an online survey. After accounting for duplicates, a total of 4,901 responses were received by the City during the two-week period. Of those, 2,442 identified themselves as Savannah residents, 2,304 identified themselves as non-residents, and 155 were not identified as either. The Task Force decided to place more or place greater weight on the opinions of Savannah residents as this is a Savannah memorial. (p. 12)

Each portal provided different ways to express opinion: The online survey asked respondents to select either “do not change,” “relocate,” “modify,” or “add interpretation,” the email and mail versions were written freeform, so the Task Force coded each and placed them into the above-mentioned categories. To summarize the results, the Task Force writers reported that a little less than two-thirds of Savannah residents wanted no changes to the monument and one-third wanted some form of change.

The *CMTF Report* does not list the full results, though. However, they did publish the full results to the media, which reveals that even more non-residents believed that the monument should not be removed, relocated, or modified (see Table 2). Neither the report nor any media releases explain the demographic or spatial makeup of the survey results. There is also no information about how the city advertised this survey to all districts or specifically how the Task Force members coded the write-in findings for each of the established categories.

	Do Nothing	Relocate	Modify	Add Interpretation	Total
Residents	1564	378	256	244	2442
Non-Residents	1961	81	84	178	2304
Unknown	122	7	6	20	155

Table 2: Full results of 2017 public survey

The reports' recommendations

The Task Force writers approached their recommendations differently in the two reports, and this difference is likely because the 2020 report is essentially a follow-up to the 2017 report. Where the first report lists eight recommendations, its successor itemizes one revision and four additional recommendations. The content of each recommendation addresses the changes that occurred between 2017 and 2020, including increased pressure from public opinion to address the monument and to incorporate more diverse public memory sites, as well as the strengthening of Georgia laws that prevent the removal of Confederate monuments and memorials.

Of the *CMTF's* (2017) eight recommendations, only one suggests a revision to Savannah's public memory system. The other seven deal with various aspects of the Confederate Monument in Forsyth Park including no. 1, which renames the site the "Civil War Memorial" so it can "be a memorial to the dead" and to "make it more inclusive to all of Savannah's Civil War fallen" (p. 13). The other recommendations suggest that the City does not remove any historical material from the monument or surrounding area (no. 2), does not alter the panel on the South side of the memorial (no. 4), and that the wrought iron fence is maintained around the monument area (no. 7). The writers also recommend installing a new bronze plaque that rededicates the monument "to all of the dead of the American Civil War" (no. 3), to relocate the busts of the McLaws and Bartow monuments⁴ (no. 5), and to not install any new monuments where the McLaws and Bartow monuments were placed (no. 6). The last recommendation, no. 8, agrees that Savannah needs to expand their interpretation of Civil War history and include the contributions of African Americans like Susie King Taylor, March Haynes, and Rachel Brownfield but that the Confederate monument in Forsyth Park is "not the place for these stories" (p. 15). The task force writers argue for an "ongoing dialogue" and for individuals and organizations to work with historic organizations already in place to propose new memorials, monuments, and markers. The 2020 report revises one of the first report's recommendations regarding the busts of the McLaws and Bartow monument. Rather than place these monuments in Laurel Grove Cemetery, the task force suggests that they be moved into storage until the city can legally decide what to do with them. The task force writers imply that due to vandalism to the Confederate monument

⁴ The busts of two Confederate soldiers, McLaw and Bartow, were added to the Confederate Monument sites 35 years after the original monument was built. The Task Force agreed that the site should be a more generalized memorial for the Civil War and not for two specific soldiers.

site, they were concerned that the busts and surrounding cemetery space could be in danger. The four additional recommendations include a confirmation that all official records and communication refer to the site as the Civil War Memorial and not the Confederate monument (no. 9) and one more interpretive sign be mounted outside the monument's fence line that explains, due to Georgia's 2019 law, that no actions can be taken to revise or remove the monument (no. 11). The writers suggest that the city should be able to determine whether a monument or memorial "no longer serves the needs of their constituents" despite the state-level law that prevents any local action (no. 10). Finally, the last recommendation (no. 12) contends that the city should create a permanent Culture, History & Education Committee that would be composed of a rotating group of citizens from all six districts. This committee would "advise City leadership and staff on ways to expand Savannah's understanding and interpretation of all of the city's history, especially related to the experiences of American Blacks, Native Americans, and women" (p. 14). Toward that goal, the task force argues for the creation of "new static and living memorials . . . public engagement, outreach, education, and discussion of that history in new dynamic and meaningful ways" (p. 14). Ultimately, the task force writes that "much work remains to be done" to document and interpret the stories of Savannah, including the time before and after the Civil War (p. 15).

Discussion

Recentering Savannah's public memory

These reports cannot be examined without taking into account Savannah's deadly and oppressive histories, which include the city's foundation that was built on the violent removal of the Muscogee and Yamacree and on slavery /slave labor, its role in supporting racialized violence during the Reconstruction era (part of a state with 593 lynchings, according to EJI's research), its role in segregating Black residents from housing and enjoying recreational spaces like Forsyth Park, its resistance to the Civil Rights Movement that involved the NAACP, and its current resistance to the BLM movement. While the wording of the 2017 document seems innocuous, the dearth of historical background that addresses the city's complex histories that abused and evicted human beings demonstrates its lack of innocence. The absences and erasures in the 2017 report's historical background demonstrate how public memory documents can appear to present objective facts, but in reality, reinforce a whitestream, American Exceptionalist view of history. And this view is presented as fact via the 2017 report. Jones and Williams (2018) explain how technical documents can further oppress marginalized groups and the importance of technical communicators to be involved in task forces and committees, like the task force for Savannah's Confederate monument:

History shows us that laws, regulations, and technical and legal documents do support and enforce civil rights infringements and human rights atrocities. Examining historical documents in our field underscores the ways in which technical and professional communication can be used and have been used to uphold oppressive power structures and implement harmful and oppressive practices. (p. 384)

By portraying a whitestream public memory as fact and erasing the City's role in supporting racist activity, the 2017 report upholds oppressive power structures in Savannah.

The 2020 report approaches the historical background and communication of public memory with a different framework. The writers begin by positioning the Confederate monument within a larger storyline: “It was erected at the tail end of the Reconstruction era, altered at the beginning of the Jim Crow era, and additional monuments to the Confederate leaders were added to its grounds at the height of the Lost Cause interpretation of the Civil War” (p. 6). This sentence, which sets up the entire section, establishes a few crucial points. First, keywords like “Reconstruction,” “Jim Crow,” and “Lost Cause” construct a narrative: No Confederate monument was built with neutral or objective intentions. Rather, as the Southern Poverty Law Center reminds us, these symbols of white supremacy were built during strategic times to reinforce the dominance of white Americans (SPLC, 2019). In the case of the Confederate monument in Forsyth Park, it was built during a time when hundreds of Black people were lynched in Georgia alone, it was altered during a time when Black Savannah residents could not step foot in the park or any “whites-only” parks, and more monuments were added as Lost Cause ideologies continued to circulate in the American South through the work of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. From that starting point, the 2020 report focuses its efforts on establishing the impacts of racism on Savannah’s Black residents. Toward that end, the writers use Forsyth Park as a symbol of racism in light of the rampant segregation and racial code laws that prevented Black people from using many of the parks and recreational facilities in Savannah up until the mid 1960s. When white residents began to feel the pressure to integrate their public spaces, Forsyth Park became a staging ground for all sorts of white supremacist activity, including the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens Council (p. 10).

By focusing on these aspects of Savannah's (racist) history, the document reconstructs the City's role in harming its Black residents. First, the 2020 report's public memory section serves as a sharp contrast to the 2017 document, which wields a carefully constructed timeline of the monument's creation that highlights the work of the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association. This contrast functions rhetorically to recenter the conversation towards the larger discussion about Confederate monuments in the US. The first report avoids any connections to the nation's larger conversation about problematic public memory. By recentering the monument in terms of Savannah's larger historic issue with racism in the 2020 report, the Task Force establishes an impetus for removing the monument—in sharp contrast to the first report, which did not discuss the need to remove and even argued that residents wanted the monument to remain in Forsyth Park. In addition to establishing a reason for removal, the 2020 report functions as a countermemory document. Countermemory, according to O'Brien and Sanchez (2021) is form of resistance to whitestream public memory; it brings erased narratives to public attention in various formats: through public memory sites like markers, memorials, and monuments; mapping practices, and even via movies, art, and TV shows. The 2017 report is an excellent example of a dominant cultural narrative and the 2020 document of a countermemory response. The first report seemingly provides a historical narrative that traces the build of the Confederate monument, the work of the artists, and the role of the Savannah Ladies Memorial Association. This document's “historical background” reads like many public memory sites around the U.S. and like many textbooks. Narratives of people of color are simply absent or reduced to footnotes. Topics like colonization, slavery, lynching, and Jim Crow are not addressed. Likewise, the work of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color is disregarded. This is how public memory most often functions in the United States.

Countermemory, though, is a disruption of the racist status quo. As the writers of the 2020 report show, it begins with contextualizing the Confederate monument within a Savannah history that is rife with racism, violence, and segregation. There is no other accurate “reading” of the site. The writers of the *CWMTF* (2020) demonstrate the power of countermemory to push back against an agreed-upon narrative and turn it upside down. Narrative, as Walton and Jones (2018) argue, is a powerful mode for TPC scholars to enact justice. It’s important to note, however, that the *CWMTF* is not flawless in its application of countermemory. While it is likely outside the scope of the report, the writers did not address the colonization of the Muscogee and Yamacree people or its impact on the city’s economic development. It also did not establish a timeline past 1964, when the city’s parks were federally mandated to be integrated. The story of the Confederate monument surely did not end there, especially as Savannah continues to deal with issues of segregation in the city’s housing infrastructure and Section 8 laws. In an investigative report about Section 8 laws, Clasen-Kelly (21 Oct. 2021) discusses how most landlords refuse to rent homes to individuals with Section 8 vouchers, and the result of this discrimination causes Jim Crow-era segregation to persist in communities like Savannah. As Clasen-Kelly writes, “In a city that draws millions of visitors annually to admire historic architecture, a disproportionate share of government-subsidized housing sits just west of the predominately white, wealthier district where tourists flock.” The results of racism and segregation that funded the Confederate monument and prevented Black people from using Savannah’s parks and that refuses to remove the monument is a system that continues to oppress the City’s Black and brown residents.

American exceptionalism and “preserving Savannah’s unique history”

Since the both reports function as mundane documents, it is imperative to examine repeated phrases like “Savannah’s unique history,” or more broadly, the use of the word “unique” to describe the apparent distinctness of Savannah’s history. As Rivers and Weber (2011) explain, while they may seem routine and unremarkable, mundane documents have the capability of “enact[ing] concrete and locally specific changes” (p. 195). The reverse is also true, though. While I agree that mundane documents, especially while functioning as part of a larger rhetorical ecology, “work in concert . . . [to] combat . . . intangible injustice,” these documents can also work to maintain the status quo. The rhetorical power is still the same, but the outcome is different. While Rivers and Weber highlight mundane technical documents like newsletters, internal memos, and proposals that propelled the Civil Rights Movement forward, documents like these can also function to maintain white supremacy. Thus, I suggest that mundane documents can promote equity and justice or bolster the status quo.

In the first report, the writers use the phrase, “preserving Savannah’s unique history” as a rhetorical device to argue against removing the Confederate monument or altering the space. In the 2017 document, the writers use this phrase in the report’s introduction and once again in the recommendations section. When studied in context, both uses of the phrase establish a framework for the writers’ argument, which ultimately argue to keep the Confederate monument in Forsyth Park. I particularly want to concentrate, though, on the writers’ use of “unique” as a signifier of American Exceptionalism. Broadly understood, American Exceptionalism is a worldview that positions the United States as playing a “special role—possibly ordained by God” in human history (Edwards & Weiss, 2011, p. 1). This perspective permeates all aspects of the nation’s identity, including its political, cultural, and social aspects; it is likewise evident in

all stages of the nation's history (p. 1-2). Central to this ideology are two beliefs: 1) the United States is unique in its foundation and development, and 2) the United States moves "in a constant upward pattern [and remains] as a beacon of light" to the rest of the world (p. 1). This line of reasoning also undergirds the 2017 report and is evident through the writers' use of "unique." The reports are not simply arguing that Savannah is a unique city with a unique history. Rather, the writers contend that because Savannah is exceptional and part of a larger narrative of an exceptional country, its public memory is untouchable. Monuments do not need to be removed. The history is communicated just fine as is. Everything should remain the same because the city communicates a much more expansive message about the United States as a "special" nation that cannot "succumb to the forces of decay" (p. 1). As I've established, the 2020 report moves the needle much farther towards taking action on the Confederate monument, both in terms of its presentation of a more comprehensive public memory and in its additional recommendations, but the writers also use this idea of "uniqueness" two more times. It's almost like their safe word: whenever we use the term unique, it's there to provide a buffer for not too much radicalness, not too much activity. In both reports, the concept of "unique" is used rhetorically; it is used to argue for the City's exceptionalism.

Flaws with survey methods

From the published results of the public survey, it appears that most Savannah residents—as well as non-residents—voted to not change or remove the Confederate monument. However, upon closer examination, there are several flaws with the methods and the survey that may have impacted the veracity of the results including: (1) The brief window of time (2 weeks) was not long enough for residents to hear about the survey and respond, (2) There was no attempt to ensure that the survey results were equally dispersed among the districts, and (3) The survey methods were not standardized across the various response portals.

The City of Savannah "issued a call for public comment during a two-week period from October 30, 2017, to November 13, 2017" (Confederate Memorial, 2017, p. 12). The City was likely concerned about wrapping up the issue before the end of the year, and as a result, only gave two weeks for residents to either email or mail their responses or complete the online survey. For such a significant issue, two weeks is simply not enough time, especially if the City was concerned about making sure that all districts were represented in the results. Parallel to the time constraints, another significant flaw with the public survey is that the city did nothing to promote responses from all the districts. It's important to note that Savannah officials were aware about issues with response rates due to past surveys that did not receive responses (B. Dawers, personal communication, October 18, 2021). Last year, the Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) issued a call for public response in regard to a new development to the Canal District, which would include a space for professional hockey, a concert venue, and a shopping area. The main area impacted from the development is the Carver Village area, which is a neighborhood composed of primarily Black and low-income residents. This development would dramatically impact property values and thus will promote gentrification. In spite of this very real concern, the zip code that would be most impacted by the development—31415—was not among the top five area codes who offered feedback (B. Dawers, personal communication, October 18, 2021; Nicholson, 2021). While there could be a variety of reasons for a low response rate, it is likely that many Black residents in Savannah are suspicious of policies that deal with their

communities. To illustrate, the Carver Village neighborhood was brutalized in the 1950s by a military operation, Operation Big Buzz, that released hundreds of thousands of potentially disease-ridden mosquitos in the community that has never been openly acknowledged by City officials (Landers, 6 Feb 2021). Injustices like Big Buzz and other race-related issues could potentially explain the low response rates regarding the Canal District and possibly even the survey about the Confederate monument.

In addition to these methodological flaws, the public survey methods were not standardized across the various portals. The online survey only allowed respondents to choose the following options: do not change; relocate; modify; or add interpretation. But the email and mail respondents were able to provide feedback in a freeform method. The Task Force members would then determine which of the four categories that the freeform responses best fit (Confederate Memorial 2017, p. 12). While this explanation is plausible enough, there is no further explanation of methods. The report does not define how the Task Force members coded the email and mail responses so that the results were standardized. Thus, there is no way to be certain that the results were accurately represented. Likewise, the method itself is problematic because of the differences in potential responses. For more accurate results, the Task Force members should have chosen either freeform (with specifics defined for coding purposes) or the survey option that gave specific choices with no room for misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Rose and Cardinal (2021) remind us that “research is never a neutral endeavor,” so it is imperative to investigate the Task Force’s methods to ascertain intention, impact, and “to ask how their work maintains and contributes to oppression” (p. 75).

Anemic Recommendations

While the 2017 report provides anemic recommendations that do not engage with the nation-wide conversation about Confederate monuments, the 2020 report offers only marginally better options. Even though the 2017 report suggests eight recommendations, seven of the eight evade addressing the problems with Savannah’s current public memory system that privileges the narratives of white men, many of them slave owners or colonizers. Rather than confronting these artifacts as symbols of violence and racism, the Task Force writers use avoidance and distraction as rhetorical tactics. For example, Recommendation #1 renames the monument from “Confederate Monument” to “Civil War Memorial” (p. 13). Their reasoning behind this name change is to make the site “more inclusive to all of Savannah’s Civil War fallen” (p. 13). Obviously, there is nothing inclusive about any type of Confederate monument or memorial, whether we change the name or not. Recommendation #3 creates a bronze plaque that further makes the point that the name has been changed to honor “all of the dead of the American Civil War” (p. 14). The task force members use language like “all of the dead” and “inclusive,” but their failure to address the reason why these sites are problematic demonstrates a lack of awareness of positionality.

Writers of technical documents have the opportunity to be mindful of their positionality, but oftentimes, they do not. Positionality, according to Jones, Moore, and Walton (2016), allows us to consider “what our identity means in particular contexts of action” (p. 220). The 2017 report is an example of a context of action. Essentially, this report recognizes that the Confederate monument is a touchpoint for the city of Savannah and that the task force members were tasked

to do research, take public comments, and make recommendations to deal with this question. However, the writers failed to consider positionality, which at the start, would ask each member to consider their positionality and how that perspective would impact their research, formation and application of methods, and writing of recommendations. To accurately deal with oppression and injustice, positionality must be considered first, as a starting point. I would argue that if the task force members first considered their positionality and made allowances to deal with that level of privilege and power that each member brought to the table, that the recommendations that were written would have possibly dealt with the issues rather than avoid and distract. The change from “Confederate” to “Civil War” was not made to be more inclusive. Rather, the name change allows the city to avoid using a hot-button word that has been a national source of contention.

Recommendation #8 is the only one that identifies a problem with Savannah’s current public memory. It remotely hints at the need to expand Savannah’s public memory system. But even in this recommendation, the writers continue to congratulate themselves for their inclusivity by renaming the monument to “Civil War” and moving the busts of the McLaws and Bartow monuments. In effect, the writers defend themselves by saying that no real change is recommended. They write, “[Forsyth Park] is not the place for these stories [that deal with the people, places, and events of the Civil War and Savannah” (p. 15). The last few sentences of a 15-page document is the only section that hints at what needs to be done; the writers recommend more interpretation of several Black women in “existing avenues” with the help of various planning and historic committees.

I would also argue that nothing more would have occurred if not for the murder of George Floyd and Breanna Taylor in the summer of 2020 and the fact that Savannah’s new mayor is a Black Democrat. The summer of 2020 brought protests around the world. Confederate monuments were forcibly removed by protesters, and those that weren’t, City officials removed them overnight to avoid public response (Fandos et al., 2017). But in the summer of 2020, Forsyth Park looked the exact same as it did in 2017. The Confederate monument still stood (albeit with its new name, the “Civil War Memorial). The McLaws and Bartow busts still stood in the site too. Absolutely nothing had changed despite the 2017 recommendations. The City of Savannah claimed that no changes had occurred because of state laws that prevented the removal of historic sites or artifacts, a law that was strengthened by Governor Kemp in 2019. However, this argument is weak, especially in light of the many other Confederate monuments and sites that were removed in Georgia, including the Confederate obelisk in Oakland Park Cemetery in Atlanta, the Confederate monument in Dalton, and another in Lawrenceville (Brown, 2021; Kim-Martinez, 2021; “Suburban Atlanta,” 2021). But because of the murder of George Floyd and Breanna Taylor, residents in Savannah began again to question the Confederate monument in Forsyth Park. Thousands of Savannah residents signed a petition in June 2020, and the monument was vandalized several times too (Gilbert, 2020). Between the resurgence of the national dialogue, the vandalization, and the petition, Mayor Van Johnson called upon the task force to reconvene and report more recommendations.

Unfortunately, the 2020 report continues to use avoidance and distraction as a rhetorical tool in the recommendations section. The revised Recommendation #5 responds to fears of vandalization and recommends moving the busts to storage. And the additional recommendations

nine, 10, and 11 double down on the same ideas expressed in the 2017 report regarding more informational signage to explain why the monument still stands even though thousands of Savannah residents want it removed and statues around the nation have been removed. As with the 2017 report, the 2020 report's final recommendation (#12) is the only one that adequately addresses the larger problem about Savannah's public memory system. Recommendation #12, though, unlike the 2017 report, provides a more detailed plan for how to change the system. The 2017 report provides a vague idea of what that might entail, but the task force writers provide a significant plan with the formation of a Culture, History, & Education Committee that is composed of a diverse group of "citizens from *all six districts*" (p. 14, emphasis mine). One of the biggest issues with the first set of recommendations is a failure to consider positionality, and this last recommendation in the 2020 document makes a strong movement towards addressing this flaw. As a "macrolevel concept that can affect social capital and agency," positionality is an identity-marker that must be considered "as a self-reflexive measure" throughout the research process (Jones et al., 2016, p. 220-221). There is no evidence of the Task Force applying self-reflexivity in their methods, and as a result, not all districts were given equal agency. It should be noted, though, that while the 2017 public survey methods do not show results from all six districts or attempt to get equal representation from all six districts, the 2020 report directly addresses this gap through the final recommendation. Similarly, the 2017 report never even mentions that lack of representation beyond some gaps in Black history, but this document also mentions Native Americans as well. The writers also end with this statement that demonstrates an awareness of positionality, privilege and power that is previously not evident in the other report:

The Civil War Memorial Task Force recognizes that there remains much work to do to continue to expand on the documented and interpreted stories of Savannah, both from the Civil War, as well as before and after it. However, they feel that this work is better served by a standing and ongoing committee comprised of a larger body representation of a broader segment of Savannah's population. The work should be ongoing, engaging with a rotating body of citizen representation, and connect City staff and officials with ideas, partners, and resources to keep momentum continuous. This work needs to address outreach and education at all levels of our community and therefore needs to be highly engaged with our educational leaders as well as our tourism industry. (p. 15)

This statement goes a long way towards addressing the task force member's positionality and recognizing the need for more voices to be heard, something that is not evident with the 2017 report.

Conclusions and recommendations

Both the *CMTF* and *CWMTF* report illustrate a different functionality of mundane documents than has been previously explored in TPC research; namely, that in some cases, mundane documents can reinforce the status quo and suppress social justice work. Each report ostensibly seeks to make recommendations to address the Confederate Monument, but neither were enough to elicit any movement. The 2017 report explains that Mayor DeLoach "charged the Task Force with making simple and sensible recommendations that would address ways to make the Confederate Memorial more representative of Savannah's community while also preserving

Savannah's unique history" (p. 2). Likewise, the 2020 Task Force members write, "In June 2020 [...] Mayor Van Johnson directed City staff to reconvene the original Task Force to consider supplementary recommendations for interpretive signage at the site that would support the original recommendations approved by City Council in 2018 but would remain in line with current State law" (p. 4). From my analysis of these recommendation reports, it appears that the 2017 report was about appearances. The writers appeared to provide historical background about the monument, but instead focused on the white leaders who supported a Lost Cause ideology. The writers appeared to elicit public feedback, but upon greater study, the methods were riddled with a lack of equity and standardization. The writers appeared to make recommendations that would be more inclusive, but instead, they suggested that the monument stay put and the busts only be removed to Mountain Laurel Cemetery.

The 2020 report, spurred on by national outrage over the public murder of George Floyd, is markedly different in tone. The historical background centers the experiences of Black Savannah residents and highlights the impacts of segregation in the city's public spaces. The writers use this framework to address the Confederate monument, and while the report does not blatantly say this, it's apparent that the writers make a connection between the City's racist policies that persist to this day. Possibly recognizing the methodological flaws in the 2017 public survey, the Task Force provides a more action-oriented and community-engaged plan to generate the involvement of more people. The 2020 report suggests the following as part of their next steps: The Task Force proposes the next steps in reviewing, vetting, and approving their proposed recommendations include a public engagement process that includes: staff briefing City Council fully on the recommendations; City Council then engaging their constituents through town hall meetings to gather feedback; and the City launching an online survey to gather citizen feedback on proposed recommendations for City Council's review (p. 2).

These "next steps," along with the final recommendation that suggests instituting a Culture, History, & Education Committee, demonstrates that the Task Force members possibly saw the errors and weaknesses of the 2017 report and intended to do something about it. However, little to no observable changes have occurred in the year since the *CWMTF* report was published. In October 2021, the Confederate monument still stood along with the busts of two Confederate leaders, McLaws and Bartow. There was no new interpretative signage.

My findings from the comparative rhetorical analysis offer space for TPC scholars to address the issues that I have located. First, I have addressed gaps in the narrative presented as historical background in both the 2017 and 2020 reports. While the 2017 report blatantly highlights a Lost Cause narrative and completely erases all but a whitestream history, the 2020 report recenters the historical background around the history of segregation in Savannah. However, even though the Task Force writers made dramatic progress in their presentation of historical background, there are notable absences in many aspects of Black narratives but even more so, the erasure of Muscogee and Yamassee people. Jones and Walton (2018) identify narrative as a "mechanism for social change" because "narratives are enacted through participation by the people" (p. 243). Since the use of narrative also facilitates reflexivity, it allows people to observe their positionality and reflect on the relative power in various social contexts (p. 247). A different approach to writing a historical background in a report such as the documents I have reviewed would include Jones and Walton's framework of narrative. By applying this approach, a

historical background could be written with an eye to positionality as a system of checks and balances. Jones and Walton (2018) provide a heuristic with questions to aid in this application of narrative, and as an extension of their heuristic, which focuses on pedagogical contexts, we could ask similar guiding questions as TPC scholars looking to more equitably present public memory (p. 260-261). Some of these questions could include the following: (1) Does this public memory narrative demonstrate reflexivity? (2) Does this public memory narrative demonstrate how narrative can interrogate historicity? (3) Does this public memory narrative examine how knowledge is legitimized? (4) Does this public memory narrative recognize context as encompassing and constructed? This narrative approach would dramatically impact the writing of any public memory in all stages of the process and would promote justice and equity by ensuring that the writers are aware of the constructed nature of narratives.

Along with the narrative approach, I also recommend Itchuaqiyag's (2021) Indigenous research paradigm (IRP) that directly address "restoring and respecting the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, lands, and knowledges, supporting community-developed aspirations, and supporting the changing and improving of unjust conditions" (Itchuaqiyag, 2021, p. 36; Smith, 2012, p. 195-196). Because neither the 2017 or 2020 report address the colonization and displacement of the Muscogee and Yamacree people as a starting point for any conversation about land (namely, Forsyth Park) is a significant omission that belies the lack of justice. An IRP would impact both the communication of public memory and the recommendations established by the Task Force by "situat[ing] the community in a privileged position" (p. 38). First, the Task Force and/or the proposed Culture, History & Education Committee would consist of local Indigenous people. In addition to participation, the ideas from the community would be centered: What do the Muscogee and Yamacree want to do with the land? What is an Indigenous perspective of public memory? How could the City of Savannah address concerns of sovereignty and survivance? The combination of a narrative approach along with an IRP would promote solutions that come from communities rather than from a small group of wealthy white leaders.

Finally, I located significant issues with the Task Force's methods, including a failure to make sure that all districts were equally represented (weighted) in the survey and a lack of standardization with the survey portals. In contrast, many TPC scholars who center social justice methods recommend methods that promote new uses of technology to hear from more groups of people. Carlson's (2021) discussion of Visual Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods explains that these methods "offer opportunities for technical communication researchers and community stakeholders to collaboratively develop, analyze, and strategize around nuanced accounts of difficult public problems" (p. 98). The Confederate monument in Savannah is certainly a difficult public problem. It's difficult because State laws make it difficult to move or alter it. It's difficult because of a history of racism in the city and around the nation. It's also difficult because few people have a say about what to do with it. Carlson's (2021) recommendation of PAR methods addresses many of these concerns because it "invites participants to share knowledge based on real community concerns" (p. 99). Like the previous two TPC approaches, narrative and IRP, PAR centers community input, respect, and concerns throughout any research process. Some of these methods can include community members drawing, mapping, taking photos, or creating videos as ways to communicate their concerns or interests. As a result, researchers have a more comprehensive understanding of the various circumstances that surround a problem (p. 99). As applied to the methods employed by the Task

Force, a PAR method would ensure that more people were given more opportunities to express their viewpoints about the Confederate monument. This process may take longer, but in the end, the city would have a more nuanced understanding of public sentiment, rather than a two-week public survey with inconsistent portals.

Overall, this study identified several key problems in these recommendation reports but provides three potential interventions from TPC scholarship. Public memory research continues to be an area that is under-studied in TPC but can benefit from the methods and approaches. The field of TPC must continue to reach out to various sites of injustice and organize change for the future.

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