

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS OF  
FIRST TIME IN COLLEGE SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of  
Texas State University-San Marcos  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

David J. Osman, B.A.

San Marcos, Texas  
May 2012

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS OF  
FIRST TIME IN COLLEGE SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS

Committee Members Approved:

---

Emily Summers, Chair

---

Leslie Huling

---

Eric Paulson

Approved:

---

J. Michael Willoughby  
Dean of the Graduate College

**COPYRIGHT**

by

David J. Osman

2012

## **FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT**

### **Fair Use**

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgment. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

### **Duplication Permission**

As the copyright holder of this work I, David J Osman, refuse permission to copy in excess of the "Fair Use" exemption without my written permission.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am grateful to my thesis committee for their guidance, patience, and encouragement during the past two years. Drs. Huling and Paulson, I appreciate your ability to question my beliefs and push my understanding of research. This thesis would not have been possible if not for the tireless work of my thesis chair, Dr. Emily Summers. Thank you.

I am indebted to all of my family and friends who helped me edit, research, and discuss so many of the important things involved in this paper. My deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Erin for her tireless support, especially during the past few years, of my work. I'd also like to thank my beautiful daughter Caitlin for being the cutest de-stresser in the world.

This manuscript was submitted on March 30, 2012.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Rationale .....	3
Research Questions .....	5
Limitations .....	5
Validity .....	6
Terminology.....	7
Background .....	8
Theoretical Framework.....	14
Foucaultian Conceptions of Power .....	15
<i>Episteme</i> .....	18
Praxis.....	20
Agency .....	21
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	23
Nature of Standards.....	23
Degree of Standards Internalization.....	25
The Post-Secondary Transition.....	26
Introductory Courses.....	27
First Time in College Students .....	30
Self-Efficacy and Motivation.....	32
III. METHOD .....	34
Setting .....	34
Institutions.....	35
Universities .....	35
Community Colleges .....	35
High Schools.....	36
Participants.....	37
Sampling and Participant Selection .....	38

Data Sources .....	39
Data Analysis .....	41
College and Career Readiness Standards Model .....	41
Interview Analysis Protocol.....	43
IV. FINDINGS.....	45
Post-Secondary Participants.....	47
Predetermined Codes .....	48
College and Career Readiness Standards.....	49
Post-secondary professors' expectations for student behavior outcomes .....	53
Instructional methods.....	54
Class policies .....	59
Emergent Codes .....	61
Educators' expectations .....	63
Student skills.....	68
Divergent institutional expectations .....	75
Standards, testing, and observation.....	79
Collective Post-Secondary Faculty Participants .....	82
Acceptance of <i>episteme</i> .....	82
Praxis of divergent expectations .....	83
High School Teacher Participants.....	83
Emergent Codes .....	84
Instructional methods and expectations .....	84
Divergent expectations.....	86
Standards, testing, and observation.....	89
Collective High School Participants .....	94
Influence of institutional power .....	94
Cross Findings .....	95
Influence of Power and <i>Episteme</i> .....	95
Participant Praxis and Agency .....	95
V. IMPLICATIONS .....	97
Educators.....	97
Secondary Teachers .....	98
Post-Secondary Professors.....	99
Faculty with in EC-16 Continuum.....	100
Student Learning Outcomes.....	100
Policy Makers .....	101
College and Career Readiness Standards.....	102
Future Research .....	102

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .....	104
APPENDIX B: SYLLABI ANALYSIS: CCRS MODEL.....	108
REFERENCES .....	113

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Participant Demographics.....	37
2. CCRS Coding System.....	43
3. Summary of Interview Responses by Respondent Role Groups .....	46
4. Mean Alignment and Standard Deviation of Post-Secondary Syllabi to College and Career Readiness Standards .....	52
5. Mean Alignment and Standard Deviation of Syllabi to Attitudes, Skills, and Knowledge (ASK) Behavioral Model of Student Learning Outcomes in VSI.....	54
6. Mean Alignment and Standard Deviation of Syllabi to Typical-Case Instructional Methods as Outlined in VSI.....	58
7. Mean Alignment and Standard Deviation of Syllabi to Typical-Case Class Policies as Outlined in VSI.....	60

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Across the United States, students struggle with the transition from secondary schools to post-secondary schools. Many of these students are first time in college (FTIC) students enrolled in introductory courses (Smith & Zhang, 2010). At the same time, post-secondary institutions have steadily increased their enrollment. In 2009, 38% more students enrolled in post-secondary institutions than enrolled in 1999 (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). The changing economy demands more highly educated domestic workers; therefore, students who are unsuccessful in post-secondary institutions are more likely to encounter economic difficulties than students who earn post-secondary degrees (Ohio Board of Regents, 2005). For students, the consequences of academic failure are significant. This is a national problem of great concern for educators and public policy leaders.

Lack of success for FTIC students is a complex problem, and significant institutional, individual, and sociological factors intertwine to obfuscate the issue further. In order to reform educational institutions effectively, it is necessary to understand the structural limits on educators and how these limitations may influence the success of students at the post-secondary level. In some states, one of these structural limitations is the use of state-mandated education standards to specify what curricula public school students must learn.

Public policy makers at the federal (Good, 2010), state (Loeb, Knapp, & Elfers, 2008; Porter, Polikoff & Smithson, 2009) and local (Evans, 2004) levels support the increasing use of government mandated standards to define what curricula is taught in public schools. These policy makers contend that the use of standards uniformly increases rigor in public schools, while simultaneously increasing educators' accountability to the public and educators' use of defined curricula (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). Over the past decade, state standards have become the norm in public school classrooms. State standards are mandated and subjective definitions of curricula and specify what is and is not to be taught. These state-mandated standards are rationally calculated measures connected to prevailing concepts of knowledge, truth, morality and the proper way to run institutions (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998).

Public policy makers assume that when codified standards change, the quality of curricula in the secondary classroom improves (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). My thesis questions the temporal and enactment aspects of this premise. When policy-makers codify a standards-based curriculum they aim to reach into individual classrooms and change the nature of instruction in order to improve student learning. Policy makers suppose improved student learning would lead to more successful post-secondary students (Swanson & Stevenson).

Texas school culture is ingrained with standards-based philosophies. It is not clear, however, that increased implementation of standards by policy makers has led to increased student success at the post-secondary level. Educators have varying understandings of student expectations and some of these understandings clash with the understandings engrained in state-mandated standards. The clashing of these

understandings influence the manner in which classroom curricula are implemented. This may ultimately impact what students learn and how successful they are in post-secondary courses (Goldsten & Kyzer, 2009).

My study will help to inform educators about the skills and knowledge of FTIC students in relation to state and national standards and help inform best practices in secondary social studies curriculum and instruction. I interviewed secondary and post-secondary educators to identify their differing and at time, overlapping understandings of student expectations and epistemological understandings of social studies curricula and student skills.

### **Rationale**

As a public school secondary level social studies educator, I am interested in how secondary educators can adequately prepare students for post-secondary success. I challenge and question my teaching practices when students are successful in secondary schools and fail to replicate, continue, and build upon these same types of successes at the post-secondary levels. The recently created College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) aim to define what successful students should know when they exit secondary schools and transition to post-secondary institutions. It was unclear to me how successful secondary educators were in achieving the goals set by the CCRS without more EC-16 collaboration and communication.

The purpose of my study is to investigate the apparent disconnect that exists between secondary social studies instruction and post-secondary instruction by exploring the understandings and expectations of educators at the secondary and post-secondary levels. It is important to study how the realist philosophy embedded within the state-

mandated standards clashes with teachers' and students' understandings and to understand value judgments inherent in choosing curricula. An understanding of these tensions helps educators and policy makers recognize the repercussions of implementing state-mandated in secondary curricula, and assists educators and policy makers understand how state-mandated standards influence instructional practices and student learning outcomes.

The findings of my study matter to me, as a social studies teacher, because the standards-based curriculum theory influences the structures of my school and the culture of my curriculum team. The state standards change how I teach and they sculpt what students learn from my class and carry with them to the next level of their education. Yet, these same standards that permeate our secondary-level teaching allow large number of students who find success in high school social studies to fail at the next educational level of social studies. Thus, I want—perhaps even need—to investigate how the high school teachers' foundational understandings translate to post-secondary teachers' expectations of the type of footing high school graduates should have to gain traction and maintain their forward academic progress at this next level.

My study is relevant to public school administrators, teachers, policy makers, and parents/guardians of students in all levels of the EC-16 public school system. Understanding the perspectives of secondary history teachers vis-à-vis post-secondary history teachers may (a) enable administrators to enact meaningful school change, (b) influence secondary educators' choice of curricula and (c) inform policy makers' understandings of the inefficiencies in standards-based curriculum theory.

A large body of research exists about FTIC students and introductory courses; however, only a limited subset of this research pertains to social studies. My study attempts to answer this gap. The perspectives of social studies educators provide a unique lens through which I can view the struggles of the FTIC student.

### **Research Questions**

As in most qualitative research, the research questions in my study were emergent, and developed as I collected and analyzed the data. My research questions were:

1. What were the student expectations of secondary and post-secondary US history educators?
2. How did secondary and post-secondary faculty perceive the college and career readiness of first time in college (FTIC) students?

### **Limitations**

Whereas several advantages undergird my approach to this study, key-limitations also exist. It was difficult to obtain approval from Institutional Review Boards (IRB) at post-secondary institutions across the state. Many community colleges do not have IRBs that meet regularly. Due to administrative lag time, I was not able to obtain approval from three community college IRBs and from one university IRB. In addition, the IRB approval process was time consuming and cumbersome; however, it was ethically necessary to receive IRB approval from post-secondary institutions. I believe instructional challenges and time constraints should never foreground ethical research considerations.

## Validity

My study took place in Texas. While the field site state I chose was geographically convenient for me, according to Summers and Dickinson (2012) this state is a strong purposive selection for social studies CCRS research because “this specific state ... had adopted social studies CCR [College and Career Readiness] initiatives in addition to the [nationally] suggested English language arts and math standards” (p. 83). The standards written in Texas are unique to the state and have distinctive strengths, weaknesses, and epistemological approaches that do not exist in other local, state or national standards. However, understanding the strong relationship between the study and context in which it was completed will improve the external validity of my qualitative study.

Standards have been used in Texas for more than two decades and the long term implications of the policies based around this curriculum theory are unique. The state is politically more conservative than most large states in the US and this conservative disposition affects education policy and influences the nature of education systems. Public policy in Texas largely reflects the conservative nature of the state and the emphasis on accountability for educators.

Secondary social studies teachers hold values and dispositions that may be different than the values and dispositions of other secondary teachers, elementary teachers, or even teachers of elementary social studies. These unique characteristics create an interesting backdrop to for me study the implementation of state social-studies standards and the implications of this policy on FTIC students in US history classes.

Several checks were put in place to ensure that the internal validity of my study remained strong: an independent researcher, and fellow graduate student, checked the reliability of my analysis and the direction of my research at several points in my study. This triangulation was done at times such as the determination of predetermined codes, spot checks done during the process of emergent coding, and the collection of codes into themes. Through this process the definitions of emergent codes would change slightly or become more clear. In addition, several peer reviewers examined and audited the findings of my study, to clarify and confirm the findings. These two procedures strengthened the internal validity of my study.

### **Terminology**

Educational terms are used in divergent ways by educators. I identify how the following terms are used in the context of my study:

1. Accountability measures are the institutional systems that governments use in regards to state-mandated testing. In Texas, these systems include the labels and distinctions given to schools for performance on state-mandated tests.  
Accountability measures can also include the overt supervision of schools by state departments of education.
2. Educational actors are the people who work and study within schools and have varying levels of control in schools. This may include students, teachers, school administrators, campus administrators, or statewide administrators.
3. First time in college (FTIC) students are students enrolled in their first year of study at a post-secondary institution. This includes prior year high school

graduates and older, non-traditional students enrolling in post-secondary schools for the first time.

4. Instructional practices are the curricula, procedures, methods, lessons and instruction that teachers implement in their classrooms.
5. Policy makers are the people who influence the creation, implementation, and interpretation of governmental laws, rules, regulations, and policies. Policy makers exist at the federal, state, and local levels and have varying levels of influence and power. Policy makers also exist in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of all levels of government.
6. Student expectations are defined in the context of this study as the academic products and skills that educators expected students to complete or master. These academic expectations could include expectations such as passing a state-mandated test or writing a coherent argument in essay form. Student expectations can also be the behavioral actions that educators expect of students. Behavioral expectations could include expectations such as listening intently in class or studying regularly outside of class.

### **Background**

The standards-based reform movement began with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 by the US Department of Education (Evans, 2004; Good, 2010; Johanningmeier, 2010; Placier, Walker, & Foster, 2002; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). *A Nation at Risk* claimed that the public education system in the United States was falling behind both historical and international standards and called for the increased use of a common core of aligned standards, assessment, and curricula to remedy the perceived

failure of schools (Good; Swanson & Stevenson). The thirty-page political document used strong, militaristic language to highlight purported failures in urban public schools and directly tied these failures to the economic well-being and national security of the country; this was a politically charged document with a targeted agenda (Good; Johanningmeier). In order to change education policy, the authors designed the document to illicit a strong reaction. In doing so, they selectively used evidence and actively promoted a narrow understanding of the realities in public schools (Johanningmeier). The committee prescribed a realist educational philosophy as a remedy for the country's educational ails (Good). *A Nation at Risk* captured the attention of the US public as few national commissions do; a competently designed and executed marketing campaign furthered the cause of the document; it was widely covered by the national media (Johanningmeier). After the report was issued, the use of standards at the state and national levels increased considerably, most significantly when Congress passed the Education and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; also named No Child Left Behind) in 2001 (Good, 2010).

Texas governor Mark White, prompted by *A Nation at Risk*, pushed for legislation in 1986 that would codify a standards-based philosophy in Texas schools (Kuehlem, 2004; White, 1986). Standards were seen as a tool that educational institutions could use to encourage positive educational change in schools and improve the quality of student learning statewide. State-wide institutions were created and more public policy was drafted that increased control of the public educational system. These new state policies included oversight of many facets of the education system, including individual student performance, secondary graduation requirements, the teacher certification process,

teacher evaluations, and school district performance (Kuehlem). Until the late 1990s, statewide standardized assessments were intended to assess only the most basic math skills and English skills, and Texas state law did not hold schools accountable when students failed (Cruse & Twing, 2000). In 1996, social studies and science standards were written by the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE). Gradually, state education policy in Texas became more rigid and prescriptive about curriculum standards, statewide assessments, and teacher certification standards.

In February of 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which laid the groundwork for the Race to the Top Program and indirectly rewarded participating states for voluntarily adopting the newly created national standards (US Department of Education, 2009). However, many states did not mandate integration of the national standards into secondary classroom curricula, including Texas. By 2009, every state had written content standards and created student achievement tests. The creation of state-mandated standards was highly controversial, as there was political disagreement over which topics to include in standards (Evans, 2004). Teachers expressed frustration of having to adjust classroom curricula to “teach to a test”, there were epistemological concerns, and concerns that standards made teaching and learning too prescriptive (Heinrich, 2012; Porter, Polikoff, & Smithson, 2009; Swanson & Stevenson, 2002).

It was expected that setting standards would improve academic achievement by creating higher expectations and focusing greater effort and resources directly on student learning (Taylor, Shepard, Kinner, & Rosenthal, 2002). At both the state and national levels, the overtly stated intention of standards was to prepare students for college and

post-secondary work (Texas Education Agency, 2009; US Department of Education, 2009). In an attempt to prepare secondary students for higher education, the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) were written to emphasize critical thinking skills rather than base factual knowledge (Texas Education Agency, 2009; US Department of Education, 2009).

While the national CCRS were being implemented, controversy over standards increased in Texas. In a highly politicized climate, the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) rewrote the EC-12 social studies standards and there was widespread media coverage of the political controversy (Blanchette, 2010). After policy makers wrote the new standards, a report from the Fordham Institute called the Texas social studies standards an “unwieldy”, “religiously motivated”, and politically motivated “laundry list” of topics (Stern & Stern, 2011, p. 142). The clash continued between those who viewed standards as the vanguard of school improvement and those who saw them as a political tool that harmed teaching.

The study of standards and standards implementation in the classroom was well researched (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). Bandoli (2009) provided critiques of state-mandated standards and Placier, Walker, and Foster (2008) suggested that the uniform implementation of standards stifled healthy democratic dissent in education and discouraged innovative curricula. Loeb, Knapp, and Elfers (2008) argued that standards counterproductively narrowed curricula and over-emphasized some aspects of curricula while reducing educators’ morale and perceptions of their own professionalism. In addition, the controversial nature of state-mandated standards may have undermined the

quality of the policy making process and led to weak standards (Binder, 2000; Camicia, 2008).

School curriculum continues to be a complex, multilayered issue, ripe with embedded philosophies, overt and covert messages, and conflicting tensions. There are many people, critical historical events, and cultural tensions that play roles in determining what curricula should be taught to students. Each of these unique conflicts and historical events can alter what is written in various states' standards. Perhaps inevitably, the philosophy of state-mandated curriculum must clash with the authentic reality of culturally diverse student and teacher populations in classrooms.

The clash leads some secondary educators in Texas to implement the state standards in ways that differ from policy writers' intentions (Salinas & Castro, 2010). Additionally, the implementation of the CCRS in secondary classrooms is unevenly executed (Khan, Castro, Bragg, Barrientos, & Baber, 2009). There are increased efforts to encourage secondary educators to align their classroom curricula to the state-mandated curriculum. In Texas, a large, hierarchical system of observers watches over secondary educators. The Texas Education Agency, school-district administrators, district-wide administrators and directors, and school administrations all have a role in observing teachers and ensuring that educators followed proper curricular norms.

Despite attempts toward alignment, there is a distinct disconnect between the existing secondary curricula and the realities of introductory curricula in post-secondary institutions (Khan, et al., 2009). Students are dropping out of post-secondary institutions at alarming rates. In 2007, only five post-secondary institutions in Texas had graduation rates above 50% (The Education Trust, 2010). Many students need explicit instruction in

learning-strategies and academic skills before they can be successful at the post-secondary level (Ryan & Glenn, 2004; Southern Regional Education Board, 2005, 2006).

Secondary schools are not adequately preparing secondary students for the rigors of post-secondary schools, and if more secondary students enroll in courses with rigorous curricular expectations more students will be successful at the post-secondary level (Ohio Board of Regents, 2005). Post-secondary institutional leaders and educators assume that the secondary curriculum does not adequately prepare students in secondary schools for the realities of post-secondary schooling (Khan, et al., 2009). Post-secondary students who enroll in rigorous course work, such as honors or Advanced Placement courses, account for 80% of those students graduated in six years or less (Warburton, Bugarin, Nunez, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). The systems in secondary schools enable some students to transition smoothly to post-secondary schools, however, these systems are not adequately preparing all students with the academic skills necessary for success in post-secondary schools.

The factors that influence failure among FTIC students do not rest solely within secondary schools. Behavioral and academic expectations at post-secondary institutions are divergent from student expectations in secondary schools; post-secondary schools are interested in increasing the institutional response to failure and decreasing institutional problems that lead to first-time student failure (Wimshurst, Wortley, Bates, & Allard, 2006). Implementation of a standards-based curriculum at the secondary level may cause the failure of FTIC students in post-secondary schools. FTIC students, especially male students, are less satisfied with introductory classroom environments at the post-secondary level than they are with secondary classroom environments (Nair & Fisher,

2001) and many fail to indirectly obtain the academic skills necessary for success in introductory post-secondary courses (Sommers, 1997). Grading policies, curricula and instruction vary widely among instructors, departments, and universities at the post-secondary level (Wimshurst et al.). Researchers should analyze the divergent structures of introductory classes at the post-secondary level and evaluate the effect of introductory courses on first-time students (Todd, 2004).

A myriad number of forces come together to create public policies at the federal, state, and local levels in support of mandated standards. Varying cultural influences, political ideologies, norms, ideas, and educational philosophies influence the creation of these public policies. Policy makers use standards in attempts to exert power over educators and positively influence student learning. However, there is resistance from some educators, and it is not clear that the implementation of state standards increases student success at the post-secondary level.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Schooling has at times has been defined by what has constrained it. In contrast, I used schooling to embody what could encourage educational actors to break free from structural limitations and return power to the interactions between teachers and students. The theoretical framework of my thesis centered on the force of power as understood by Foucault (1975) and the counterforces of *episteme*, agency and praxis that can empower educational actors to interact with and within educational systems. Power worked as a limiting force that pushed down on educators, while *episteme*, agency, and praxis served to push up against power. These theories stem from Foucault and Popkewitz (2009).

## **Foucaultian Conceptions of Power**

Decisions about what educators teach and students learn within the state schooling system are tied to the power of prevailing concepts. Modern institutions used the power of prevailing concepts to reform people by individualizing the correction of behaviors, using a hierarchy of observation, and normalizing judgment through an examination (Foucault, 1975). Foucault argued that institutions, “machine[s] for altering minds”, used ever-growing knowledge of individuals to control and reform behavior (p. 125). Knowledge of the individual could be used to define punishments according to an individual’s unique dispositions or weaknesses. More significantly, institutional knowledge of individuals could be used to judge and rank the potential value and worth of a child (Foucault).

**Foucaultian hierarchical observation.** According to Foucault (1975), observation and the surveillance of behavior exerted power and disciplinary control over individuals operating in institutions. The concept of hierarchical observation physically manifested itself in Bentham’s Panopticon, where the prisoner became an “object of information” (Foucault, p. 200). In the Panopticon, subtle observation of the individual could be hierarchical or lateral, and coupled with purposeful punishment of deviant behavior, resulted in systemic control over the individual. The goal of this observation was to reform the individual and normalize him by correcting his deviant behavior. Foucault held that intermittent observations created a persistent state where individuals were aware that institutional surveillance was always a possibility; therefore, individuals consistently believed they were susceptible to punishment. This resulted in individuals who were hyper-aware of normalizing forces and altered their behavior to avoid

punishment and conform to institutional expectations. In addition, as the hierarchical organizations became more authoritarian and concerned with control, people became passive and disengaged.

Foucault (1975) believed that Bentham's Panopticon was a generalizable model that could be used to define power relations in a variety of institutions, including educational systems and schools. Systems of hierarchical observation in schools pessimistically assume a negative view of educators' dispositions, potential and their differing abilities to choose quality classroom curricula. McNeil (1986) added to Foucault's observations, clarifying that in educational systems, teachers, and students in particular, became less concerned with doing what was best and became more concerned with avoiding trouble and meeting minimum standards. This stifled educators' and students' potential, creativity, and ultimately limited student learning.

**Foucaultian conception of normalizing judgment.** At the root of institutional punishment, Foucault (1975) considered the necessity of institutions to judge and define what was considered normal and acceptable behavior. This definition process occurred over periods of time and led to increasing institutional power. As the process of finitely defining acceptable behavior occurred, institutions broke down specific behaviors into elements and judged individuals based on these definitions. When norms were further defined, what was considered to be normal or abnormal became clearer, as did the shades of difference in between. When acceptable behavior was more prescriptively clarified, defined and normalized, the institution gained more power over the individual.

A sense of sameness and cohesion came from institutional acceptance and served to silence dissenting voices and alternative approaches to reality (De Freitas, 2004).

Punishments were given to those who did not achieve or perform at dictated levels and distinctions, labels, or ranks were given to those who performed deficiently, sufficiently and everywhere in between (Popkewitz, 2009; Foucault). Institutional labels and ranks defined institutional norms by clarifying who was normal and who was not, while also encouraging members to adhere to these norms. Thus the institutional process of normalization served to homogenize and, conversely, individualize at the same time.

**Foucaultian examination.** Most significant for schools were Foucault's (1975) writings on institutional examinations. Individual failure on exams supposed characterizations of that person in relation to the exam. This assured that individuals who believed in the value of the exam would always strive to continuously improve themselves in relation to a particular examination and had "the function of reducing gaps" between individuals (Foucault, p. 179). Foucault observed that "the demoted corporal must regain his rank, the failing student, work and rework a lesson" (p. 180). The examination coerced normalization by using both the force of truth and the threat of failure. By using the forceful weight of fear of failure and classification, the exam served to validate the truthfulness of the curriculum assessed. The threat of failure on the examination and the resulting ranking and classification encouraged individuals to reform themselves. Individuals desired to constitute themselves as "knowing subjects," and subjected themselves to the reforms necessary for success (Simola, Heikkinen, & Silvonen, 1998). "In short, [the exam] normalizes" (Foucault, p. 183).

In an effort to ensure individual reform, all individuals attempted to learn the information needed to pass the exam. This guaranteed that the same curriculum was

taught to every examinee and ensured that the concepts of reality espoused by the exam were institutionalized.

**Foucaultian relationship between power and knowledge.** The traditional Baconian model argued that knowledge is power. Foucault reversed this traditional belief and contended that power over knowledge was more significant (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). By knowing we can control and by controlling we can know (Gutting, 2011). The goals of both power and knowledge could not be separated and knowledge is always influenced by power (Simola et al., 1998). Foucault was especially interested in how “people effect knowledge to intervene in social affairs (Popkewitz & Brennan, p. 16). The most significant conflicts in education occurred in political conflicts over which knowledge the community would deem legitimate.

### *Episteme*

Foucault (1975) explained how contingent turns of history governed established understandings of reason within prevailing systems of knowledge. Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) defined *episteme* as the effort to understand the conditions in which knowledge is produced. *Episteme* was made of fundamental assumptions so basic that they were invisible and unnoticed by many people of the era. A range of cultural institutions and actions shaped varying concepts of reality, and these concepts of reality recursively influenced the ways in which institutions and schools were organized and decisions about curriculum were made (Greene, 1981).

All decisions embody a choice between differing values; decisions are political by their very nature. Decisions about rationality, the truth and what constitutes legitimate knowledge were political, and the power of these decisions extended well beyond the

classroom (Popkewitz, 2009); what is taught in classrooms influences the *episteme* of students, families and a broader cultural understandings of the truth (Foucault). Studying epistemology in schools was an effort to understand the conditions in which knowledge is produced (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998).

Foucault (1975) built a theory showing how “punishment was a political tactic” (p. 24). In the same sense, I contend that curriculum is a political tactic. Historicizing shifting assumptions of true and good, learning (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998) and an educated subject (Fendler, 1998) enabled educators to consider the significance of educational reform and curriculum change. Policy makers posited an epistemological theory about reality when they codified a fixed curriculum that assumed that knowledge was univocal and static (Baines & Stanley, 2006).

In addition, educational systems exist within a long cultural history and a history of individual and institutional actions. This history influences the educators who interact within it and their individual *episteme*; in the same sense, educators and individual *episteme* manifest their influence over the cultural history of educational institutions. Modern schools are the product of a conglomeration of an uncountable number of individual theses, historical systems of reason, and power relations (Popkewitz, 2009). It may be uniquely difficult to challenge educators’ personal *episteme* (Schussler, 2006). *Episteme* embody particular values, and the *episteme* of educators and policy makers was “inscribed in the very rules and standards of reason that order schooling” (Popkewitz, p. 305) and used to create curriculum standards, organize schools and determine how teaching happened in classrooms across Texas.

## **Praxis**

For the purposes of this study, praxis was the purposeful human action by which educators challenged the existing dominant narratives. Fendler (1998) as well as Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) observed similar enactments of educator praxis. They found that when educators deconstructed decisions and historicized their underlying assumptions, they problemized the relationships of these decisions to present models of reasoning. Freire (1970) contended that praxis, or as he worded it, “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” was a defining feature of human life and was a necessary condition of freedom (p. 36). In order to guide their praxis, educators may have understood that there was significant interplay between the way in which history and culture shape people while people conversely shape history and culture (Glass, 2001).

Through praxis, educators can “recognize or critique the subtle ways in which power is currently being exercised” (Fendler, 1998, p. 60), challenge the *episteme* of educational systems, and respond to the overwhelming character of institutional down force. Greene (1981) dramatically noted that “teachers are likely to become technicians or transmission belts, unable to think about their own thinking or their own knowing or their own valuing, out of touch with their own lived landscapes, distanced from the human beings they hope to enable to learn” (p.36).

When policy makers used political systems to legislate new curriculum standards they attempted to use power over educational institutions; when educators’ praxis purposefully interplayed with the enactment of new standards in schools they assumed agency and power with those institutions (Fendler, 2004). Historically, educators were

key political actors in that they reflected and enacted political decisions every day, political decisions about which curricular concepts were emphasized, incorporated, or excluded and the manner in which this was done.

### **Agency**

According to Foucault (1975), institutions used power to coerce individuals to transform their behavior and dispositions, to reform. Educators' sovereign agency moved against institutional downward push tendencies, not so much to contradict them, but to have a voice within their enactments. Individuals could exert agency by interpreting the meaning of standards, practicing *episteme*, or actively moving against power systems within schools (Zilber, 2002). Educators exhibited individual agency within the institution when they enacted educational philosophy and made pedagogical decisions about classroom curricula. However, not all individuals may have agency. The capacity for agency may be dependent on individual dispositions or an individual's ability to recognize the systems "in which we are caught up" (Davies, 1990, p. 346; Zipin, 1998).

At times, individual educator's agency was undermined by the individual's uncontested acceptance of an institution's power. Foucault argued that power was embedded in institutional systems and "the systems of ideas that normalize" (Popkewitz & Brennen, 1998, p. 19). Policy makers used the power embedded in institutions to assert *episteme* inherent in standards over educators. The power to choose curricula did not lay with various and sovereign educational actors, but with "common sense" notions of validity and democratically elected political bodies (De Freitas, 2004, p. 263; Foucault). This power served to limit educators' individual agency, showing how institutions had power over individuals.

The use of Foucaultian power was inherent in the structure and rigidity of traditionally structured schools. Both factors informed daily decisions about curriculum, personal relationships, and pedagogy. They could limit how educators act and may have changed educator and student dispositions. Conversely, agency, praxis and *episteme* helped educators respond to prevailing concepts of power, and act as counter forces to change classroom practice, and alter student outcomes.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

For the purposes of this study, the literature is organized into three key strands: the nature of standards, the degree to which standards were internalized by educators, and the post-secondary transition. These three strands help to inform my understanding of the role of standards in existing disconnects between secondary and post-secondary institutions.

#### **Nature of Standards**

Nationwide, the use of standards enables state public policy makers to attempt to define what is normatively considered reasonable to teach and the manners in which student knowledge could be assessed. According to Baines and Stanley (2006), Binder (2000), Camicia (2002), Goldston and Kyzer (2009), Placier et al., (2002) and Swanson and Stevenson (2002), this process is politically controversial and a multitude of unintended consequences follow. While statewide assessment data are able to sum student learning into a “single, inarguable number” and may indicate curriculum alignment, it is inconclusive if assessment results indicate a meaningful understanding of student knowledge or educator ability (Baines & Stanley, p. 220).

When state boards of education attempt to identify what curriculum is rational to teach, there are significant political conflicts over what the objective truth is and what should be taught. The social studies curriculum can be especially controversial due to its overt political nature (Camicia, 2008). Those who study social studies describe, identify,

classify and position individuals and groups within larger power relations and ideological stances. The study of the past is especially controversial when stake-holders see historical events as a direct reflection of current political controversy (Camicia). Proposals to change social studies curriculum often serve as a lightning rod for criticism regarding the purposes of school and competing visions of the ideal American society (Evans, 2004). Some policy makers see conflict over what is taught in social studies classrooms as a part of a larger philosophical conflict over disagreements between epistemological, ontological and metaphysical ideologies. As noted by a stake-holder in Camicia's research, "The complaint [has] more to it than the exact curriculum" (p. 305).

Due to the amount of controversy surrounding the writing of social studies standards, it can be politically difficult to ensure that standards are passed (Binder, 2000). Local history (Camicia, 2008), local political factors (Placier et al., 2002) and the news media (Binder) can have an impact on the standards making process. The conditions of standards-making lead curricula writers to avoid "red flag" (Placier et al., p. 295) issues that may incite partisan rancor and controversy. As writers attempt to define what must be taught, they tend to leave out ideas about reality that are less normatively accepted than others, leaving a curriculum that is "too easy, too delicate, too careful, [and] too cautious" (Salinas & Castro, 2010, p. 445).

Over time these timidly-created standards were manifested in state-approved textbooks and standardized tests (Ravitch, 2003). Salinas and Castro argued that this oversimplified perspective led to significant gaps between the standardized curriculum and the needs of a culturally diverse student population. The Fordham Foundation

argued that many state social studies standards did not cover many themes and issues that historians normatively accepted (Stern & Stern, 2011).

### **Degree of Standards Internalization**

The top down structure of state-mandated standards reform and the hierarchical organization of schools ran counter to the traditional teaching culture that fostered a sense of educator autonomy and individualism (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). Despite this, Loeb et al. (2008) found that educators were highly aware of state-mandated standards and that standards had considerable relevance in the creation of classroom curricula. The research of Goldston and Kyzer (2009), Grant et al. (2002), Hill (2001), Roehrig, Kruse, and Kern (2007), and Swanson and Stevenson (2002) concurred with this conclusion.

Educators' dispositions and daily decisions significantly affect the degree of implementation of the state-mandated curricula. When comparing individual classroom curricula, considerable variability exists in the implementation of state-mandated standards (Bandoli, 2008). Some secondary educators use specific words or statements in order to comply at a surface level with state-mandated standards while missing the larger instructional intentions of policy makers (Hill, 2001).

An administration actively supportive of state-mandated standards has an effect on curriculum implementation; in-depth administrative oversight and more frequent classroom visits serve to limit secondary educators' autonomy and positively influence the implementation of state standards (Roehrig et al., 2007). Conversely, a lack of administrative oversight empowers educators to assume agency and make independent curriculum decisions, at times completely ignoring mandated curricular change (Goldston & Kyzer, 2009).

If the required curriculum is not tested on the state-mandated tests, educators may act more independently and have more autonomy from administrative oversight (Goldston & Kyzer, 2009). Binder (2000) found that educators believed they were free not to teach a subject if it was not included in the state test, while Grant et al. (2002) noted that educators were less likely to spend time on subjects that were not emphasized on the state exam. The number of instructional days is limited. When educators have to make decisions about what curriculum is taught and what is not taught they take into account the likelihood that a standard will be tested (Bandoli, 2008). The importance of standards to educators is seriously diminished when the educators are aware that these standards are not included on state achievement tests; these topics are frequently disregarded by educators (Bandoli). Simply, standards are implemented in the classroom in ways different than those intended by public policy makers (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002).

Standards-based reform efforts changes what educators teach and what students learn. However, the autonomous nature of teachers enables many educators, for various reasons, to disregard curricula change or mis-interpret the intentions of policy makers. Educators may misunderstand the standards, purposefully disregarded the standards, or interpret the standards to align with their dispositions. The varied ways in which educators chose to align their instructional methods with standards leads to the uneven implementation of state-mandated standards.

### **The Post-Secondary Transition**

A multitude of forces influence the success of first-time students at post-secondary institutions. Some of these forces relate directly to the nature of introductory

courses, and the expectations of post-secondary educators. FTIC students and educators came to introductory courses with diverse dispositions and *episteme* that strongly influence student success. FTIC students do not understand many of the behavioral expectations of post-secondary schools and can struggle to understand the cultures surrounding these schools. Students who have a high self-efficacy and strong motivation tend to transition well to post-secondary schools.

### **Introductory Courses**

Introductory courses vary widely in their understanding of student expectations, instructional methods, and epistemological understandings of curriculum (Wimshurst et al., 2006). Individual professors make decisions about values and student expectations. Differences in *episteme* and a lack of institutional control can lead to pronounced differences in the structure, curriculum, style, grading practices, and the character of introductory courses within and across disciplines (Wimshurst et al.). Up to 13% of disparity in student grade point average may be due to differences in varying instructors' grading policies (Tai, Sadler, & Mintzes 2006). Despite the variability between introductory courses, post-secondary courses remain fundamentally different from the courses that students take at the secondary level (Wimshurst et al.).

The challenges of modern FTIC students are inadequately met by introductory courses (Morosanu, Handley, & O'Donovan, 2010), and introductory courses should involve developing students' self-awareness of personal knowledge, predispositions, and beliefs about the subject and should be designed to foster intellectual development and help students learn how to think critically and acquire knowledge (Lucas & Meyer, 2004; Vance, 2010). Students who are purposefully taught active learning strategies and critical

thinking strategies in their introductory courses are more likely to be academically successful (Schapiro & Livingston, 2000).

When the curriculum and instruction in some introductory courses are reorganized to reflect instructional practices commonly seen in secondary schools, FTIC students can find success (Khoon & Othman, 2004). The alignment of a skills-based curriculum across several introductory courses increases student comfort and confidence in post-secondary coursework (Pence, Workman, & Haruta, 2005). Problem-focused curriculum improves student retention in introductory courses (Swarat, Drane, Smith, Light, & Pinto, 2004), while some students in introductory courses prefer mastery learning approaches (Thompson & Grabau, 2004). When introductory courses are reorganized and generally focused on modeling, problem solving, and theoretical aspects, a students' negative attitudes can improve (Falsetti & Rodriguez, 2005).

Progressive changes to the style of instruction in introductory courses can also improve student success (Huon, Spehar, Adam, & Rifkin, 2007). Post-secondary professors can integrate first-year seminar curriculum successfully into introductory social studies courses (Sommers, 1997). When instructors modify introductory courses to include no memorization activities, add more hands on activities, and implement a curriculum with direct applications of knowledge, it significantly improves student retention of the course material (Sommers). In addition, instructional practices that sufficiently increased student growth in evidence-based historical writing at the post-secondary level are: (a) approaching history as evidence-based interpretation, (b) reading historical texts and considering them as interpretations, (c) supporting reading comprehension and historical thinking, (d) asking students to develop interpretations and

support them with evidence (Monte-Sano, 2008). When post-secondary educators have high curricular expectations of their students and use class time to actively engage students, students are more likely to be successful.

Several key problems exist for FTIC students enrolled in introductory courses. The learning environments in introductory courses are not structured to be as consistently supportive as secondary courses (Lawrenz et al., 2005). Many of the structural supports that exist in secondary classrooms do not exist in post-secondary classrooms and the “sink-or-swim” attitude is prevalent (Lawrenz, Huffman, & Appeldoorn). Introductory liberal arts courses do not consistently integrate the teaching of empirical and qualitative literacy into curriculum (Dietz, 2006). Unlike in many secondary classes, students in post-secondary courses are expected to independently develop the academic skills necessary to succeed in introductory courses; this model is not effective for many FTIC students (Sommers, 1997). Class attendance is directly related to student success in introductory courses; there is a strong negative correlation between the number of absences and final grades (Gump, 2005). Despite this, few introductory courses require attendance (Moore et al., 2003). Conversely, secondary schools require student attendance and have several structural incentives in place that encourage students to attend class regularly. The structural differences between secondary and post-secondary classes and institutions appear to influence student success at the post-secondary level.

FTIC students come to post-secondary institutions with dispositions that may negatively influence their first-year experiences. Significantly, many students do not understand the importance of class attendance and the direct correlation between class attendance and academic success (Moore et al., 2003). FTIC students are almost entirely

extrinsically motivated (Bye, Pushkar, & Conway, 2007). They are more interested in earning letter grades than in mastering skills and knowledge (Miley & Gonsalves, 2004). Rather than enrolling in courses they find interesting or may lead to personal self-improvement, many FTIC students enroll in introductory courses required for their discipline or college (Miley & Gonsalves). These student dispositions may be reflections of the practices in secondary systems that use extrinsic motivators, like GPA and class rank, and give students little agency over course selection.

### **First Time in College Students**

First-year students come into post-secondary institutions with a variety of dispositions, skills, and knowledge. Their knowledge about post-secondary courses is naïve and lacks a contextualized consideration of the academic expectations of introductory post-secondary course work (Dietz, 2006; Scanlon, Rowling, & Weber, 2007). When students transition to post-secondary life many struggle to understand their identities and how to operate in unfamiliar environments (Scanlon, et al., 2007). The manner in which the transition to post-secondary life alters students' dispositions is significant; it influences students' responses to the academic and social challenges of post-secondary life (Gibney, Moore, Murphy, & O'Sullivan, 2011; Scanlon et al.). Students who are successful in introductory courses have high self-appraisal of their academic ability, high achievement expectations, and participate in more senior-year activities in high school than those who are not successful (Olsen & House, 1997). Academic success for FTIC students is positively influenced by deliberate knowledge of learning strategies and personality characteristics such as curiosity, enthusiasm, academic persistence, a willingness to take risks and a willingness to change (Schapiro &

Livingston, 2000; Zheng, Saunders, Shelley II, & Whalen, 2002). Students' success in adjusting to college is influenced by their sense of humor, their previous academic achievement (Hickman & Crossland, 2005), their ability to master anxiety, and their confidence when managing a new, more independent, role (Gibney, et al., 2011).

Students' dispositions can influence the rigor, amount, and style of the curriculum in which they chose to enroll each semester. For example, first-time students who enroll in more than twelve hours of course work tend to have higher grade point averages and graduate in six years or less (Duby & Schartman, 1997). Students who assume more rigorous course work in the first-year of post-secondary education account for 80% of those students who stay enrolled in post-secondary institutions and persevere to graduation (Warburton et al., 2001). Students in remedial courses come into college with many disadvantages (Hagedorn, Siadat, Fogel, Pascarella, & Nora, 1999). Remedial course enrollment rates are directly related to the rigor of high school courses taken (Ohio Board of Regents, 2005).

In addition to personal dispositions, after first-time students enroll in courses at post-secondary institutions many factors help determine how successful students are. Student involvement in traditional social networks plays an important role in reducing the stress created by the transition process (Corwin & Cintron, 2011). Social integration into the university environment is as important as academic integration; first-year students who are able to create a support system are more successful. Making compatible friends is essential to retention; friends provide the emotional support important to first-time student success (Smith & Zhang, 2010; Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005). Students lean on their long-time friends from their home communities (Corwin & Cintron), and

more social support in the first year predicts more positive academic and non-academic decisions, increasing student persistence (Nicpon et al., 2007).

In addition, the adoption of achievement goals by first-year students serves as a proximal predictor of achievement outcomes (Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001). A sense of locus of control (Gifford, Briceno-Perriott, & Mianzo, 2006) and perceptions of the relevance of course work to future employment or future courses (Lizzio & Wilson, 2004) are the strongest predictors of academic success for first-year students. Conversely, Nonis and Hudson (2006) found that study time or hours at work had no direct influence on academic performance.

### **Self-Efficacy and Motivation**

Significantly, individual student dispositions influence the success of FTIC students in the first year. Many first-time students have inaccurate expectations about the nature of post-secondary courses. As students adjust to the first year of post-secondary schooling, a sense of self-efficacy, personal motivation and optimistic nature become crucial (Palmer, O’Kane, & Owens, 2009). These factors are both directly and indirectly related to student performance and adjustment to the post-secondary environment (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001; Olsen & House, 1997; Wintre et al., 2011; Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005).

Self-efficacy and motivation are manifested in higher student expectations and coping abilities (Olsen & House, 1997), which influence classroom performance, personal stress and health, overall satisfaction, and a commitment to remain enrolled in school (Chemers et al., 2001). High levels of perceived stress and depression in November negatively correlate with grade point average (Wintre et al., 2011); in spite of

this, motivation and academic self-efficacy in FTIC students are stronger predictors of academic success than mid-semester stress levels (Zajacova et al., 2005).

Students who have a sense of high self-perception of academic control (Cassidy & Eachus, 2000; Gifford et al., 2006) and a concern with academic failure are more likely to have a higher grade point average, withdraw from fewer courses, or stay enrolled at the institution (Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun, & Clifton, 2005). These self-motivated students outperform other less motivated groups by one to two letter grades (Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun, Clifton, & Chipperfield, 2005; Zheng et al., 2002).

Intrinsic motivation positively correlates with positive student affect and older and non-traditional students tend to be more intrinsically motivated (Bye et al., 2007). One of the best predictors of motivation is course attendance (Moore et al., 2003; Gump, 2005), and the correlation between motivated students and attendance suggests a dependent relationship between attendance and achievement (Donathan, 2003).

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

Educators' expectations of students and their understandings of student skills are broadly divergent. These divergent expectations interplay with student dispositions and institutional structures to paint a complex and diverse landscape. The expectations of secondary educators and post-secondary educators are only parts of this broad landscape, hills that have been built up over time by the collective understandings and *episteme* of individual educators. In my study, I explored the landscape of Texas secondary and post-secondary educators' social studies expectations of students.

#### Setting

Texas is a unique state and harbors educational institutions that are uniquely influenced by the culture and policy of the state. I collected a purposive stratified statewide sample of post-secondary syllabi from introductory US history courses. Additionally, I conducted interviews with a statewide sample of 26 secondary and post-secondary US history educators.

It is important to note that I grew up in Texas and was a participant in the EC-16 public educational system as a student for 15 years and as an educator for six years. This enables me to understand the landscape of expectations more intuitively and the educational systems. It is possible that as a product of the system my view is distorted and I am unable to see beyond the institutions that molded me and look back at them with true perspective.

**Institutions**

In an attempt to obtain a geographically and culturally balanced statewide sample of secondary and post-secondary institutions and participants, I utilized the 20 regional Education Service Centers (ESC) in the state. From the 20 ESCs, I purposefully selected seven ESC regions stratified by population size, the significance, and the classifications of the post-secondary institutions within these regions. The purposive selection helped to ensure that I captured a fair representation of all of Texas' large metropolitan areas and major universities. I selected the ESC regions of Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, El Paso, Houston/Corpus Christi, Huntsville/College Station, Lubbock, and San Antonio.

**Universities.** My study represented a total of six universities, including five of the eight largest universities in the state, as measured by total enrollment. The average student population of the six universities in fall 2011 was approximately 31,000 total enrollment with a range of about 8,000 – 52,000 students (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2011). The demographics of the students enrolled at the institutions were widely varied, as were the nature of the institutions, and therefore the nature of students' expectations. Four of the universities were considered “flagship” universities, heads of their perspective statewide university systems.

**Community Colleges.** Two community colleges were represented in my study. The limited nature of this representation was mainly due to how difficult it was to procure institutional approval from many community colleges. The average student population was about 12,500 students in fall 2011 with a range of about 10,000 – 15,000 at each campus. One community college campus was a branch of a larger regional community college system, while the other was independent of any other institution.

This may have influenced the hierarchical nature of curriculum implementation in these institutions.

**High Schools.** A total of 11 secondary schools participated in this study. Five of the schools served suburban communities, four served rural communities, and two served urban communities. The student populations of the 11 secondary schools ranged between 241 and 3,273 with an average student population of 2,272. Six of the secondary schools had a predominately Hispanic populations, six had predominately White populations, and one had a predominately African-American population; this is reflective of schools statewide. On average, 40% of the students at these 11 secondary schools were classified as “economically disadvantaged”, ranging from 11% to 70%. For each school, the average spending per pupil in 2006-2007 ranged from \$7,140 per pupil to \$8,547 per pupil, with a sample wide average of \$7,545. Typically, more funding was spent at schools with larger populations, by percentage, of economically disadvantaged students. Nine of the 11 secondary schools were traditional secondary schools that offered grades 9 through 12. One small secondary school offered grades 6 through 12, and one recently opened suburban secondary school only offered grades 9 through 11, with plans to expand to grade 12 the following year. This sample is highly reflective of statewide averages and typical-case schools.

Statewide, 11<sup>th</sup> grade students did very well on the state-mandated social studies test, and the test scores from these 11 secondary schools reflect this. From the sample of schools, 98% of students passed the 11<sup>th</sup> grade social studies test, with a very small range of 97% to 100%. There was no correlation between average spending per pupil and student performance on the state test. Statewide, the average social studies class is 22

students. Out of the 11 institutions represented in this study, the average social studies class size was 22.77 students, and the range was between 15 and 26; there was no correlation between average social studies class size and student performance on the state social studies test. In addition, ten of the 11 secondary schools offered at least one course in Advanced Placement US History as an alternate choice in curriculum from grade-level US history. From a macro view, the structures of the social studies courses offered the 11 secondary schools appear to be similar to structures established across the state.

### Participants

Over the course of three months, a total of 26 interviews were conducted with various US history educators in Texas: seven introductory US history professors at six universities, five introductory US history professors at two community colleges and 14 US history teachers at 11 secondary schools. In each region, I made an effort to contact educators who taught introductory US history courses: university faculty, community college faculty and secondary educators. I interviewed a total of twelve post-secondary US history instructors; six university professors, and six community college professors. The demographics of the participants are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

#### *Participant Demographics*

Characteristic	University (n=6)	Community College (n=5)	Secondary (n=14)
Mean years teaching	16	13.8	12.62
Female	n=2	n=3	n=7
Male	n=4	n=2	n=7

#### **Sampling and Participant Selection**

I purposefully selected interviewees at each post-secondary institution based on recommendations from history department chairs and/or analysis of their publicly available course syllabi. State law requires all post-secondary institutions in Texas to post the course syllabi of instructors on the institution's website for public review. I used a sample of publicly available syllabi to determine typical-case instructors of introductory US history courses, and contacted them; however, not all professors responded to the personally addressed e-mails that solicited volunteers for interviews. All post-secondary participants were teaching US History to 1865 the semester of my study, or had taught the course the previous semester, except one. One professor had not taught US History to 1865 in four years. This professor was the history department chair at a large university and supervised the instruction of dozens of history instructors and 4,500 to 5,000 introductory history students each semester. Despite not having recently taught the course, I in my professional judgment, this professor's perspective was relevant, unique and worth including in my study. In addition, one community college instructor served as a part time US history instructor and dean of the campus' college of social sciences.

Through the recommendation of social studies coordinators at the various Education Service Centers, I recruited participants at the secondary level. The social studies coordinators distributed my invitation to participate in a research study, which included a recruitment flyer. I obtained interviews at the secondary level, the post-secondary level, or both, were from educators teaching at institutions in each of the seven selected regions, except El Paso. Each university and community college granted Institutional Review Board approval, or the respective institutional equivalent.

## Data Sources

In order to more fully understand US history instructors' varying expectations of students at the secondary and post-secondary levels, I used two data sources: post-secondary course syllabi and individual interviews. I utilized syllabi to define professors' academic student expectations, curricular goals, and used them to understand a reflection of the pedagogical values of post-secondary educators. Syllabi analysis helped me to determine if the student expectations, grading policies, and course structures of post-secondary instructors fit a qualitative typical-case profile. In addition to collecting syllabi, I interviewed several post-secondary professors and secondary educators. The interviews helped me to understand the complexities surrounding student expectations and educators' perceptions of the individual and institutional barriers to student success.

By utilizing the websites of post-secondary institutions, I was able to access the syllabi of all professors who taught US History to 1865 in fall 2011. Texas state-law requires all post-secondary institutions to post the syllabi and *curriculum vitae* of all university undergraduate courses and professors online. I analyzed these syllabi in order to understand the post-secondary educators' expectations more fully, values and dispositions of. I collected 89 total syllabi from fall 2011 from seven selected universities, and collected 220 syllabi from seven selected community colleges. Community colleges were more likely to have a larger number of sections of introductory US history, each section with lower student-to-professor ratios than were large universities; this difference was reflected in the number of instructors at differing institutions who taught introductory US history courses. I did not collect course syllabi from secondary educators. I believed that course syllabi created for students at the

secondary level were not documents that accurately reflected the daily expectations educators had for students.

In order to get a deep understanding of educators' expectations of students and the structural limitations placed on those expectations, I conducted several interviews. Interviews enable researchers understand the intertwining issues surrounding the transition from secondary school to college (Spradley, 1979). Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, with two interviews lasting about 45 minutes and two lasting about 20 minutes.

I used a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A) in all interviews and fidelity to the protocol was maintained in all formats. This conversational format encouraged participants to be open, honest, and gave a more realistic painting of the educators' understandings and dispositions. My goal when conducting interviews was to discover and describe the "cultural meaning system" that educators were using to interpret their experience and frame their curriculum and expectations (Spradley, 1979, p. 173). The questions were written in an open-ended format so that interviewees would feel comfortable elaborating on their understandings and experiences (Merriam, 2009). Throughout the interviews the interviewer purposefully used wait-time and follow-up-questions to encourage interviewees to elaborate further and to dig deeper into their understandings. This allowed for a better understanding of the relationships between the interviewees' dispositions and their course structures (Merriam).

When interviewing these post-secondary participants, I sought to understand their emic perspective and use that perspective to help educators understand the divide between secondary and post-secondary schools. These perspectives helped me to

understand post-secondary institutions and the normative values that could be generalized about post-secondary institutions in Texas. This study was not an attempt to define what skills will predict academic success or define how post-secondary participants may foster academic growth.

### **Data Analysis**

The main purposes of data analysis were to explore the multifaceted nature of educators' understandings and to contextualize them within normative understandings of US history courses at the secondary and post-secondary levels. In order to explore these understandings, I took a five step process based on the work of Seidman (1998) and Spradly (1979):

- (1) Coded course syllabi,
- (2) Classified and coded interviews,

This process helped to ensure that I approached the data with an open attitude, willing to acknowledge what emerged from the text and prepared to let the data “breathe and speak for itself” (Seidman, p. 100).

### **College and Career Readiness Standards Model**

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board commissioned a study, Validation Study I (VSI), to determine if the newly created CCRS accurately reflected the typical practice of post-secondary courses in Texas (Education Policy Improvement Center, 2010). VSI confirmed that the skills and knowledge outlined in the CCRS were necessary for academic success in post-secondary schools. In addition, typical-case course products such as course syllabus, grading structure, and essay assignment were published for many common introductory courses, including US History to 1865. The

products outlined in VSI reflected typical-practice in post-secondary classroom, and did not necessarily reflect research based best-practice in regards to curriculum or instruction (Education Policy Improvement Center). I used this document as a framework to code the syllabi of interviewed professors and modified the coding scheme outlined in VSI to create a multi-modal coding system.

The coding system was primarily based on the model of the CCRS, but I created additional predetermined codes based on what the VSI identified as typical instructional and curricular practices in post-secondary classes across the state, (Appendix B). In order to label and identify the predetermined codes I created a numerical system, based on the system outlined in VSI. VSI outlined a system where syllabi were coded to determine alignment to the CCRS. Based on the content of the syllabi, inclusion of the CCRS was “stated verbatim”, “implied”, was “reasonable to infer”, or “not evident” (Education Policy Improvement Center, p. 12). I modified this system and added one additional code, anti-evidence, to note when instructors’ syllabi included information counter to the predetermined code. Table 2 illustrates the how I labeled the syllabi in the modified coding system.

Table 2.  
CCRS Coding System.

Code	Code Descriptor	Explanation
5	Verbatim	Overtly mentioned in the text
4	Implied	Partially mentioned in the text
3	Inferred	Hinted at in the text
2	No evidence	No evidence existed in the text
1	Anti-evidence	Anti-evidence overtly existed in the text

*Note. The coding system based on VSI, used to identify alignment of instructors' syllabi to CCRS and typical-case instructional method.*

Typically, are professors contextualize syllabi throughout the semester, modified, clarified and may or may not be followed to the letter. Many of the professors overtly mentioned the tentative and flexible nature of their syllabus and the professor's "right" to alter the syllabus, student requirements, and the course schedule. With this caveat in mind, I inferred useful understandings from the data in these documents, including professors' pedagogical and epistemological understandings. I was especially interested comparing the syllabi to typical-case practices in the VSI to determine if instructors had typical expectations of their students; this coding system provided a means to determine if the expectations of post-secondary instructors were typical-case in relation to other post-secondary instructors in the state.

### **Interview Analysis Protocol**

All interviews were professionally transcribed. A question by question analysis was performed; I also analyzed the text of the interviews, using a protocol proposed by Seidman (1998). A brief summary of predominant interview responses is shown in Table 3. When labeling information as important, I was cautious about inserting my

dispositions into the analysis process while attempting to make meaning of it. In order to check my dispositions, this process was confirmed through peer checks. I was especially interested in parts of the text that related to conflict, either between individuals and institutions, individuals and ideas, or individuals and prevailing norms. At this point, the bracketed information was given tentative labels. Rather than attempting to confirm my own dispositions, the labels “[arose] out of the passages;” after all, I interviewed people, to understand their perspectives (Seidman, p. 109).

In an effort to avoid artificially inserting my dispositions into the analysis process, the interviewee archetypes were cross-checked by a colleague whose feedback encouraged me to slightly modify the archetypes and their descriptors. In order to further define the data, previously bracketed information was gathered by label into files and categorized by commonalities, or themes as defined by Seidman (1998). These themes provided the framework to display the findings. When writing about these themes I used quotation marks to notate direct quotes by participants, italics were used to emphasize points.

Themes became evident through this detailed process the landscape of educators’ expectations became more clear. The nature of the regional sample of university, community college, and secondary educators painted a broadly generalizable understanding of educators’ expectations in Texas, especially how these expectations were influenced by the implementation of state-mandated standards.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

One goal of state-mandated standards was to increase the overall quality of education that students received in public schools, thus helping to better prepare them for the rigors of college and the workforce. Some data sources cut across participant groups while other data sources applied to one or more specific participant group(s), such as the post-secondary syllabi of professors. In this section, the findings derived from the various data sources will be discussed as they relate to a specific role group.

Post-secondary participants expressed concern about the complex issues surrounding student transition from secondary to post-secondary schools. Their expectations of students, values, and theories on educational institutions were important to understand as they attempted to clarify the broad landscape of divergent expectations between secondary and post-secondary schools. In order to understand these expectations and values, I analyzed professors' syllabi and conducted interviews. Despite divergent views at times, the participants had significant commonalities. Table 3 is a summary of interview responses organized by question and participant role group. These divergent participant responses will be discussed as they relate to various themes identified in the data.

Table 3

*Summary of Interview Responses by Respondent Role Groups*

Category	University (n=7)	Community College (n=5)	Secondary (n=14)
<b>Domain I. Nature of exams/assessments in the course</b>			
Products	Three exams administered throughout the semester	Three exams administered throughout the semester and several smaller products	Students completed a variety of products that emphasized critical thinking
Exams	Exams included a writing component and multiple choice questions	Exams included a writing component and multiple choice questions	Multiple choice questions based on the demands of the state test
Student success over time	Typically students become more successful on exams as the semester progresses	Students were typically successful on the first test, less successful on the second, and more successful on the third	Student success varied throughout the year and was not dependent on the time of year
<b>Domain II. Background academic skills of students</b>			
Skills required for success	Reading, writing, and analytical skills	Reading, writing, analytical, and behavioral skills	Critical thinking skills
Skills in need of improvement	Writing and analysis skills	Writing, note taking, and analysis skills	Reading, writing, vocabulary skills
Proficient skills	Technological skills	Technological skills	Completing simple tasks
<b>Domain III. Purposeful teaching of academic skills</b>			
Emphasis of US history course	Acquisition of critical thinking skills, varied content emphasis	Acquisition of critical thinking skills, varied content emphasis	Content outlined by state standards
Teaching of academic skills	Rarely done in class	Done at beginning of semester in class, rarely after this	Integrated into lessons on content knowledge
Perspective on ideal secondary US history course	Significant change was necessary, should be greater emphasis on writing, reading, and analytical thinking	Significant change was necessary, should be greater emphasis on writing, reading, and analytical thinking	Less emphasis on state standards and a greater emphasis on critical thinking

### **Post-Secondary Participants**

The post-secondary participants were professors of typical-case US history courses. Using the findings of VSI, I determined that course descriptions largely fit within the normative definition of what an introductory US history course in post-secondary institutions looks like in Texas. When analyzing post-secondary syllabi, it was not in the scope of this study to attempt to confirm or validate the findings in VSI in regards to post-secondary course structure or curriculum content.

The post-secondary participants identified the syllabus as a very important document, and understood it as a political document which reflected educators' pedagogical and epistemological understandings. Syllabi were typically presented to students on the first days of class, and served as students' introduction to the course expectations and participants' dispositions. Many participants saw the importance of this document and used their syllabi to document their expectations thoroughly for student learning outcomes, instructional methods and class policies. The sampled syllabi had a mean page length of six pages; university syllabi had a mean of 4.83 pages, while community college syllabi had a mean length of 7.4. The documents were a reflection of the academic values held by professors.

When they created their course frameworks and syllabi, post-secondary participants made decisions about what types of assignments to value over others, and these decisions were political (Popkewitz, 2009). Participants could assign value through grading frameworks. For example, some participants assigned student grades for written assignments, but not for classroom discussion. In doing so, the participant accessed a grading framework to emphasize the importance she placed on students completing written assignments over participating in classroom discussion. Participants used their

syllabi to emphasize the importance of various student skills or student behaviors. In many syllabi, student expectations, academic and behavioral, remained tacit, while in other syllabi, participants elaborated on specific student expectations in great detail. As artifacts, these syllabi served as indicators of the participants' academic values and their pedagogical understandings of schooling. In addition, nine of the 11 participants used their syllabi to outline the specific historical content that would be taught in each class day, and when participants had divergent schedules, the divergence revealed historiographical understandings, political dispositions, and epistemological understandings.

### **Predetermined Codes**

For the course US History to 1865, VSI included dozens of exemplars of typical-case practices such as syllabi, assignments, exam questions and student work.

Categorizing the exemplars in VSI by themes, such as instructional methods and class policies, I selected and used some of the predetermined codes outlined in VSI as exemplars and themes relevant to the nature and scope of this study. After selecting the relevant exemplars from VSI and the predetermined coding I broke the scheme into four themes for analysis:

- (1) College and Career Readiness Standards,
- (2) Student behavior outcomes,
- (3) Instructional methods, and,
- (4) Class policies.

I used these predetermined codes and their respective themes as a framework to analyze the pedagogical values held by educators and determine the typical-case nature of syllabi and course structures. Predetermined codes were rated based on the coding system

outlined in Table 2. When the mean of the ratings was greater than 3.0, I determined that the syllabi were aligned to the code.

**College and Career Readiness Standards.** The Texas Education Agency created the CCRS to help students transition from secondary to post-secondary schools and guide the instructional methods of secondary and post-secondary educators (Education Policy Improvement Center, 2010). However, none of the syllabi that I analyzed included a specific discussion of the CCRS as prerequisite skills, and none explicitly stated that the skills outlined in the CCRS were necessary for success. It is unclear if the CCRS document influenced participants' understandings of student skills and influenced their instructional practices, as determining the influence of the CCRS is outside the scope of this study. Several US history syllabi did define skills necessary for academic success in the course. The CCRS reflect many of these skills and the document served as an excellent framework to understand the post-secondary participants' expectations of FTIC students.

As shown in Table 4, community college participants were more than twice as likely as university participants to explicitly outline and define the academic skills necessary for student success. Specifically, community college participants defined that students needed to master interrelated disciplinary skills such as the chronological nature of change and the changing nature of ideologies, economic systems, and social organizations. For example, participants mentioned CCRS numbers 1.C (change and continuity of political ideologies, constitutions and political behavior), 1.D (change and continuity of economic systems and processes), and 1.E (change and continuity of social groups, civic organizations, institutions, and their interaction) with higher frequency. Community college participants consistently identified the skills necessary for the

analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of primary and secondary sources. Community college participants were more apt to state the necessity to practice good research skills and listen critically. In addition, community college participants emphasized effective communication skills and encourage students to practice academic integrity. By blatantly defining these academic skills, the community college participants emphasized the value of these academic skills, could indicate that the participants perceived students in the past had fallen short of these expectations.

In contrast, University participants were more inclined to outline the importance of critically examining texts such as primary source documents, than were community college participants. Obviously, every university participant mentioned the necessity of primary source examination in their syllabi. In addition, university participants were more likely to emphasize the necessity for students to analyze multiple sources of information in order to reach academic conclusions. The emphasis on these skills shows the value that university participants place on research and the acquisition of research skills.

Neither university participants nor community college participants emphasized the skills highlighted in Domain II of the CCRS, Diverse Human Perspectives and Experiences. These skills also reflected a more sociological approach to history, and when participants did not emphasize this, it could have shown that their historiographical understandings of history were based in more traditional schools of thought.

The content analysis of participants' syllabi was a window into the values of post-secondary participants. Community college participants were more likely to emphasize student skills more obviously than university participants, especially communication skills, while university participants were more apt to emphasize the skills necessary to

complete introductory research. These emphases indicated that participants valued these skills and may have encountered students who struggled with these skills in the past.

Table 4

*Mean Alignment and Standard Deviation of Post-secondary Syllabi to College and Career Readiness Standards*

College and Career Readiness Standard <sup>c</sup>	University syllabi <sup>a</sup>		Community College syllabi <sup>b</sup>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>I. Interrelated disciplines and skills</b>	3.92	.82	<b>4.20</b>	.84
A. Spatial analysis of physical and cultural processes that shape the human experience	3.00	1.10	<b>3.40</b>	.55
B. Periodization and chronological reasoning	<b>4.67</b>	.52	4.60	.89
C. Change and continuity of political ideologies, constitutions and political behavior	3.83	.75	<b>4.40</b>	.89
D. Change and continuity of economic systems and processes	3.83	.75	<b>4.20</b>	1.10
E. Change and continuity of social groups, civic organizations, institutions and their interaction	3.83	.75	<b>4.20</b>	1.10
F. Problem-solving and decision-making skills	4.33	.82	<b>4.40</b>	.89
<b>II. Diverse human perspectives and experiences</b>	<b>2.50</b>	.82	2.20	.45
A. Multicultural societies	<b>2.67</b>	.82	2.20	.45
B. Factors that influence personal and group identities	<b>2.33</b>	.82	2.20	.45
<b>IV. Analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information</b>	3.92	.41	<b>4.30</b>	.89
A. Critical examination of texts, images and other sources of information	<b>5.00</b>	.00	4.60	.89
B. Research and methods	2.33	.82	<b>3.80</b>	1.30
C. Critical listening	3.83	.98	<b>4.40</b>	.89
D. Reaching conclusions	<b>4.50</b>	.84	4.00	1.00
<b>V. Effective communication</b>	4.08	.55	<b>4.70</b>	.45
A. Clear and coherent oral and written communication	4.17	1.17	<b>4.60</b>	.55
B. Academic integrity	4.00	1.55	<b>4.80</b>	.45

*Note.* Five point coding system is outlined in Table 2. Boldface denotes the > mean, when comparing the syllabi of university faculty and community college participants. <sup>a</sup>*n* = 6. <sup>b</sup>*n* = 5. <sup>c</sup>Domain III of the CCRS (Interdependence of Global Communities) does not align with the typical-case expectations of US History to 1865 (Education Policy Improvement Center, 2010) so it was not included in this study.

**Post-secondary professors' expectations for student behavior outcomes.**

Participants valued student behavior outcomes and student learning outcomes. Every participant, except one university participant, outlined the learning outcomes they expected students to master at the completion of their respective course. These learning outcomes reflected the academic and behavioral skills that participants valued and wished to foster in students. However, very few professors outlined skills that aligned with the behavioral outcomes as outlined by the VSI.

The Attitudes, Skills, Knowledge (ASK) Model presented by VSI was a model of typical-case expectations for student behavioral outcomes. As indicated in Table 5, nearly all of the qualities outlined in the ASK Model were not explicitly mentioned in most post-secondary participants' syllabi. Post-secondary faculty did not generally outline the attitudes necessary for success in their courses. None of the university participants openly mentioned or hinted at in their syllabi how students should value lifelong learning, and no syllabi included mention of students' ability to accept change, nuance, and uncertainty. The behavioral outcomes frequently identified in participants' syllabi, at both the university and community college levels, were academic skills such as effective communication skills, critical thinking skills, and creative thinking skills. The emphases of syllabi centered on pedagogical understandings of school as a place where students learn traditional academic skills and knowledge, rather than school as a place where students acquire values and encounter divergent understandings of the world.

Table 5

*Mean Alignment and Standard Deviation of Syllabi to Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge (ASK) Behavioral Model of Student Learning Outcomes in VSI*

Student behavior outcome	University syllabi <sup>a</sup>		Community College syllabi <sup>b</sup>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Attitudes</b>	2.38	.55	<b>2.70</b>	.71
Behave with integrity and practice personal and social responsibility.	3.33	1.51	<b>3.80</b>	1.30
Value lifelong learning.	2.00	.00	<b>2.40</b>	.89
Accept change, nuance and uncertainty.	2.00	.00	2.00	.00
Value diversity and differences in people.	2.17	.41	<b>2.60</b>	.89
<b>Skills</b>	<b>3.63</b>	.41	3.60	.84
Communicate effectively.	<b>5.00</b>	.00	4.60	.55
Cooperate and collaborate effectively.	2.17	.41	<b>2.40</b>	.55
Think critically and creatively.	<b>4.83</b>	.41	4.40	.55
Use technology appropriately and effectively.	3.17	1.47	<b>3.80</b>	1.30
Set goals and assess progress.	<b>3.00</b>	1.55	2.80	.84
<b>Knowledge</b>	3.25	.41	<b>3.40</b>	.45
Understand various ways of knowing, and how individual disciplines investigate and interpret the world.	<b>2.50</b>	.55	2.20	.45
Understand the American experience and its place in an interdependent world.	4.00	.89	<b>4.60</b>	.55

*Note.* Five point coding system is outlined in Table 2. Boldface denotes the > mean, when comparing the syllabi of university faculty and community college participants. <sup>a</sup>*n* = 6. <sup>b</sup>*n* = 5.

**Instructional methods.** As defined by VSI, participants were consistent with typical-case instructional methods. Participants used textbooks and lectures as the driving force behind their instructional methods. Although the specifics of grading practices diverged, most participants based student grades on traditional forms of assessment such as multiple choice or essay-based exams. All participants taught US

history with a macro approach, and chronologically covered the normatively-accepted historical high points from the Colonial Era, through the American Revolution, until the end of the Civil War.

Every participant assigned students to read a textbook and all participants required students to analyze readings outside the textbook. When choosing a US history text book, there was little to no commonality between institutions; only participants at the same institution chose the same textbook. One university participant assigned the textbook he authored. Several participants put significant emphasis on students reading primary documents, historical monographs, and historical fiction.

The analysis of the practices outlined in post-secondary participants' syllabi concluded that the grading frameworks were typical of traditional introductory post-secondary history courses. Participants relied on traditional exams, papers, and quizzes to individually assess student knowledge, and the details of grading practices between participants were varied. This finding was congruent with the research of Wimshurst et al. (2006) and Tai et al. (2006). As seen in Table 6, university participants tended to assign out-of-class research papers and put more weight behind student performance on final exams, and the level of emphasis on research papers was divergent between university participants. When post-secondary participants required research papers and assigned more weight to student performance on research papers, it indicated university participants valued research and the acquisition of research skills.

Community college participants used their grading structures to emphasize smaller assignments, such as homework or quizzes. As a percentage of a student's grade, the mean weight of final exams in the community college courses sampled was 15% and some participants chose to not offer a final exam. Some community college participants

chose these grading structures as attempts to limit the negative effects of low exam grades on students' final grades. Only one community college participant assessed student content posted on online discussion boards, while no university participants used discussion boards as an assessment tool. Group projects and group grades were not outlined in any participants' syllabi. The emphasis of these grading structures in introductory US history courses is focused on individually assessing students' knowledge and performance on assignments traditionally completed in US history courses.

The syllabi indicated that the post-secondary participants approached US history in a traditional manner, using a macro lens to progress chronologically through major historical periods in US history. None of the participants in the sample structured their course thematically, as opposed to chronologically, and no participant taught the course through the perspectives of individuals, as opposed to through a macro approach. Alignment to the typical-case course schedule defined in VSI was high. These data provided a window into the more traditional historiographical dispositions of participants. Even if participants personally thought it was best to approach history with a more thematic or individualistic historiography, they made political choices when they decided to teach their introductory US history course in the traditional manner, chronologically with a macro lens.

In their syllabi, many participants explicitly defined exactly what curriculum would be taught on each class day, what instructional methods would be used and how students would be assessed. Other participants did not include a daily instructional schedule in their syllabi and many who included a schedule left the timeline vague. Between those who clearly described the planned schedule, there were echoes between cases when defining which historical eras were taught. The greatest variability existed in

the manner in which participants approached the years leading up to the American Revolution. The specific inclusion of pre-colonial Native American societies stood as the only topic deviant from the commonalities in the curriculum. Some participants included this topic in a larger topic such as “Europe and America to 1607” or “The New Global World”; while some participants began their courses with a focus on the European settlers in the Colonial Era and proceeded chronologically without necessarily focusing on Native American societies. Despite this minor variability, I determined that the syllabi revealed that as a whole, the instructional methods of the sample of post-secondary participants were typical-case.

Table 6

*Mean Alignment and Standard Deviation of Syllabi to Typical-case Instructional Methods as Outlined in VSI*

Instructional method	University syllabi <sup>a</sup>		Community College syllabi <sup>b</sup>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Assignments and assessments<sup>c</sup></b>				
Homework	0%	.00	<b>10%</b>	.14
Quizzes	8%	.12	<b>17%</b>	.18
Discussion board postings	0%	.00	0% <sup>d</sup>	.01
Exams	56%	.18	57%	.11
Final exam	<b>21%</b>	.13	15%	.11
Papers/essays	<b>14%</b>	.22	0%	.00
<b>Course schedule<sup>e</sup></b>				
Introduction and First Encounters	<b>4.00</b>	1.55	3.00	1.41
European, African and Indigenous Roots of the Americas	<b>3.33</b>	1.51	2.50	.58
Atlantic Slave Trade	<b>3.83</b>	1.47	2.50	.58
Native American Societies	2.50	1.22	2.50	.58
Migration, Religion and Intolerance	<b>4.00</b>	1.55	3.00	.82
Colonial Society and the Role of Religion	<b>4.00</b>	1.55	3.75	1.50
American Revolution	4.00	1.55	<b>4.25</b>	1.50
Making the United States – The Federalist Era	<b>4.00</b>	1.55	3.50	1.29
Jacksonian America	<b>4.00</b>	1.55	3.75	1.26
Manifest Destiny	<b>3.67</b>	1.51	3.25	1.26
The Age of Reform	<b>3.50</b>	1.64	2.75	.50
Sectional Conflict	<b>4.00</b>	1.55	3.75	1.50
The Civil War	4.00	1.55	<b>4.25</b>	1.50

*Note.* Five point coding system is outlined in Table 2. Boldface denotes the > mean, when comparing the syllabi of university faculty and community college participants. <sup>a</sup>*n* = 6. <sup>b</sup>*n* = 5. <sup>c</sup>Assignments and assessments as a percentage of the overall grade <sup>d</sup>One community college participant counted discussion board postings for 2% of students' overall grades. <sup>e</sup>All of the variation that exists in this table is due to a lack of evidence in the syllabi supporting the inclusion of a particular topic in the course. There were no instances of anti-evidence (coded as 1).

**Class policies.** Post-secondary participants used their syllabi to overtly define their formal classroom policies. For the most part, community college participants sampled were more explicit about defining their class policies, grading policies, academic expectations, and behavioral expectations, including expectations surrounding academic honesty. As seen in Table 7, every community college participant in the sample specifically defined student expectations, expectations for behavioral conduct, and desirable academic behaviors. Many community college participants took the time in the syllabus to clarify policies about cell phones, headphones, sleeping in class, and tardiness, while university participants were less like to define these policies. In addition, even though the majority of syllabi mentioned policies about academic integrity, i.e. plagiarism, cheating, and collusion, community college participants were more likely to elaborate on these policies and explicitly define what student behaviors constituted academic dishonesty. These participants valued these various behavioral academic norms. When they defined these rules in their syllabi it was an indication that in the past, students' values clashed with the values inherent in the behavioral norms. Clarification in the syllabus was an attempt to avoid this value conflict in the future.

Not all syllabi included mention of a grading policy. Every participant that mentioned their grading policy structured their grading policy in the traditional manner. As seen in Table 7, the way participants structured their courses to arrive at these grades was divergent. Analysis of the class policies, grading policies, and academic integrity policies of the sample of post-secondary participants shows that these policies, as outlined in the course syllabi, were typical-case.

Table 7

*Mean Alignment and Standard Deviation of Syllabi to Typical-Case Class Policies as Outlined in VSI*

Class policy	University syllabi <sup>a</sup>		Community College syllabi <sup>b</sup>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Attendance policy	4.00	1.55	<b>4.40</b>	1.34
Expectations	4.33	1.03	<b>5.00</b>	.00
Student conduct	4.00	1.55	<b>5.00</b>	.00
Academic behaviors	4.00	1.55	<b>5.00</b>	.00
<b>Grading Policy</b>	4.00	1.26	<b>4.25</b>	1.50
A (90–100) = excellent/performance beyond mastery	4.00	1.55	<b>4.40</b>	1.34
B (80–89) = above average/beyond basic mastery	4.00	1.55	<b>4.40</b>	1.34
C (70–79) = average mastery	4.00	1.55	<b>4.40</b>	1.34
D (60–69) = below average	4.00	1.55	<b>4.40</b>	1.34
F (0–59) = failure	4.00	1.55	<b>4.40</b>	1.34
+/- may be used at the instructor's discretion	<b>2.33<sup>c</sup></b>	1.37	2.00	.00
<b>Academic integrity policy</b>	3.61	1.51	<b>4.60</b>	1.00
Plagiarism	3.67	1.51	<b>4.60</b>	.89
Cheating	3.67	1.51	<b>4.60</b>	.89
Collusion	3.50	1.38	<b>4.60</b>	.89

*Note.* Five point coding system is outlined in Table 2. Boldface denotes the > mean, when comparing the syllabi of university faculty and community college participants. <sup>a</sup>*n* = 6. <sup>b</sup>*n* = 5. <sup>c</sup>Only one university participant expressed in the syllabus that +/- grades may be used at the instructor's discretion, while another specifically forbade the policy.

My analysis of the syllabi soundly undergirds the post-secondary participants as typical-case instructors in Texas. The participants' courses appeared to be aligned with the CCRS, their student expectations are typical to US history instructors, and their class policies were representative of post-secondary instructors statewide. My analysis of the syllabi also revealed that these participants used the structures in their courses to encourage academic values important to them, reading, writing, and critical thinking. This served as a strong foundation for the 12 qualitative post-secondary interviews that were conducted and increased the generalizability of my study.

### **Emergent Codes**

I interviewed 26 educators from Texas at eight different post-secondary institutions and 12 secondary institutions, and followed a semi-structured interview protocol. The interviews had a conversational feel, and I felt free to ask follow-up questions not specifically listed on the protocol. This relaxed setting enabled interviewees to feel more comfortable with the interview. In addition, several post-secondary participants were passionate about the questions that were asked, and comfortably elaborated on intertwining issues. This was evidenced by one community college participant who, near the end of the interview, noted her own surprise and joy in her responses when she said, "Boy, I got to get on my soap box with you; it's great!"

Many interviewees quickly turned the conversation from the overt focus of the interview, i.e. student skills and academic expectations, to matters of public policy, student culture, and institutional issues. These issues and educators' perspectives in regards to these topics interest me. As an outsider, it is possible that if I directly asked questions about controversial topics, that educators, wishing to preserve their self-interest, may not have been as open. Post-secondary faculty struggled with complex

factors and the findings of this research may help researchers understand the complex nature of the landscape of educator expectations.

When I analyzed the 12 post-secondary educator interviews, several codes emerged from the data and from these codes six themes emerged (Spradley, 1979). As I coded, the boundaries of these themes became clearer and more defined. These themes formed the framework of the findings, they were: (1) educators' expectations of students and course requirements, (2) student skills, (3) divergent institutional expectations, and (4) standards, testing, and observation. I determined that two themes, (5) motivation and (6) curriculum, were outside the focus of this particular study.

Post-secondary educators' expectations of students and their course requirements echoed between themselves and were either overtly expressed or tacit. Educators' expectations centered on reading, writing, and others small assignments, and the level of communication of these expectations varied greatly between cases. At times, introductory students struggled to meet the academic expectations of post-secondary educators. The post-secondary educators perceived the disparity between educators' expectations and student performance was widest in regards to the reading and writing skills of FTIC students. All twelve participants argued that the clash between educators' expectations and student skills may be a reflection of the divergent expectations of students between secondary and post-secondary schools, and nine of twelve reasoned that these divergent institutional expectations were due to public policy which increased the influence of standards and state-mandated testing in secondary schools. They argued that this influenced limited student learning, critical thinking, and decreased students ability to succeed. These ideas intertwined in four themes of emergent codes:

(1) Educators' expectations of students and course requirements,

- (2) Student skills,
- (3) Divergent institutional expectations, and
- (4) Standards, testing, and observation.

**Educators' expectations.** It is important to understand post-secondary educators' expectations of students; there are implications for secondary educators, post-secondary educators, and for students. Post-secondary educators' expectations of students were divergent; despite these divergences, several codes emerged when analyzing the 12 interviews. All 12 post-secondary interviews discussed FTIC student expectations, and every participant interviewed specified expectations surrounding reading assignments and writing requirements. Some participants outlined expectations about small, non-exam, assignments, and extra credit, while others discussed the prescriptive nature of their expectations. Two participants explained how the requirements of the secondary AP US History course influenced their student expectations.

**Reading requirements.** Textbooks readings were explicitly encouraged in the introductory US history courses of all 11 participants and were required in ten of them; in addition to the textbook all 11 participants required some sort of reading assignment. Students were expected to read the textbook out of class, summarize what they read, and “learn how to think critically about the material contained within it.” This academic expectation was difficult at first for some students and one participant noted that “it takes them about a month or so of not being very successful to finally figure out that they need to read.”

Besides the textbook, every post-secondary participant used additional readings as a means to emphasize their personal pedagogical understandings of history and to

highlight what they considered important when learning history. As a way to emphasize historical research, most participants required that students read primary source documents in an attempt to foster students' research skills. History can be told through the lens of story-tellers and other participants emphasized this theme when they assigned historical novels or monographs. Many participants used these out of class reading assignments as a means to encourage students to write out of class papers.

***Writing requirements.*** All interviewed participants described some sort of writing assignment or assessment that was expected of students and constituted of a large portion of students' final grades. Every participant, except one, had some sort of a writing component built into their exams. Three university participants had exams that comprised of only writing assignments like essays or short identification questions. Eight participants, including 100% of the community college participants in the sample, combined a variety of writing tasks with multiple choice questions in order to create exams. Only one post-secondary participant, a university participant, relied solely on multiple choice questions for exams, and even this participant assigned an in class writing assignment. In addition to the writing expectations on exams, participants expected students to complete other writing assignments. In class writing assignments used by these participants were varied and included complex primary document analysis assignments, the identification of basic historical terms or concepts, and traditional freeform essay exams. Some participants expected students to complete out of class writing assignments or research papers, but this was not the norm. These participants typically expected students to analyze a historical novel or primary document, or expected students write about their family genealogy.

Several universities had required writing components, and had no other requirement on course structures. When asked why this was, one participant noted, without further explanation, that requiring writing in introductory history courses was simply, “the right thing to do.” No department had a requirement for the use of multiple choice testing, and no participant spoke highly of their decision to use multiple choice questions on tests. There is an underlying value that many institutions, and participants, believe that writing has in US history courses, even introductory courses.

It appeared that it was badge of honor to rely heavily on writing assignments as a form of student assessment, as opposed to using multiple choice style questions. With a sense of pride, one participant noted the “intensive” nature of the history department’s writing expectations, while another participant actively argued that essays were better measurements of student knowledge because in a written essay a student “generates the answers from within their head rather than pull[ing] one off the page.” Four participants took the time to justify their use of multiple choice questions or apologized for using multiple choice questions. When justifying the use of multiple choice questions participants made comments like, “a lot of [the decision] has to do with the time constraints that we're placed under in terms of grading.” At large universities, because of the sheer number of exams that participants had to grade, these participants saw multiple choice questions in introductory courses as a necessary evil; “we really need to accommodate my graders who ... need to be able to get grades in for 250-300 students.” If not for the overwhelmingly time consuming nature of grading written essays, more of these participants would assign more writing assignments.

*Smaller assignments and extra credit.* Besides traditional exams, several participants, especially those teaching at the community college level, offered additional

assignments to help students' grades. There was an understanding that the participant's had to structure their grading framework so that motivated, but "less than prepared", students would be able to pass the course, despite the students' academic background. Some participants allowed students to watch documentaries or Hollywood style movies, write research papers or biographical essays, or attend tutorials in order to improve their grades. When participants structured their courses in this manner they revealed that what important in their course was the ability to work and complete tasks, rather than understand the content knowledge or master academic skills.

*Specificity of academic expectations.* While academic expectations were typically outlined by participants in their syllabi or in the first days of the course, many times community college participants clarified their expectations and specified exactly what content knowledge and skills would be assessed on exams. This could be done by giving students an outline of expectations, an essay rubric, an essay guide, a list of possible essay questions, or a review sheet. When participants clarified their expectations with students, they found that students were more successful on exams because the students knew what to expect. Some participants provided students with a sample of possible essay questions, in attempt to help students prepare for the essay portion of the exam. This way students could spend time outlining and preparing for one of several essay options. The extreme of this was seen when one community college participant provided his students with one sample essay that could be studied by students and re-written on the exam from memory "just as" the participant wrote the sample essay. The participant considered this a successful method when he noted that, "they do what I ask ... generally they look [the sample essay] up and commit it to memory and give it back to me, which is what I'm trying to do."

***Advanced Placement framework.*** One way in which the chasm between the divergent expectations of secondary and post-secondary participants was bridged was through the use of Advanced Placement (AP) US History structures as a tool to inform instructional practices at the post-secondary level. AP US History is a course that students can take in secondary schools, and the expectations of students enrolled in the course are comparable to that of expectations at the introductory college level. Assessment of students' knowledge on the AP US History exam is heavily based on Document Based Questions and the analysis of primary sources. Enrollment in courses with AP level curriculum in secondary school positively influenced the probability that a student would be successful in post-secondary schools. The course was widely offered across the nation including at ten of the 11 secondary schools participating in this study.

In an interesting twist, two post-secondary participants in this study adopted the academic expectations defined in the secondary AP US History curriculum. These participants had experiences either teaching AP US History as a secondary teacher or as a "grader" of AP US History exams. In their post-secondary courses, the participants used the Document Based Question framework "brick by brick" and the AP US History rubric as a means to teach primacy source analysis. They found that students were more successful on traditional written assignments when they used this framework. This practice was not common in sample, but it is worth mentioning this practice.

***Tacit expectations.*** Participants found that specifically outlining their expectations of students benefitted students and improved student learning outcomes. However, some of the expectations that lay the foundation for FTIC student success were not stated or defined by many participants. Participants infrequently defined these tacit expectations, and rarely explicitly taught them. Some participants were more likely than

others to keep their academic expectations tacit. Students were expected to develop critical and analytical thinking skills, important understandings about how to study, and how to manage their time on their own. These skills were difficult for the majority students to master in one semester, and one participant defined his tacit expectations as goals “that they’re aiming for,” rather than course requirements. Participants assumed that students would eventually be able to master these skills and would intuitively figure out “the process of going to college.”

Between cases, the post-secondary participants had many similar student expectations. They wanted students to write well, read for understanding, and think analytically. Every participant required some sort of a writing assignment and required students to read outside of class. However, the assignments that they used to assess students and the ways in which they framed students’ expectations of professors were divergent. Some participants were more prescriptive about the manner in which they outlined student expectations than others.

**Student skills.** Many post-secondary participants had very high academic expectations of their students and FTIC students were not always academically prepared for success. It was easy, when discussing student skills, for educators to focus on the skills that students struggled to master. When educators were interviewed, they tended to highlight skills which students had yet to master, rather than highlighting proficiencies. A community college participant highlighted the inner conflict between her desire to honor students’ successes and at the same time recognize their struggles when she said,

“It’s so hard to see the things that [students] are good at, because we tend to be overwhelmed by the things that they are not good at. It can be overwhelming. It

can be easy to go, “these people are completely ignorant – they’ve never been taught anything.””

*Divergent participant views of skills.* Participants had divergent ideas about student skills, and some participants noted how they were pleased with their students and their students’ success. This was highlighted by a university participant who took a positive approach to students when he noted that:

I often hear my colleagues at the college level lament on the poor preparation of students and how students don’t know as much as they used to. I don’t find that to be the case with my students. I find that my students are pretty well-prepared and I don’t, I can’t say that they know less than students used to.

As defined by the participants, the academic skills that post-secondary students fundamentally struggled with were, reading skills, writing skills, analytical skills, and social studies skills. When participants determined students did not have the skills “that you expect them to have at this point in time,” they altered their grading frameworks and academic expectations. At least five of the 11 participants interviewed adjusted their course expectations to ensure that students who were motivated, but academically underprepared were able to earn credit for the course. As a collective case, the post-secondary participants had high expectations for students and altruistically wanted success for students. When they spoke poorly of students’ skill, many of them did so because they cared deeply about student success and students’ futures.

All 12 participants were able to identify areas of improvement for students, and two participants ultimately could not identify a skill in which students were “proficient.” One university participants noted that, ” there's really not something that I would give them high marks for across the board,” while a community college participant stated “I

can't say there's really anything that they excel at. I mean, that's terrible to say but that's it.” However, some educators remained positive about student dispositions and did not define students by deficiencies. One community college participant noted that “we have to take them where they are here and lift them up.” Others spoke highly of the students enrolled in their classes. Participants defined the skills that they perceived their FTIC students were proficient in, including computer literacy skills, reading skills, vocabulary skills, spelling skills, basic research skills, verbal skills, and the skills, and commitment surrounding a strong work ethic.

**Reading skills.** Five of the 12 post-secondary faculty spoke of difficulties that they have experienced with FTIC students centered on reading; however, an additional participant highlighted reading and vocabulary skills as student strengths. It was clear that a consensus did not exist between cases in regards to the reading skills of students. Four of the five participants who spoke of problems concerning reading tied student difficulties to larger societal problems concerning reading. Participants expressed concern that students were not willing, or perhaps able, to read large passages of text for long periods of time. Exemplifying this idea, one participant noted that “I think students these days might read as many words as students did in the past but they rarely are in the form of a sustained piece.” An additional concern of the interviewees was that many students struggled to read “in depth,” and connect the things they were reading about to larger historical concepts, ideas, and arguments. A university participant noted that reading in this manner, about “disassociated facts,” tended to bore students, and getting them to think differently while they read was vital.

**Writing skills.** Whereas a minority of participants stated that introductory students struggled with reading skills, seven of the 12 stated their belief that students

struggled to write well. The interviewed participants each had a solid understanding of the general nature of their students' writing skills, as each post-secondary participant interviewed assigned significant writing assignments in their introductory courses and regularly read students' work. Concerns about writing skills were varied, however. Five of the seven participants emphasized their frustrations as students' struggled with basic grammar errors such as spelling and sentence structure, while four of the seven participants expressed concern about students' ability to use their writing to coherently organize their thoughts and make a strong argument. One community college participant noted that her frustrations with FTIC students' writing skills were so great that she avoided the issue by not assigning "formal papers." When participants spoke of writing skills, many of them spoke emphatically, in short phrases that emphasized their conviction and a sense of moral authority over the struggling students. In a frustrated manner, with a hint of disdain, one post-secondary participant said:

I get people all the time that I get the impression that they have never really written a paper before they get to college. They don't get the mechanics of it. They don't know how it's spaced, that paragraphs need to be indented, just sort of basic stuff... Grammar is atrocious, spelling is terrible, run-ons, and fragments, these are things that people should learn in middle school, if not before. It's just disconcerting if these people go into the work place and they can't spell and they can't write.

Many participants did not attempt to explain the possible causes of student struggles with writing; however, a few specifically noted how their writing expectations were divergent from the writing expectations typical in post-secondary schools. Despite struggles, however, several participants argued that FTIC students experienced growth in

their writing skills by the end of the semester and these participants supposed that struggling students could be successful in their US history course, despite student difficulties with writing skills.

*Analytical skills.* In introductory US history courses participants perceived that it was essential for FTIC students to be able to process a large amount of information, in the form of textbook readings, lectures, primary source readings, and other sources, “distill it down to key points”, and think critically about it. This can be difficult for some students, however, especially “if the students have no background at all in [US history.] It’s often difficult for them to sort out between the trivial and the essential” and because of this some students struggle to tie knowledge about US history to their prior knowledge. One participant perceived that the root of this struggle lay in most students’ “ability to concentrate for fifty minutes” and think deeply about the content. Each of the six participants who discussed this academic difficult recognized that mastering analytical skills was especially difficult.

*Acquisition of academic skills.* Between participants of introductory history classes, there is a sense that there is “too much” history content to cover and that every minute of class time is a precious minute that could be spent analyzing another cause and effect relationship or telling the story of another important historical figure. Historians value history; it interests them. They have chosen to make a career out of the field and learned the intricacies of their subject. Some participants noted that students will “gradually pick up the skills along the way,” without realizing it. This widespread nature of this idea was researched (Sommers, 1997). When the historians I interviewed choose to spend less class time, even five minutes, on historical content, and more time teaching

writing skills, or reading skills, the decision was purposeful, and was typically bore out of necessity rather than option.

Very few participants purposefully used class time to teach FTIC students academic skills. Post-secondary participants stated that the large nature of some introductory courses, the availability of tutoring resources elsewhere on campus, the one-on-one nature of skill acquisition, unmotivated students, and their personal lack of formal educational training, were all factors that limited their ability or desire to teach academic skills during class time. However, six participants discussed ways in which they actively taught academic skills in class; they discussed teaching skills during class in the following ways: while discussing content, in the form of written feedback, and lectures over writing skills, and reading skills.

Of the six participants who discussed teaching academic skills in class, four were community college participants, another was the full-time history department chair, and one was a university participant. Participants tended to front-load instruction on academic skills at the start of the course and taper off as the course progressed. However, the instructional methods that participants used were divergent between cases. Some taught academic skills through small lectures on reading skills, or note-taking skills, while others spent an entire class days conducting writing workshops. Most commonly, participants integrated skills instruction with traditional history instruction. Some doubted the effectiveness of their efforts, while others could immediately see positive results in student learning outcomes. One community college participant challenged the idea that a participant could make a difference in the abilities of all students.

*Academic proficiencies.* When highlighting the perceived skills of FTIC students, many participants elaborated on the academic skills that many students

successfully applied in introductory US history courses. Two participants noted how technologically advanced students were, and how the students were “more electronically savvy than I ever care to be.” Students used their technological skills to quickly access information in order to answer questions. In addition, two participants perceived that students excelled at verbal skills and were able to apply their skills to oral arguments based on reasoning and critical thinking. Finally, one community college participant was especially impressed with the work ethic of some of his students. The students’ ability to balance full-time employment, a full-time academic course load, and family responsibilities amazed him; so much so that he said:

I personally believe that the future of America is in community colleges now and not at Harvard or Yale. These people still have a work ethic about what they want to earn and what they want to get and they realize that the world isn’t cutting them a break.

The issues surrounding FTIC student success were emotional and overwhelming to some post-secondary educators. At times it was easy for educators to lament about the nature of FTIC students and the struggles that students encounter. These post-secondary participants identified three key areas in which students struggled to be successful, reading skills, writing skills, and analytical skills. However, these emotions were juxtaposed by the positive attitudes of some educators and the consistent efforts that most educators put forth to ensure that FTIC students were consistently successful. The frustrations that educators had with students reflected the pedagogical values that educators held and showed the importance that reading, writing, and analytical skills had in their introductory US history classrooms.

**Divergent institutional expectations.** There was a general understanding in US culture that typical high school experiences were broadly divergent from the experiences typical in college. American movies have highlighted these differences for decades. These movies spoke to broad cultural divergences between experiences in these institutions, however, they did not necessarily speak to differences that most influence student success at the post-secondary level. The opinions of post-secondary participants were helpful especially when I attempted to understand the divergent academic and behavioral expectations between secondary and post-secondary institutions. Post-secondary participants regularly experienced FTIC students struggling with this divergence and the participants' unique dispositions contribute to the power of their perspectives when speaking about the divergence of institutional expectations.

*Nature of the disconnect.* The post-secondary participants interviewed were all very aware of the issues that confronted them due to the divergent expectations. Some were very critical of secondary institutions and when directly asked "what do you wish high school educators would, or could, do differently to better prepare students for college," two participants quickly answered by saying "everything." This critical approach challenges the collective structures, policy, and organizations surrounding secondary schools, and additionally challenges the individual choices of secondary classroom educators.

FTIC students are struggling in post-secondary classrooms and post-secondary educators are living the reality of this disconnect. Two participants discussed the FTIC students' shock when they are confronted for the first time with the realities of post-secondary course work. These students "freak out because they are used to high school."

A community college participant highlighted the institutional nature of this disconnect when she argued that the problem was not inherent to students, but lay with institutions.

I really don't think that our students are less able than they used to be but I do think that they're very much less prepared or ill prepared. They don't bring the skill sets with them when they come from high school.

***Challenge to the institutional nature of divergent expectations.*** Other participants, however, challenged the legitimacy of the institutional nature of the problem. One community college participant noted that “I suspect that there’s not much that high school teachers can do that they’re not already doing [to prepare students for college].” For him, the onus of failure lay solely on the individual student. This philosophy was reflected for him in his classroom policies and grading structures. In addition, three other participants highlighted the individual nature of student failure when they acknowledged that students rarely failed their courses due to lack of academic preparation. Instead students could pass who were motivated and worked hard. Two of the three did qualify this statement with the understanding that poor secondary school preparation may be the difference between a grade of an *A* or a *C*, and that “obviously there are students coming in who just cannot earn an *A* because their preparation is so poor.” To some students, however, it is likely that the difference between an *A* and a *C* due to academic preparation may be a personal failure, and although these students were passing the course, I challenge that this example discredits the problems surrounding the divergent institutional expectations between secondary and post-secondary schools.

***Behavior expectations.*** When I taught seniors in high school, many would comment that they couldn’t wait to get to college and live a life of freedom and independence. Post-secondary participants highlighted this behavioral divergence when

one noted that the independent nature of college caused problems for many FTIC students. With more independence came more individual responsibility and students were not used to being “on their own.” The idea of being “on their own” manifested itself in students’ abilities or inabilities to manage their time and practice good study habits. It also manifested itself in the independent nature of academic success or failure. One participant recalled how the large size of classes discouraged participants from assessing student knowledge weekly, as commonly done in secondary schools. This meant that students had to avoid procrastination and stay on top of their studies so that they did not fall too far behind, unable to catch up by exam time.

*Critical thinking.* In addition to divergent behavioral expectations, many participants discussed the divergent nature of academic expectations in secondary and post-secondary institutions. Interestingly, most post-secondary history participants appeared less concerned with student understandings of historical events and historical figures and were more concerned with FTIC students’ ability to read for understanding, think critically and write well. International students, never having taken a US history course, were able to be successful in at least two university participants’ courses. She observed that these students were able to be successful, despite their lack of content knowledge, because they understood how to “analyze documents and formulate an argument.” One community college participant elaborated on this in an interview when she requested that secondary educators:

be more demanding in their reading loads so that students are more accustomed to actually reading ... we can teach [students] the content again ... [the] fact that they've forgotten the content is [not] as much of a problem as that they're not prepared to receive it.

There was a perception between the post-secondary participants that secondary students were “spoon-fed” a curriculum focused on a litany of dates and chronological events. This influences FTIC students’ abilities to think critically and as one participant observed, “it’s not that they’re not thinking or that they’re dumb – it’s just [that I want them] thinking in a different way.” She went on to note that “[FTIC students are] struggling with the critical thinking – most of them feel liberated by it – but some are still at the end of the semester saying, “Well how do I study for this?””

***Reading, writing, and note taking.*** Divergent institutional expectations about critical thinking were important; however, those interviewed mentioned divergent expectations surrounding reading, writing, and note-taking twice as many times as they did divergent expectations about critical thinking. Many of the post-secondary participants interviewed perceived that secondary students were not accustomed to writing for their secondary history classes. Instead, writing instruction was focused in English and speech classes, where students were taught to “feel good about their writing,” instead of the mechanics of high quality expository writing. One community college participant cynically claimed that students were not taught to write well in college because “coach never has them write. Coach doesn't do essays because it's a pain in the ass to grade.”

In addition to divergent institutional expectations about writing, many of the post-secondary participants interviewed argued that FTIC students struggled with reading assignments and note-taking skills because expectations surrounding these academic skills in secondary schools underprepared FTIC students for college. Three participants argued similar points to this idea, that students “don’t have a clue how to take notes, because they weren’t taught to do that in high school.” Note taking and reading skills

simply weren't practiced enough in secondary schools, and practicing skills is what enables students to become proficient in them. A community college participant echoed this idea when she said, "I don't think students really become readers until they actually get to college so I think the reading is kind of overwhelming for them."

Finally, three participants separately offered an interesting theory. They argued that FTIC students learned in their secondary history classes that history is boring, linear, and is based on the "rote memorization of events, dates, and names." These "bad memories" haunted FTIC students in introductory courses, decreased their affect towards the subject, and limited their thinking. These students struggled when asked the "why's of history" and weren't able to see where they "fit into all of this and [they] should give a damn" about history.

It is likely that the divergent expectations of students in secondary schools and post-secondary schools lay at the foundation of the struggles of FTIC students. These post-secondary educators highlighted the divergent expectations most worrisome to them, behavioral expectations, critical thinking skills, reading skills, writing skills, and note-taking skills. The divergent natures of student expectations in these key areas were important factors that must be examined when analyzing the academic readiness of FTIC students.

**Standards, testing, and observation.** Post-secondary participants frequently theorized that the divergent expectations between secondary and post-secondary schools were due to institutional problems in secondary schools. Many participants perceived that systems of hierarchical observation limited educator agency and these systems had detrimental effects on instructional practices. Ultimately, they thought that student learning outcomes suffered because of this and FTIC students struggled in post-

secondary schools. The emergence of this theme and the echoing ideas that existed between cases was especially intriguing. There were no interview questions about state-mandated standards, standardized testing or the impacts of these on individual educator agency. Despite this, 75% of post-secondary participants discussed issues that related to this theme and many astutely reflected on the negative influence of standards, testing, and observation on students.

Post-secondary participants did not encounter the daily realities of the down force of standardized testing. Secondary educators were most qualified to speak of the ways in which standards, testing, and observation manifested themselves in daily instructional practices and student learning outcomes. However, most students enrolled in post-secondary institutions in Texas were participants in public educational systems in Texas. Post-secondary participants encounter these students and can attempt to understand their voice. Because of this, the positions of post-secondary educators are valuable when speaking of standards, testing, and observation.

Many participants argued that the root of the divergent expectations between secondary and post-secondary schools were factors which “dictated” exactly what educators taught, limiting educators “freedom” to choose instructional practices. Two participants used a historical analogy, and compared the loss of agency by educators to the loss of agency that industrial workers experienced “in the industrial revolution, where educators [were] increasingly becoming cogs in the machine.” Elaborating on this analogy, the second participant noted that institutional forces “strapped” educators down, limited their ability to try innovative ideas, and eventually encouraged innovative educators to leave the field of education.

The great teachers that I had ... were those special teachers who did things differently. The creators and the innovators and we're losing those because they get frustrated and quit because they can't do things. They cannot do innovative or unique things because across the nation today, we're treating K-12 teachers like assembly line workers and not teachers. They need more freedom to create.

Participants claimed that teachers were unable to exhibit agency because the down force pressures associated with being graded by accountability measures “locked” educators to the knowledge and skills assessed by the state tests. These forces caused “teachers [to] have very little control over” their instructional practices. Teachers no longer “had the luxury” to create “fun” activities that engaged students and fostered a love of history. In addition, these forces shifted the focus of classroom instruction from “what’s important.” Elaborating on this idea a participant said, “[Education is] not about filling in the little ovals and learning how to take a test, it’s learning how to use your brain to figure stuff out.”

Frequently interviewees echoed ideas that accountability measures put teachers “under the gun,” and limited them to teaching rote memorization about “disassociated facts.” The idea of history as a list of disassociated facts ran counter to prevailing ideas about history as a clash of ideas, arguments, and concepts that were always subjective and open to interpretation. The controversy inherent in the subject made history interesting, and the realist philosophy inherent in standards “squellch[ed] the excitement of learning [and] curiosity.” The understanding of history encouraged by state-mandated tests “dumbed-down” the curriculum, and encouraged teachers to raise important issues for discussion and cultivated less critical thinking in students. This caused students to be less prepared to critically think when presented rigorous expectations in post-secondary

schools, causing a participant to claim, “Our kids don’t know how to think critically anymore.” One participant addressed the institutional nature of the problem, and released teachers from individual blame when she claimed that this problem was occurring because teacher “can’t actually teach the information that these students need to succeed in college.” In addition, one participant argued that standards and their deliberate use in classrooms has “created a generation of very literally minded students” who are “scared” to analyze and interpret history. This caused them to be “ill prepared” for success in college. One participant discussed an idea echoed by several other participants when she argued that because of accountability measures, students today are not “less able but I definitely believe they’re less prepared.”

### **Collective Post-Secondary Faculty Participants**

Post-secondary educators were concerned with the transition that FTIC students had to make and thought deeply about the factors that made this transition difficult for some students. These post-secondary participants had high academic expectations for their students, especially when compared to the expectations of secondary schools, and were especially interested in fostering academic skills centered on reading, writing, and critical thinking. These educators valued the aforementioned academic skills and acted on their values when they required students to complete assignments that compelled students to read, write, and analyze. Many of the post-secondary educators had positive attitudes about the dispositions of students and remained faithful that most FTIC student could succeed with a little institutional help and individual student motivation.

**Acceptance of *episteme*.** These post-secondary participants created traditional educational structures in their classes when they structured their curriculum, class policies, and student expectations. When they did so, they accepted the prevailing

*episteme* surrounding post-secondary history courses. They valued traditional academic skills, such as reading, writing, and analytical skills and put less emphasis on values surrounding the acceptance and understanding of diverse perspectives.

**Praxis of divergent expectations.** Post-secondary professors were concerned with the divergent expectations that existed between secondary and post-secondary schools, especially in regards to writing and analytical thinking, and many postulated that this divergence was due to the pressures of accountability that weighed heavily on secondary educators and influenced students' learning outcomes. These participants adjusted their classroom structures over time to meet the needs of students. Some altered the types of reading assignments, while others offered smaller assignments and extra credit opportunities. Others adjusted instructional practices to meet the perceived needs of students when they specified the academic and behavioral expectations of students and used AP US History style instructional practices. Some of these participants took class time to purposefully teach academic skills they valued, but most did not.

### **High School Teacher Participants**

Secondary US history participants were very interested in the success of FTIC students and were concerned when students were unsuccessful. Even though they did not teach post-secondary students, the experiences of secondary participants enable them to speak with a strong voice about the transition from secondary to post-secondary schools. Fourteen secondary US history participants from diverse regions across the state of Texas were interviewed for this study. I conducted interviews in person, over the phone, and through written format. In general, the interviews conducted with secondary participants were shorter in length than interviews with post-secondary professors.

## **Emergent Codes**

The concerns of secondary participants echoed many of the concerns of post-secondary professors. Some stated that divergent expectations between institutions negatively influenced FTIC student success. Most of the secondary participants interviewed discussed the negative force that state standards, state tests, and systems of observation had on instructional practices, and student learning outcomes.

Through the process of emergent coding (Spradley, 1979), codes became clear, which were later categorized into six themes. These themes, similar to the themes used to analyze the interviews of post-secondary professors, were clearly defined as the coding process continued. The themes were: (1) instructional methods and expectations, (2) divergent expectations, and (3) standards, testing, and observation. I determined that three of the themes were not relevant to the scope of my study, (4) student skills, (5) curriculum, and (6) motivation. When focusing on the transition to post-secondary schools, secondary participants' perceptions of student skills were not directly relevant to study. These perceptions were centered on student skills as they entered the 11<sup>th</sup> grade US history class, two full years of schooling before students made the transition to post-secondary schools. The participants interviewed discussed ideas surrounding these themes at various lengths, but they emphasized the last theme most.

**Instructional methods and expectations.** Secondary participants were more varied in their academic expectations and instructional methods between each other than post-secondary participants. All 14 of the secondary participants interviewed elaborated on their student expectations. The interviewees were likely to regularly expect students to complete a diverse range of tasks including creating some of the following products: skits, videos, newspapers, songs, television shows, PowerPoint presentations, projects,

cooperative learning projects, and history fair projects. In addition to these activities, some participants had students complete document-based analysis activities or fill out graphic organizers that required students to use critical thinking skills. Finally, most participants had students answer more traditional multiple choice questions, and write essays. Participants usually spoke proudly when they spoke of the wide variety of instructional methods used in their classrooms that encouraged critical thinking, required an “open-minded”, and got students to “see the big picture.”

In addition, several participants patently rejected instructional methods that allowed students to “regurgitate” information. One participant argued that teachers should not tell students to, “study this and write about this”, and instead opt for activities that encouraged a more free flow of student ideas and creative thinking. When discussing teacher-created multiple choice assessments, one participant echoed this idea when she said,

We might not have necessarily flat out given them the information on [the question], so it’s not a regurgitation of information that we’ve discussed ... we teach them the skills throughout the unit and they have to apply it on the assessment.

These participants valued the use of diverse instructional practices that fostered analytical skills were important for student success. In doing so, they perceived that nurturing critical thinking skills was more important than teaching rote memorization skills.

There was less commonality between participants’ expectations about reading and writing. Four out of 14 participants specifically highlighted their expectation that students read for their classes. One emphatically added that the necessity for students to

be able to read for understanding “cannot be emphasized enough.” Two participants quickly tied the importance of reading skills to the abilities to summarize and critically think. Only five participants discussed the importance of students’ writing skills in their history courses. What is most interesting here is not what was said by the interviewees, but what was left unsaid. Of the participants interviewed, 50% discussed the expectation that students read in, or for, their class. In addition, 50% of participants mentioned student writing assignments during interviews. Of the participants who required writing assignments, two of them noted that their assignments were “brief” or assigned “every once in a while.” One participant noted that “in lieu of” writing assignments, he assigned group projects. It was possible that all of the sampled participants required students to read and write regularly in, and for, their classes. However, the silence of 50% of participants on the issues of reading and writing indicated that these secondary US history participants placed less emphasis on reading and writing in their courses than post-secondary professors.

**Divergent expectations.** Only six of the 14 secondary participants interviewed highlighted this issue. It was possible that other participants thought that divergent expectations did not exist. Though these participants’ daily teaching lives were not directly impacted by the struggles surrounding the secondary to post-secondary transition, their positions as secondary participants enabled them to remain close to the issues surrounding divergent institutional expectations. Their proximity to the transition enabled them to relay the concerns of students who were about to make the transition and of those FTIC students who were transitioning. Because of this, the experiences of these secondary participants gave their voice unique perspective and value in this study. When

speaking of divergent expectations, secondary participants highlighted differences in behavioral expectations and academic expectations.

***Behavior expectations.*** These secondary participants perceived that students in post-secondary schools were given more freedom, which required students to have “self-initiative” and operate independent of any institutional systems academic support. The independent character of post-secondary schools was divergent from the support systems established in secondary schools that helped prevent students from failing. These participants argued that systems like these “coddle[d]” students and didn’t “create the type of student who would [have] innately succeed[ed]” in post-secondary schools. One participant reported that his students had similar attitudes about this behavioral divergence and told a story that highlighted his opinion on the issue.

I had a class today ... talk about that Kindergarten through 12th grade now is about someone holding your hand to get you to the next grade so you can graduate and then that you go to college and no one will hold your hand anymore and you're set up to fail. I asked the whole class, "Is that what you guys think?" Because this one guy said that and they said, "Yeah, pretty much. We're screwed." This is a class of juniors and seniors. That's their perspective on what's been going on [since the passage of No Child Left Behind.]

The idea of educational systems as enablers and “coddlers” was significant. When students admitted that they felt “screwed” by the preparation they received from secondary schools, they admitted the power that institutions had over them and indicated that they had little individual agency with their academic future.

***Academic expectations.*** In addition to concerns about divergent expectations about behavioral expectations, these secondary participants had concerns about divergent

academic expectations. These secondary participants envisioned that divergent expectations about critical thinking, reading skills, writing skills, and assessments would cause difficulties for many students after they graduated from secondary schools. One participant emphasized that students were struggling in college because social studies courses at the secondary level “fail to challenge students with frequent and complex reading assignments and/or writing tasks.” Specifically in regards to tests, one participant admitted that in order to have made his tests congruent with the expectations of post-secondary institutions he would have needed to move away from multiple choice tests and towards an essay-based format.

The culmination of the divergent expectations between secondary and post-secondary institutions was exemplified in a story that one participant told about a former student who had returned from college. She said:

We were having dinner a few weeks ago and she was like “[High school] did the worst job of preparing me for school.” ... What she’s studying is challenging her. But she flat out said “[High school] did not prepare me for what I was going to face.” ... she felt like she was dumped on her head. And I knew that was happening. I know that they’re leaving here without the skills that they could have had and they should have had.

This issue challenged secondary participants, and caused some of them to reflect on their own teaching practices. One participant discussed how her attempts to prepare students for college were so divergent from the expectations of the state-mandated social studies test that when she taught critical thinking skills and social studies skills she viewed these practices as “civil disobedience,” rather than good teaching practice. Her

beliefs showed how distorted the implementation of standards and accountability measures in some secondary schools had become.

**Standards, testing, and observation.** Secondary educators were very concerned with the issues surrounding state-mandated standards, state tests, and the bureaucratic machinations that served to enforce these policies. These issues played out in their daily lives and they argued that they frequently interfered with their abilities to practice sound instructional practices and effectively foster meaningful learning for students. Twelve of the 14 interviewees discussed this issue, some at great length. Their opinions about these issues were pointed and may have reflected the concerns of other secondary participants in the US. Concerns about standards, testing, and observation centered around the hierarchical system of observers, the nature of the newly created social studies standards in Texas and the influence of state standards on teacher agency, instructional practices, and student learning outcomes.

***Hierarchical observation.*** Public policy established a hierarchical system of accountability that actively encouraged district officials, campus administration, and classroom teachers to get as many students as possible to pass the test. The goals of this policy were altruistic and several interviewees noted how they “understood” the necessity for accountability and state standards. Despite this, participants argued that the downward force of this system placed serious pressures on classroom teachers and significantly altered their approaches to student learning. To these participants, the systems surrounding accountability appeared to be more powerful than teachers, campus administrators, or district administrators.

In these systems, district and campus administrators were “under the same gun” as teachers and this caused administrators to require participants to collect more data on

student achievement, conduct additional benchmark testing, or even directly influence participants' instructional practices. This led to conflict between some participants and their administrators as decisions about how to best teach students were made. Campus and district administrators made the downward influence of standards obvious when they directly told US history participants what specific curricula to include in lessons and what to leave out. One participant noted that, "we were actually told not to teach [Stalin] by administrators, "if he's not in your TEKS you don't teach him."" The Texas State Board of Education exercised power when it rewrote the state standards, and the Board became especially powerful when the hierarchical systems inherent in public schools began to enforce the Board's policy. On one campus, monitors representing the Texas Education Agency (TEA) regularly "walked-through" classrooms to monitor instructional practices. Afterward the monitors would offer suggestions on best practices to help improve classroom instruction. A participant argued that despite his successes in the classroom, his instructional methods were more traditional and "that is not what [TEA] want[ed] to see in a classroom. It's not." Ultimately regular monitoring by TEA caused him to adjust his instructional methods.

*New standards.* New social studies standards were recently written by the Texas State Board of Education and were initially implemented in fall of 2011. At the time of my study, secondary teachers were still struggling to implement the new standards and the contrasts between the new standards and old standards appeared clear to them. Echoing each other, these participants commented on the new standards' emphasis on historical "minutiae" and trivial events. The new standards included many new historical events, figures, and details that had not been included in past standards. Several participants also argued that the standards lacked "nuance" and had an emphasis on

economics and business. In addition, some participants argued that the standards omitted key historical events and perspectives. One participant pointed out that the new standards “left out all of the Indian wars; all of them. So they took out an entire American voice and replaced with details.” All participants interviewed tacitly accepted the validity of the new standards. While some participants perceived the standards had flaws, no participant directly challenged the standards or the right of public policy makers to create standards. In addition to new state standards, the state was rolling out a new standardized test for US history in spring of 2013. The uncertainty surrounding the expectations of this exam was very concerning for some participants and one participant said that

I thought I was going to have a breakdown and cry the first time I saw it. I'm like, "What are they going to make us do now?" I didn't [cry]. I got up and did it.

**Teacher agency.** The cumulative effect of these systems of hierarchical observation weighed heavily on participants and they were seen as increasingly burdensome. One participant lamented that “I think our state has really done us dirty.” Another participant declared with exasperation, “I wish I had the ability to just teach my class.” He went on to argue that increased hierarchical pressure caused him to “[feel] like my hands [were] tied so much more as to what I can do.” His sense of agency was limited by the hierarchical expectations and increased expectations of newly implemented social studies standards. For him, what it ultimately came down to was, “I don't want to lose my job and so I'm concerned with keeping up with [increased expectations].”

Not all participants interviewed agreed that there was inherent conflict between standards and teacher agency. One participant argued that he was employed by the state and the state asked him to teach the standards, so he did. It was that simple to him.

Another participant declared that it was her “duty” to ensure that students passed the test and argued that she had no other moral option.

*Instructional practices.* Many secondary participants elaborated on the ways in which state standards and accountability measures have forced them to change their instructional practices. Many noted that the new standardized test would be more difficult for students and this would further limit the ways in which they could teach. Several participants argued that that the increasing size of the curriculum combined with the increased rigor forced them to “compact so much information” into a class period and made them “more of a driller,” less able to teach students how to complete research, write papers, and do “fun and creative projects.” One participant stated that students are “going to have to know specifics so that's changing the way I have to teach ... limiting the creativity.” These participants perceived that if they did not cover the details prescribed in the mandated curriculum, it was possible that students would fail the state test at the end of the year. This would cause increased oversight of them and perhaps cause them to lose their job. As a measure to “CYA” some participants adopted a “rigorous pace” and “drilled” their way through the curriculum. One participant expressed concern that the manner he was teaching the curriculum was too disjointed, lacked nuance, and larger themes. Instead he thought his curriculum was just one state standard (TEKS) after another, and this manifested itself in classroom instruction that looked like, “TEKS, TEKS, TEKS, TEKS.”

As a discipline, social studies is centered on issues of humanity and society. These “big” issues frequently cause historians to ask deep questions about the human condition and how humans communicate with each other and relate to each other. One

participant argued that the issues of social studies uniquely laid a strong foundation for students to practice critical thinking and communication skills when she said,

One of the benefits of social studies as opposed to other subjects is we're dealing with humanity to a larger degree, right? The human condition within society ... [These issues] are a great training ground for a lot of the [skills] that they need to have to be successful in college and career, more so perhaps than the ins and outs of what happened during WWI and WWII ... Social studies is a great framework to develop those skills in. When you're moving through [the curriculum] so fast, based on objectives, you don't have time for that, so we bypass a lot of the skills that people use to perhaps get from the social studies arena.

In order to “cover” the curriculum and cover the minutiae of the in-depth curriculum, many of these participants were cutting out the critical thinking, research, and skills based activities that were not directly assessed on the state US history test. These participants did not “slow down” to ask critical questions that caused teachers and students to think deeply about the big picture questions central to the field of history. The decisions to cut these activities were rational decisions based on the overt and tacit values prescribed by the state test, and many of these exact activities and skills were what post-secondary professors valued most. While post-secondary professors wished that secondary teachers would encourage secondary US history students to write more, think more critically, and read more, the demands of the state-mandated US history test were encouraging participants to write less and do more straight forward activities that enable teachers and students to quickly learn historical material, and “move on.”

### **Collective High School Participants**

These secondary US history participants valued the diversity of their instructional practices and non-traditional academic activities, especially those that fostered critical thinking skills. They valued reading and writing skills less, and were less likely to emphasize the importance of these skills. Fostering reading and writing skills in students can be very difficult, time consuming and many participants stated that “we just don’t have time” to do these things. Participants’ expectations about reading and writing were divergent from the values that post-secondary participants held.

**Influence of institutional power.** Some participants openly stated their awareness of the divergent student expectations between secondary and post-secondary schools. They argued that secondary schools did not provide students with enough freedom to learn individual accountability, or foster the academic skills necessary for success in post-secondary schools. Some of these participants supposed that the power that institutional forces held prevented many secondary participants from overcoming this divide. Participants found that the expectations defined by state standards and the tests that enforced standards limited teachers’ agency and forced teachers to limit their instructional practices. These participants stated that the state standards took a detailed-oriented approach to history and valued historical minutiae. This emphasis necessitated participants to “drill” their way through the curriculum and encouraged instructional practices that enabled participants to quickly “cover” material before moving on to the next topic. The state exam directly influenced what they taught and normalized the instructional practices of these participants. This ran counter to the values that participants placed on non-traditional instructional practices and ran counter to values post-secondary US history professors placed on writing and analytical skills.

## **Cross Findings**

There were significant convergences and divergences in secondary US history participants and post-secondary professors. Not only were expectations divergent, but their values were divergent. These divergences may be due to the influence that standardized tests have on the values inherent in schooling.

### **Influence of Power and *Episteme***

Secondary participants were very concerned that their students would be prepared to do well on the state test, and this influenced their instructional practices. These participants were likely to value a variety of non-traditional activities that enabled students to use critical thinking skills and create a variety of non-traditional products. Increased pressure due to accountability measures pressured them to rely less on these activities that they valued. The curriculum mandated by the state standards served to normalize instructional practices, and required the curriculum be taught at a fast pace. Secondary participants accepted the prevailing *episteme* surrounding the state test and perceived that they had to consistently choose instructional activities that focused on content knowledge rather than on academic skills. Because of this, participants did not spend a lot of class time teaching research skills, encouraging students to write papers, or doing “fun” projects.

### **Participant Praxis and Agency**

The praxis of standards, testing, and observation was important to secondary participants. The secondary participants and post-secondary participants were both very concerned about the divergent expectations and values of the participants surrounding FTIC student transition. Many secondary participants were concerned that their students were not being prepared academically for the rigors of post-secondary US history

courses. Many post-secondary participants were concerned that the lack of independence in secondary schools was detrimental to student success in post-secondary environments. Despite these perceptions, most participants did not act upon their agency and challenge systems of power.

Post-secondary participants also saw the praxis of divergent institutional expectations manifest itself in their classrooms and were concerned. These participants valued writing, reading, and critical thinking skills and were likely to emphasize traditional activities that encouraged these values. Even though secondary professors were concerned that students lacked key academic skills, they rarely purposefully taught academic skills during class time. Like secondary participants, they supposed that they did not have enough time to teach skills and because of this, they had to focus on historical content during class time. Post-secondary participants challenged the *episteme* surrounding standards, testing, and observation and encouraged secondary educators to seize their agency and confront the systems of power that limited secondary instructional practices.

The findings of my study did not support policy makers' claim that state-mandated standards increased the overall quality secondary and post-secondary education (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). The values of the secondary US history educators and post-secondary US history professors interviewed diverged from each other, and these differences manifested themselves in the classroom expectations educators had of students and the academic skills they chose to foster in students. Many of these secondary and post-secondary educators argued that the divergence of values was due to the power that hierarchical forces of standards, testing, and observation placed on secondary educators, limiting their agency.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **IMPLICATIONS**

We continue to study educational institutions because this process historicizes and defines the existing *episteme* in schools. When policy makers influence educational systems the results can be monumental. This study outlines some of the unintended consequences accountability measures had on FTIC students' transition to post-secondary schools. These findings can help educators foster a fuller understanding of the educational systems surrounding FTIC student transition. The findings of this study may encourage educators to use these understandings as a guide when creating systems that foster student growth and mitigate the negative influence of transition on FTIC students. One of the many reasons that FTIC student learning outcomes at the post-secondary level suffer may be due to the clash between the values of post-secondary US history teachers and the values surrounding the state mandated test. Some teachers believe this is a direct consequence of accountability measures as they manifest themselves in the secondary classroom. Policy makers should consider this and other unintended consequences as they continue to modify public policy measures, including the continued implementation of the CCRS.

#### **Educators**

This study, when generalized to the concerns of educators, may have implications for most educators, including secondary teachers, post-secondary faculty, and faculty throughout the EC-16 continuum, especially those who teach US history. For educators,

concern lies with how the disconnect between the values of the social studies test and post-secondary educators' values increases the academic struggles of FTIC students. Secondary teachers who can more fully understand the values of post-secondary US History professors should establish structures to align their instructional practices with the values of post-secondary professors, and give secondary students more freedom. However, the structures of secondary schools and the power of the hierarchical forces surrounding accountability may prevent structural changes like this.

In addition, this study may encourage those who criticize the systems surrounding accountability from within to see the importance of their voice. Post-secondary professors and faculty across the EC-16 continuum may use the findings in this study to more fully understand the institutional forces at play in secondary schools and use these understandings to guide the establishment of structures that will help FTIC students make a smooth academic transition to post-secondary classrooms.

### **Secondary Teachers**

It is useful for secondary US history teachers to have an awareness of the requirements of introductory US history college courses and the values that college professors hold. With an understanding of the importance of the academic skills that post-secondary professors value, such as reading, writing, and analytical skills, secondary teachers can attempt to adjust their instruction to align to these values and foster the academic skills of students who struggle with those skills.

In addition to academic implications, there are behavioral implications for secondary educators. Many post-secondary instructors emphasized the "on your own" nature of post-secondary environments, they perceived that students were not given enough freedom in secondary schools. Secondary educators should seek ways to

encourage more responsibility and freedom in secondary schools. Done well, it is possible that increased choice may encourage more students to develop the behavioral skills necessary for academic success in post-secondary schools.

The majority of secondary teachers interviewed for this study emphasized how the use of standards, testing, and observation directly limited their teaching practices and student learning outcomes. Despite the critical praxis of these educators, no teacher directly challenged the legitimacy of standards, questioned the right of standards to exist, or called for wholesale changes to the systems surrounding standards, testing, and observation. The use of standards may be so deeply engrained in the *episteme* of school culture in Texas that some educators struggle to see past them and cannot divide schooling systems from standards. The inability to see past the *episteme* of schools served to decrease these educators' capacity for agency. This understanding has strong implications for other educators who criticize the systems surrounding standards and testing, and highlights the importance of critical voices.

### **Post-Secondary Professors**

This study provides post-secondary educators with greater understanding of the powerful downward forces that influence teachers in public secondary schools and how these forces may negatively impact the student learning outcomes of secondary students and negatively influence FTIC student performance. With a direct interest in altering the systems surrounding these understandings, post-secondary professors should continue to articulate concerns and lobby public policy makers to make changes to the public policies surrounding standards, testing, and accountability measures.

Many post-secondary participants identified skills that students struggle with. Many professors speculated that student struggles were influenced by institutional values

and forces. These participants acknowledged the power the systems can have over students and student learning outcomes. Few professors chose to harness institutional power and create systems within their courses that would foster the academic skills professors valued. Some professors created systems that involved things like, the purposeful teaching of academic skills, the use of instructional methods prepared for the College Board's AP US History course, required tutoring for struggling writers, or writing workshops. The creation of more systems like these may help professors bridge the disconnects between their academic values and the academic dispositions of FTIC students.

### **Faculty within EC-16 Continuum**

As faculty across the EC-16 continuum attempt to understand what can be done to help students transition from secondary to post-secondary institutions, it may be useful to understand that there are institutional limitations on schools within the continuum and that these limitations negatively influence student learning outcomes. It is possible that attempts at alignment between institutions may never be able to fully counter these structural limitations. In order to adjust to institutional transitions, educators across the continuum should continue to provide additional support systems that may help students transition.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

There was a strong perception among the secondary and post-secondary educators interviewed that standards were detrimental to student learning outcomes, especially outcomes centered on critical thinking, analytical thinking, reading skills, and writing skills. Instead, educators emphasized content knowledge expected to be assessed on the state test. The difficulty with judging student learning outcomes as prescribed by

standardized testing is that the policy overemphasizes skills and knowledge that may not prepare students to be successful in college. All of the college courses sampled in this study required writing and some did not require multiple choice questions, yet the state mandated tests in Texas remain solely based on multiple choice questions. This divergence in student expectations may continue to manifest itself in secondary classrooms and may lead to continued struggles for students as they transition to post-secondary schools.

### **Policy Makers**

I believe that policy makers had good intentions when they initially instituted accountability measures. In practice, these policies may not serve well students who intend to study at post-secondary institutions in Texas. When policy makers define exactly what students should know and punish the students and schools who do not reach the minimum standard, schools will do whatever it takes to get students to learn what the test requires. This manifestation of Foucaultian conceptions of power in the field of education shows that there can be serious unintended consequences to public policy. This is the case with the current social studies standards in Texas.

The participants' students learned the facts they needed to know in order to be successful on the state test. These students came out of public schools with knowledge of key dates, historical figures, and events. However, increased access to technology enabled these students to quickly access millions of basic facts about dates, historical figures, and events. Participants perceived that increased access to basic historical facts made the basic skills and knowledge that students acquired in US history classes increasingly irrelevant.

When deliberating new state and federal policy, state and federal policy makers should seriously keep in mind the possible unintended consequences of accountability measures, state-mandated standards, and testing, especially as No Child Left Behind comes up for reauthorization and state departments of education consider applying for waivers from the US Department of Education.

### **College and Career Readiness Standards**

It is clear that many of the standards outlined in the CCRS are valued by both university and college professors. These standards speak to these professors' choice in assignments and student expectations. It is less clear if secondary teachers believe that the academic values inherent in the CCRS are congruent with the demands placed on them by state social studies standards and the state-mandated exam. It is also unclear if secondary and post-secondary professors are using these standards as a guide and implementing the skills outlined in them.

### **Future Research**

The limited nature of this study calls for research to confirm if the findings of this study are more widespread. In addition, if there are programs in the state that are successfully implementing the new social studies standards with fidelity while fostering reading, writing, and analytical skills, researchers could study these to help educators understand how to balance the expectations of the state with the expectations of college professors. It would also be interesting to see a case study done following the implementation of the secondary state social studies standards in a post-secondary introductory US history course. Two studies could be done; one study that quantified existing prevalence of CCRS in post-secondary classrooms, and another that defined the

average time students spend reading and writing in class in secondary social studies classes.

**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**Pre-Interview**

A. Introductory Narrative: Thanks for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of the study is to explore the nature of work expected of social studies students in high school and college classrooms. Our interview will be about 30 minutes. It is possible that I will need to ask a few follow up questions/interviews. Thank you again for your participation.

B. Welcome Script: My name is David Osman and I am a master's student in the College of Education at Texas State University. This interview is part of my thesis work.

C. Informed Consent: This study will involve minimal risk and discomfort. The probability of harm and discomfort should not be any greater than your daily work as an educator. Risks may include emotional discomfort from answering interview questions. You may skip any questions. This will not affect your participation in the study.

*Reference and review signed IRB form.*

D. Other Permissions: To facilitate documentation and analysis I will digitally record this phone interview. *Get (verbal release, mention emailed consent form) signed consent form.*

E. Interview Overview: Today, we will cover three topics, including 1) nature of exams/assessments in the course, 2) background academic skills of students and 3)

purposeful teaching of academic skills. While I value the many diverse aspects of your position, my focus only extends to these topics.

F. Introduction/Rationale: I requested to interview you because you are an instructor/professor/teacher of US history courses. When responding, please orient your answers from the point-of-view of your official role as *[NAME ROLE]* on the *[XYZ NAME]* campus. If you have experience beyond this role and campus, you are welcome to tell me about it in any remaining time at the end of the interview or in a follow up email correspondence.

**Topic Domain I: Nature of exams/assessments in the course**

1. What products do you expect students to complete in your US history class?
  - a. Are there exams, papers, group projects, etc?
  - b. Can you describe X?
  - c. Why did you choose this structure?
2. How are the exams in your introductory US history course structured?
  - a. Are there multiple choice questions, short answers, essays?
  - b. Why did you choose this format?
  - c. What might be a typical question?
3. How successful are most FTIC students on the first exam in your class?
  - a. Why do you think this occurs?
  - b. Have you seen a change in this success rate over time?
  - c. Have you observed patterns in what contributes to success or in which types of students are most successful?

4. Other info you may have to add regarding the nature of exams/assessments in your course?

**Topic Domain II: Background academic skills of students**

1. What skills do you feel FTIC students need to be successful in intro US history?
2. What academic skills do most FTIC students struggle with?
  - a. such as: content knowledge, reasoning skills, academic organization, writing skills, reading comprehension
  - b. Why is it important for a student to master these skills to have success in your course?
  - c. Why do you think students struggle with this skill?
3. In your course, which academic skills are most FTIC proficient at?
  - a. such as: content knowledge, reasoning skills, academic organization, writing skills, reading comprehension
  - b. Why is it important for a student to master these skills to have success in your course?
  - c. Why do you think students are proficient with this skill?
4. Other info you may have to add regarding the skills of FTIC students in your course?

**Topic Domain III: Purposeful teaching of academic skills**

1. What do you emphasize most in your intro US history class?
  - a. What do you wish you had more time to emphasize?
2. Do you purposefully spend time in class teaching academic skills?
  - a. What does this process look like in your courses?

- b. Why did you decide to structure instruction in this manner?
  - c. What percentage of class time is spent teaching academic skills?
3. What do you wish HS educators would do differently to better prepare FTIC students?

**Conclusions:**

Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share?

**APPENDIX B**  
**COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS MODEL**

<b>Domain I: Stated Prerequisites and Prior Knowledge</b>
Prerequisites stated
<b>I. Interrelated Disciplines and Skills</b>
A. Spatial analysis of physical and cultural processes that shape the human experience
B. Periodization and chronological reasoning
C. Change and continuity of political ideologies, constitutions and political behavior
D. Change and continuity of economic systems and processes
E. Change and continuity of social groups, civic organizations, institutions and their interaction
F. Problem-solving and decision-making skills
<b>II. Diverse Human Perspectives and Experiences</b>
A. Multicultural societies
B. Factors that influence personal and group identities

<b>IV. Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation of Information</b>
A. Critical examination of texts, images and other sources of information
B. Research and methods
C. Critical listening
D. Reaching conclusions
<b>V. Effective Communication</b>
A. Clear and coherent oral and written communication
B. Academic integrity
<b>Domain II: Student Behavior Outcomes: Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge (ASK)</b>
<b>Attitudes</b>
Behave with integrity and practice personal and social responsibility.
Value lifelong learning.
Accept change, nuance and uncertainty.
Value diversity and differences in people.
<b>Skills</b>
Communicate effectively (visual, verbal, written and listening).
Cooperate and collaborate effectively.
Think critically and creatively.

Use technology appropriately and effectively.
Set goals and assess progress
<b>Knowledge</b>
Understand various ways of knowing, and how individual disciplines investigate and interpret the world.
Understand the American experience and its place in an interdependent world
<b>Domain III: Instructional Methods</b>
<b>Textbook</b>
Other Instructional Materials
<b>Assignments and Assessments</b>
Homework
Discussion Board Postings
Exams
Final Exam
Papers/Essays
<b>Schedule</b>
Introduction and First Encounters
European, African and Indigenous Roots of the Americas

Atlantic Slave Trade
Native American Societies
Migration, Religion and Intolerance
Colonial Society and the Role of Religion
American Revolution
Making the United States – The Federalist Era
Jacksonian America
Manifest Destiny
The Age of Reform
Sectional Conflict
The Civil War
Final Exam
<b>Domain IV: Class Policies and Expectations</b>
Attendance Policy
Expectations
Student Conduct
Academic Behaviors

<b>Grading Policy</b>
A (90–100) = excellent/performance beyond mastery
B (80–89) = above average/beyond basic mastery
C (70–79) = average mastery
D (60–69) = below average
F (0–59) = failure
+/- may be used at the instructor's discretion
<b>Academic Integrity Policy</b>
Plagiarism
Cheating
Collusion

## REFERENCES

- Baines, L. A., & Stanley G. K. (2006). The iatrogenic consequences of standards-based education. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 79(3), 119-123. Retrieved from Education Research Information Center database.
- Bandoli, J. H. (2008). Do state science standards matter?: Comparing student perceptions of the coverage of evolution in Indiana & Ohio public high schools. *The American Biology Teacher*, 70(4), 212-216. doi: 10.1662/0002-7685(2008)70[212:DSSM]2.0.CO;2
- Binder, A. J. (2000). Why do some curricular challenges work while others do not?: The case of three Afrocentric challenges. *Sociology of Education*, 73(2), 69-91. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Blanchette, S. (2010). Education or indoctrination? The development of social studies standards in Texas. *Social Education*, 74(4), 199-203.
- Bye, D., Pushkar, D., & Conway, M. (2007). Motivation, interest and positive affect in traditional and nontraditional undergraduate students. *Adult Education Quarterly: A Journal of Research and Theory*, 57, 141-158. doi:10.1177/0741713606294235
- Camicia, S. P. (2008). Deciding what is a controversial issue: A case study of social studies curriculum controversy. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 36(4), 298-316. Retrieved from ERIC database.

- Cassidy, S., & Eachus, P. (2000). Learning style, academic belief systems, self-report student proficiency and academic achievement in higher education. *Educational Psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology*, 20, 307-22. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Chemers, M. M., Hu, L., & Garcia, B. F. (2001). Academic self-efficacy and first-year college student performance and adjustment. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93, 55-64. Retrieved from ERIC.
- Church, M. A., Elliot, A. J., & Gable, S. L. (2001). Perceptions of classroom environment, achievement goals and achievement outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93, 43-54. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Corwin, J. R. & Cintron, R. (2011). Social networking phenomena in the first-year experience. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, 8(1), 25-37. Retrieved from ERIC.
- Cruse, K. L. & Twing J. S. (2000). The history of statewide achievement testing in Texas. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 13(4), 327-331. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.
- Davies, B. (1990). Agency as a form of discursive practice: A classroom scene observed. *British Journal of Sociology in Education*, 11(3), 341-361.
- De Freitas, E. (2004). Plotting intersections along the political axis: The interior voice of dissenting mathematics teachers. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 55, 259-274. Retrieved from ERIC database.

- Dietz, T. L. (2006). The effect of data analysis modules in the introductory sociology course: Lessons for the social sciences. *Innovative Higher Education*, 31, 27-42. doi:10.1007/s10755-006-9006-8
- Donathan, D. A. (2003). The correlation between attendance, grades, and the nontraditional student. *Business Education Forum*, 58, 45-47. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Duby, P., & Schartman, L. (1997). Credit Hour Loads at College Onset and Subsequent Academic Performance: A Multi-Institutional Pilot Project. AIR 1997 Annual Forum Paper. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Education Policy Improvement Center (2010). *Validation study I: Alignment of the Texas College and Career Readiness Standards with entry-level general education courses at Texas postsecondary institutions*. Retrieved from Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website: <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/>
- Evans, R. W. (2004). *The Social Studies Wars: What Should We Teach the Children?* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Falsetti, M. C. & Rodriguez, M. A. (2005). A proposal for improving students' mathematical attitude based on mathematical modeling. *Teaching Mathematics and Its Applications*, 24, 14-28. doi:10.1093/teamat/hrh015
- Fendler, L. (1998). What is impossible to think? A genealogy of the educated subject. In T. Popkewitz & M. Brennan (Eds.), *Foucault's Challenge: Discourse, Knowledge, and Power in Education* (pp. 39-63). New York: Teachers College Press.

- Fendler, L. (2004). Praxis and agency in Foucault's historiography. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 23(5/6), 445-466. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vintage. [ebrary Reader version]. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrary.com/>
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury.
- Gibney, A., Moore, N., Murphy, F., & O'Sullivan, S. (2010). The first semester of university life; 'Will I be able to manage it all?'. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, 62(3), 351-366. Retrieved from ERIC. doi:10.1007/s10734-010-9392-9
- Gifford, D. D., Briceno-Perriott, J., & Mianzo, F. (2006). Locus of control: Academic achievement and retention in a sample of university first-year students. *Journal of College Admission*, 191, 18-25. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Glass, D. (2001). On Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberation Education. *Educational Researcher*, 30(2), 15-25. doi: 10.3102/0013189X030002015
- Goldston, M. J. & Kyzer, P. (2009). Teaching evolution: Narratives with a view from three southern biology teachers in the USA. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 46(7), 762-790. doi: 10.1002/tea.20289
- Good, C. J. (2010). A Nation at Risk: Committee members speak their mind. *American Education History Journal*, 37(2), 367-386. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.

- Grant, S. G., Gradwell, J. M., Lauricella, A. M., Derme-Insinna, A., Pullano, L., & Tzetzso, K. (2002). When increasing stakes need not mean increasing standards: The case of the New York State Global History and Geography Exam. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 30*(4), 488-515. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.
- Greene, M. (1981). Contexts, Connections, and Consequences: The Matter of Philosophical and Psychological Foundations. *Journal of Teacher Education, 32*(31), 31-37. doi: 10.1177/002248718103200408
- Gump, S. E. (2005). The cost of cutting class: Attendance as a predictor of student success. *College Teaching, 53*, 21-27. doi:10.3200/CTCH.53.1.21-26
- Gutting, G. (2011). Michel Foucault. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Hagedorn, L. S., Siadat, M. V., Fogel, S. F., Pascarella, E. T., & Nora, A. (1999). Success in college mathematics: Comparisons between remedial and nonremedial first-year college students. *Research in Higher Education, 40*, 261-84. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Heinrich, C. J. (2012, March 11). Standardized test with high stakes are bad for learning, studies show. *The Austin American Statesman*. Retrieved from <http://www.statesman.com/>

- Hickman, G. P., & Crossland, G. L. (2005). The predictive nature of humor, authoritative parenting style, and academic achievement on indices of initial adjustment and commitment to college among college freshmen. *Journal of College Student Retention Research Theory and Practice*, 6, 225-245. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Hill, H. C. (2001). Policy is not enough: Language and the interpretation of state standards. *American Educational Research Association*, 38(2), 289-318. Retrieved from JSTOR database.
- Huon, G., Spehar, B., Adam, P., & Rifkin, W. (2007). Resource use and academic performance among first year psychology students. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, 53, 1-27. doi:10.1007/s10734-005-1727-6
- Johannengmeier, E. V. (2010). A Nation at Risk and Sputnik: Compared and reconsidered. *American Education History Journal*, 37(2), 347-365. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.
- Khan, S., Castro, E., Bragg, D. D., Barrientos, J. I., & Baber, L. (2009). The College and Career Readiness Act: Findings from Evaluation--Year One. In Brief. *Office Of Community College Research And Leadership*. Retrieved from <http://occr1.ed.uiuc.edu/>
- Khoon, K. A. & Othman, M. (2004). Some thoughts on the introductory course in physics. *College Student Journal*, 38, 503-510. Retrieved from ERIC.
- Kuehlem, M. (2004). *Education reforms from Gilmer-Aikin to today*. Retrieved from <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/>

- Lawrenz, F., Huffman, D., & Appeldoorn, K. (2005). Enhancing the instructional environment: Optimal learning in introductory science classes. *Journal of College Science Teaching, 34*, 40-45. Retrieved from ERIC.
- Lizzio, A. & Wilson, K. (2004). First-year students' perceptions of capability. *Studies in Higher Education, 29*, 109-128. doi:10.1080/1234567032000164903
- Loeb, H., Knapp, M. S., & Elfers, A. M. (2008). Teachers' response to standards-based reform: Probing reform assumptions in Washington State. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 16*(8), 1-28. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.
- Lucas, U. & Meyer, J. H. F. (2004). Supporting student awareness: Understanding student preconceptions of their subject matter within introductory courses. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 41*, 459-471. doi:10.1080/1470329042000277039
- McNeil, L. M. (1986). *Contradictions of Control: School Structure and School Knowledge*. New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: a guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miley, W. M., & Gonsalves, S. (2004). Grade expectations: Redux. *College Student Journal, 38*, 327-333. doi:10.2466/pr0.94.1.257-258
- Monte-Sano, C. (2008). Qualities of historical writing instruction: A comparative case study of two teachers' practices. *American Educational Research Journal, 45*, 1045-1079. doi:10.3102/0002831208319733

- Moore, R., Jensen, M., Hatch, J., Duranczyk, I., Staats, S., & Koch, L. (2003). Showing up: The importance of class attendance for academic success in introductory science courses. *The American Biology Teacher*, 65(5), 325-329. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1662/0002-7685\(2003\)065\[0325:SUTIOC\]2.0.CO;2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1662/0002-7685(2003)065[0325:SUTIOC]2.0.CO;2)
- Morosanu, L., Handley, K., & O'Donovan, B. (2010). Seeking support: Researching first-year students' experiences of coping with academic life. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(6), 665-678. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.487200
- Nair, C. S. & Fisher, D. L. (2001). Transition from senior secondary to higher education: A learning environment perspective. *Research in Science Education*, 30, 435-50. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Nicpon, M. F., Huser, L., Blanks, E. H., Sollenberger, S., Befort, C., & Kurplus, S. R. (2007). The relationship of loneliness and social support with college freshmen's academic performance and persistence. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 8, 345-358. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Nonis, S. A., & Hudson, G. I. (2006). Academic performance of college students: Influence of time spent studying and working. *Journal of Education for Business*, 81, 151-159. doi:10.3200/JOEB.81.3.151-159
- Ohio Board of Regents (2005). *Making the Transition from High School to College in Ohio 2005: A Statewide Perspective*. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Olsen, J. K. & House, J. D. (1997). Student achievement in science and mathematics general education courses: An assessment of the effects of academic background and noncognitive variables. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

- Palmer, M., O’Kane, P., & Owens, M. (2009). Betwixt spaces: Student accounts of turning point experiences in the first-year transition. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(1), 37-54. doi:10.1080/03075070802601929
- Pence, L. E., Workman, H. J., & Haruta, M. E. (2005). A general chemistry and precalculus first-year interest group (FIG): Effect on retention, skills, and attitudes. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 82, 65-70. doi:10.1021/ed082p65
- Perry, R. P., Hladkyj, S., Pekrun, R. H., Clifton, R. A., & Chipperfield, J. G. (2005). Perceived academic control and failure in college students: A three-year study of scholastic achievement. *Research in Higher Education*, 46, 535-569. doi:10.1007/s11162-005-3364-4
- Placier, M., Walker, M., & Foster, B. (2002). Writing the "Show-me" standards: Teacher professionalism and political control in the US state curriculum policy. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 32(3), 281-300. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.
- Popkewitz, T. S. (2009). Curriculum study, curriculum history, and curriculum theory: The reason of reason. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 41(3), 301-319. doi: 10.1080/00220270902777021
- Popkewitz, T. S., & Brennan, M. (1998). Restructuring of social and political theory in education: Foucault and a social epistemology of school practices. In T. Popkewitz & M. Brennan (Eds.), *Foucault’s Challenge: Discourse, Knowledge, and Power in Education* (pp. 3-35). New York: Teachers College Press.

- Porter, A. C., Polikoff, M. S., & Smithson, J. (2009). Is there a de facto national intended curriculum? Evidence from state content standards. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 31*(3), 238-268. doi: 10.3102/01623373709336465
- Ravitch, D. (2003). *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Roehrig, G. H., Kruse, R. A., & Kern, A. (2007). Teacher and school characteristics and their influence on curriculum implementation. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 44*(7), 883-907. doi: 10.1002/tea.20180
- Ryan, M. P. & Glenn, P. A. (2004). What do first-year students need most: Learning strategies instruction of academic socialization? *Journal of College Reading and Learning, 43*, 4-28. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Salinas, C. & Castro, A. J. (2010). Disrupting the official curriculum: Cultural biography and the curriculum decision making of Latino preservice teachers. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 38*(3), 428-463. Retrieved from Education Research Complete database.
- Scanlon, L., Rowling, L., & Weber, Z. (2007). "You don't have like an identity ... you are just lost in a crowd:" Forming a student identity in the first-year transition to university. *Journal of Youth Studies, 10*(2), 223-241. doi: 10.1080/13676260600983684
- Schapiro, S. R. & Livingston, J. (2000). Dynamic self-regulation: The driving force behind academic achievement. *Innovative Higher Education, 25*, 23-35. doi:10.1023/A:1007532302043

- Schussler, D. L. (2006). Defining dispositions: Wading through murky waters. *The Teacher Educator*, 41(4), 251-269. Retrieved from Wilson Web.
- Seidman, I. E. (1998). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*. Teachers College Press: New York.
- Simola, H., Heikkinen, S., & Silvonen, J. (1998). A catalog of possibilities: Foucaultian history of truth and education research. In T. Popkewitz & M. Brennan (Eds.), *Foucault's Challenge: Discourse, Knowledge, and Power in Education* (pp. 64-90). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Smith, W. L. & Zhang, P. (2010). The impact of key factors on the transition from high school to college among first- and second-generation students. *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 22(2), 49-70. Retrieved from ERIC.
- Snyder, T. D. & Dillow S. A. (2011). *Digest of Education Statistics 2010* (Report NCES 2011-015). Washington, DC: NCES, IES, U.S. Department of Education.
- Sommers, B. J. (1997). The freshman year experience and geography: Linking student retention and the introductory geography curriculum. *Journal of Geography*, 96, 243-49. doi:10.1080/00221349708978798
- Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2005). *Building Transitions from High School to College and Careers for West Virginia's Youth*. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The Ethnographic Interview*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York.

- Stern, S. M. & Stern, J. A. (2011). *The state of state US history standards 2011*. Retrieved from <http://www.edexcellence.net>
- Summers E. J. & Dickinson, G. D. (2012). A longitudinal investigation of project-based instruction and student achievement in high school social studies. *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning*, 6(1), 82-103.
- Swanson, C. B. & Stevenson, D. L. (2002). Standards-based reform in practice: Evidence on state policy and classroom instruction from the NAEP state assessments. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(1), 1-27. doi: 10.3102/01623737024001001
- Swarat, S., Drane, D., Smith, H. D., Light G., & Pinto, L. (2004). Opening the gateway: Increasing minority student retention in introductory science courses. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 34, 18-23. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Tai, R. H., Sadler, P. M., & Mintzes, J. J. (2006). Factors influencing college science success. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 36, 52-56. doi:10.1021/ed083p1703
- Taylor, G., Shepard, L., Kinner, F., & Rosenthal, J. (2002). *A Survey of Teachers' Perspectives on High Stakes Testing in Colorado: What Gets Taught, What Gets Lost*. CSE Technical Report.
- Texas Education Agency (2009). *Texas College and Career Readiness Standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/collegereadiness/crs.pdf>
- Texas Education Agency. (2010). *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies*. Retrieved from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter113/ch113c.pdf>

- Texas High Education Coordinating Board. (2011). *Preliminary 2011 enrollments suggest steady growth at Texas' institutions of higher education*. Retrieved from [www.thecb.state.tx.us](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us)
- The Education Trust (2010). *Compare College Results*. Retrieved from [http://d2o6nd3dubbyr6.cloudfront.net/media/documents/Texas\\_Public\\_Universities.pdf](http://d2o6nd3dubbyr6.cloudfront.net/media/documents/Texas_Public_Universities.pdf)
- Thompson, J. A. & Grabau, L. J. (2004). A la carte grading: Providing students opportunities to determine their own paths to success. *Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Education*, 33, 92-97. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Todd, C. S. (2004). Assessing math and English general education courses with results applicable to advising. *Journal of College Student Retention Research*, 6, 209-224. doi:10.2190/NTED-G4W5-6LXM-5H0A
- U.S. Department of Education. (2009). *The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009: Saving and Creating Jobs and Reforming Education*. Retrieved from US Department of Education website: <http://www2.ed.gov>
- Vance, M. (2010). *Evaluation of Postsecondary Education First Year Transition Programs for Intellectual Development Principles* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ERIC.
- Warburton, E. C., Bugarin, R., Nunez, A & National Center for Education Statistics (ED). (2001). *Bridging the Gap: Academic Preparation and Postsecondary Success of First-Generation Students. Statistical Analysis Report. Postsecondary Education Descriptive Analysis Reports*. [serial online]. May 1, 2001; Retrieved from ERIC, Ipswich, MA.

- White, M. (1986). In Texas ... an educational opportunity act. *NASSP Bulletin*, 70(54), 54-57. doi: 10.1177/019263658607049112
- Wilcox, P., Winn, S., & Fyvie-Gauld, M. (2005). "It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people": The role of social support in first-year experience of higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30, 707-722. doi:10.1080/03075070500340036
- Wimshurst, K., Wortley, R., Bates, M., & Allard, T. (2006). The impact of institutional factors on student academic results: Implications for "quality" in universities. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 25, 131-145. doi:10.1080/07294360600610370
- Wintre, M. G., Dilouya, B., Pancer, S. M., Pratt, M. W., Birnie-Lefcovitch, S., Polivy, J., & Adams, G. (2011). Academic achievement in first-year university: Who maintains their high school average? *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, 62, 467-481. doi:10.1007/s10734-010-9399-2
- Zajacova, A., Lynch, S. M., & Espenshade, T. J. (2005). Self-efficacy, stress, and academic success in college. *Research in Higher Education*, 46, 677-706. doi:10.1007/s11162-004-4139-z
- Zheng, J. L., Saunders, K. P., Shelley, II, M. C., Whalen, D. F. (2002). Predictors of academic success for freshmen residence hall students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43(2), 267-283. Retrieved from PsychINFO.

Zilber, T. B. (2002). Institutionalization as an interplay between actions, meanings, and actors: The case of a rape crisis center in Israel. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 46, 234-254. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3069294>

Zipin, L. (1998). Looking for sentient life in discursive practices: The question of human agency in critical theories and school research. In T. S. Popkewitz & M. Brennan (Eds.), *Foucault's Challenge: Discourse, Knowledge, and Power in Education* (pp. 316-3147). New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.

## VITA

David J Osman was born in 1982, the son of John Osman and Helen Osman. After completing his work at Leander High School, Leander, Texas, in 2000, he entered Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in history, *cum laude*, from Saint Louis University in May 2004. Following this, he enrolled in the UTeach-Liberal Arts post-baccalaureate teaching certification program at the University of Texas at Austin. He received teaching certification from the state of Texas in 8-12 Social Studies and EC-12 Special Education in August 2006. During the following years, he was employed for one school year as a special education social studies teacher at Pflugerville High School, Pflugerville, Texas, for four school years as a government teacher at Round Rock High School, Round Rock, Texas, and was employed as a Social Studies Instructional Coach in the Office of School Improvement in Round Rock ISD at the time of this writing. In August 2010, he entered the Graduate College of Texas State.

Permanent Address: 7413 Peabody Drive

Austin, TX 78729

This thesis was typed by David J Osman.