

TEACHER AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF
SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT STANDARDS

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TEACHER AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF
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ABSTRACT

TEACHER AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT STANDARDS

by

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In this mixed-methods study, I investigated how teachers and pre-service teachers perceive social studies content standards. My study focused on three main areas: (a) classroom implementation of content standards, (b) educators' familiarity with standards, and (c) curricular support for implementation of the standards. I selected participants based on their status as a (a) Texas social studies teacher who is a member of a social studies database maintained by Texas regional education service centers or (b) pre-service teacher enrolled in a graduate-level social studies methods course. Additionally, a purposeful selection of participants took part in an authentic museum trunk training allowing me to observe and evaluate their abilities to apply social studies standards to curriculum planning. I invited these participants to participate in an online focus group following the training. I offer a descriptive picture of social studies teachers' perceptions

of state standards, as well as illuminate potential differences between pre-service and in-service social studies teachers preparedness to implement the new state and established national standards.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the start of the 21st century, US state and federal governmental units have firmly established a collection of standards that delineate the academic content students should learn. The rhetoric of standards-based reform in this period involves setting high expectations and the confidence that teachers can improve students' academic achievement by setting higher goals and focusing greater efforts and resources on student learning (Taylor, Shepard, Kinner, & Rosenthal, 2003). In theory, the practice of setting high expectations while pushing K-12 students to attain mastery of specific concepts seemed more than reasonable within the field of education. However, I wondered what the professional cost was to social studies educators' creative curricular expressions?

Background

The act of including standards into the planning of lessons became such an integral component of K-12 US teaching that even pre-service teachers were required to learn how to do it. Many secondary schools also expect teachers either to identify specific standards when writing lesson plans or to post the standards covered that day on the board. Since standards can refer to several different concepts within the scope of education, it is important to define and differentiate between the types of standards. The first type of standards are content or curriculum standards. Content standards, as defined

within this study, are mandated by the federal and state governments. They describe the content teachers are responsible for teaching and that students are responsible for learning; including specific facts, themes, or concepts. Within the scope of social studies, an example of a United States history content standard is:

The student understands the effects of reform and third party movements in the early 20th century. The student is expected to: (a) evaluate the impact of Progressive Era reforms, including initiative, referendum, recall, and the passage of the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th amendments; (b) evaluate the impact of muckrakers and reform leaders such as Upton Sinclair, Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells, and W.E.B. DuBois on American society; and (c) evaluate the impact of third parties, including the Populist and Progressive parties. (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, 2011)

The centralization and alignment of content standards provide K-12 educators with an established curriculum to follow. Many school districts or regions formulate curriculum frameworks for teachers to reference while planning lessons. These frameworks utilize state and/or national standards as the base. Landman (2000) noted that some standards are clearly themes that the state desires teachers to emphasize, while other standards appear to articulate important skills and knowledge that students should learn.

In addition to content standards, educators refer to a second type of standard, performance standards. Performance standards describe how students demonstrate the mastery of content standards, usually associated with exam performance. According to Abrams, Pedulla, and Madaus (2003), performance standards outline the expected

outcomes and high expectations for students' academic achievement. An example of a high school performance standard is as follows:

Social studies skills: the student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.

The student is expected to: (a) create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information; (b) use correct social studies terminology to explain historical concepts; and (c) use different forms of media to convey information, including written to visual and statistical to written or visual, using available computer software as appropriate. (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, 2011)

Proponents of the standards-based reform, such as Delandshere and Arnes (2001), argue that the desired levels of high academic achievement will result from a clearly defined curriculum. Additionally, such advocates reason that if high performance standards are set and effectively measured by assessments, instructional practices will change accordingly and further produce high levels of academic achievement.

Landscape

Several different entities influenced the standards-based movement in Texas, including national organizations and state agencies. In addition to the state agencies outlining content and performance standards, they stipulate state testing requirements in order to fulfill testing requirements delegated by the national government.

National Standards. Social studies national content standards and performance standards originated in 1992 with the release of a report from the National Council on Education Standards and Testing. The Comprehensive Social Studies Assessment Project (2001) credits the development of standards at the national level to encouragement from

the United States Department of Education and professional social studies organizations, such as the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS).

In 1994, the NCSS developed national content standards and organized the standards into ten thematic strands and five important skills. The ten themes consist of (1) culture; (2) time, continuity and change; (3) people, places and environment; (4) individual development and identity; (5) individuals, groups and institutions; (6) power, authority and governance; (7) production, distribution, and consumption; (8) science, technology, and society; (9) global connections; and (10) civic ideals and practice. Additionally, the five skills include: (1) chronological thinking; (2) historical comprehension; (3) historical analysis and interpretation; (4) historical research capabilities; and (5) historical issues analysis and decision-making. The NCSS national set of content standards became the basis for many state-created sets of standards. The ten themes and five skills presented in the NCSS standards provided a method of conceptualization and organization for state content standards.

State Standards. In 1997, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), under authority of the Texas State Board of Education (TSBOE), developed content standards called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). All schools in Texas are required to adopt the TEKS, and, by law, all teachers must integrate the TEKS content and performance standards into their classroom teaching. There are TEKS for all grades, kindergarten through twelfth grade, in the main subject areas of English language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics. The TSBOE requires that the experts and stakeholders from across the state provide input on revising and updating the TEKS, and subsequently the state-mandated exams. The latest update of the social studies TEKS was in the spring of

2010 and went into effect for the 2011-2012 school year. This, in part, is why this research investigation is apt and timely.

In 2007, the TEA collaborated with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to develop College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) in the four main subject areas of mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science. The THECB adopted the CCRS standards in January 2008 and sent them to the TSBOE to incorporate into the TEKS (College and Career Readiness Standards, 2009). The CCRS, as the name indicates, emphasize the information students need to know in order to move beyond high school to be successful in entry-level college courses or post-graduation professions. The CCRS focus on content knowledge to stimulate deeper levels of thinking, instead of just focusing on the mastery of basic skills and knowledge. In other words, the CCRS do not stipulate *what* students need to learn as much as the TEKS do, but instead emphasize *how* students evince their accumulated EC-12 knowledge.

State Testing Requirements. There is a strong relationship between state content standards and state-mandated standardized tests. Abrams et al. (2003) found that 58% of teachers reported that their state-mandated test extracts content-based questions from a curriculum that all teachers should follow. Likewise, the same study revealed that 55% of teachers believed that if they teach the state content standards that their students will do well on the state-mandated test.

The state of Texas has a long history of implementing performance standards in the form of state-mandated exams. The Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) was the first state-mandated test, introduced in 1979. The TABS evaluated only grades three, five, and nine in the subjects of reading, mathematics, and writing. In 1985, the Texas

Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) was implemented; it tested reading, mathematics, and writing in grades one, three, five, seven, nine, and eleven. The 1987 TEAMS was the first to require entering ninth grade students to pass an exit-level test to graduate from high school. In 1990, Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) replaced TEAMS, which tested reading, mathematics, and writing in grades three through eight and ten. The state also added science and social studies tests to the eighth grade requirements.

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) was introduced in 2003 and assessed mathematics, English language arts, the combination of reading and writing, science, and social studies. Students tested in all grades three through eleven. Students' promotion to the next grade necessitated passing TAKS test results. High school graduation requirements depended on eleventh grade scores on the English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies exams.

The most recent testing change started in 2011 when the state removed TAKS from grades three through eight and introduced the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). At the high school level, the state started to phase out the TAKS in grade nine while simultaneously implementing the STAAR. At the high school level, the STAAR consists of twelve end-of-course exams, three exams for each of the four tested subject areas. Instead of taking one exam that includes information from the three required courses in each subject, students now test the same year they take a specific course. In other words, freshman students enrolled in World Geography take the World Geography STAAR at the end of the school year. As sophomores, they take the World History exam immediately after taking world history, and as juniors, they take the

US History exam directly after taking US history. Students in the graduating class of 2015 will be the first who must meet the STAAR end-of-course testing requirements, as well as pass their classes, in order to earn a diploma.

Federal Testing Requirements. The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), reframed and renamed as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001, implemented the test-based accountability system to the federal level. NCLB is considered the nation's most comprehensive federal education policy, according to McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, and Heilig (2008). The researchers also credit Texas with creating the model for the NCLB's standardized, test-based, high-stakes accountability system.

Proponents of NCLB claim that holding schools and states accountable will eliminate the achievement gap (Cruz & Brown, 2010). Three requirements of the act are (a) all states are required to test reading and math on an annual basis; (b) all states are required to implement a system to measure the progress of school districts; and (c) reports are to include student and district achievement data. Reports of student and district achievement include data like demographic subgroups, performance of individual schools, and inclusion of assisting low-performing schools. NCLB threatens the loss of federal funding for schools and districts that fail to produce satisfactory test scores – many of which are districts with large numbers of students who are poor, who belong to a minority group, or whose first language is not English (Ferguson & Brink, 2004).

Rationale

Whether it is through aligning lessons with standards or creating assessments to measure students' mastery of the standards, content standards have extensive

implications on almost all aspects of the day-to-day lives of teachers. As a pre-service teacher who just completed the required semester of student teaching, my familiarity with content standards has encapsulated my interest to investigate how teachers perceive standards-based curriculum. Additionally, since the standards-based movement in Texas received rejuvenation in 2010 and 2011, an inquiry directed towards the people who are required to facilitate the changes, the teachers, is another motivating factor for inspection.

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' perceptions of content standards, concentrating on three major aspects: (a) practical implications of content standards, (b) the level of familiarity teacher and pre-service teachers have with standards, and (c) the amount of local curricular support given to teachers.

This study may have implications for educators at the secondary and post-secondary level concerning the amount and type of standards-based training provided to teachers and pre-service teachers. Districts may also investigate the usefulness of standards-based professional development or the effectiveness of their curriculum framework.

Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework pulls from historical reasoning. Historical reasoning focuses on activities that promote student analysis, synthesis, hypothesis, generation, and interpretation while studying history. Through this method of instruction, students not only learn historical facts, but also acquire knowledge that enables them to interpret information from the past and present. Drie and Boxtel state that historical reasoning requires the following:

The ability to appreciate the context, to deliberate and judge, to reflect on the causes of historical events and processes, their relative significance, and the potential outcomes of alternative courses of action, and, lastly, to reflect on the impact of the past on the present. (Drie & Boxtel, 2007)

The framework of historical reasoning that Drie and Boxtel developed consists of six components: (a) asking historical questions, (b) using sources, (c) contextualization, (d) argumentation, (e) using substantive concepts, and (f) using meta-concepts (2007). Using this framework to demonstrate their historical reasoning skills, students should be able to organize, describe, compare, and/or explain historical phenomena.

The Historical Society of Wisconsin developed a K-12 version of this framework in its *Thinking Like a Historian* (www.wisconsinhistory.org/ThinkingLikeaHistorian).

The program emphasizes skills used by historians, such as analyzing artifacts and critical thinking, to demonstrate how history teachers can creatively integrate historical learning into their classrooms. *Thinking Like a Historian* provides teachers with a framework to develop lessons that focus on analyzing sources, formulating a hypothesis, and then justifying the hypothesis with facts and information they learned through the process. By using programs like *Thinking Like a Historian*, teachers learn how to integrate creative learning projects into the classroom and do not feel limited by standards-based curriculum.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The implications of standards for teachers' everyday planning and facilitation of lessons are vast and, as such, the research concerning content and performance standards, school reforms, and standardized testing is extensive. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I organized literature into three key concepts: the practical applications of content standards, the familiarity of teachers and pre-service teachers with standards, and the use of local curricular influences.

Practical Applications of Content Standards

Even though content standards provide a curriculum framework for teachers to reference while planning lessons, the practical application of incorporating standards into classroom instruction is far reaching. Teachers reported giving greater attention to tested content areas, particularly with regard to the focus of daily lessons. However, the most prominent effect of content standards is the ways in which teachers adjust classroom practices to incorporate the standards. One teacher discussed how they very rarely or no longer assign engaging, long-term, or group projects because of the lack of association these activities have with content standards or the state-mandated exam (Au, 2011). Teachers primarily focused on the content outlined by state standards instead of personal knowledge on the subject, textbooks or other outside resources. Loeb, Knapp, and Elfers

(2008) reported that 79% of teachers organized learning activities explicitly around state standards (p. 14). Likewise, teachers often felt overwhelmed by the responsibility and the demands of planning daily lessons around the content dictated by state-mandated curriculum (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Lui, & Peske, 2002).

Additionally, teachers created assessments similar in structure to the state-mandated exams to help students gain familiarity with exam formatting and expected types of questions. Schools facilitated practice, or benchmark, tests throughout the year to continuously gauge students' progress and areas in need of more concentration. An overwhelming majority (95%) of teachers indicated their classroom-based performance assessments were somewhat or closely aligned to state-mandated exams (Loeb et al., 2008, p. 14). Research conducted by Abrams et al. (2003) and Cruz and Brown (2010) reported the same findings—that teachers construct their own classroom assessments to mirror the mode of instruction and exam format of the state standards and state-mandated test. As a result, the format and structure of classroom assessments were comparable to, if not exactly the same as, the state-mandated exam.

The culmination of teaching state-mandated content standards to prepare students to do well on a state-mandated exam creates a phenomenon that many teachers described as “teaching to the test.” Abrams et al. (2003) believe this phenomenon is due to the high level of pressure teachers felt to improve scores on the state-mandated test. Hoffman, Assaf, and Paris (2001) reported that 50% of surveyed teachers from Texas did not think that an increase in TAAS scores reflected learning and high-quality teaching, but, instead, the increase was due to teaching to the test. An implication teachers found troubling in regards to teaching to the test was the loss of creativity in the classroom. Instead, teachers

who focused on raising test scores made lessons more rote and less engaging in order for students to memorize the facts more efficiently (McNeil, Coppola, Radigan, & Heilig, 2008).

Teacher Familiarity with Standards

In order for content standards to have a positive effect on the information students learned, teachers first need to be familiar with the standards. A study conducted by Loeb et al. (2008) revealed that 99% of teachers stated they were “at least somewhat familiar” with the state’s content standards, while 62% of the teachers reported they were “very familiar” with the standards (p. 14). When taking a broad look at the standards-based reform movement and test-based accountability, the same investigation stated that over three-quarters of respondents indicated they paid more attention to assessment results (77%), adapted the content of their teaching to match what is tested (77%), or used instructional strategies that are compatible with items on the state-mandated exam (81%) (p. 15).

Other teachers expressed their unhappiness regarding the requirement to adhere to and reference content standards created by the state. When investigating teachers’ perceptions of standards, Bender-Slack and Raupach (2008) found that many social studies teachers skip sections of the text to allow more time to cover the content standards that have the potential to show up on the state-mandated exam. This is most common among experienced teachers who were in the classroom before content standards dominated state and local curriculums. In a similar examination, teachers were not as critical of content standards; instead, they reportedly used content standards primarily for planning when designing large projects, assessments, or year-at-a-glance

curriculum guides. One teacher noted that “students consider standards to be jargon” and that it is more important to focus on activities that students can relate to instead of constantly referencing the standards in assignments (Mecum, 1995). A third study indicated that teachers could not ignore content standards because they guided both *what* was taught and *how* it was taught (Segall, 2003).

New teachers (less than 5 years experience) have the highest rate of turnover. Among the many reasons for their leaving the profession is the unfamiliarity with content standards and the demands of day-to-day planning in regards to the standards. Similarly, new teachers may not be aware of the sometimes restrictive nature of content standards and the level of importance administrators place on following the standards. A study conducted by Crocco and Costigan (2007) highlighted this, as many new teachers were suspicious of the state-mandated exams as meaningful indicators of their students’ progress during the year. They believe what constitutes as good teaching often differs from administrators’ expectations, especially in regards to the adoption of whatever pedagogical methods would “cover” the curriculum. New teachers often wish for more freedom in the classroom so they can teach the content they love in more creative and engaging ways. Therefore, new teachers found the prescribed curriculum inadequate for achieving the educational outcomes they desired for their students (Crocco & Costigan, 2007).

The importance of content-standard familiarity has become so prominent that pre-service educators are now not only learning how to incorporate content standards into their classroom curriculum, but becoming acutely familiarized with the state and national content standards themselves. Pre-service teachers were required to reference content

standards in lesson they created, plans they wrote out, and projects they organized.

McArthur (2004) noted the growing importance of pre-service teachers familiarizing themselves with state and national content standards. McArthur urged college professors to introduce standards and to educate pre-service teachers on the different methods in which they can incorporate standards into planning and lesson development. Doppen (2007) argued further that teacher preparation programs face an increasingly standardized future, and, therefore, must prepare pre-service teachers for the reality of the high-standards, high-stakes movement they will face as a new teacher in the classroom.

Looking back at teacher educator programs from the 1990s, the emphasis on content standards can, today, arguably add to the traditional aspects of teacher preparation. The four main teacher educator traditions, as discussed by Delandshere and Arnes (2001), are as follows: a) *academic tradition*, which emphasizes teachers' knowledge of the subject matter they intent to teach; b) *social efficiency tradition*, which emphasizes teachers' abilities to apply a 'knowledge base' about teaching based on research; c) *a developmental tradition*, which emphasizes teachers' abilities to base their instruction on knowledge of their students' understanding of the content and developmental readiness; and d) *social reconstructionist tradition*, which emphasizes teachers' abilities to see the social and political implications of their contributions.

Each of these traditions still has a significant contribution to pre-service teacher education programs today, in addition to the heightened emphasis on acquainting pre-service teachers with the state-mandated content standards and exams. As a result, pre-service teachers are learning how to 'blend the two worlds'—or connect traditional theories of teaching to the practical implications of building lessons around a state-

mandated curriculum (Ferguson & Brink, 2004). Pre-service teachers who completed the requirement of student teaching, or internship, in a school that emphasized standards-based instruction indicated the need to align their teaching with the content standards (Sandholtz, 2011). These pre-service teachers described how they would focus lessons on specific standards but also concluded that effective teaching involved more than simply covering the required content. Lastly, a few pre-service teachers mentioned the use of pacing guides, scripted lessons, and instructional requirements provided by their cooperating teachers, as a district requirement.

Local Curricular Influences

Many districts started to produce their own, scripted curriculum frameworks to help teachers organize the curriculum on a more localized level and insure that it aligned with the state content standards. Scripted curriculum refers to the mandated use and pacing of standardized and pre-determined lessons and assessments for all teachers within a specific subject area. One such program that helps districts with organizing a curriculum framework is CSCOPE. Once a school district buys CSCOPE, teachers of the four major content areas have access to customizable instructional plans, resources, and assessments that vertically aligned with the state content standards, or TEKS. This allows teachers to use and customize the same lessons and assessments to produce a level of consistency across classrooms and subject areas.

The two most frequent changes teachers reported while combining different frameworks together, such as adding local curriculum to their district's CSCOPE program, were aligning the existing curriculum with content standards and adding something to the curriculum because of content standards (Taylor et al., 2003). Martell

(2010) reported that teachers felt more compelled to use department-created or approved curriculum frameworks because they were a product of local, authentic collaboration and revised more often. Additionally, teachers know these department created frameworks align with the state content standards and, thus, minimized the number of resources they had to reference when planning units and/or lessons. A report by Dutro and Valencia (2004) argued that a productive relationship between state and local standards requires districts to have a voice in their own curriculum development while, at the same time, attending to the content mandated by the state. The researchers believe this type of productive relationship is facilitated only when educators within a district or school have conversations regarding content standards—conversations such as how best to teach the standards, major concepts represented, instructional strategies, and/or the sharing of resources and creation of lessons.

Furthermore, teachers had positive views on their district's role in supporting them. Taylor et al. (2003) reported that 55% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that their districts were providing them with the amount professional development they needed to be successful while 47% believed that their districts were providing them with the resources and materials needed to help students learn (p. 48). In a similar investigation, 78% of teachers reported that school administrators, especially principals, are providing positive encouragement for teachers to align their classroom practices to standards reforms (Loeb et al., 2008, p. 14). Further, they revealed that 73% of teachers receive encouragement from the district's central office personnel (p. 14).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Teachers and pre-service teachers are often encouraged to continue their own education and to stay abreast of current social studies publications and news via local education services. My study explored this landscape to gain a better understanding of how these educators viewed and utilized standards.

Research Setting

Research took place in three stages. First, I recruited in-service K-12 social studies teachers from across a large Southwestern US state. Since states differ in their state-level standards, I focused on one state for this sample. The second stage utilized a purposive selection of pre-service and in-service teachers' classes. Teachers in this part of the study came from a mix of in-service and pre-service teachers enrolled in a state university graduate-level social studies methods course in one of two counties in the central part of the state. I chose to collect data from campuses in two central counties because teachers who graduate from these programs teach at K-12 schools across the state.

Research Instruments

The quantitative portion of my study utilized a statewide survey. The survey also had open-ended qualitative questions. The in-depth qualitative portion involved

observations and focus groups. These three data collection techniques when analyzed together formed my mixed method study.

Statewide Survey. The first research instrument was a statewide online survey. I designed the survey questions, found in Appendix B, to work with a web-based survey. I emailed social studies instruction specialists at each of the twenty regional education service centers in the state to explain the purpose of the survey, provide the participation deadline, and include a link to the survey. The social studies instruction specialists then forwarded the survey to social studies teachers teaching within their respective geographic regions. To encourage participation, those willing to provide a name and email, which remained separate from all results, had a chance to win a \$25 Amazon gift card in a drawing. Participants completed an online survey that asked questions concerning content standards, as found in Appendix B. The surveys consisted of 23 questions to be answered using a Likert scale and six open-ended questions, totaling 29 responses. There were also 10 optional questions to gather demographic information on the participants. To ensure confidentiality, I randomly assigned each respondent with a number for reporting purposes.

Operation Footlocker Observations and Focus Groups. Graduate-level university students participated in a project called *Operation Footlocker* from the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana. I borrowed the footlocker trunk from the museum. According to the museum, the traveling footlocker includes the following:

Each footlocker comes loaded with actual artifacts from WWII (not reproductions!). Of course, no weapons or ammunition are included. However,

there are ration books, V-mail letters, dog tags, sand from the beaches of Normandy and Iwo Jima, wartime magazines, a high school yearbook from the early 1940s, and many other artifacts, both commonplace and surprising. Footlockers come complete with white cotton gloves for handling the artifacts and a teacher's manual that describes each object and contains directions for conducting artifact "reading" sessions. (National World War II Museum, 2011)

Working in dyads or triads, participants analyzed the contents of the museum trunk in small, interrelated groups of artifacts. Then, participants selected one artifact and created a social studies lesson plan using relevant content standards that simulated their investigation of the trunk. They identified the content standards during the assignment as well as any performance standards measuring student learning. The professor asked participants to explain both state and national standards related to the artifact. Throughout the entire training, I observed how participants interacted with the materials found in the trunk and how they used standards to develop lesson plan ideas. After the class finished *Operation Footlocker*, I asked students in an online class forum about their experience and familiarity with content standards, using questions found in Appendix A.

Participants

The participants in this study were US K-12 social studies in-service and pre-service teachers. All participants were either in-service K-12 social studies educators contacted via their regional education center or enrolled in a graduate-level social studies methods class at one of two campuses within the state university system. I surveyed 164

teachers from across the state. I observed 57 participants using *Operation Footlocker*. In total, my study included 221 participants.

Survey Participants. Teachers listed in the regional social studies databases received an electronic survey consisting of several Likert scaled questions and short response items. Instructions specified that participation was voluntary. A total number of 164 teachers completed the survey.

The majority of respondents were in-service teachers (97%) – half of whom teach in high schools (51%), just over one-third teach in middle schools (35%), and the remainder were elementary teachers (14%). The majority of participants taught one or more of the following subjects: 11th grade United States History since 1877 (n=39), 9th grade World Geography (n=37), 8th grade United States History before 1877 (n=33), 10th grade World History (n=32), 7th grade Texas History (n=24), 12th grade Government and Economics (n=23), or a social studies course in elementary school (n=19).

Experience. The number of years of teaching experience ranged between one year and 45 years, with an average of 16 years teaching experience. The majority of participants earned their certification through a traditional, university-based program or degree (59%, n=97). Around 12% of the teachers (n=20) reported earning certification by exam and another 15% of the teachers (n=25) reported earning certification through an alternative program.

Campus Geography. In terms of geography, 50% of the teachers classified their campus as rural, 25% as suburban, and 22% as urban. Similarly, the teachers classified the size of their campus as follows: 34% work at a very small campus (<500 students), 33% work at a small campus (500-1,000 students), 17% work at a medium campus

(1,000-2,000 students), 13% work at a large campus (2,000-3,000 students), and 2% work at a very large campus (3,000+ students).

The majority of survey participants worked in the following regions: Region 2 in the Corpus Christi area (19%), Region 12 in the Waco area (20%), Region 13 in the Austin area (16%), and Region 15 in the San Angelo area (13%). For an entire regional breakdown, see Table 1 below.

Table 1. Regions in which Survey Participants Teach

| Region | City | Count | Percent |
|-----------|----------------|-------|---------|
| Region 12 | Waco | 31 | 19.7% |
| Region 2 | Corpus Christi | 30 | 19.1% |
| Region 13 | Austin | 25 | 15.9% |
| Region 15 | San Angelo | 21 | 13.4% |
| Region 11 | Fort Worth | 12 | 7.6% |
| Region 7 | Kilgore | 9 | 5.7% |
| Region 5 | Beaumont | 8 | 5.1% |
| Region 18 | Midland | 7 | 4.5% |
| Region 16 | Amarillo | 4 | 2.5% |
| Region 20 | San Antonio | 4 | 2.5% |
| Region 1 | Edinburg | 3 | 1.9% |
| Region 8 | Mt. Pleasant | 2 | 1.3% |
| Region 4 | Houston | 1 | 0.6% |
| Region 10 | Richardson | 0 | 0.0% |
| Region 14 | Abilene | 0 | 0.0% |
| Region 17 | Lubbock | 0 | 0.0% |
| Region 19 | El Paso | 0 | 0.0% |
| Region 3 | Victoria | 0 | 0.0% |
| Region 6 | Huntsville | 0 | 0.0% |
| Region 9 | Wichita Falls | 0 | 0.0% |

Observation and Focus Group Participants. Fifty-seven participants enrolled in a graduate-level social studies methods course joined in the *Operation Footlocker* observations. Four trainings took place at two campuses. There were two trainings per semester. One campus had two large social studies methods classes with 24 students and then 15 students. The second, more Northern campus, had two smaller social studies

methods classes with 10 students and 12 students. The majority of participants were pre-service teachers.

Analysis

I utilized descriptive statistics to analyze and report the quantitative survey data. For the qualitative data, I used Irving Seidman's method analysis to analyze the open-ended section of the online survey, observational, and focus group data collected during *Operation Footlocker*. I utilized direct observation along with informal, impromptu interviewing as needed for member checks and clarification. Per Seidman, I recorded portions of the participants' comments to assist in analysis. I then coded each set of qualitative separately. Finally, I organized the coding structures into overarching themes.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The mixed-methods approach to research produced two levels of findings. First, those who participated in the survey reported how they incorporate social studies standards into classroom planning and instruction. Secondly, the *Operation Footlocker* participants provided insight into the process of how teachers integrate social studies content standards into their instructional planning and pedagogical thinking while they analyzed historical artifacts.

Survey Results

By creating a survey with both quantitative and qualitative sections, I was able to gather data regarding specific aspects of standards-based curriculum using the Likert scaled questions while also allowing participants to elaborate and provide personal examples while responding to the open-ended questions. The Likert scaled survey questions provided insight into the ways in which teachers integrate social studies content standards into their classrooms, how campuses require teachers to use the content standards, and how teachers use outside resources while planning.

Quantitative Survey Results. The majority of teachers, nearly 73%, reported that they refer to the TEKS at least once per week (27% agree and 46% strongly agree). However, this number drops to 48% (17% agree and 31% strongly agree) when asked if

the teachers refer to the TEKS more than three times per week. Most teachers either strongly agreed (43%) or agreed (38%) that they are required to identify relevant social studies content standards in their lesson plans. Similarly, 42% of teachers strongly agreed and 41% of teachers agreed they are required to identify social studies content standards in their classroom teaching. In other words, the majority of teachers were required to identify TEKS both in their lesson plans and in their classroom (81% and 83% respectively). Alternatively, only 26% of teachers reported using the NCSS standards and 37% reported using the CCRS when planning lessons.

Teachers indicated that campuses are not creating their own curriculum frameworks. Nearly half of the teachers (48%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed when asked if their campus creates its own social studies curriculum framework. Alternatively, 60% reported that their campus requires teachers to follow a scripted curriculum framework, such as CSCOPE. A strong majority of teachers (92%) agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum frameworks they are required to use aligned with the social studies TEKS. In contrast, less than half of the teachers thought their social studies curriculum frameworks aligned with the NCSS standards (32%) and the CCRS (41%).

Contrastingly, teachers split when asked if their classroom textbooks aligned with the TEKS. Around 44% disagreed or strongly disagreed (20% and 24% respectively) and only 41% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed (32% and 9% respectively). Even fewer teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their textbooks aligned with the NCSS standards (17%) and the CCRS (13%).

Almost all of the teachers (95%) considered themselves familiar with the changes made to the social studies TEKS that took effect in the fall of 2011. Despite a high level

of familiarity, the teachers did not overwhelmingly agree that the changes were positive. Only 42% of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed (26% and 16% respectively) that the changes were positive, while 26% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 32% remained neutral. Even if the teachers were indecisive towards the changes made to the social studies content standards, 87% reported that they have changed lesson plans to include the new TEKS.

Although most teachers reported referencing the social studies TEKS and changing lessons to incorporate the updated TEKS, less than half (44%) of the teachers believed they are “teaching to the test”. In fact, 36% of the teachers outright disagreed or strongly disagreed that they find themselves teaching to the test. Teachers may not consider themselves teaching to the test when they include outside information and resources into their lessons. Supporting this notion was the fact that most teachers (69%) reported incorporating content that is not included in the social studies TEKS into their lessons. Likewise, while the NCSS standards and the CCRS are not greatly included in textbooks or districts’ curriculum frameworks, a majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they were familiar with the NCSS standards (55%) and CCRS (65%).

Lastly, only about half of the teachers (53%) reported that they learned about social studies content standards prior to teaching, with 34% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. When asked if they were required to incorporate social studies content standards into lesson plans while student teaching, only 45% agreed or strongly agreed while 28% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 27% remained neutral or indicated the question was not applicable (11% and 16% respectively).

Table 2. Social Studies Content Standards Scaled Survey Responses

| Survey Question | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Neutral | | Agree | | Strongly Agree | | Not Applicable | | N |
|--|--------------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|----------------|----------|--------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | |
| 1. I refer to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) social studies content standards at least once per week. | 4.9 | 8 | 15.9 | 26 | 5.5 | 9 | 26.8 | 44 | 46.3 | 76 | 0.6 | 1 | 164 |
| 2. I refer to the TEKS social studies content standards more than three times per week. | 12.8 | 21 | 28.7 | 47 | 10.4 | 17 | 17.1 | 28 | 31.1 | 51 | 0.0 | 0 | 164 |
| 3. I find myself "teaching to the test". | 11.0 | 18 | 25.0 | 41 | 14.6 | 24 | 25.6 | 42 | 18.3 | 30 | 5.5 | 9 | 164 |
| 4. I'm required to identify relevant social studies content standards in my lesson plans. | 4.9 | 8 | 11.0 | 18 | 2.4 | 4 | 38.4 | 63 | 42.7 | 70 | 0.6 | 1 | 164 |
| 5. I'm required to identify social studies content standards in my classroom teaching. | 3.0 | 5 | 7.9 | 13 | 6.1 | 10 | 40.9 | 67 | 41.5 | 68 | 0.6 | 1 | 164 |
| 6. I'm familiar with the standards created by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). | 6.7 | 11 | 19.6 | 32 | 17.8 | 29 | 38.0 | 62 | 17.2 | 28 | 0.6 | 1 | 163 |
| 7. I'm familiar with Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). | 6.1 | 10 | 17.2 | 28 | 11.0 | 18 | 42.9 | 70 | 22.1 | 36 | 0.6 | 1 | 163 |
| 8. I use the NCSS social studies content standards in addition to the TEKS when planning lessons. | 14.7 | 24 | 31.9 | 52 | 24.5 | 40 | 19.0 | 31 | 7.4 | 12 | 2.5 | 4 | 163 |
| 9. I use the CCRS in addition to the TEKS when planning lessons. | 13.4 | 22 | 28.7 | 47 | 20.1 | 33 | 25.0 | 41 | 11.6 | 19 | 1.2 | 2 | 164 |
| 10. I learned about social studies content standards prior to teaching. | 9.2 | 15 | 25.2 | 41 | 11.0 | 18 | 28.2 | 46 | 25.2 | 41 | 1.2 | 2 | 163 |
| 11. I was required to incorporate social studies content standards into lesson plans while student teaching. | 8.0 | 13 | 19.6 | 32 | 11.0 | 18 | 23.3 | 38 | 22.1 | 36 | 16.0 | 26 | 163 |

Table 2. Continued

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 12. I'm familiar with the changes made to the TEKS that took effect in fall 2011. | 0.6 | 1 | 3.0 | 5 | 1.2 | 2 | 30.5 | 50 | 64.0 | 105 | 0.6 | 1 | 164 |
| 13. I've changed lesson plans to include the new TEKS. | 0.0 | 0 | 6.7 | 11 | 3.7 | 6 | 30.7 | 50 | 56.4 | 92 | 2.5 | 4 | 163 |
| 14. I often teach content that is not included in the TEKS. | 3.1 | 5 | 14.8 | 24 | 12.3 | 20 | 45.7 | 74 | 22.8 | 37 | 1.2 | 2 | 162 |
| 15. I feel the changes made to the TEKS in 2011 were positive. | 9.9 | 16 | 16.0 | 26 | 32.1 | 52 | 25.9 | 42 | 16.0 | 26 | 0.0 | 0 | 162 |
| 16. My campus creates its own social studies curriculum framework. | 20.1 | 33 | 28.0 | 46 | 20.1 | 33 | 20.7 | 34 | 7.9 | 13 | 3.0 | 5 | 164 |
| 17. My campus requires me to follow a scripted curriculum framework, such as CSCOPE. | 14.1 | 23 | 19.0 | 31 | 4.9 | 8 | 33.1 | 54 | 26.4 | 43 | 2.5 | 4 | 163 |
| 18. My classroom textbooks are aligned with the TEKS. | 20.1 | 33 | 24.4 | 40 | 9.8 | 16 | 31.7 | 52 | 8.5 | 14 | 5.5 | 9 | 164 |
| 19. My classroom textbooks are aligned with the NCSS. | 21.5 | 35 | 28.8 | 47 | 26.4 | 43 | 12.9 | 21 | 3.7 | 6 | 6.7 | 11 | 163 |
| 20. My classroom textbooks are aligned with the CCRS. | 24.5 | 40 | 31.9 | 52 | 23.3 | 38 | 11.0 | 18 | 2.5 | 4 | 6.7 | 11 | 163 |
| 21. The curriculum framework I use is aligned with the TEKS. | 0.6 | 1 | 4.3 | 7 | 3.1 | 5 | 46.6 | 76 | 45.4 | 74 | 0.0 | 0 | 163 |
| 22. The curriculum framework I use is aligned with the NCSS. | 3.7 | 6 | 22.0 | 36 | 38.4 | 63 | 22.0 | 36 | 10.4 | 17 | 3.7 | 6 | 164 |
| 23. The curriculum framework I use is aligned with the CCRS. | 3.1 | 5 | 20.2 | 33 | 33.7 | 55 | 22.1 | 36 | 18.4 | 30 | 2.5 | 4 | 163 |

Overall, the vast majority of teachers reported consulting the state social studies content standards at least once per week. An even higher percentage of teachers were required to identify relevant standards in their lesson plans and/or identify standards in their classroom teaching. Nearly all participants agreed or strongly agreed that their

curriculum frameworks aligned with the state standards. Most campuses required teachers to follow a scripted curriculum framework, such as CSCOPE.

Numbers significantly decreased when participants responded to questions about the NCSS standards or CCRS. Only a quarter of teachers reported using the NCSS standards while planning and only one-third believed their curriculum framework and nearly one-fifth believed their textbook aligned to the NCSS standards. Similarly, only one-third of teachers reported using the CCRS during instructional planning, while two-fifths believed their curriculum framework and one-fifth believed their textbook aligned with to the CCRS.

Nearly all teachers considered themselves familiar with the changes made to the social studies content standards that took effect in the fall of 2011. However, less than half of teachers believed these changes were positive. Regardless of teachers' agreement or disagreement with the changes made to the standards, almost all teachers report they made changes to their lessons to include the updated standards. Even when teachers changed instruction to include the new standards, less than half of them believed they are teaching to the test, likely because nearly three-quarters of the teachers incorporated outside content into their lessons. These results indicated that teachers across the state interact with social studies content standards in similar ways and for similar reasons. The open-ended findings shed more light onto the individual ways and reasons teachers' integrate content standards into their classroom instruction.

Qualitative Survey Findings. In addition to answering the scale-based questions, participants also responded to six short-answer questions that enabled them to describe in

more detail the practical implications of content standards, teacher familiarity with content standards, and local curricular influences of standards.

The practical applications of content standards include the day-to-day processes of classroom planning. Primarily, the instructional strategies teachers practiced are greatly dependent on the teachers' ability to incorporate social studies content standards into their lessons. Many districts and campuses also required teachers to document the standards covered in lesson plans or classroom instruction. Finally, teachers provided their overall perceptions of social studies content standards – how they are relevant to instruction and how they benefit or take away from teachers and students.

Since standards influence the day-to-day lives of teachers, the familiarity teachers have with social studies content standards is immense. Participants described where and how they received education regarding content standards. One of the most prominent ways teachers learned about content standards is during various professional development activities. Additionally, participants described their reactions to the updated state social studies content standards that took effect in the fall of 2011. It is not surprising that the teachers' reactions were of concern and unhappiness since they are the people responsible for making sure students comprehend the updated standards.

Finally, local curricular influences greatly affected how teachers implement and interact with social studies content standards. For example, the districts typically prescribed the type of curriculum framework participants used. Teachers must rely on the curriculum framework and state standards regardless of their personal knowledge, teaching experience, or preferred content. Another local influence is the amount of support and resources provided by the regional education service center. Many teachers

described how professional development activities and resources provided by their local service center have positively influenced their understanding of content standards and their ability to integrate content standards into instruction.

Practical Applications of Content Standards. The process of incorporating social studies content standards into a classroom is something teachers deal with every day. They are required to use a state-mandated curriculum instead of developing their own based on personal knowledge or outside resources. However, while many teachers do not like an outside entity telling them exactly what to teach, others admitted they like having something guide their planning. Similarly, some teachers acknowledged the benefits of a state-mandated curriculum, especially for students who moved to new schools, while others believed it limits their teaching.

Instructional Strategies. Participants reported that they often use the social studies content standards as a guide to what each lesson should cover. Many teachers described how they use the state content standards as a reference for each of the lessons they created or modified to insure the appropriate content and performance standards were covered. For example, one teacher commented, “The TEKS are the backbone for my lesson structure – I must ensure that I cover all of the TEKS for my particular unit, so I build my lessons around them” (Teacher 62). Another teacher said, “I refer to standards when planning lessons to ensure that the appropriate items are being covered. The standards are the skeleton of my lessons” (Teacher 144).

Several teachers commented on how they adjusted lessons depending on the TEKS to be covered and the resources available in their classrooms. The following

description outlines how one teacher balanced between the state content standards and textbooks.

When I am planning my lesson, I start with my textbook chapter and see what important information it stresses. I double-check that information with my TEKS. If something from my TEKS is missing in the textbook, then I find that information elsewhere and plan how to incorporate it into our lesson. (Teacher 95)

A few teachers explained that if their textbook did not provide information concerning all of the state content standards, especially those added in recent years, they incorporated outside resources into the lesson. Expressing this exact sentiment, one teacher noted, “I make sure that if it is not covered in the textbook, I use the internet or other resources to put it in my lesson plan and assessments” (Teacher 111).

Another instructional strategy was to focus on the taxonomical adherence of the standards to ensure the lesson produced the intended level of difficulty, similar to planning lessons based on Bloom’s Taxonomy. Two of the participants described how they used this strategy to encompass social studies content standards. The first teacher said, “The verbs used in the content standards (e.g. describe, explain, analyze, etc.) must be demonstrated in the activities in which the students participate in order to be fully aligned.” (Q1:31) The second teacher explained how he/she uses the strategy while planning lessons:

I re-examine the TEKS at the beginning of each unit, then examine which ones will fit into the region we are studying, and build my lessons to cover the TEKS

based on their verb usage and how students are expected to be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of each of the TEKS. (Teacher 126)

The last instructional strategy participants described using while integrating the social studies content standards into lesson plans was to focus on long term planning, such as by creating a unit or semester scope and sequence to follow. These teachers focused less on the details of the content standards; instead, these teachers believed that “the social studies content standards are the big picture that students are expected to know” (Teacher 24).

Two other teachers described how they only periodically referred back to the content standards. The first outlined how his/her campus used the content standards to plan the year ahead of time: “We use them at the beginning of the year when we take time to plan out the year in its entirety, more for scope and sequence” (Teacher 17). Similarly, another teacher noted that he/she used the content standards “periodically in long term planning to ensure I am hitting all the minimal requirements” (Teacher 38).

Documentation of Standards. In addition, administrators and district personnel often required teachers to document relevant social studies content standards in the classroom or in lesson plans. The ways in which teachers were required to document content standards greatly varied across campuses and districts. Many teachers reported documenting the state content standards covered in their lessons through an online program called Eduphoria. Eduphoria is a website that allows teachers to input lesson plans and then collaborate with other teachers in their district, such as by comparing or collaborating on lessons or developing and maintaining a scope and sequence to follow. Two teachers provided detailed accounts of their experience with Eduphoria’s program.

The first said, “We input weekly lesson plans on Eduphoria. The standards are listed right there, so it makes it easy to see if I am covering the TEKS and following the scope and sequence.” (37) The second teacher described his/her district requirements concerning lesson plan and standards documentation on Eduphoria:

Our district uses Eduphoria program that allows us to upload all TEKS and CCRS prior to each school year. We electronically track them by ‘checking them off’ as we add them to our lesson plan. The computer lets the user know if all standards have been met for the unit currently being covered. (Teacher 96)

The majority of teachers were required to document standards in their lesson plans and then submit the lessons to the campus’ administration. Many teachers were required to submit lesson plans with documentation of which TEKS were covered on a weekly, monthly, or grading-period (6-weeks or 9-weeks) basis. The following three responses described different requirements made by schools and districts:

I am required to document social studies standards covered in my lesson plans by indicating which TEKS I will be teaching for the assigned unit/chapter. Our campus requires that we state standards taught on the weekly lesson plan that is turned into the office of Curriculum and Instruction. (Teacher 8)

The second teacher said:

Teachers are required to turn in weekly lesson plans along with copies of handouts, writing assignments, or questions used in the classroom. All lessons are expected to show the TEKS associated with the lesson and an explanation of the activity and objectives. All lessons are subject to review if it seems that the TEKS are not being incorporated appropriately. (Teacher 31)

The third teacher explained:

My district uses CSCOPE and we are required to have our lesson plans available one week out. We have intensive planning sessions to ensure that all the TEKS are covered and that the lessons fully cover material needed and relate to the students prior knowledge. (Teacher 131)

Posting standards in the classroom was another way teachers were required to document which standards they were currently covering. The teachers required to do this usually wrote the TEKS covered that day on the board for students to see. A teacher who was required to post the standards in his/her classroom provided the following description: “We are required to document the TEKS and objectives on the board in our classrooms. We are required to relate that information to the students so that they are aware of what they are learning and how it relates to the overall picture” (Teacher 50).

Many teachers were required to do more than one of the previously mentioned methods of documentation. For example, several teachers were required to both submit lessons plans to their administration and post standards on the board in their classroom. One teacher explained why they are required to document standards in multiple ways.

In our weekly lesson plans, we have to list the TEKS that we are teaching each day, and write them on the board. The administration asks us to do this so they can see what we are teaching when they walk through our classrooms. (Teacher 3)

Another teacher provided a different reason to document standards in the classroom:

They are documented at the beginning of each lesson plan. They are posted on the board for the students to see with the verbs underlined and explained to the

students. They are re-visited after each lesson to ensure students are aware of what they should have learned. (Teacher 91)

If teachers were not required to submit documentation regarding the standards covered in their classroom, they described how their district or campus monitors their progress. For example, the following teacher noted that their unofficial documentation was in the form of student work and department-based records:

We are not required to document in planning so much as we are responsible for showing that we have used them in class with work examples and so on. We keep a department notebook and each teacher is responsible for being able to show that they covered the material. (Teacher 155)

Teacher Perceptions. Teachers' perceptions of social studies content standards greatly vary. Responses ranged across the spectrum – from the positive rationalization of the importance of standards to the negative aspect of how the standards force teachers to teach to the test. Almost all teachers reported that they alter their classroom teaching to incorporate content standards, even if they did not agree with the reasons why they had to change their methods.

Teachers believed social studies content standards were relevant to their teaching and should be consistent across the state. Similar to responses in the following questions, 20% of teachers (n=32) commented on how they appreciated that the standards provided a foundation or a statewide guideline for the content that needs to be taught. One teacher responded with the following statement: “I see the benefit in having content standards. It gives me and other teachers a starting point for all lesson plans. It also provides teachers with a general overview of the main topics that students should know” (Teacher 31).

Similarly, a second teacher described his/her perception of the social studies content standards: “It’s important that teachers have a guide – and instruction book – to determine if they are teaching the information that the state has required, but there needs to be room for the teacher to explore with [his/her] classroom” (Teacher 36).

Highlighting a desired balance concerning the level of specificity of the content standards, a third teacher explained his/her opinion:

For the most part, I feel the standards are set up well. There is a fine line between a standard being too specific and too vague. History teachers do not want to be told every little date and person they have to teach...We like to implement our interests into our teaching, while still hitting our standards. (Teacher 36)

In addition, teachers recognized the importance of a standardized state curriculum, especially when they received new students from other schools. If all schools followed the same set of standards, the student would not be excessively behind or ahead when switching to a new school in the state. In other words, “content standards are necessary so that there is some sort of continuity between school districts” (Teacher 35).

Another teacher echoed these exact sentiments:

I believe we should have standards because there are many that would not follow any standard and there would be a lack of consistency in student education. Many students move around quite a bit and standards help do just that, establish a standard. Standards are simply a base to start from and expand upon. (Teacher 25)

Overall, the teachers who discussed why content standards were relevant to their teaching methods and how they provided consistency across the state seemed to have a generally positive outlook towards the standards.

On the other hand, nearly 20% of teachers (n=31) expressed dissatisfaction regarding the amount of information the social studies content standards include. Interestingly, even when they regarded the standards as too dense, many of them still believed the content standards to be an integral part of their teaching. For example, one teacher asserted that the “standards are essential” but had a “problem with the sheer number of new TEKS...and the fact that there is entirely too much information to cover adequately in a five month period to prepare for the [exams]” (Teacher 53). Two other teachers had similar responses: “I think they are too long and involved. They should be simplified and made more manageable for the classroom teacher” (Teacher 75); and, “For the most part I agree with the content standards, although I believe that there are too many for World History and American History” (Teacher 85).

Two more teachers provided more detail regarding their opinions towards social studies content standards:

I think the standards need to be more condensed and focused. Far too much information is expected to be covered in a single school year. We need to look at the information that is most important to a student’s future learning and design the standards around that goal. (Teacher 128)

And, secondly,

It is unrealistic to expect such a huge amount of curriculum to be covered during the year... I would remove requirements to teach some of the specific people who have been added to the curriculum and leave room for teachers to exercise their professional judgment. (Teacher 136)

Some teachers (n=6) believed content standards required them to “teach to the test” or limited the amount of information they incorporated into their lessons to ensure the tested material was covered extensively. The following two descriptions highlight these concerns:

I think it is always good to have a framework for what should be taught to ensure students have equal access to education. However, I do not like the way the content standards have become the focus of education. I think we are definitely in a ‘teach to the test’ rut in education and there needs to be some constructiveness brought back into the classroom. (Teacher 30)

Likewise, another teacher explained:

Over the years, we have gone from being creative to, I’m sorry to say, teaching to a test. This is not my idea of teaching social studies, nor do I prescribe to this method of learning. I believe that if we were to address the TEKS, all standards will be met and students will be college ready. (Teacher 89)

Since the emphasis of a successful education focuses on the mastery of content standards and high performance on the state-mandated exams, there is no doubt teachers feel pressure to focus on content they are told will be on the exam. Teachers paid greater attention to tested areas and content and adjusted classroom practices to incorporate the information most likely to appear on the state-mandated exam.

Overall, the practical implications of social studies content standards are far-reaching into the daily lives of teachers. Content standards affect the instructional strategies teachers decided to use while planning classroom instruction. Most teachers used the state content standards as guide to ensure the necessary content taught. Others

used the state standards as a pacing guide or a taxonomical reference point. In addition to implementing the content standards into classroom instruction, teachers were often required to provide documentation of this implementation. Different districts and campuses have different requirements, but the majority of teachers indicated how they document content standards in lesson plans or in the classroom. Lastly, participants provided insights into the perceptions teachers have about content standards – why they are useful, whom they benefit, and the realistic expectations of implementation.

Teacher Familiarity with Standards. In order for students to learn the necessary content, teachers must be familiar with the social studies content standards they are required to teach. All teachers make adaptations to their lessons and classroom activities to incorporate new content or ideas, whether stipulated by the state or not. Figuring out where and how teachers' best learn about social studies content standards can help other teachers, administrators, districts, and education service centers to facilitate and promote such learning during professional development.

Standards Education. Teachers indicated they first learned about social content standards in a variety of settings, including formal education, work experience, and professional development.

Nearly a quarter of participants (n=39) indicated that they first learned about social studies content standards in an educational setting. Educational settings included undergraduate coursework, graduate coursework, classroom-based student teaching, and both traditional and alternative certification programs. The following teachers described activities they were required to complete in university courses or student teaching programs:

Demonstrating ways to teach them was the most useful one. We did in-class practices of methods using specific TEKS, which has stayed in my memory. As a college class, we divided up the TEKS to analyze them using the jigsaw method. (Teacher 5)

Another teacher described how he/she compared different standards:

In one of our seminar classes, we were required to compare the TEKS with the NCSS, and it was really neat to see what was lacking in each. This helped me to understand what is expected of students as well as teachers. (Teacher 30)

A third teacher discussed how he/she was required use standards in college coursework:

In my approaches course I was required to print out and review all content standards. In addition, some courses required us to complete sample lesson plans. In these lesson plans, it was required to incorporate the content standards and appropriately align the lesson around the content standard. (Teacher 31)

Another quarter of teachers (n=38) reported learning about the social studies content standards through on-the-job experience. Many responses were similar to this teacher's statement: "I became very familiar with the TEKS during my first year of teaching, as I had to plan lessons that incorporated the TEKS" (Teacher 21). Another teacher described that he/she learned about the standards "through the use of the TEKS, curriculum, CSCOPE, and my co-workers. I did not learn about all of the standards in one setting, it took time" (Teacher 147).

Several teachers (n=19) indicated they learned about social studies content standards by doing independent research. Two teachers described their reasoning behind doing their own research on the topic: "I researched. It's my job to teach the standards

and enrichment to those standards” (Teacher 9); and, the second, “When our social studies book was adopted in our district, I made it a point to learn all about the social studies standards” (Teacher 46).

Participants also credited professional organizations with providing beneficial activities for teachers to learn about social studies content standards. Several teachers stated that their local Texas Law Related Education (LRE) office provided valuable training. One teacher specifically claimed that he/she “got a more in depth understanding of the social studies TEKS when [he/she] attended professional development from Texas LRE” (Teacher 3). A few teachers also claimed that they learned about the social studies content standards, especially the NCSS standards, through their membership in the professional organization and the publications received by members.

Professional Development. Almost half of the teachers (n=68) stated that they first learned about social studies content standards during professional development in-service days or workshops. These professional development activities included teaching about the state content standards, NCSS standards, and CCRS. One teacher reported: “I just grew with the standards. My teaching career started long before the first tests of TABS. As each new test was introduced, workshops were provided to inform us of what they included” (Teacher 4). A second teacher shared that “through professional development we learned about the NCSS and CCRS. The presentations were short and usually packed full of more information than was palatable in that amount of time though” (Teacher 17).

Participants described several specific professional development activities that contributed to their understanding of content standards. One teacher described an activity

similar to the course-based activities: “One activity I did in a professional development was to have the TEKS, ELPS, and CCRS, all placed on cards to group together to see how they can connect with each other” (Teacher 47). Another teacher conveyed a short but positive outlook on professional development activities focused on standards by saying: “Workshops have been the biggest help, not just to learn about the standards, but to learn how to understand the best ways to use them in the classroom” (Teacher 123).

While the majority of participants expressed satisfaction, or at least neutrality, towards their professional development experiences, several participants indicated they were lacking sufficient support and/or training. These two responses best describe the ways in which teachers were dissatisfied with their local professional development:

We have not done much of any activities to learn about the new TEKS. We were given copies of the [standards] and expected to understand them ourselves.
(Teacher 12)

The second teacher echoed these sentiments:

My district uses professional development time to assign teachers time to look at the standards and align them with curriculum. This is the extent of the professional development. Very little is done to help teachers understand how to incorporate them or raise individual levels of instruction. (Teacher 78)

Teachers who reported about beneficial professional development workshops emphasized the things they were able to take away from the training – such as a more complete understanding of a topic, lesson or activity ideas, or different types of resources. One teacher who expressed dissatisfaction with the type of professional development he/she attended exemplifies this:

The training focused on the changes made in the TEKS, but the trainers had no knowledge about the STAAR test itself or any other resources that might be beneficial to classroom teachers. Teachers are basically flying blind into the new test, attempting to prepare our students with outdated materials and textbooks. (Teacher 74)

Reaction to Updated Standards. Despite where teachers learned about content standards, when the social studies state content standards were re-written in 2010, the media and school districts alike discussed the changes extensively, which contributed even more to teacher familiarity with content standards. Teachers' reactions to the updated content standards varied for several different reasons. A couple of the main issues teachers took with the updated state content standards focused on the number of names added, many of which the teachers felt were unnecessary or obscure, and indicated that teachers preferred more thematic or conceptually based standards. One teacher conveyed, "if it was up to me, I would remove a significant portion of the 'laundry list' of names and events and focus on social studies skills and larger themes" (Teacher 3). Another teacher had a very similar response, "I disagree with just 'throwing in' names for the sake of including them, when the test might be the only time [students] will be asked about them" (Teacher 106).

Moreover, this teacher recognized how difficult it may be for social studies content standard writers to choose the names that appear in the standards: "The standards can't possibly include every contributing person to society for a given time frame. To single out specific people automatically excludes others. I think fewer names should be

listed; the list has gotten too long” (Teacher 19). A second teacher acknowledged the writers’ attempt to include ethnic or cultural minority leaders into the standards:

Generally the standards are OK. However, I would put less emphasis on the individuals that were added in 2011, as many of those were minor players in the events of the past that were added on the basis that they are minorities. I didn’t even know who several of the people were without researching them. Focus needs to be on the concepts, not the details. (Teacher 47)

Lastly, one teacher did not describe changes he/she would make to the specific content of the standards, but towards the level of specificity. He/she would “make the TEKS for some content standards more concise. Some standards seem redundant and could be combined with others.” (Teacher 31)

Another major trend in the responses provided by participants dealt with the belief that the changes were politically motivated or biased. The following four descriptions highlighted the reasons why teachers were wary of the changes. The first teacher believed that the changes made to the US history content standards were “political and religiously motivated rather than based on sound historical doctrine; but I call them to students’ attention and use it as a teaching moment to talk about bias” (Teacher 69). The second teacher highlighted that his/her college coursework did not include the information he/she is now required to teach: “The new standards are a little extreme and too politically correct. Many of the standards are not necessary to make the student ‘college ready’. I did not even cover many of the new standards while getting my history degree” (Teacher 115). A third teacher described his/her outlook towards the changes: “Politicians should not be changing the teaching of history to suit their personal agenda. We need to teach

the facts: the hard ones, the ugly ones, and the inspiring ones. We can't change the future if we don't know about our past" (Teacher 152). Finally, the fourth teacher described his/her opinion regarding the new social studies content standards:

I feel that the current standards are a step in the right direction, however, they are extremely biased to certain political ideologies. The only change I would make is for the standards to be less politically bent – certain topics are included with a design to teach a certain mindset to the students – they need to learn the facts and be taught how to develop their own interpretation. (Teacher 144)

The higher amount of familiarity teachers have with social studies content standards can only benefit the teacher. If teachers know what they are required to teach, at least concerning the general themes and content of their subject, the more flexibility they can incorporate into their lessons since they are able to recognize relevant material more easily. Teachers learned about social studies content standards in a variety of different ways. Many of them first learned about standards in a formal education setting, such as college courses. Others have learned about content standards while working in the classroom or writing their own curriculum. Professional development activities have also provided teachers with valuable learning experiences and resources. During 2010 and 2011 when the state social studies standards were re-written and implemented, teachers' familiarity increased as well since many had to integrate the updates into classroom instruction and/or learned about the changes through the media. Reactions to the changes were strong, as teachers felt increased pressure to teach the updated, often longer list of standards.

Local Curricular Influences. Almost all districts write, develop, or buy some form of curriculum framework for their teachers to use while planning classroom instruction. Curriculum frameworks align state social studies content standards and usually provide a pacing guide and/or organize content by major concepts. One of the most common planning strategies teachers mentioned using was a curriculum framework, whether it was commercially created like CSCOPE or locally created by a specific campus or department.

Curriculum Frameworks. The majority of participants indicated their campus uses a curriculum framework, whether it is a purchased framework or a locally developed framework. Almost half of teachers reported using the scripted curriculum framework called CSCOPE. The CSCOPE framework conceptually organized the state standards into units of study and also provided a pacing guide, lesson ideas, sample test questions, and additional instructional resources. Many teachers said that CSCOPE was the only source they use, since the social studies lesson plans already incorporated the state standards, insuring the standards were covered. Two teachers recited how they use CSCOPE while planning: “I follow CSCOPE as my timeline. The TEKS are bundled together with lessons provided by CSCOPE” (Teacher 45); and, secondly, “I use CSCOPE as a framework for lesson plans. I use the CSCOPE concepts as my objective and build daily activities that direct student towards an understanding of the concepts” (Teacher 14).

Other teachers who use CSCOPE explained how they incorporated other resources into the lesson plans provided by the program to ensure all of the content standards were covered. “I use CSCOPE, then augment it with prior year lessons from

CSCOPE, materials from our textbooks, and other lesson ideas and materials I find on the internet to add the new standards requirements” (Teacher 19). Likewise, another teacher recounted his/her lesson planning process:

The content standards tell me what the students need to know. I organize how I’m going to teach the students those standards. CSCOPE already has the lesson plans and how it wants us to teach the students. I don’t always agree, so I may ‘tweak’ those plans to what I feel is better. (Teacher 156)

Alternatively, if campuses did not buy into CSCOPE, they usually created their own curriculum framework and established a way to determine which standards were covered. One teacher mentioned that his/her department created “their own lesson plan template to document the standards” (Teacher 28). Another described how teachers of the same subject collaborated to meet the demands of a standards-based curriculum: “As a subject, we turn in a calendar of events. Our subject team is expected to be on the same topic at the same time” (Teacher 17). Finally, a third teacher outlined his/her district’s collaboration towards standards alignment: “We meet with our other middle school to do horizontal alignment and with high school teachers to do vertical alignment. We document [standards] in our lesson plans weekly” (Teacher 77).

Many teachers recognized that the time spent writing or revising curriculum helped them to learn more about the social studies content standards. One teacher discussed how he/she “had written curriculum for [his/her] school district for several years and because of that experience it allowed me to really spend time dissecting the TEKS and understanding what it is the state really wanted taught” (Teacher 152). Likewise, another teacher recited that he/she best learned about the content standards

“primarily through curriculum writing and extensive review of the new TEKS when they were released. Anytime you work on scope and sequence you rely heavily on the TEKS” (Teacher 86).

Regional Education Service Centers. Regional education service centers provided resources and support to local school districts and campuses, including professional development training. Of the 68 teachers who reported learning about social studies content standards in a professional development setting, 29 of them specifically mentioned this training was from their regional education service center. Teachers stated that the “more in-depth workshops were offered through the service center” and that they “learned from [their] education service center social studies representative and through workshops held at the service center” (Teachers 24 and 139, respectively).

Participants reported that their regional education service centers provided some of the best professional development training, especially concerning the strategies and resources the teachers could take away from the trainings. Three teachers described their most helpful professional development trainings provided by their region:

[My region] hosted a one-day training to inform teachers of TEKS and/or changes in standards and objectives. My knowledge expanded to understand and perceive the rigor and critical thinking skills that students must demonstrate in order to be successful on the STAAR. Subject area workshops were provided to develop strategies and obtain resources to meet the content standards.” (Teacher 79)

The second teacher described the types of speakers that provided some of the most useful information:

Meaningful professional development has come, for the most part, through our regional service center and their cohorts. Our regional service center contracted professors that specialize in the area of history and related fields to provide different methods/approaches to teaching ‘history’ rather than listening to some irrelevant speaker. (Teacher 89)

Thirdly, this teacher stated how his/her regional professional development aided in their understanding of the social studies content standards:

We spent the second half of the day breaking down each set of TEKS and putting them into groupings to help with lesson planning. It helps show you where and how to put them into your daily activities as well as give you some good examples of lessons/games/activities to use in your classroom. (Teacher 105)

Additionally, participants provided a list of different local professional development workshops that they have greatly benefited from. Workshops specifically mentioned the highest number of times were the following: local regional education service centers (n=68), district training (n=12), Law Related Education seminars (n=7), Humanities Texas seminars (n=6), Teaching American History grant (n=4), graduate-level courses in teaching field (n=4), Advanced Placement trainings (n=4), History Alive trainings (n=3), and Texas Council for the Social Studies conferences (n=3). The following description illustrates the type of training a teacher received at an organization’s conference:

The conference focused not only on how to use previous test scores of students in order to help them in areas of weakness, but also focused on providing an overview of the verbs used in the TEKS and how to align lesson plans with those

verbs in a way that helps one to properly align their lessons with the TEKS. It allowed me to learn how to dissect and view the TEKS in a way I had not done previously.” (Teacher 31)

The amount of support provided to teachers on the local level greatly influences the teachers’ knowledge of content standards. Many campuses provided or even required teachers to adhere to scripted curriculum frameworks, such as CSCOPE. If campuses did not purchase CSCOPE, they likely created their own curriculum frameworks or had teachers develop curriculum within their department or teaching subject. Many regional education service centers provided beneficial professional development training for teachers to attend locally. These trainings provided teachers with a better understanding of social studies content standards and ways they can integrate the content standards into classroom instruction.

The open-ended responses provided valuable, detailed accounts of the ways in which teachers use, learn about, and integrate social studies content standards into classroom instruction. As a pre-service teacher, it was interesting to read and analyze all of the different ways teachers use the social studies content standards during their everyday lesson planning and classroom instruction. Additionally, the responses describing beneficial professional development activities provided insight into the ways teachers’ best learn how to conceptualize, organize, and understand social studies content standards.

Operation Footlocker Findings

I observed four different graduate-level social studies methods courses as they participated in *Operation Footlocker* at two different state university campuses. Each of

the four classes had the same professor, were all three-hour long evening courses, and followed the same general schedule for the day: project introduction, partner/group analysis, and presentations.

Before the first two groups of *Operation Footlocker* received artifact analysis, participants learned the *Thinking like a Historian* method from the Historical Society of Wisconsin (<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/ThinkingLikeaHistorian/>). Additionally, the first two groups read research by Sam Wineburg. During the artifact analysis introduction, the professor provided the participants with handouts from the *Operation Footlocker* manual. These sheets, found in Appendix C, outlined the following: the first sheet defined an artifact and explains how students read artifacts, the second sheet described how students and teachers should handle the artifacts, the third sheet provided ideas on how teachers can successfully lead an artifact reading session in their classroom, and the fourth sheet provided a list of sample questions the teacher can ask students to facilitate artifact reading. The professor asked four different students to each read one of the sheets, interjecting or asking students to repeat a statement when she wanted to emphasize specific instructions. The professor also suggested a few ways in which the participants could incorporate the footlocker into their future classrooms.

Participants formed into six groups of dyads or triads. Each group received two or three interrelated artifacts. Each group also received the information sheet associated with each artifact, but placed it facedown to prevent it from being read. The small groups were told to analyze the artifact, determine what it is, and hypothesize how it and by whom it was used. After formulating their predictions, they could flip over the information sheet, read it, and determine if their prediction was correct. Once all of this was complete, they

then switched to a different station and started the process over with a new set of artifacts.

As participants were investigating the artifacts, I circulated throughout the room gathering observational data, such as their reactions to the artifacts and questions they asked during the investigation. I documented their historical and pedagogical thinking. More than a quarter of participants shared personal stories of family members or friends who served in World War II as this personal histories intertwined with an artifact they were investigating. Over half of participants placed themselves into the perspective of someone who experienced WWII and formulated a story illustrating how they would have used the artifact in their life at the time. The majority of participants tried to think of questions their students may have about the artifacts and answered them. A few teachers commented on how they would modify the artifact information articles and questions to the appropriate reading and/or cognitive level for their students. Eventually I would ask each of the groups how they would incorporate the artifact they were currently investigating into a lesson to use in their future class and/or which standards they associate with the artifact.

The last portion of the class, about 45 minutes, consisted of students presenting one artifact to the entire class. The first two classes were required to identify NCSS themes and lesson ideas that related to the artifact. The third and fourth were required to identify a lesson idea and relevant TEKS in their presentation.

After participating in *Operation Footlocker*, I invited participants to respond to online focus-group questions. One participant, responding to a question regarding the overall *Operation Footlocker* experience, provided the following response:

I loved the hands on experience! We all were required to wear cotton gloves when handling the artifacts and this helped to make the experience come alive for me. I really felt like a historic investigator trying to unearth the facts in front of me. Working with a partner allowed for creative discussions and hypotheses about each artifact. I have never been a part of this kind of experience before in my graduate studies, so this was truly one-of-a-kind. I gained a deeper understanding about the events of WWII and plan to incorporate an activity like this in my future teaching curriculums. (Participant 1)

Additionally, two participants provided feedback in regards to using the footlocker in their classrooms and how their students would respond. The first said that he/she would “definitely use an experience like *Operation Footlocker* in my classroom. This hands-on activity helped social studies to come alive! I can see how the use of a footlocker like this can help motivate students’ enthusiasm towards social studies” (Participant 2). The second participant responded with the following:

Anything hands on that allows the students to transport back in time and see how the world was during a certain period will help bring it home. Additionally, it allows the learner to have empathy for the people during that time and makes it real to them. Examining items allows the learners to make connections to their own lives and the world they live in at the present. (Participant 5)

Overall, between the classroom observations and feedback provided by the participants, they seemed to enjoy participating in *Operation Footlocker* and welcomed the curriculum ideas and inspiration that came with the project. Not only did the

participants learn about WWII themselves as they inspected the artifacts, they brainstormed and planned lesson ideas and identified relevant content standards.

Operation Footlocker was a valuable experience for both the participants and me. It demonstrated that standards-based curriculum does not have to be rigid. The more teachers are familiar with the social studies content standards, the more they will recognize how creative lessons fit within the standards, and then, hopefully, they will include more original and stimulating lessons in their classroom instruction. Participants who partook in *Operation Footlocker* saw firsthand the ways project-based and creative instruction could be included while still covering relevant content standards. The participants learned about valuable resources, such as museum boxes, that are available to teachers as well.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS

This was a unique year to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding social studies content standards since the updated state content standards went into effect in the fall of 2011 and the new state-mandated exams administered in the spring of 2012. Due to these changes, many teachers re-evaluated the social studies content they were teaching and changed lessons to incorporate the new content standards. However, the results from this study suggest there is a disconnect between the familiarity teachers have with the content standards and the actual classroom implementation.

Teachers described how much of their training – professional development, education, or otherwise – taught them mainly where to find the standards and what the standards contain. This is evident by the ways in which teachers are required to cite the TEKS in their lesson plans or classrooms and the high number of teachers who report referring to the TEKS on a weekly basis. These findings are similar to those of Loeb, Knapp, and Elfers (2008), which report that 79% of teachers organized classroom instruction explicitly around state content standards. Additionally, the majority of teachers commented on how they use the state content standards or their curriculum framework, mostly CSCOPE, as the basic skeleton for writing or updating lessons. Mecum (1995) also reported that teachers primarily used content standards for planning.

Once teachers know the content that needs to be covered, they can create or adapt lessons to integrate the necessary information into their classroom instruction.

The disconnect appeared between the teachers' planning and implementation. Teachers who described beneficial professional development workshops or activities indicated that the most useful ones taught the teachers how to take the social studies content standards, conceptualize them in a new or different way, and provided practical ways to implement the standards into classroom instruction. Teachers who claimed that their time spent writing curriculum was the most useful way to learn about the content standards support this notion as well, since curriculum writing requires the teachers to categorize and conceptualize the standards instead of just checking them off of a list or referencing the standard number.

Similarly, participants reported professional development workshops that provided teachers with examples of specific lessons or activities to help facilitate the classroom implementation of the content standards as being extremely beneficial. Again, as teachers learned how to create activities based on the content standards, their knowledge of the standards and ability to incorporate them into the classroom increased. The observations collected while participants participated in *Operation Footlocker* support this notion. Not only were the participant required to identify relevant TEKS and NCSS standards, they had to create a lesson using both the artifacts and content standards. This is a perfect example as to how teachers can creatively integrate the social studies content standards into classroom instruction.

Many teachers highly regarded professional development workshops that provided additional resources they could use to supplement their classroom resources.

Some of the new TEKS do not appear in student textbooks, therefore, sometimes teachers have difficulty finding information at the right cognitive or reading level to supplement the book. Since the majority of teachers indicated they often incorporate outside resources into their lessons, they greatly appreciate it when professional development organizations provide useful resources, such as binders with articles and handouts, trustworthy websites, or, sometimes, a classroom set of books.

In addition, some teachers explained how they benefit from collaboration between fellow teachers, departments, campuses, districts, and even regions. Teachers who have worked in groups with other teachers to write curriculum or share lesson ideas felt positively towards classroom implementation of the standards since they, as a group, could pool resources, ideas, and expertise. For example, if one teacher found a useful website that addressed content standards that were not in the textbook, he/she would share it with the others and brainstorm relevant lesson ideas.

The findings in this study would benefit teachers, administrators, education service centers, and those who host professional development workshops. Teachers and administrators, after reviewing the reactions of the teachers who participated in this study, may change the ways in which they interact with or conduct training on social studies content standards. It is possible that those with negative attitudes towards the standards are those who receive the less amount of support or training. The education service centers and those who host professional development workshops can compare their methods, resources, and trainings to the responses provided in this survey to determine if teachers benefit from the instruction offered at their location.

Limitations to this study include the voluntary nature of the survey and that it may not have reached teachers in all regions of the state if the education center was unable or unwilling to forward to request. In addition, due to time constraints, I was unable to use the *Operation Footlocker* in an elementary or secondary classroom to compare how an in-service teacher might use the project differently than pre-service teachers. It would be interesting if future research explored the same survey and free-response questions in a few years, after the novelty of the updated TEKS and new state-mandated exams wears off and teachers are ‘used to’ the changes made during the 2011-2012 school year. It would also be interesting to note if more or less districts use scripted curriculum frameworks, such as CSCOPE, or if they return to writing their own curriculum.

APPENDIX A
OPERATION FOOTLOCKER FOCUS QUESTIONS

Teacher and Pre-Service Teacher Perceptions of Social Studies Content Standards

CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study about the level of familiarity teachers have with social studies content standards. My name is Caylie Hoffmans and I am a graduate student at Texas State University in the Department of Education working under the direction of Dr. Emily Summers. Should you have any questions you may reach me by phone (512-755-5797) or email (caylie@txstate.edu). Dr. Summers' contact information is es33@txstate.edu via email or 512-245-1743 via phone.

The purpose of the research study is to explore teacher and pre-service teacher perceptions of social studies content standards while participating in Operation Footlocker.

You have been selected as a possible participant in this study for one or more reasons:

1. You are currently enrolled in a graduate-level social studies teacher preparation course.
2. You participated in Operation Footlocker.

I will be conducting this research study in the 2012 spring and summer semesters. I will observe your class while participating in Operation Footlocker. I will then ask you to and provide responses to focus questions via TRACS. You may choose not to answer any question(s) for any reason.

The study will explore how teachers and pre-service teachers interact with social studies content standards while they are analyzing historical artifacts provided by Operation Footlocker. It is important to understand the nature of social studies teacher preparation programs in differing locations. The participants may indirectly benefit from this study, especially if they are interested in issues addressed by the study. However, they may not immediately benefit from the findings of the study. The study will help give insight into teacher and pre-service teacher familiarity with social studies content standards and how they develop lesson ideas with social studies content standards in mind.

Because the study is typical of classroom practice, there is minimal potential risk to this study beyond your normal role as a graduate student in a social studies methods course. The principle risk associated with the study is the potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. All data collection will be confidential. Any information I obtain in connection with this study that can identify you will remain confidential. All confidential records will be stored in a secure manner at 306 San Saba, Marble Falls, Texas, until January 1, 2013. I will destroy all records on or before this date.

A summary of the findings will be provided to participants upon completion of the study, if requested. The purpose of the study is to explore teacher and pre-service teacher interaction with historical artifacts to develop social studies lessons aligned with

social studies content standards. All dissemination of findings will directly relate to these purposes.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your course grade or your future relations with Texas State University. Participants' names (and only their names) will be entered into a drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card if they consent to participate in the drawing. The drawing will be completely independent of the analysis or publishing of any results, which will help to maintain confidentiality. I will notify the drawing winner via an email address voluntarily provided by the respondent. I will send the gift card via email. Additionally, the email will not contain any information related to the study and there will be no identifications on the gift card tied to the study. The drawing will be done completely independent of the analysis or publishing of any interview data, thus ensuring that the interview data remains confidential.

Pertinent questions about the research and research participants' rights should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3413 – lasser@txstate.edu), or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512-245-2102). Texas State University - San Marcos IRB Approval Number: 2012X5289.

Sincerely,

Caylie Hoffmans

By checking this box and providing your name below, you are indicating that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate - allowing Caylie Hoffmans to use observational data collected during Operation Footlocker and

focus question responses provided via TRACS without your identity attached. You may withdraw at any time, should you choose to do so. You may print this page for your records. ***This question is required**

- I consent.

OPERATION FOOTLOCKER FOCUS QUESTIONS

Please respond to the following prompts. Where applicable, please indicate the grade level(s) you teach or plan to teach.

1. Tell me about your experience with *Operation Footlocker*.
2. Would you use *Operation Footlocker* in your social studies classroom? Why or why not?
3. Describe a lesson you would create to incorporate *Operation Footlocker*. How would students be assessed?
4. Which National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) standards align with your lesson? With the Footlocker in general?
5. Which Texas Essential Knowledge Skills (TEKS) align with your lesson? With the Footlocker in general?
6. Which College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) align with your lesson? With the Footlocker in general?
7. Is *Operation Footlocker* an effective way to teach standards? Why or why not?
8. If *Operation Footlocker* were not available for use in your classroom, would you use the project's concept of analyzing artifacts in a different way? Explain.
9. How do you (or plan to) utilize historical artifacts alongside the standards?

APPENDIX B
SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT STANDARDS SURVEY

Social Studies Content Standards

Consent Form

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study about the level of familiarity teachers have with social studies content standards. My name is Caylie Hoffmans, and I am a graduate student at Texas State University in the Department of Education working under the direction of Dr. Emily Summers. You may contact me with any questions you may have by phone (512-755-5797) or email (caylie@txstate.edu). Dr. Summers' contact information is es33@txstate.edu by email or 512-245-1743 by phone.

The purpose of the research study is to explore teacher and pre-service teacher perceptions of social studies content standards.

You have been selected as a possible participant in this study for one or more reasons:

1. You are currently a social studies teacher in the state of Texas.
2. You are currently a pre-service social studies teacher in the state of Texas.
3. You teach in any of the Texas regions I contacted to distribute my survey.

I will be conducting this research study in the 2012 spring and summer semesters. Participation is limited to the completion of this internet-based survey. You may choose not to answer any question(s) for any reason.

The study will explore how teachers and pre-service teachers perceive social studies content standards. It is important to understand the nature of social studies programs from different institutions. The participants may indirectly benefit from this study, especially if they are interested in issues addressed by the survey. However, they may not immediately benefit from the findings of the study. The study will help give insight into teacher and pre-service teacher familiarity with social studies content standards and how they develop lesson ideas with social studies content standards in mind.

Because the study is typical of classroom practice, there is minimal potential risk to this study beyond your typical daily work in the classroom. The principal risk associated with the study is the potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. All data collection will be confidential. Any information I obtain in connection with this study that can identify you will remain confidential. All confidential records will be stored in a secure manner at 306 San Saba, Marble Falls, Texas, until January 1, 2013. I will destroy all records on or before this date.

A summary of the findings will be provided to participants upon completion of the study, if requested. The purpose of the study is to explore teacher and pre-service teacher perceptions of social studies content standards. All dissemination of findings will directly relate to these purposes.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your school, the district, or future relations with Texas State University. Participants' names (and only their names) will be entered into a drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card if they consent to participate in the drawing. The drawing will be completely independent of the analysis or publishing of any results, which will help to maintain confidentiality. I will notify the drawing winner via an email address voluntarily provided by the respondent. I will send the gift card via email. Additionally, the email will not contain any information related to the study and there will be no identifications on the gift card tied to the study. The drawing will be done completely independent of the analysis or publishing of any interview data, thus ensuring that the interview data remains confidential.

Pertinent questions about the research and research participants' rights should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3413 – lasser@txstate.edu), or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512-245-2102). Texas State University - San Marcos IRB Approval Number: 2012X5289.

Sincerely,

Caylie Hoffmans

By checking this box, you are indicating that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate in the survey. You may withdraw at any time, should you choose to do so. You may print this page for your records.*

☐ I consent.

If you would like to submit your name into the \$25 Amazon gift card drawing, please provide your name and email address below. This information will be completely

independent of the analysis or publishing of any results. The winner will be notified through the email address voluntarily provided by the respondent below.

Name: ÷ _____

Email: ÷ _____

Social Studies Content Standards

Please respond to the following statements based on how much you agree or disagree.

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree | Not Applicable |
|--|----------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. I refer to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) social studies content standards at least once per week. | () | () | () | () | () | () |
| 2. I refer to the TEKS social studies content standards more than three times per week. | () | () | () | () | () | () |
| 3. I find myself "teaching to the test". | () | () | () | () | () | () |
| 4. I'm required to identify relevant social studies content standards in my lesson plans. | () | () | () | () | () | () |
| 5. I'm required to identify social studies content standards in my classroom teaching. | () | () | () | () | () | () |
| 6. I'm familiar with the standards created by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). | () | () | () | () | () | () |
| 7. I'm familiar with Texas College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). | () | () | () | () | () | () |
| 8. I use the NCSS social studies content standards in addition to the TEKS when planning lessons. | () | () | () | () | () | () |
| 9. I use the CCRS in addition to the TEKS when planning lessons. | () | () | () | () | () | () |

- 1) How do you use social studies content standards for lesson planning? Explain your response.
- 2) How are you required to document social studies standards covered in your lessons? Explain your response.
- 3) How did you first learn about social studies content standards? Did you learn about all of the standards (i.e. TEKS, NCSS, and CCRS) in this setting?
- 4) What types of activities helped you to learn about social studies content standards? Explain your answer.
- 5) What is your opinion about social studies content standards? If possible, would you make any changes to the existing social studies content standards?
- 6) Tell me about any of your professional development training that expanded your knowledge of social studies content standards. Please explain who hosted the professional development, its duration, and how it expanded your knowledge.

Demographic Information

Number of years teaching experience: _____

Social studies subject(s) currently teaching: _____

Subject(s) previously taught: _____

Method of certification: _____

Type of curriculum framework used in district: _____

I currently teach or plan to teach at the following level:

() Elementary School

☐ Middle School

☐ High School

I am currently a:

☐ Pre-service Teacher

☐ In-service Teacher

I teach in the following region:

☐ Region 1

☐ Region 2

☐ Region 3

☐ Region 4

☐ Region 5

☐ Region 6

☐ Region 7

☐ Region 8

☐ Region 9

☐ Region 10

☐ Region 11

☐ Region 12

☐ Region 13

☐ Region 14

☐ Region 15

- ☐ Region 16
- ☐ Region 17
- ☐ Region 18
- ☐ Region 19
- ☐ Region 20
- ☐ I am not a current teacher

The campus where I teach is the following:

- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Suburban
- ☐ Rural
- ☐ I am not a current teacher

The campus where I teach is the following:

- ☐ Very small (
- ☐ Small (500-1000)
- ☐ Medium (1000-2000)
- ☐ Large (2000-3000)
- ☐ Very Large (3000+)
- ☐ I am not a current teacher

APPENDIX C

OPERATION FOOTLOCKER INSTRUCTIONS



OPERATION FOOTLOCKER THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

What is an artifact?

An artifact is an object that has been created or altered by humans from another place or time (or both). As such, it may be irreplaceable.

Artifacts represent the material culture of a place and time. If we analyze, or "read," artifacts, we can learn about what was occurring when the item was created and used.

Artifacts can be small or large or somewhere in-between. But whatever their sizes, artifacts are the "real deal" of history—not reproductions, fakes, or copies. By handling artifacts, students, in a sense, travel back in time to experience history.

Artifact reading uses multiple learning styles to capture students' interest. Reading artifacts involves:

1. Use of multiple senses to manipulate and investigate.
2. Natural curiosity about the unknown nature of an artifact.
3. Tie-ins with prior knowledge about the subject matter (in this case WWII).
4. Forming conclusions about artifacts from their physical attributes.
5. Forming conclusions about a time and a place from an artifact's physical attributes.
6. Developing and exploring emotional connections to the past through physical encounters.



OPERATION FOOTLOCKER THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

How to handle artifacts

Remember: an artifact is an object from another place or time (or both). As such, it must be treated with great care and respect.

Students and teachers alike need to understand the fragile nature of the artifacts they will be using. Students will increase their appreciation for history by learning to handle artifacts properly.

Each artifact used in Operation Footlocker is unique, and will require special treatment, but there are a few basic handling rules students should learn:

- 1) When handling artifacts, wear cotton gloves. Gloves allow students to feel the item's texture, but prevent contact with the natural oils of human skin. Each contact with human skin degrades an artifact, especially paper ones. Gloves may be reused between classes - we will wash the gloves when you return them!
- 2) Handle with care! Special care should be taken when artifacts are being taken out of (or put back into) protective covers and boxes. Do not force artifacts out, or back in, to their storage packaging. Call us if there's an issue!
- 3) Once out, artifacts should be handled delicately and supported by both hands. Extra care should be taken when artifacts are being passed between students. This is especially important for paper items such as books, magazines and advertisements. **PLEASE TURN PAGES CAREFULLY!**
- 4) Artifacts can often be repaired if damaged. When you return your Footlocker to the Museum, please record any damage to artifacts on the Artifact Condition Report found at the back of this binder.



OPERATION FOOTLOCKER

THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

Leading an Artifact "Reading" Session



*The handling of artifacts should always be done with close teacher supervision.
Do not allow students free access to the artifacts or trunk.*

What is meant by "reading" an artifact? Reading is just a friendly term for analyzing, exploring, and discovering the use and significance of an artifact. Some artifacts are easier to identify than others. Some artifacts need more careful examination to determine what they are and how they were used.

When students "read" an artifact, they become detectives, piecing together clues from what they see, feel, smell, hear (please, no tasting). They also use past experience and knowledge to compare and contrast, intuit, deduce, and assess the historical use and significance of an artifact.

GOAL: Students will gain a richer understanding for and appreciation of WWII history by analyzing (what historians call "reading") artifacts.

RECOMMENDED PROCEDURE:

1. Define "artifact" for students; introduce Project Footlocker by telling students that they will be exploring actual pieces of WWII history
2. Briefly review **How to handle artifacts** page and obtain an agreement from students that they will handle each object carefully and respectfully
3. There are several ways to proceed:
 - a. Divide class into small groups and pass out gloves and artifacts. Ask each group to examine their artifact and make a verbal report to the class on what they have. You may wish to use the questions on the following page as a guide. Follow up with the information on each artifact found in the following pages.
 - b. Call up students one at a time, each handling and examining an artifact in front of the entire class. Follow up with the information on each artifact found in the following pages.
 - c. Divide the class into small teams. Give each team an artifact to "read." Have them make a report to the class on their artifact.
 - d. If it is not appropriate to let students handle the artifacts, the teacher can handle them, showing the class each one in turn.



Remember, students must be wearing gloves if they are handling the artifacts



OPERATION FOOTLOCKER

THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

Sample questions to ask for artifact "reading"

1. What kind of item do you have? Some artifacts are self-evident; others may not be so apparent. Look carefully for details.
2. What materials is it made of? Be specific. Artifacts may be made of several materials. Try to list them all.
3. Does it have anything written on it? English? Other language? Read what you can on the artifact to learn more about it.
4. Where did it come from? Where was it manufactured? Can you tell? How?
5. How was it used? This may be the trickiest question. Each artifact is described in the following pages.
6. Who was it used by? Soldiers/civilians; Allied/Axis; etc.
7. Where was it used? Continent/climate/country/on a ship/in a plane/etc.
8. Do we have or use anything similar today? If so, how is this object the same and how is it different?
9. Note those things that are different or strange or that you cannot identify or do not understand.

And, perhaps, the most important question:

10. What can we learn about WWII from this object?

This last question is important because it helps us understand history by exploring its material culture. There are many ways to research and analyze history. Reading books and watching documentaries are great ways to learn history. But being able to handle actual pieces of history (primary sources) gives students a unique opportunity to interact with history in a physical, hands-on way.

When students reach a conclusion or gain an insight about history from studying an artifact, they gain not just knowledge, but a material connection to the past and the experience of discovery they cannot get from books, documentaries, or other secondary sources.



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VITA

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This thesis was typed by Caylie L. Hoffmans.