

STANDARDIZATION OF PRACTICE IN A HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES
DEPARTMENT: THREE CASE STUDIES

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife,
Susanna Lynne Cañizo Schippers,
my editor, my best friend, and the love of my life.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored high school social studies teachers' perceptions of the degree of standardization of practice within their department. The three participants were members of a social studies department in a large, urban high school. One teacher was the department chair. The school administration had introduced professional learning communities (PLCs) during the year of the study, and the number of department meetings had been reduced to accommodate these PLCs.

This was a qualitative study, using interviews to create case studies for each participant. The researcher used a three-part interview design developed by Seidman (2006). Five research questions served as a framework for data analysis.

Participants believed teaching practice was not standardized within their department. They identified the following means to increase standardization of practice: develop a departmental philosophy, align the curricula of subject matter groups, share teaching techniques in department meetings, implement common assessments, increase the number of department meetings, make department meetings more professional, establish peer observations, and improve or replace the PLC model.

The participants also identified a number of barriers to standardization of practice: the size and complexity of the school, weak leadership by school administrators, poor professional development, time constraints, ineffectiveness of the PLC model, interpersonal conflict within the department, uncertainty regarding the department's future composition, needs and limitations of students, lack of consensus on social studies

content and assessment, teacher isolation and autonomy, ambiguity of teaching outcomes, and teacher fatigue.

The type of standardization of practice envisioned by the participants reflected their desire for collegial, professional relationships. The methods of standardization they described would preserve teachers' freedom to conduct their practice according to their personal preferences.

Barriers to standardization of practice identified by the participants were attributable to structural and cultural elements of the school site and to characteristics of social studies as a school subject. As such, they may prove difficult to overcome.

The researcher concluded that modifications to department structures may promote the development of effective micro-PLCs. However, structural modifications should be framed so as to complement department work and teachers' professional standards.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This dissertation documents case studies of three high school social studies teachers. The study was based primarily on interviews with the teachers in which they reflected on the degree of standardization of practice within their department. Each study participant framed her practice in light of a number of factors, including her personal professional standards, her knowledge of her peers' practice, the state social studies standards, administrative policy, and professional development. This first chapter of the dissertation presents the background of the study, specifies the problem of the study, describes its significance, presents an overview of the methodology used, and defines key terms. The chapter concludes by noting the delimitations of the study and by providing an outline of the chapters to come.

Background to the Study

This study grew out of my interest in the conflicting influences of standards-based educational reform (SBER) and professionalization on teachers' practice, including my own. On the one hand, SBER is predicated on the belief that public schools are churning out millions of poorly educated, underachieving graduates at the cost of billions of taxpayer dollars (see, for example, U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The purported solution mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 is the implementation of content area standards at the state level as a means of standardizing teaching and learning. Regular testing is used to monitor student progress toward mastery of the standards and to hold teachers accountable for the results. In 2008, just over half of

all states had attached high stakes to the results of these tests (McNeil, 2008). Students and teachers in these states faced severe consequences for poor test results, including withheld diplomas for the former and reduced pay, censure, and even termination for the latter.

SBER sends a clear message that teachers cannot be trusted with the autonomy jealously guarded by other professions. Teachers are aware of the low status they are accorded by the public and its elected officials (Soder, 1990), but at heart they believe that their work is of great importance to society and too difficult and demanding to be performed by laypeople. Consequently, education advocacy groups have long agitated for professionalization of teaching (Goodlad, 1990). They argue that teachers possess special knowledge of how to render content intelligible to learners (Shulman, 1986). Furthermore, through their decision making teachers act as the principal gatekeepers of the curriculum, determining the nature of their students' educational experiences (Thornton, 1991). What teachers lack relative to other professional groups (in addition to high salaries and public esteem) is collegiality and collaboration: researchers frequently note that teachers are largely isolated from their peers (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthey, 1996; Grant, 1996; Onosko, 1991). Teachers will be accepted as professionals only when they work together to establish their own standards for excellence and facilitate their own learning and growth (Barth, 1990; Feinberg, 1990). Consequently, many researchers and critics support the reorganization of the teaching force into professional learning communities (PLCs), small groupings of educators with common interests and goals who collaborate often and meaningfully to plan lessons,

create curricula, evaluate and critique each other's performance, and solve problems (DeLong, 2008; Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2008; Eaker & Keating, 2008; Hipp, Huffman, Pankake, & Olivier, 2008; Servage, 2008; Williams, Brien, Sprague, & Sullivan, 2008; Wynn & Brown, 2008).

Consequently, Fenstermacher's (1990) observation that "there is something of a war going on over control of the occupation of teaching" (p. 130) is still true of public education today. Two models of control over teaching are in conflict (Feinberg, 1990). The bureaucratic model, the law of the land under NCLB, imposes goals and purposes on teachers from outside the school system. Evaluation of teachers is based on the results of their labor, i.e., their students' test scores. By contrast, the professional model championed by teachers and their advocacy groups argues for regulatory power to be given to the teachers themselves. Teachers-as-professionals would evaluate their peers according to the appropriateness of their methods. Thus, teachers are subject to conflicting visions of the profession. One of the most important issues facing education today is how teachers respond to this conflict (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009).

A History of SBER in Arizona

Because NCLB requires each state to develop its own content area standards and assessment instruments, there is considerable variation in how SBER is enacted in schools. I will, therefore, briefly sketch the history of SBER in Arizona from the 1970s to 2009. While the state has attempted to standardize instruction in a number of content areas, I will focus on the place of social studies in Arizona's education accountability policy. Note that much of Arizona's convoluted story of standardized assessment is

omitted here because social studies content has never been included in a state test (readers who wish to pursue this topic in greater detail are encouraged to consult Smith, Heinecke, and Noble [1999]). I will follow this history with an account of my experiences as a high school social studies teacher struggling to come to terms with SBER on my own and with my peers in the context of department-based collaboration. My intention is to provide the reader with a window into the process through which the study design emerged.

The roots of Arizona's SBER policy extend back to the state's adoption of *What Every Child Should Know . . . Social Studies* (Arizona Department of Education [ADE], 1974), a course of study mandating the basic content to be taught in geography, economics, world history, and government. Although the document consists primarily of lists of knowledge items to be taught to children in each of the four subject matters, the state moved away from prescription of facts in the next two revisions of the social studies standards. The first revision bearing the same title (ADE, 1983) emphasized processes of inquiry, while the 1988 revision, renamed *Arizona Social Studies Essential Skills* (ADE), mandated teaching skills such as explaining, interpreting, evaluating, describing, distinguishing, comparing, and contrasting data (Robinson, 1996).

Robinson (1996) noted that these documents, particularly the 1983 and 1988 editions, are "oddly liberal" in light of Arizona's record of political conservatism. Indeed, the Arizona Essential Skills, a multidisciplinary standards framework of which social studies was but one component, was championed by progressive members of the ADE who sought to supplant traditional, teacher-centered instructional methods with

constructivist pedagogy (Smith et al., 1999). However, the progressive impetus in Arizona's education policy came to an end with the election of Lisa Graham Keegan as superintendent of public instruction in December 1994. ADE was reorganized to reflect her political orientation and, in May 1995, Keegan called for the abandonment of the Arizona Essential Skills, which she criticized as being too focused on process at the expense of outcomes (ibid.). Keegan's actions as superintendent proved critical because they helped initiate Arizona's entry into the high-stakes age of SBER. It is difficult, however, to gauge the immediate impact of ADE's policy realignment on social studies teachers. There are two reasons for this uncertainty: first, we lack the empirical evidence to draw conclusions because there are no studies exploring social studies teachers' responses to the ADE's policy change in the 1990s; and, second, none of the three social studies standards documents had been accompanied by an assessment (Robinson, 1996). Without a means for policing and auditing teachers' compliance with content area standards, there was little to prevent them from straying outside the curricular bounds prescribed by ADE. Social studies teachers who had been in the profession since the early 1970s might have perceived the demise of the Arizona Essential Skills framework as yet another seemingly inconsequential adjustment to Arizona's education accountability policy.

The state legislature demanded that the vacuum left by the abandonment of the Arizona Essential Skills be filled immediately. Keegan convened an academic summit in October 1995 during which design teams were tasked with writing new standards for nine content areas, including social studies. Four months were budgeted to draft, revise, and

publish the completed standards documents, but the process stalled due to controversy within the design teams and partisan squabbling among Keegan, Governor Fife Symington, and the legislature (Smith et al., 1999). As months dragged on into years, the new standards were steered down an increasingly conservative path. By 1998, the social studies standards had yet to be completed, but the big news was the introduction of the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS), a series of tests in reading, writing, and math that ADE promised would be used to determine high school graduation. ADE had officially raised the stakes for the state's teachers and students.

The new social studies standards were adopted in 2000, revised in 2005, and finally updated in 2006 to bring them into compliance with NCLB (ADE). The updated standards were divided into five strands, one each for world history, American history, civics and government, geography, and economics. Each strand was presented as a series of concepts accompanied by a number of performance objectives students were expected to master. For example, the first concept of the American history strand was called "Research Skills for History." The performance objectives in this concept required that students construct graphs, analyze primary and secondary sources, and compare and contrast past and present events. The remaining nine concepts covered different time periods in American history and identified a substantial body of facts and concepts students must manipulate. The third performance objective in concept nine, "Postwar United States, 1945–1970s," directed students to "describe aspects of post World War II American society," including the baby boom, the GI Bill, women's rights, civil rights, César Chavez, and Martin Luther King, Jr., among other events and important people.

With its lists of concepts and facts, the updated standards document resembled *What Every Child Should Know . . . Social Studies* (ADE, 1974) in structure and content. However, the updated standards differed from the 1974 version in that students were required to compare, assess, and analyze historical data rather than merely memorize facts.

In 2006 and again in 2007, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne called for the addition of arts and social studies tests to the AIMS battery. He claimed this would force schools to return to teaching subjects they had abandoned in order to devote more time and resources to preparing students to pass the AIMS tests in reading, writing, and math (Falkenhagen, 2006; Horne, 2007). Such tests have not been added, but the test battery was expanded in 2008 with the addition of a science component (Madrid, 2008), indicating that the composition of AIMS is subject to revision.

SBER and Professionalization: A Personal History

My involvement in the story told above began in January 2000, when I was hired to teach English and social studies in a small suburban high school in Arizona. I was provided with copies of the state's new social studies and language arts standards and was told to base my teaching on these standards. While I realized the standards were meant to help guide my practice, I nonetheless felt completely overwhelmed and unprepared. The thick documents were dense and intimidating, and they set forth what seemed an impossible task: teach every concept, fact, and skill within their pages to mastery with little direction in how to do so. Moreover, as one of only two social studies teachers in the school and the only person teaching my course preparations, I didn't have

a friendly colleague to turn to for help. Consequently, my first few years at the school were a struggle to define my practice. I developed my units and sequenced them according to the textbook, and I drew upon handouts and materials from my undergraduate coursework when I felt they would hold my students' interest.

I continued to refine my lessons and pedagogy during the seven years I taught at the school. I had a sympathetic principal who made time to talk to me whenever I had questions or problems, but I received very little in the way of educational leadership. Faculty meetings were usually given over to administrative minutiae, leaving no time for substantive discussion of teaching philosophy and curriculum issues. Moreover, conversations with my peers served to give voice to our frustrations rather than build a rationale for practice. Professional development was infrequent, boring, and quickly forgotten. When I left the school in May 2006 to teach English in a much larger high school in a different school district, I looked forward to being a member of a content area department for the first time in my career. I anticipated that I would participate in curriculum and lesson planning with my new colleagues during weekly meetings. Furthermore, I believed I would receive stimulating and challenging professional development.

I was disappointed, therefore, when reality did not accord with my expectations. Much like the faculty meetings at my previous school, department meetings seemed always to consist of discussion of the latest administrative directives. Most teachers avoided sharing their beliefs about teaching and learning for fear of offending their peers. When I asked if the department had a curriculum map, I was directed to download a copy

of the state standards from the district's Web site. I relied on my fellow English teachers more for their "sympathetic commiseration" (Palonsky, 1986, p. 83) than for their professional guidance.

At the end of the year, I took a position in a social studies department at a different high school. I was completing coursework for my doctoral program and considering what I would study for my dissertation. I had long been interested in the ways districts and schools interpret and enact SBER policy, so I felt a renewed sense of enthusiasm for the topic when the assistant principal assigned to evaluate the social studies department directed us to develop curriculum maps and end-of-course exams based on the state standards. But as I settled into the department, I felt frustrated by what I didn't know about my colleagues as professionals. I found myself wondering what they thought they were accomplishing with their classes. With the lack of time spent developing departmental consensus on questions of purpose, content, and method, did the state's and the school administration's efforts to regulate our practice serve as a proxy for internal standard setting? Or were we all pursuing our own agendas with little regard for the department, the school, and the state? These questions occupied me more often as the school year wound down, and I came to the conclusion that I wanted to investigate what standardization of practice means to social studies teachers within the context of their department.

Problem Statement

SBER is predicated on what Smith et al. (1999) call the conventional model of school reform, which assumes that educators interpret and enact standardizing policy

rationally and predictably. Differences in implementation can be accounted for by systemic variation, e.g., inadequate resources or uneducated personnel. At the heart of this model is the belief that standards of practice can be codified and imposed on educators through the provision of accountability measures such as high-stakes tests.

However, the conventional model of school reform may not accurately describe the effects of SBER on teachers' practice. Teachers develop their own professional standards through a complex process that is influenced by a large number of factors, of which education policy is but one among many. Moreover, SBER at the high school level is focused on standardizing educational outcomes (i.e., student achievement), not processes (Olsen & Sexton, 2009). Relatively little attention has been paid to what "standardization" of teachers' practice entails. It is left to districts, schools, and teachers to negotiate their own parameters for the term (Lemons, Luschei, & Siskin, 2003).

This study explored high school social studies teachers' perceptions of the meaning and degree of standardization of practice within their department.

Professional Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature on social studies instruction at the high school level with its description of teachers' perceptions of standardization of practice. It focuses on the factors that teachers identify as facilitating shared professional standards within their department. Moreover, the study findings identify factors that social studies teachers perceive as preventing standardization of their practice.

By attempting to determine what factors department members identify as promoting substantive dialogue among their peers, this study helps elucidate the process

through which schools and districts can design productive responses to the mandates of SBER. It also contributes additional information to the literature on teacher professionalization.

If social studies teachers can develop their own standards for practice through collegial interaction, their practice will improve, their status will be enhanced, and their professional autonomy will increase.

Overview of Methodology

This study employed a qualitative perspective to explore and understand participants' conceptualizations of standardization of practice. By uncovering connections and patterns among teachers' beliefs about social studies, their practice, and standardizing policy, the study attempted to identify the critical variables that affect the ability of groups of teachers to establish shared professional standards of practice.

The type of research used was the case study. Creswell (1998) defines a case as a system bound by place and time. Arguing from an empirical point of view, in defining and studying a case the goal of the researcher is to develop substantive theory, i.e., theory grounded in a specific, quotidian context that can be used to guide practice (Merriam, 1998). In this study, the reflections of three social studies teachers during one school year were treated as separate cases.

The context of the study was a large Arizona public high school. The participants are members of the social studies department. Moreover, two of the participants belonged to the same PLC.

The researcher accessed the participants' beliefs and insights through a three-interview sequence, taken from the work of Seidman (2006). This method of interviewing assumes that the participant's viewpoint cannot be fully understood without reference to the past experiences that helped shape it. Therefore, the first interview prompts the participants to recount their life histories up to the present time. The second interview focuses on participants' present experiences with the topic of study, while the final interview engages participants in reflection on their past and present experiences and the meanings they have constructed from those experiences. The interview questions were generally open-ended, with follow-up queries embedded in the protocol as a guide for the interviewer.

The interview protocol was adjusted to each participant's circumstances. This was accomplished with data collected from classroom observations. The researcher observed three full lessons taught by each teacher and kept detailed descriptive fieldnotes of each lesson. However, data from classroom observations were not used in data analysis as described below.

The data analysis followed guidelines set by Bogdan and Biklen (2003). Analysis began and continued during data collection, with tentative speculations used to guide further data collection. The data were then sorted according to broad coding categories derived from the research questions. Next, the initial categories were refined as patterns and themes emerged from the data. Lastly, substantive theory was described in the study's findings and conclusions.

Research Questions

1. What do social studies teachers understand standardization of practice to mean?
2. To what degree do social studies teachers believe their practice is standardized within their department?
3. In what ways do social studies teachers believe their practice should be standardized?
4. What factors do social studies teachers identify as impeding standardization of practice within their department?
5. What factors do social studies teachers identify as promoting standardization of practice within their department?

Delimitations

Only three members of a high school social studies department participated in this study. Moreover, the participants were not randomly selected and did not represent every subject matter taught in the department. Consequently, the conclusions drawn from the study findings could have been very different had other cases been studied. See Chapter 3 for more information about participant selection.

In addition, the findings of this study are based solely on interview data. Consequently, there is the possibility that participants misrepresented their practice. However, the use of multiple interviews allowed the researcher to ask confirming questions throughout data collection as the need arose. Moreover, the researcher's relationship with the participants encouraged mutual trust and openness.

Definition of Terms

Practice. All the cognitive processes and physical behaviors that teachers enact in and out of the classroom to fulfill their professional duties. Shulman (as cited in Nelson, 2009) identifies the following kinds of pedagogical reasoning and actions as components of teachers' practice: (a) comprehension of content knowledge, goals, curriculum, teaching methodology, students, and the classroom and school context, (b) transformation of content knowledge and goals into representations and learning experiences for students, (c) enactment of learning experiences and representations (i.e., observable teaching behaviors), (d) assessment of student learning and teaching effectiveness, (e) critical analysis of student learning and teaching performance, and (f) and new comprehensions resulting from reflections on teaching experiences (p. 549).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). A group of educators who share a commitment to ensuring students learn and achieve at high levels, engage in professional development to improve their teaching practice, and collaborate to identify and solve problems considered important by group members (Hord, 2009). Although the term is used in the literature to describe school-wide communities of educators, it is also applied to small groups of teachers operating more or less independently of one another. Refer to Chapter 2 for a discussion of theoretical and empirical literature on PLCs, and see Chapter 3 for details about the structure and operations of PLCs at the research site.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study and provides information on the background of the study topic, the problem statement, the professional significance of the

work, an overview of the methodology, the research questions, delimitations, and definitions of key terms. The review of literature in Chapter 2 includes analysis of the following influences on social studies teachers' practice: standards and SBER, the institutionalization of public education, the nature of social studies as a school subject, teachers' knowledge and beliefs, and the local school context. Both theory and results of empirical studies on these topics are presented.

Chapter 3 presents information on the research design and methodology. In Chapter 4, the study results are presented. The concluding chapter, Chapter 5, contains an analysis and summary of the investigation and the conclusions reached. It also presents a discussion of implications for the field raised by the study and suggestions for areas in which further study would be productive.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter examines the complex and numerous factors that influence social studies teachers' practice. The topics addressed are:

- *Standards and standards-based educational reform (SBER)*. This section presents information on teachers' professional standards and the federally sanctioned movement to standardize teaching and learning, including a discussion of its history and effects on teachers' practice.
- *The institutionalization of public education*. The conserving effects of institutionalization of schools on teachers' practice are described.
- *The nature of social studies as a school subject*. This section explores the distinguishing characteristics of social studies as a school subject and their impact on teachers' practice.
- *Teachers' knowledge and beliefs*. This section describes how social studies teachers' knowledge and beliefs influence their practice.
- *The local school context*. This section discusses the effects of a number of contextual factors on social studies teachers' practice, including school administration, peer interactions (in a number of contexts, including PLCs), students, and textbooks and other curricular materials.

Each section reviews the relevant theoretical and empirical literature. The chapter concludes with a summary of the major themes identified in the literature.

Standards and Standards-Based Educational Reform

Given the extent to which the SBER movement has dominated discourse about public education, it is easy to narrowly define educational standards as fixed targets and requirements established by state departments of education (Kordalewski, 2000). In reality, as the literature reviewed in this chapter demonstrates, teachers develop their own professional standards within the context of their practice. To be successful as a policy instrument, officially mandated standards must exercise more influence on teachers' practice than their own beliefs and values. While there is, to date, insufficient empirical evidence to gauge the efficacy of SBER, the results of the studies I review suggest that the effectiveness of mandated standards may be blunted by contextual variation among schools.

Teachers' Professional Standards

The term "standard" can be interpreted in subtly different ways, such that it can be difficult to know what it is supposed to refer to. Kordalewski (2000) argues that the task is not to choose one from among the many definitions of the term; rather, it is important to recognize the interconnectedness of different conceptualizations of educational standards. His typology of standards is therefore useful in understanding the nuanced and complex referents that guide teachers' practice:

1. *Standards as one's system of values.* Like anyone else, teachers' values are shaped by their membership in various communities. They judge certain kinds of teaching and learning more or less worthwhile based, in large part, on their

values. Moreover, teachers develop habits and pursuits in order to live by their systems of values.

2. *Standards as meanings given to relative concepts.* When an individual recognizes that different experiences and backgrounds promote different systems of valuation, it becomes possible to recognize standards as meanings ascribed to relative concepts. For example, a teacher acknowledges that a lesson she is particularly proud of may appear frivolous to her peers.
3. *Standards as benchmarks of performance.* Teachers measure their performance against benchmarks that they develop on their own or in concert with others. These benchmarks may become standards that they strive to meet. A social studies department, for instance, may decide that all teachers should begin and end their curricula at equivalent points in history. A teacher who does so can be said to have met the department's standard.
4. *Standards as acceptable professional behaviors.* This interpretation of the word is a logical extension of standards as benchmarks. Continuing the example from the previous definition, the behaviors and practices that permit teachers to cover a great deal of history content become standard operating procedures. Although their use is not mandated by the department, teachers who do not employ them risk being labeled eccentric or radical by their peers.

Eisner (2000) references several of these interpretations in arguing for the inevitability and indispensability of educational standards:

Without standards people will not know where they are going and without knowing where they are going they will be unable to plan for its realization.

Furthermore, without standards people will have no basis for making judgements about the quality of students' performance or that of their teachers. Standards make rational behaviour possible. They provide a benchmark, a necessary basis, a means for describing in precise terms what it is that people value and, therefore, provide a basis for curriculum planning. (p. 344)

Theorists and researchers argue that the classroom is a unique context in which teachers develop standards that distinguish them from other professional groups.

Although teachers, like other professionals, must acquire a special body of knowledge and demonstrate proficiency in the use of a specialized set of skills, tools, and technologies (Feinberg, 1990), teaching is an unpredictable enterprise that is unusually resistant to quantification and codification. "Even if a well-developed science of teaching were available," writes Goodlad (1990),

its mastery by teachers would not provide sufficient guidance for the burden of judgment they carry, its full definition would not adequately frame a profession of teaching, and teacher education programs based on only this science would be seriously deficient. (p. 19)

More so than other professionals, teachers must possess "moral sensitivity" to their students' needs (p. 27). Given the continued absence of a universally efficacious technology of teaching, Soder (1990) argues that attempts to increase the standing of the teaching profession in the eyes of the public must capitalize on teachers' obligation to care for children. In other words, teachers' standards of practice are distinct from those of other professional groups in being inextricably rooted in moral or ethical values. The emphasis on the moral dimension of teaching is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Cuban's (1998) work indicates that teachers' standards differ from those of policymakers as well as other professional groups. This is clearly evident in the ways

different education stakeholders evaluate reform initiatives. Politicians and school administrators, Cuban argues, employ the effectiveness standard (what evidence exists to prove that a reform achieves its intended goals?), the popularity standard (does the reform enjoy broad popular support?), and the fidelity standard (how closely does the operational reform cleave to the original intent?). These standards stem from a view of “organizations as instruments for solving problems through top-down authority, formal structures, clearly specified roles, and technical expertise to . . . achieve desired goals set by organizational decision makers” (p. 458). Teachers, by contrast, assess reforms with criteria derived from service values and intimate knowledge of life in classrooms. Teachers examine reforms to see if they meet the standards of adaptiveness and longevity. That is, a reform is judged successful by teachers if its implementation can be adapted to fit local needs and personal preferences and if it proves more durable than the typical fad or craze.

Indeed, a host of ambitious reforms of public education have failed to substantially alter teaching and learning in American public schools (Cuban, 1991, 1998, 2004). A combination of the conserving influence of public school institutionalization, discussed in detail later in this chapter, and the lack of a strong technical culture in teaching has made contextual influences on teachers’ practice stronger than most education policy (Lortie, 1975). SBER, however, presents what Angus and Mirel (1999) claim to be an unprecedented attempt at changing the core philosophy and structure of public education. It melds old assessment methods with new data warehousing

technologies in order to standardize teaching practice and educational outcomes (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009).

History, Goals, and Criticism of SBER

SBER is made possible by what Popkewitz (1997) describes as a “re-visioning of the teacher and the child as objects that are systematically classified, legislated, standardized, and normalized” (p. 148). This objectified view of teachers and students derives from the belief that substandard public schooling churns out young people who lack the skills, knowledge, and disposition to be productive workers and citizens (Olsen & Sexton, 2009). The widespread perception that incompetent teachers are failing to discharge their duties provides policymakers with a mandate for drastic action. While advocates of reform disagree over whether the blame for the failure of public schooling lies with teachers, students, administrators, or parents, they are united in the belief that the problem can be solved through standardization of educational processes (what teachers teach) and outcomes (what students demonstrate they have learned). Mintrop and Sunderman (2009) argue that SBER’s accountability system consists of three parts: “Standards as broadly framed orientations for subject matter content and skills, standardized tests as the basis for performance indicators, and performance targets and quotas for measuring performance and underperformance” (p. 354). It is assumed that holding schools accountable to standards through high-stakes testing will “trigger a change in expectations and actions [in schools] that leads to improvement” (Rhoten, Carnoy, Chabrán, & Elmore, 2003, p. 15).

The roots of the SBER movement have been well documented by historians. Traditionally, deficiencies in public schooling have been identified as the cause of real or imagined national crises. For example, poor science and mathematics instruction was blamed for the failure of the United States to be the first nation to orbit an artificial satellite around the Earth. The embarrassment of *Sputnik I* spurred massive federal funding for development of new curricula, including the loose federation of projects that came to be known as the New Social Studies (Evans, 2004).

While the late 1950s may have given birth to the widespread perception that something is rotten in the nation's schools, the publication in 1983 of *A Nation at Risk*, the White House's scathing indictment of public education, stoked the fires of the incubating SBER movement (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Mathison, Ross, & Vinson, 2001). Following the dire language of *A Nation at Risk*, critics predicted the impending political and economic collapse of the United States as a result of its ineffectual public education system (see, for example, Hirsch, 1987). In response to the belief that American children weren't learning enough, professional associations representing the academic disciplines embarked on projects to develop voluntary national standards during the 1980s and 1990s. Advocates for national standards argued that the lack of authoritative frameworks for content areas had resulted in the nation's curricula becoming fragmented, outdated, and ineffective. National standards would help teachers provide their students with a more comprehensive, challenging, and thought-provoking education (Nash & Dunn, 1995).

Despite receiving mostly broad, bipartisan support from policymakers (Vinson, 1999), the published standards ultimately failed to reform teachers' practice in the ways standards advocates had predicted. This may be because teachers felt no need to adopt voluntary standards, spurned standards documents perceived to be controversial or erroneous, or rejected national standards that were simply too cumbersome or confusing to use. Yet another possibility, exemplified by the social studies standards developed by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), is that the definitional ambiguity inherent in the term "standard" may have led some teachers to expect something quite different from what they were given. Responding to criticism of the NCSS standards, Adler (2001) argues that the document should be viewed as a framework to guide curriculum construction, not as a set of recipes for lesson construction. Indeed, Adler concedes that referring to the document's contents as "standards" represents NCSS's appropriation of popular jargon in order to secure social studies a voice in the national discussion of curriculum reform. The NCSS standards did indeed receive attention, but teachers who combed through the document looking for specific guidelines or prescriptions were likely disappointed, and their dissatisfaction helped limit the long-term influence of the national social studies standards.

With the enthusiasm for national standards fading by the late 1990s, the federal government intervened early in the new century to add teeth to SBER. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, supported by a coalition of liberals and conservatives in Congress and the White House, mandates that all states set standards for grade-level achievement and implement a system to assess students' progress toward meeting grade-

level standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). In effect, NCLB creates many subnational standards systems (Jenness, 1990) by forcing states to replace their school districts' many autochthonous accountability systems with a single state-defined system that typically consists of several grade-level tests culminating at the secondary level with a high-stakes exit exam (Goertz, 2000). In some states, teachers risk losing money earmarked as performance pay if their students fail to achieve at established levels on these tests. Moreover, students' scores on grade-level tests are aggregated and published in newspapers and Web sites so that the public can compare the effectiveness of local schools. Under NCLB, educators cannot afford to dismiss their state standards as they could the national standards. Teachers may feel such pressure from the external disciplinary system imposed by NCLB that they adopt "certain conformative and power-laden modes of both thinking and [acting]" (Vinson & Ross, 2003, p. 57).

Opponents of SBER object to the demands that teachers and students are subjected to under NCLB. Moreover, they contend that SBER ignores the complexity of teaching and learning in favor of a "quick fix" solution (Nelson, 1998; Ross, 1996). Standards documents are presented as authoritative and beyond question, yet the choices made by state departments of education as to what constitutes "essential" knowledge, concepts, and skills are no less tentative and subject to criticism than those of teachers and their professional organizations (Perrier, 2007). Furthermore, Nelson (1998) argues that SBER emphasizes assessment at the expense of teaching and learning. Framing the problem of education in terms of measurement justifies the time and money spent on expensive standardized tests, which are easy to score and whose results permit

comparisons to be made among students and teachers (Perrier, 2007). Finally, Berliner and Biddle (1995) contend that the educational crises that SBER is supposed to remedy are fictions manufactured by groups interested in reshaping public education according to their beliefs and desires. Contemporary American public school students, say Berliner and Biddle, are learning and performing as well if not better than their predecessors.

Regardless of the merits of these criticisms, SBER will continue to dominate national and local education policy so long as NCLB remains the law of the land. But what effect has this latest reform movement had on teachers' practice? Is there empirical evidence demonstrating that the accountability system described by Mintrop and Sunderman (2009) has promoted standardization of teaching and learning in American public schools?

Effects of SBER on Teachers' Practice

Before reviewing the research that directly addresses how SBER affects teachers' practice, it is worthwhile to consider the outcome of most education reform policy. Cuban (1991) differentiates between first-order or incremental changes and second-order or fundamental changes to educational systems. While first-order changes seek to improve schools' efficiency without disrupting their basic structures, second-order changes derive from deep dissatisfaction with schools and attempt to alter the business of schooling in significant ways. Given the long history of differentiation of curricula in high schools, the current attempt to standardize teaching and learning represents a second-order reform of public education (Angus & Mirel, 1999). Unfortunately for advocates of SBER, Cuban found that schools are usually successful in selectively

incorporating parts of second-order reforms and jettisoning the rest. In other words, ambitious reforms of public education are often only able to produce incremental changes in schooling at best. Because teachers adapt new ideas into existing practices throughout successive waves of reform efforts (Cuban, 1998, 2004), the core nature or grammar of public schooling remains stable (Tyack & Tobin, 1994).

We do not yet have enough information on the effects of SBER on teachers' practice to know if it will share the same fate as the failed reform movements studied by Cuban (1991), although some researchers and theorists express pessimism about its long-term prospects (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008; Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009). Very little is known, for example, about how teachers perceive and use state content area standards (VanSledright, 2002). On the other hand, a growing body of research documents the effects of high-stakes standardized testing on schools. Jennings (2000) found that newly implemented state standards brought about changes in teachers' beliefs and curricula in four rural schools. A norm of silence often develops in teaching teams and departments such that teachers do not feel comfortable examining each other's practice (Onosko, 1991; Siskin, 1994). The teachers in Jennings' study were required to collaborate to align their curricula with the state standards, and through this process they were forced to discuss topics such as curriculum and teaching philosophy that had previously been off limits. Although the teachers in Jennings' study resented the imposition of standards, they acknowledged that the resulting pressure for change led to increased communication and collaboration. It is important to note, however, that the participants' students were tested to determine whether the schools were in compliance with the new standards. Would the

state standards have exerted the same influence on the teachers' practice in the absence of a test?

The findings of Corbett and Wilson's (1991) study of schools' responses to high-stakes testing suggest a possible response to the hypothetical question raised above. The researchers argued that two characteristics of standardized tests help determine how administrators and teachers react to them: stakes and pressure. A test's stakes, or the consequences associated with students' performance, are a property of the perceptions of teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Pressure, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which administrators, policymakers, and other education stakeholders attempt to force teachers to bring about a specific student performance level. High stakes may induce higher pressure for student performance, but these two conditions may also vary independently (e.g., a district may "overreact" to a relatively inconsequential test).

Corbett and Wilson (1991) found that different combinations of stakes and pressure produced the following reactions in the schools and districts they studied:

1. *Rebellion*. High stakes and high pressure caused some schools to view test scores as the goal of education rather than as one way of gauging student learning. These schools abandoned existing curricula and teaching methods in favor of alternatives thought to bring about improved test scores.
2. *Innovation*. Some schools did not lose their view of tests as instruments to measure learning. However, high stakes and high pressure caused them to seek out new methods of achieving their existing educational goals.

3. *Conformity*. In response to high stakes and low pressure, often the product of easy tests or well-prepared districts, schools felt free to act deliberately and systematically in pursuit of improved student learning outcomes.
4. *Ritualism*. In conditions where tests carried low stakes and high pressure, some schools rejected the validity of the test but appeared to take it seriously. This was often done to pacify influential community members who demanded that “something be done” about test scores.
5. *Retreatism*. Low stakes and low pressure, the product of unimportant assessments that no one cared about, spurred little activity in some schools beyond making arrangements to administer the test.

These findings permit us to generalize about the probable effects of SBER on social studies teachers’ practice. Because social studies is excluded from NCLB’s testing requirements, only 23 states include a social studies component in their standardized test batteries and, of that number, only 10 states specify consequences for poor student performance (Grant & Salinas, 2008). Thus, barring the interventions of school and district administrators, social studies teachers in most states are likely to feel little pressure to teach to untested standards. According to the typology of responses developed by Corbett and Wilson, we would expect to see social studies teachers in most states merely going through the motions of teaching to standards documents (i.e., engaging in ritualism or retreatism). However, because stakes are a subjective phenomenon, rebellion, innovation, and conformity are possible even in the absence of standardized testing if

social studies teachers feel compelled to ensure their students demonstrate mastery of the standards.

Corbett and Wilson's (1991) findings indicate that the relationship between standards-based educational policy and teachers' practice is complex and multifaceted. This conclusion is supported by other studies. Segall (2003) found that Michigan social studies teachers responded to their state's standardized test by compromising their own professional standards. One teacher described having to abandon chronological sequencing of his American history curriculum so that certain topics emphasized on the state test, such as the Constitution, were covered in detail prior to the test administration date. He also lamented that time dedicated to test preparation had edged out activities that he felt had more value, such as critical examination of photographs and other popular culture objects. However, Michigan teachers found ways to "sneak" untested concepts and skills into their curricula (p. 309). This caused them distress because doing so placed them in opposition to the "mandate" of the school (*ibid.*).

Several studies have shown that standardized testing encourages use of conservative teaching methods, including lecturing and drilling, which Leming (1994) collectively refers to as traditional social studies instruction (TSSI). Smith (2003) found that Virginia social studies teachers had introduced unwelcome changes to their pedagogy as a result of the pressure they felt from the state standards and high-stakes test. For example, these teachers conducted "cramming sessions" as the state testing window approached because their students' graduation depended on passing test scores. Similarly, the two social studies teachers studied by Gerwin and Visone (2006) varied their

approaches to teaching as a result of standardized assessment. They planned creative lessons and expected their students to engage in higher-order thinking in their elective classes that were not included in the state's testing program. Their state-tested courses, however, were characterized by rote learning of vocabulary and application of test-taking strategies geared to the high-stakes exam. Finally, Au's (2007) metasynthesis of findings related to the effects of high-stakes testing demonstrated that teachers adopted generally more controlling, transmission-oriented approaches when subjected to state-mandated assessment. Their practice exhibited the following characteristics: narrowing of curricula to closely match tested content (particularly evident among social studies teachers), fragmentation of content knowledge to better approximate test language and format (see also McNeil, 1986), and reliance on teacher-centered pedagogy to cover large amounts of tested material.

Although these findings suggest that SBER policy has succeeded in influencing social studies teachers' practice, the resulting changes have not been uniform across all school sites. This is because contextual variation within and among districts and schools mediates teachers' responses to standardizing policy (Corbett & Wilson, 1991; Fore & Biermann, 1998). This seems to be particularly true of high schools, in which differentiated structures cause reform policies to "refract" and "bend" (Siskin, 2003). Based on a multistate study of high schools' responses to standardizing policy, Debray, Parson, and Avila (2003) concluded that the internal accountability system, or capacity, of schools played a significant role in their alignment with mandated standards. Schools with "incoherent internal accountability mechanisms," evidenced by inconsistent

professional development, inadequate collaborative structures, minimal collective expectations, and little or no data sharing and analysis, “provided a weak or nonexistent structure with which the external policy could align” (p. 84). However, the organizational complexity of high schools meant that pockets of alignment or resistance developed even when the school’s prevailing capacity was significantly high or low.

Section Summary

The development of teachers’ professional standards is necessary and inevitable. It is a process shaped by their backgrounds and work with their students and colleagues. However, the pervasive belief that public schools are failing to prepare young people for roles as workers and consumers has led many to conclude that teachers’ standards must be substandard, incoherent, or inappropriate. The policy response is SBER, a nationwide attempt to hold teachers’ accountable to mandated content area standards. Although research has documented changes in social studies teaching as a result of standardizing policy, contextual variation in schools can mediate the impact of education policy.

The Institutionalization of Public Education

We have seen that explicitly formulated standards are not the only influence on social studies teachers’ practice. Teachers are also subject to the powerful, but subtle, forces exerted by life in schools. Unlike standardizing policy, which invites debate due to its high profile, the quotidian operations of schools are rarely questioned because they have assumed institutional status in the minds of teachers, students, and the public. Such things as large class sizes and heavy work loads are often assumed to be “just the way

things are.” Nevertheless, the institutional qualities of schools have been shown to influence social studies teachers’ practice in many ways, including the content they choose to teach, the methods they employ to teach the content, and their tolerance for disorder and uncertainty in the classroom.

Schools as Institutions

Reflecting on the failure of his anthropology curriculum to take root as designed in high school world history classrooms, Hanvey (1971) concludes that “the work of the national curriculum projects [has taught us] that the improvement of curriculum cannot be isolated from larger structural problems inherent in the culture of the schools” (p. 143). The curricula that emerged from the New Social Studies movement were designed with the assumption that teachers would faithfully implement the new programs and materials they were given. “The schools, of course, didn’t use as directed” (p. 148). In the case of Hanvey’s anthropology curriculum, teachers who reported successful implementation were found to have changed very little about their practice. They adopted the project’s inquiry-oriented materials, which Hanvey and his peers considered to be of lesser importance than the processes and norms of anthropological study, because those materials were consonant with the teachers’ prevailing beliefs and practices.

Why did this happen? Hanvey (1971) concluded that teachers’ lack of skill or preparation was not a causal factor; indeed, teachers with formal training in anthropology actually demonstrated less fidelity to the new curriculum than those without. Rather, the barrier to full adoption derived from the environment of the schools. Teachers are individuals who have learned to work in a “swamp” (p. 149), that is, a school system

characterized by a powerful culture. This culture has the following traits: (a) an expectation that teachers have unbelievably heavy work loads, (b) professional norms that call for technical experimentation rather than intellectual activity, (c) a resulting absence of collegial discourse and debate about substantive ideas, (d) a lack of meaningful feedback from peers and evaluators, and (e) pressure for harmony among faculty members (*ibid.*). This culture deadens teachers' critical faculties and teaches them to value loyalty, deference to seniority, cordiality, and dependency. Over time, teachers are subtly encouraged to be competent technicians who don't deviate much from what is considered normal.

The structural elements of schools that produce their distinctive culture are firmly entrenched. They have become institutionalized, that is, they have assumed significance as abstractions in the public consciousness (Reid, 2003). The institutional quality of public schooling freezes structures and processes. For example, a world history class is, in one sense, simply an organizational unit that helps to "[bring] order to the conduct of schooling" (Jackson, 1992, p. 5). It should be capable of being shaped to the specific needs of a particular school, teacher, or group of students. However, "world history" is an institutional category, existing as an approximate model in the minds of teachers, students, parents, and administrators. Because everyone "knows" what content and activities are germane to world history (at least on a broad level), a given world history class will tend not to differ much from the institutional archetype (Eisner, 2000). The institutionalization of schooling means that teachers face significant—and probably often

implicit or unquestioned—constraints on their practice even in the absence of explicit directives such as standardizing policy.

Although institutionalization imposes limitations on schools, these constraints need not be thought of in exclusively negative terms. Cultures shape values, and values shape standards of practice (Kordalewski, 2000). Hopmann (2003) argues that the education of young people is the type of inherently ambiguous undertaking that requires standardization in order to generate and sustain public support. The persistent problems of education, such as what content to teach, in what order to teach it, and how it should be taught, are insoluble in absolute terms because they are all predicated on disagreements stemming from conflicting values (Goodlad, 1990). However, when the processes and forms of schooling become institutionalized in a society, they become abstractions that educators, administrators, and community members acknowledge (again, implicitly or explicitly) as “normal” or “business as usual.” That is, institutionalized forms and processes are rendered stable even though the problems they are meant to address remain ambiguous and contestable (Olsen & Sexton, 2009).

What sustains the institutionalization of schooling? After all, American public education is decentralized to a much greater degree than in most other postindustrial nations. In the absence of a national curriculum, the states must establish their own educational systems, and the states, in turn, grant individual school districts a significant degree of autonomy in teaching students as they see fit. Consequently, the schools have historically been subject to an array of external influences from the broader culture. Interest groups attempt to remold public education to conform with their values and

goals; just as one group's agenda comes to prominence, it is supplanted by another's as the political, social, and economic landscape of the nation shifts (Evans, 2004; Kliebard, 2004).

Consequently, one might wonder how institutional stability is possible in public education. A compelling answer offered by Labaree (2000) is that the Carnegie unit, the nearly ubiquitous credential granted to students on the basis of their seat time in classes, has elevated the forms and rituals of public education over its substance. Because student performance factors so minimally in its calculation, a Carnegie unit communicates very little information about what a student has learned as a result of attending a class. This is what Reid (2003) means when he identifies the acquisition of status as the denouement of the curricular experience. That status is necessarily generic, and its legitimacy will be recognized by almost any person or agency. Such is, therefore, also the case for credentials issued by American schools. A diploma earned in Arizona is, in large part, functionally equivalent to one awarded in Utah, Wyoming, or Maryland. Of course, a system that renders courses generic in their outcome does not discriminate strong or effective curricula from weak ones. The classroom is a "black box" in which a great deal happens with little consequence as far as credentialing is concerned. Under such conditions, teachers need only keep their students preoccupied and docile with shallow coverage of content in order to meet the minimum standard of professional competency.

This system of accreditation offers clear benefits to consumers of public education (i.e., students and parents) (Gatto, 1992). I use the word "consumer" deliberately, because, as Labaree (2000) notes, the generic quality of the typical high

school diploma broadens many graduates' economic horizons. A credentialing system that awards credits based on seat time requires that students merely possess stamina, not intelligence, talent, or some other quality in presumably scarcer supply. This, in turn, means that very few students are incapable of earning a diploma, enrolling in postsecondary education or training, and benefiting from the resulting expanded employment opportunities. Job applicants need not fear that their credentials will be called into question, and employers can omit lengthy and costly audits of candidates' transcripts.

The Effects of Institutionalized Education on Social Studies Curriculum and Pedagogy

Based on the findings of his study of hundreds of classrooms across the nation, Goodlad (1984) concluded that a great deal of regional variation did not fundamentally alter the sameness of public schooling from one state or district to the next. From a pedagogical perspective, one result of the institutionalization of public education is that traditional teaching methods such as lecturing continue to be used (Leming, 1994; Levstik, 2008; Westbury, 1973) despite prolonged attempts to supplant them (Cuban, 1993; Elmore, 1997). These methods are often denigrated as ineffective anachronisms. By extension, teachers who employ them are thought to be hidebound, ignorant, or worse.

Yet traditional instruction persists, even among teachers who believe it to be a poor substitute for student-centered methods. This suggests that teachers' ability to choose is situationally constrained (Cuban, 1993). Doyle (1986a) argues that classrooms

are dynamic spaces that exert constant pressure on teachers' practice through several intrinsic features:

1. *Multidimensionality*. Classrooms are crowded places in which many people attempt to satisfy their (potentially mutually exclusive) needs and desires.
2. *Simultaneity*. Multiple activities are almost always in play at the same time, presenting teachers with difficult choices as to how they allocate their time and attention.
3. *Immediacy*. Event follows event and task follows task at a rapid clip, affording teachers few opportunities to deliberate and weigh the consequences of their actions.
4. *Unpredictability*. Teachers must prepare themselves as best they can for the disruptive effects of the unexpected, which can range in severity from an occasional minor interruption by the public address system to a major crisis precipitated by a fight or lock down.
5. *Publicness*. Teachers are constantly being monitored by their students, meaning that something they say to one has pedagogic implications for all.
6. *History*. Classroom participants remember what happens from day to day, and from their shared experiences emerge norms and routines that regulate their behavior (pp. 394–395).

Once a class period begins, teachers must be ever in the moment, endeavoring to teach their content to students of widely varying ability levels while maintaining an orderly environment (Jackson, 1968). Because the classroom context presents so many inherent

challenges to meeting the linked goals of teaching content and managing students' behavior, educators learn to cope as well as they can by relying on resilient and efficient methods that afford them the greatest possible control over an environment that constantly threatens to slip into chaos (Cuban, 2004; Schug, 2003; Westbury, 1973).

Given the pressures they face, it is not surprising that even accomplished teachers come to prize predictability and safety in their practice (Goodlad, 1984). Doyle (1986b) differentiates familiar work—consisting of routine, unambiguous tasks completed through rote deployment of algorithms—from novel work, which is made up of unfamiliar, ambiguous tasks requiring judicious use of original, creative thinking. He posits that teachers preemptively manage their practice (and, by extension, their students' behavior) by assigning familiar work that does not cause students to become frustrated and disruptive. Thus, the classroom is an environment that shapes both the kinds of work done there as well as its participants' perceptions of that work.

The result, observed Goodlad (1984), is that “something strange seems to have happened to [social studies content knowledge] on the way to the classroom. The topics of study become removed from their intrinsically human character, reduced to the dates and places readers will recall memorizing for tests” (p. 212). Surveying the results of research into social studies practice conducted since 1992, Levstik (2008) concluded that “little appears to have changed in social studies classrooms. . . . Patterns of instruction persist, with textbooks still predominating” (p. 59). As an example of the conservatism that characterizes social studies, DeWitt (2007) found that lecturing was the most commonly employed method of four social studies teachers who had thoroughly

incorporated instructional technology in their practice. Similarly, Bolinger and Warren's (2007) survey of 38 high school social studies teachers revealed that a majority perceived lecturing to be the most effective instrument in their repertoire. My analysis should not be interpreted to mean that the institutional quality of schooling is the principal cause of conservatism of social studies practice. Other factors, including the nature of social studies as a content area, teachers' thoughts and beliefs, and contextual forces within schools, exert considerable influence on social studies teaching. They will be examined later in this chapter.

Institutionalization and the Need for Control

As discussed previously, the institutional stability of schools hinges on shared expectations for specific forms and processes. According to Olsen and Sexton (2009), "A school earns external legitimacy when its visible structures resemble what society expects a successful school to look like" (p. 13). Unsurprisingly, the public demands that schools and classrooms be orderly, safe, and well-run, and these demands are keenly felt by teachers. However, maintaining discipline and control can interfere with the execution of teachers' distal goals (e.g., to awaken a passion for history in their students) (Thornton, 1988). Goodlad (1984) found that the stultifying mood of many classrooms served to keep students in check. Teachers wielded instructional practices as policing devices such that classroom interactions were boring, predictable, and safe.

McNeil (1986) found that social studies teachers regularly used four defensive techniques in order to minimize student frustration and thus prevent disruptive behavior. These techniques were fragmentation, mystification, omission, and defensive

simplification. The teachers faced the prospect of conveying a great deal of complex information to students of varying ability levels. Fragmentation, the practice of breaking material down into short lists that could be easily copied as notes, ensured that lessons would not be too difficult for students to follow. Moreover, when students asked difficult questions that teachers were not prepared to answer, they attempted to mystify the topic. In other words, they claimed that it was too difficult to understand in order to shut down students' curiosity and maintain the momentum of the lesson. In addition, concepts or time periods were omitted if teachers believed they were too complicated or controversial. However, some topics could not be left out and were resistant to fragmentation. In these cases teachers warned students at the start of the lesson that the content would be difficult, and in return they promised to skim through it as quickly as possible. This technique, known as defensive simplification, communicated to students that ambiguity was merely a temporary nuisance that could be overcome through compliance with the teacher's program of action.

Doyle and Carter's (1984) study of a junior high school English teacher's practice suggest that pressure for order and control can divert teachers from the stated goals of lessons. The researchers found that ambiguous, risky tasks such as essays were unstable elements in the teacher's curriculum. When the pace of her lessons flagged because students could not complete tasks as assigned, she provided extensive directions and assistance to preserve order and advance her students through her lessons. Moreover, she awarded plentiful bonus credit to cushion the impact of her students' poor scores. In effect, the teacher and her students regularly negotiated down the risk and ambiguity of

major tasks, such that the announced curriculum was not what was actually enacted. Because assignments in social studies and English classrooms are often quite similar, Doyle and Carter's findings are applicable beyond the language arts.

Section Summary

Much of public schooling, including its external appearance and internal processes, has become entrenched through institutionalization. Simply put, most people, including teachers, "know" what schools, classrooms, and courses ought to be like, and they work to maintain the institution as they think it should be. Consequently, students across the country experience education similarly despite the fact that American public schooling is decentralized to a greater degree than in other postindustrial nations. Institutionalization constrains teachers' practice in several ways. Charged with both educating and managing their students, social studies teachers respond by relying on traditional methods of instruction. Moreover, they reduce the ambiguity and complexity of their curriculum to preserve order in their classrooms.

The Nature of Social Studies as a School Subject

"With respect to classroom activity," Stodolsky (1988) argued, "the subject matters." There is a logical relationship between teachers' content area and the conduct of their practice that is, for some reason, seldom explicitly considered by theorists and researchers. In the case of social studies, the literature indicates that difficulty achieving consensus on the core content and purposes of the discipline may make social studies teachers more inclined to adopt traditional instructional methods (Leming, 1994).

Defining Social Studies

Siskin (2003) argues that some school subjects enjoy “high levels of agreement on what the subject is, what should be taught, and even . . . how the subject should be taught” (p. 89). This is not the case for other content areas, including social studies.

Hanvey (1971) claimed the boundaries of social studies are so porous that the discipline “embraces everything in sight” (p. 143). Indeed, the definitional ambiguity of the label “social studies” has bred longstanding turf wars among practitioners and researchers alike (Evans, 2004; Seixas, 2001). The NCSS sought to quell infighting within social studies with the following definition:

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (1994)

Evans (2004) describes this as a “federationist, consensus” definition (p. 35) carefully designed to alienate no one and omit no program or curriculum. On the other hand, its language does little to delimit the boundaries of the content area.

Moreover, evidence suggests that the term “social studies” may be losing its standing among practitioners, especially those in high schools. According to Jenness (1990), social studies is merely a generic or administrative term, like “language arts” or “mathematics,” that encompasses a number of somewhat distinct subject matters.

Moreover, he argues that history (adroitly fifth billed by the NCSS [1994] in its

alphabetical listing of subject matters comprising social studies) is unquestionably dominant over its brethren subject matters. Likewise, Shaver (1997) suggests that few high school social studies teachers would refer to themselves as such, preferring instead to be known as history teachers (or government teachers, or economics teachers, and so on). Even researchers show signs of disenchantment with the term. From 1973 to 1997, 41% of all articles published in *Theory and Research in Social Education* treated the traditional disciplines, not social studies, as the relevant curricular orientation (Ehman, 1998). Furthermore, the fourth edition of the *Handbook of Research on Teaching* is the first to contain separate chapters for research on social studies and history education (Wilson, 2001), an indication that a growing population of researchers prefers the focus of study offered by history to the porous boundaries of social studies.

Despite the energy and passion with which the issue is debated, it is difficult to know if a definition of social studies is helpful for anyone other than those responsible for recruiting membership in NCSS (Newmann, 1986). Morrissett and Haas (1982) claim that teachers are not interested in definitions of their content areas because definitions explain what something is, not what it does. Of course, the boundary between definition and purpose is exceptionally fuzzy, so Morrissett and Haas may be arguing semantics.

Although teachers may not be preoccupied with defining social studies, Stodolsky's (1988) study of elementary school teachers' practice demonstrated that variation in their instruction was attributable to differences in their content areas. She found that, in most cases, social studies lessons were not as predictable as math lessons. Teachers employed a broader range of assignment types when teaching social studies.

Stodolsky argued that because social studies, unlike math, “is not a well-defined school subject” (p. 6), teachers felt free to experiment with curricular materials and instructional techniques. On the other hand, “a possible emphasis on a body of knowledge to be mastered in history and geography may also incline teachers to instruct in a traditional fashion” (p. 116).

The Purposes of Social Studies

Intertwined with debates about the nature of social studies is contention regarding the purposes it is supposed to serve. According to Ross and Marker (2005), “lack of agreement regarding the purposes of the field, perhaps more than any other characteristic, has become the hallmark of social studies” (p. 142). Theorists and researchers frequently conclude that social studies teaching is thoroughly balkanized due to the lack of a coherent teleological foundation (Armento, 1986; Kaltsounis, 1994; Marker & Mehlinger, 1992; Morrisett & Haas, 1982; Postman, 2000).

It is strange, then, that NCSS declared without reservation that “the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world” (1994). Indeed, a role call of proponents of citizenship education in social studies gathers together a large and quite diverse assemblage of researchers and theorists (Banks, 2008; Banks & Nguyen, 2008; Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1978; Barth, 1993; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Brophy, 1997; Cheney, 1987; Clubok, 1987; Hirsch, 1987; Parker, 2008; Ross, 2001). According to Saxe (1991), social studies has had, from its inception, a narrow agenda to prepare citizens by teaching

young people the skills they need to participate in a democratic society. This is echoed by Barr et al. (1978), who identified “citizenship transmission” as the oldest and most entrenched of the three “traditions” of social studies, including the social science and reflective inquiry traditions.

Marker and Mehlinger (1992) observed that as an abstract ideal the citizenship mission of social studies has few detractors. It is easy to see why—who could argue against efforts to maintain an active and effective citizenry? The trouble is that a word like “citizenship” is a sliding signifier with no inherent meaning (Apple, 2004). As with any other contested term, the definitions offered for citizenship depend on the ideologies of the people issuing those definitions, and one’s ideology or theory of the content informs the curricular experiences to which students are subjected. Citizenship education is sometimes defined in conservative terms as the transmission of traditional beliefs (Barr et al., 1978), inculcation of cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1987), preservation of cultural memory (Cheney, 1987), or maintenance of conservative cultural continuity (Morrissett & Haas, 1982). On the other hand, more progressive champions of citizenship education frame it as a transformative process (Banks, 2008; Banks & Nguyen, 2008; Parker, 2008) in which students become active, informed participants in a democratic society (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Clubok, 1987; Kaltsounis, 1994). As Marker and Mehlinger (1992) argued, “the definition of a good citizen is so vague and the knowledge one requires to perform as [a] citizen so freely interpreted that nearly any point of view can be folded into that noble purpose” (p. 832). Others argue that citizenship education fails as a compelling purpose for social studies because it lacks grounding in empirical research

(Grant & VanSledright, 1996; Hyslop-Margison, Hamalian, & Anderson, 2006).

Moreover, Cogan (1996–1997) observed that preparing young people to function in adult roles in society has historically been the primary rationale of American public schooling as a whole. How can social studies teachers take credit for that which should properly be considered a collective, longitudinal effort?

On the other hand, rigid interpretation of citizenship education as “civics” instruction can lead to what Leming (1994) called the bifurcation of social studies practice. He distinguished between text-oriented, whole group, teacher-centered pedagogy, or TSSI, and civics (citizenship) instruction, typically operationalized through participation in extracurricular organizations such as student council. Leming’s argument is that TSSI is an adaptive mechanism that permits social studies teachers to survey a great deal of content while keeping their students under control. Hence, social studies teachers who wish to impart or nurture citizenship must bifurcate their practice, dividing their time between helping students memorize historical content knowledge during class time and involving them in civics-based clubs and activities outside of the physical or temporal boundaries of the classroom. According to Davis (1991), however, bifurcation is not environmentally determined as Leming described it; rather, it is what results when citizenship is narrowly conceptualized as a set of technical skills (e.g., voting) set apart from the “rest” of social studies. Acquisition of those skills, along with the disposition to deploy them, is prized as the prime goal of civics-minded teachers. Unfortunately, the academic subjects that typically comprise the “rest” of the social studies curriculum are “assigned a role only contributory to citizenship, to a kind of curricular dustbin. . . .

These leftover social subjects are taught lifelessly. They are routinely dull” (Davis, 1991, p. 35).

Developing Rationales for Social Studies

Morrisett and Haas (1982) argued that the absence of a compelling purpose for social studies can be redressed by developing rationales. The term describes a coherent philosophical position one assumes to justify the inclusion (and exclusion) of content and activity from the curriculum. An effective rationale for social studies should elucidate the interrelationship of curriculum, students, and society according to the following six themes:

1. *The nature of the individual.* What are the needs, desires, and goals of the individual? How do goals develop throughout the individual’s lifespan, and at what point does the individual possess the capabilities and competencies needed to satisfy them? How much diversity of goals and needs exist within the population of individuals, and how uniformly are abilities and limitations distributed throughout that population?
2. *The nature of society.* What is a society? To what extent do societies differ from one another? Is a society a thing apart from the individuals who compose it? What responsibilities do individuals owe their society, and vice versa? To what extent and by what means can and should societies change?
3. *The nature of values.* Where do individuals derive their values? Do certain values have demonstrably universal validity?

4. *The nature of knowledge.* Is there an objective reality that can be definitively known, or is “reality” a purely subjective phenomenon? How do people come to know things, and are some types of knowledge better, more powerful, or more useful than others? What role should institutions of learning play in organizing knowledge into disciplines or subjects?
5. *The nature of learning.* What does it mean to learn something, and how does learning happen? What aspects or characteristics of students are relevant to their learning process? Is learning better facilitated through extrinsic or intrinsic motivators?
6. *Curriculum goals and objectives.* Based on their responses to the questions in the five previous themes, how do teachers design a social studies curriculum that accords with their beliefs?

Rationales should enable teachers to identify goals and objectives, select curricular materials, and design tasks to promote student learning (Barr et al., 1978).

Research indicates that development of rationales should be driven by teachers within their school site. According to Cobb and Bowers (1999), the principles and standards that matter to teachers are generated from their practice and are revised according to changes in the classroom context: “Theoretical constructs evolve in response to problems and issues encountered in the classroom. As a consequence, theoretical constructs developed in this way do not stand apart from instructional practice, but instead remain grounded in it” (p. 12). In other words, an externally developed rationale given to or imposed on teachers is unlikely to be sensitive to the idiosyncrasies of the

local school context. It will, therefore, not provide much guidance to teachers whose professional standards grow out of their practice.

Section Summary

The traditional school subjects do not all present the same affordances and limitations to teachers. The literature indicates that social studies is distinct from other content areas in its lack of curricular and pedagogical definition. That is, there is no consensus on what constitutes essential social studies content knowledge, nor is it clear how students should best experience the content. This may promote experimentation and diversity in social studies teachers' methods; on the other hand, evidence also suggests that teachers may be encouraged to adopt traditional methods of surveying content in order to impart a body of knowledge to their students. In the absence of a compelling purpose for social studies, theorists urge the development of rationales for practice at local school sites.

Teachers' Knowledge and Beliefs

Nearly twenty years ago, Thornton (1991) assessed the inroads research had made into the thinking of social studies teachers as follows: "Although the curricular-instructional practices that teachers employ have been described in some depth, much less is known about their underlying beliefs about social studies" (p. 241). Fortunately, we now know a great deal more about what social studies teachers think and believe. Researchers have established that teaching practice in social studies is significantly influenced by teachers' knowledge and beliefs (Kon, 1995). Moreover, the literature

suggests that teachers' core beliefs about social studies are formed well in advance of their formal preparation (Lortie, 1975). Consequently, teacher development programs may be less effective in changing beliefs than in reinforcing preexisting patterns of thought.

Development of Social Studies Teachers' Beliefs

The field of research on teacher development and preparation is vibrant and rapidly expanding. A comprehensive accounting of its results to date is beyond the scope of this review; rather, I will discuss only those studies that investigate how social studies teachers come to know and believe what they do about their content area. Their results confirm Bennett and Spalding's (1992) observation that preservice educators enter their teacher preparation programs with their beliefs already formed, and that coursework does little to change their minds.

Based on her case study of two social studies educators completing their certification, Johnston (1990) argued that "the influence of the methods course/certification program had a partial and differential influence on [the participants'] beliefs and teaching practices; and that this influence was interactive with their backgrounds, beliefs, personalities, and experiences" (p. 228). Both participants adopted positions advocated by their instructors, but they did not interpret and enact these positions with complete fidelity. For example, Tom entered the program committed to making education relevant to students. He liked the program's emphasis on curriculum integration because he interpreted it as a means to show students the practical applications of social studies content knowledge. However, another of his strongly held

beliefs, that teachers should be in control in order to transmit knowledge, caused him to largely abandon attempts at integrating his curriculum and extending autonomy to his students.

Angell (1998) reported comparable findings employing a similar case study methodology. She identified overlapping—repeating the same message from multiple sources (e.g., course materials, supervising teacher, cooperating teacher)—as an effective means of restructuring teachers’ beliefs. One participant, Margaret, came to believe that elementary school students were capable of discussing controversial issues. This position was heavily emphasized by both Margaret’s methods instructors and her supervising teacher. While overlapping contributed to the development of the teachers’ professional thinking, Angell conceded that preprogram beliefs determined teachers’ receptivity to messages conveyed in their coursework. Because Margaret believed that knowledge is constructed by the knower and is, therefore, tentative, she was inclined to question her own beliefs when presented with contradictory evidence. On the other hand, Holly, the second participant, expressed complete faith in her beliefs and resisted some of the program’s key messages. It is doubtful whether any degree of overlapping could have brought about significant changes in her thinking.

These studies confirm what most experienced educators probably already know: the influence of formal education extends only so far into the life of the student. In the case of teacher preparation, a great deal of learning to teach social studies occurs before the preservice educator takes a single methods course (Angell, 1998; Johnston, 1990; Slekar, 1998). Although Lortie’s (1975) classic study of public school teaching is not

concerned solely with social studies, his findings are too important to ignore here. Lortie concluded that students spend many years observing their teachers before choosing to take on the role themselves. This long period of general schooling, which Lortie likened to an apprenticeship of observation, promotes knowledge of teaching that is “intuitive and imitative, not explicit and analytical . . . [and] based on personalities rather than pedagogical principles” (p. 62). Consequently, Lortie’s participants described learning to teach as the process of emulating or expressing desirable qualities of teaching models. Rather than education coursework driving teachers’ beliefs, “one’s personal predispositions are not only relevant but, in fact, stand at the core of becoming a teacher” (p. 79).

Eclecticism of Social Studies Teachers’ Thoughts and Beliefs

As discussed in a previous section, social studies is a loose federation of related subject matters. It is unusually inclusive of content and accommodates a greater range of teaching styles than other disciplines (Stodolsky, 1988). It is not surprising, then, that attempts to develop typologies of conceptualizations of social studies teaching have produced mixed results. Although researchers have identified several apparently distinct, coherent, and enduring approaches to conceptualizing social studies, their findings suggest that most social studies teachers are best described as eclectic in their thinking.

Traditions of social studies teaching. With publication of *The Nature of the Social Studies*, Barr et al. (1978) established an enduring framework for scholarly discourse about social studies. They posited that social studies teachers think and behave in one of three predictable patterns, which they formally refer to as traditions: social studies as

citizenship transmission, social studies as social science, and social studies as reflective inquiry. Moreover, they claimed to have developed a survey instrument that detects the respondent's preferred tradition.

According to Barr et al. (1978), teachers who adhere to the first tradition conceive of citizenship as engagement in public life and conformity to societal norms. Good citizens are defined by their values and behaviors, not by what they know. Consequently, social studies content knowledge is important only insofar as it conveys lasting feelings and attitudes (e.g., America is a just and powerful nation that occupies a preeminent place in world affairs). Teachers belonging to this tradition typically employ direct instruction methods like lecturing (Schug, 2003), with students passively experiencing the curriculum. By contrast, social studies taught as social science involves students learning the "habits of mind" (p. 86) of historians. Students analyze primary and secondary sources to reconstruct the past as accurately as possible. In contrast to teachers of citizenship, who are less concerned with the veracity of their content as long as it tells a good story, teachers of social science go out of their way to debunk historical myths in order to portray themselves as guardians of truth. The third and youngest tradition, social studies as reflective inquiry, also casts students as active participants in the curriculum. What distinguishes teachers of this tradition is that they want their students to become agents of change in the community. Therefore, the curriculum offers students opportunities to practice decision making in meaningful contexts. Content knowledge is chosen because it is relevant to students' work with critical contemporary issues and problems, not because it constructs a coherent narrative of the past.

The tidiness of Barr et al.'s (1978) typology facilitates discussion about social studies teaching. This conceptual simplicity, however, is belied by the researchers' own survey data, which reveals an unofficial "fourth tradition" consisting of a blend of the three traditions. Despite their exhortations to social studies teachers to adopt a coherent, uniform approach to their practice, Barr et al. conclude that most teachers hold inconsistent, potentially incompatible beliefs about their discipline. As we shall see, other researchers have reported similar results.

Perspectives of social studies teaching. Based on their work with individuals enrolled in a post-baccalaureate teacher certification program, Bennett and Spalding (1992) described teachers as entering the profession with one of seven perspectives on teaching and learning. The authors defined a perspective as "the personal attitudes, values, beliefs, principles, and ideals that help a teacher justify and unify classroom decisions and actions. It provides the lens through which teaching is viewed and affects the way teaching is perceived and interpreted" (p. 264). The teachers' perspectives tended to remain stable over time, resisting the influence of their preparation program. Moreover, Bennett and Spalding observed that the greatest diversity in perspectives occurred among social studies teachers participating in the study. The perspectives are summarized as follows:

1. *Inculcators.* These teachers emphasized transmission of content knowledge, values, and beliefs. They were concerned with maintaining discipline in order to keep students on task.

2. *Friendly scholars*. As with inculcators, friendly scholars sought to convey content knowledge. However, they prized student engagement over discipline, and as such they attempted to make their lessons fun and appealing.
3. *Friendly pedagogues*. Friendly pedagogues saw education as a performance art. They devoted their attention to lesson preparation and approached teaching with enthusiasm to captivate their students. Content knowledge was less important than the impressions students derived from lessons.
4. *Nurturers*. These teachers valued personal interactions with students. Nurturers counseled students and built relationships with them in hopes of helping them become happy, well-adjusted adults. As with friendly pedagogues, nurturers deemphasized content knowledge and skills.
5. *Facilitators of thinking*. Facilitators of thinking wanted to turn their students into lifelong learners. They focused on developing their students' critical thinking skills rather than their knowledge of course content.
6. *Empowerers*. Empowerers were keenly aware of their society's shortcomings and viewed their mission as promoting reform. To that end, they apprenticed their students in programs of social action.
7. *Scholar-psychologists*. The last and most prevalent perspective was a "murky blend" of the other six (p. 270). Most scholar-psychologists tended to see their role as preparing students for their futures.

Although Bennett and Spalding's (1992) typology is more nuanced than the one developed by Barr et al. (1978), both teams of researchers conclude that the thinking of

most social studies teachers is too diverse and contingent to be categorized (except, of course, in a catch-all group).

Tendencies, conceptions, and approaches. Unlike the previous researchers, who employed inductive methodology to generate categories of teacher beliefs and practice, Evans (1990) proceeded deductively with a typology already in hand. He referred to his focus of study alternatively as tendencies, approaches, and conceptions of history. In the main, these terms all seem to refer to what Bennett and Spalding (1992) called perspectives. Evans's five categories are as follows:

1. *Storyteller.* As their name suggests, storytellers were interested in communicating an interesting narrative to their students. In the process they conveyed a great deal of historical content knowledge.
2. *Scientific historians.* These educators shared the same beliefs and practices as teachers of social science (Barr et al., 1978) and facilitators of thinking (Bennett & Spalding, 1992). They valued historical inquiry and acted as impartial facilitators of student thinking and questioning.
3. *Relativists/reformers.* As with empowerers (Bennett & Spalding, 1992), relativists/reformers were committed to redressing social injustice by preparing their students to be change agents. Historical content knowledge was perceived by them to be background information to help students understand why their society is the way it is.

4. *Cosmic philosophers*. These teachers perceived history as events linked by universal “laws.” They wanted their students to appreciate these laws by understanding the historical causality implicit in the historical record.
5. *Eclectics*. These teachers had no dominant tendency and altered their methods as circumstances warranted, hence their label. They seemed to be most concerned with keeping their students interested and engaged, much like friendly scholars and friendly pedagogues (Bennett & Spalding, 1992).

Of note is that a “significant number” of teachers Evans (1990) studied were truly eclectic, offering a variety of answers when asked about the purpose of studying history (p. 121). Evans perceived this as a cause for concern, because “the lack of a deeper and more consistent philosophy may lead to a lapse into the most basic and least sophisticated type of teaching, a style based on teacher talk and student recitation” (p. 122).

It would appear, then, that social studies teachers are inconsistent in their thinking about their practice and their content area. Consequently, they select methods and activities from a number of traditions or approaches as circumstances warrant (Goodlad, 1984). On the other hand, it may be unreasonable to expect social studies teachers to demonstrate complete consistency of thought and practice. Kordalewski (2000) argued that teachers’ standards for student performance are multifaceted and multilayered, hence difficult to bring to bear in their entirety within a curriculum (to say nothing of a single lesson). Therefore, we should expect social studies teachers’ stated beliefs and practice to vary partly as a result of what they choose or are forced to emphasize at a given point in time. Moreover, research has shown that even eclectic teachers possess a fixed core of

beliefs around which their practice revolves. Based on his study of a social studies teacher's practice, Cornett (1990) concluded that she held nonnegotiable theories of teaching and learning that framed her overall approach. Sue, the participating teacher, was always observed to offer unconditional positive regard to her students. Her belief that learning should be positive and affirming was a source of tension when she felt that a lesson was too dry or structured. Consequently, she varied her methods in order to achieve a balance between organized presentation of content and responsiveness to her students. Sue's apparent eclecticism was, therefore, the result of conflicts between her deeply held beliefs and other influences on her practice.

Nelson and Drake (1994) interviewed veteran social studies teachers who had entered the profession during or very near the peak of the New Social Studies movement's influence. Although these teachers did not seem to have a rationale that informed their practice, they emphasized the importance of teaching their subject matter, controlling their students, and maintaining student interest in lessons. Content coverage, classroom management, and student engagement seemed to be the nonnegotiable, permanent frames with which these social studies teachers defined their practice. Given the complexity and unpredictability of life in classrooms, the participants did not have the luxury to be as doctrinaire in pursuit of their pedagogical ideals as they might have preferred. Rather, they made do with a flexible agenda for their practice.

The Relationship of Teacher Thinking to Practice

The preceding discussion suggests a conclusion that should come as no great surprise: Social studies practice is significantly influenced by what teachers think and

believe. Teachers possess and exercise agency, like anyone else. They “have considerable control over what they listen to and how they respond. Influences . . . are only potential. They seem to matter, but only as teachers comprehend and decide to act (or not) on them” (Grant, 1996, p. 261). Much could be written here about teacher thinking as a general phenomenon, but entire volumes would be required to do the topic justice. Readers are encouraged to consult Clark and Peterson (1986) and Munby, Russell, and Martin (2001) for comprehensive treatments of the literature. I have chosen to confine my review to studies of social studies teachers’ cognition. The results of my discipline-specific literature review portray the thinking of social studies teachers as a complex process in which beliefs and values interact with factual and procedural knowledge to guide practice. It is important to note that simply discovering what teachers know and believe is insufficient to predict how they will teach. The “imperfect correlation between thought and action” (Kordalewski, 2000, p. 141) is partially attributable to the intercession of a host of other contextual variables. These will be examined in detail in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Merryfield (1998) sought to identify influences on the practice of high school global studies teachers. Her participants ranged in experience from master teachers to preservice educators just completing their certification. While veteran global studies teachers differed from neophytes in their approach to teaching global studies, most participants espoused the belief that students need to know and appreciate multiple perspectives and viewpoints on issues, events, and cultures. This theory was born out of the participants’ shared commitment to tolerance, respect, and cooperation. Merryfield

concluded that the most important factors shaping participants' instructional decision making were their beliefs, values, experiences, and knowledge of globalization and access to resources to teach it. In surveys and interviews, the teachers consistently identified "a belief in" or "concern for" something when explaining their instructional choices. Additionally, Merryfield ranked student characteristics, including their abilities and disabilities, experiences, interests, and behaviors, as significant an influence on the participants' practice as their knowledge, values, and beliefs. However, Merryfield did not distinguish between students' observable behaviors and teachers' subjective assessments of their students. It is important to note that teachers' instructional decision making may not be exclusively driven by the actions of a particular group of students. Teachers may conduct their practice according to their knowledge of general student characteristics (Cunningham, 2007).

Swan and Hicks (2007) used a combination of interviews and classroom observations to investigate three high school American history teachers' incorporation of primary sources in their curricula. The researchers found that all three participants regularly taught using primary sources. However, their use of primary sources differed according to their understanding of the purpose of history. Larry, a veteran teacher who had studied the most history of the three participants, expressed a love for the content of his discipline. His pedagogy demonstrated the narrowest range, consisting mainly of lectures interspersed with teacher-led analysis of selected primary sources. He reported his disdain for his methods coursework, saying that "the worst history class was far better than any education class I took" (p. 155). Jamie, by contrast, had the least

experience teaching American history but employed the widest range of instructional strategies. She routinely dedicated segments of class time to small, manageable tasks, such as viewing a video or responding to a photograph or news story. She was most interested in pedagogy and developing her students' reading and writing abilities and deemphasized conveying historical content knowledge. Whereas Larry had assembled a "canon" (p. 159) of discursive primary source documents he deployed year after year, Jamie consistently searched the Internet for a variety of sources that met her immediate instructional needs. In sum, the findings of this study suggest that social studies teachers with more content knowledge may be more inclined to perceive their practice in terms of transmission of facts and concepts. On the other hand, Swan and Hicks observed that Jamie's reluctance to lecture for long periods of time was partially a response to the brief attention spans and frequent misbehavior of her students (who were of average or lower achievement levels, unlike Larry's Advancement Placement students).

Working with data from Fred Newmann's (1991) 5-year study of the teaching of higher-order thinking in social studies, Onosko (1991) analyzed the impediments to thoughtfulness that restricted the range of instructional practices in social studies classes to lower-order tasks, such as recording lecture notes and answering textbook questions. Onosko found that the first major barrier to thoughtful instruction was the "overriding agenda . . . to ensure student acquisition of knowledge, be it generalizations, themes, facts, chronological events, or beliefs held by prominent people past and present" (p. 9). Onosko argued that an "educated" person in America is typically construed as one who possesses numerous, discrete "knowledge bits" (p. 16). As such, teachers in the study felt

compelled to cover a great deal of information in necessarily superficial ways. On the other hand, some participants reported that they relied on a survey approach to teaching because they feared their content knowledge was too shallow to engage students in extended investigation of fewer topics. Onosko noted that pressure for content coverage frequently stemmed from the participants themselves, not from curriculum guides or standardized tests. Finally, 45% of participants identified student academic or intellectual deficiencies as a serious barrier to thoughtful social studies teaching. Given how few opportunities students had to engage in higher-order thinking or have it modeled for them, Onosko interpreted the participants' responses as evidence of teachers' low expectations of students rather than objective proof of student deficiencies.

Wineburg and Wilson's (2001) study of novice social studies teachers examined the linkages between the participants' educational backgrounds and their practice. Only one participant, Jane, had majored in history. The researchers found that the participants' backgrounds influenced their perceptions of the purpose of history and their approach to teaching. Fred's teaching centered on analysis of economic and political trends, skills he internalized in his undergraduate political science coursework. Cathy, who majored in archaeology and physical anthropology, presented the often messy process of societal change as the inevitable result of environmental determinism. Wineburg and Wilson concluded it was Fred and Cathy's "*lack of knowledge that was most decisive in their instruction*" (p. 150, emphasis in original). That is, teachers who had not been trained in methods of historical study did not adopt approaches to practice that "fit" the discipline.

Cunningham (2007) found that the British history teachers in her study were influenced by three broad types of thinking: knowledge of student factors, knowledge of structural factors, and knowledge of teacher factors. Student factors, which were often used as the basis for the teachers' planning, included teachers' assessments of their students' intellectual, emotional, and linguistic capacities, their preconceptions, and their predilection for misbehavior. Moreover, teachers considered how past students had reacted to similar assignments and content. Three structural factors were significant influences on their practice: awareness of limited teaching time, perceptions of the quantity and quality of instructional resources, and their knowledge of requirements of the National Curriculum and A-Level (age 16–18) examinations. Finally, the teacher factors that helped shape their practice included their disposition to control classroom discourse, their content knowledge, their goals, and their emotional state. Cunningham noted three trends in the relationship between teachers' practice and their content knowledge: (a) deep knowledge and confidence about content allowed teachers to provide students information not included in the textbook or other resources, (b) teachers with more content knowledge tended to challenge anachronistic and inaccurate thinking rather than reinforce it, and (c) gaps in content knowledge were associated with lower standards for historical accuracy (i.e., teachers invented details and allowed more creative student responses). Cunningham concluded that small contextual variations could cause any of the knowledge factors to move into a dominant position in teachers' thinking, which was reflected in changing emphases in their practice.

The findings reviewed here indicate that social studies teachers' practice reflects their thoughts and beliefs. However, this reflection wavers and shifts according to the interaction of numerous other forces. Thus, teacher thinking should be considered an important but unpredictable influence on social studies teaching.

Section Summary

Social studies teachers develop the significant patterns of their thinking throughout their formative years as students. Consequently, the success of teacher preparation programs seems to be limited to confirming what preservice educators already know and believe about their discipline. Moreover, research indicates that most social studies teachers do not possess a consistent intellectual approach or rationale; however, even teachers who demonstrate eclecticism of thought hold nonnegotiable theories that influence their practice. Finally, teacher thinking is reactive to contextual influences, meaning that knowledge of teachers' thoughts and beliefs is insufficient to predict the contours of their practice.

The Local School Context

The local school context presents a host of powerful influences on social studies teachers' practice (Goodlad, 1990). Based on my analysis of the literature, I define "school context" to include the following elements: the school administration, peer interactions, PLCs, students, and textbooks and other curricular materials. Although I will consider these elements separately, teachers do not have the same luxury when they are at work. As a result of the rapid pace and complexity of teaching (Doyle, 1986a), the

components of the instructional context blend together such that teachers cannot easily distinguish their individual influences (Fickel, 2000).

The School Administration

The influence of school administration on social studies teachers' practice has received scant attention in the literature. While administrators seldom directly intervene in classroom life, their ability to draft and enforce school-wide policy gives them considerable indirect power over teaching and learning. It is reasonable to expect social studies teachers to respond to administrative directives; the question is, how?

Daly's (1991) survey of a group of school administrators revealed that they exercised subtle influence on social studies teachers' content selection. These administrators mandated ideologically balanced treatment of controversial issues in social studies classes. "Balance" seemed to mean precluding texts that strongly expressed a position in favor of short, neutral summaries of opposing viewpoints. Moreover, the administrators believed that social studies teachers should not invite guest speakers who might express strong opinions. Although these administrators expressed support for teachers' academic freedom, their desire for individually balanced lessons left teachers little room to present controversial issues in authentic ways.

The barriers to teaching higher-order thinking in social studies identified by Onosko (1991) included large class sizes and insufficient planning time, two factors that school and district administrators have some control over. As a result, McCartney and Schrag (1990) argued that any systematic attempt to improve social studies practice must be predicated on strong administrative support.

Peer Interactions

Teaching is often portrayed as a solitary endeavor in which teachers are isolated and insulated from their peers (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Elmore et al., 1996; Grant, 1996; Onosko, 1991). The physical separation of teachers from other adults is a structural and institutional fact of life in public schools, but it is not total. Lortie (1975) found that teachers' chronic uncertainty regarding their personal effectiveness forced them to seek validation from their peers. They also sought to preserve their autonomy, which enabled them to conduct their practice as they preferred, by maintaining a level of distance from their colleagues. The result of these negotiated relationships was a culture of egalitarianism that was calculated to "reduce organizational influences and . . . ensure that [teachers] have no more 'bosses' (that is, influential colleagues) than already exist" (p. 195).

The role of the department. A reasonable place to look for high school teachers' negotiations with their peers is within the content area department. Department members are united under a common endeavor, namely, to effectively teach social studies to their students (although it should be noted that there may be considerable variation in the interests, needs, and concerns among those who teach the individual subject matters that comprise social studies). Teachers gather together in department meetings to plan their lessons, voice their concerns, order supplies, and receive communications from administrators. While the department is an important organizational unit from the point of view of administrators, teachers are more likely to perceive it as a community of friends and colleagues with whom they work most closely (Melville & Wallace, 2007; Siskin,

1994). Veteran department members will often act as mentors to novice teachers, sharing lesson plans and materials, offering advice, and commiserating with them when lessons go poorly (Doppen, 2004; Palonsky, 1986). Teachers may use department meetings to socialize with one another and organize off-campus social gatherings. Moreover, because typical comprehensive high schools usually cluster teachers of a given discipline in the same building or area of the campus, they interact more often with members of their department before school, during passing periods and lunch, and while walking to the faculty parking lot. In short, teachers' professional identities and standards may be determined in part by their membership in a department.

Melville and Wallace (2007) found that effective, influential departments are characterized by metaphorical duality: they have the qualities of both an organization and a community. As a bureaucratic division of a school's faculty, a department confers administrative sanction on business conducted within it. For example, development of curricula, course allocations, and resource disbursement are some of the actions legitimated by the department as an organization of the school. Thus, the department-as-organization provides the means for teachers to exercise power as a collective. This is complemented by the sense of community that can develop within departments. Melville and Wallace defined a department-as-community as a

group [of teachers] who share a commonality of identity, practice and sense of meaning in their work. . . . Teachers identify themselves as teachers of their subject. . . . Their training . . . gives them a sense of purpose as to what is important in their subject content, how it should be taught, and why it should be taught. (p. 1994)

The science teachers Melville and Wallace observed worked closely within the department to develop their curricula. As a result of their respect for their colleagues' knowledge and abilities, they elected to distribute the responsibility for leading professional development among department members. The researchers concluded that this science department did not require external direction with regard to what and how to teach because "a strong community can effectively achieve an organizational consensus of what is important in science education" (p. 1203). The department had earned the respect of school administrators and had been granted leeway to pursue its own agenda.

Unfortunately, social studies departments may have more difficulty achieving metaphorical duality than other content area departments. Siskin (1994) identified four types of departments:

1. *Bonded*. Bonded departments demonstrated a high degree of camaraderie and collaboration among members. These departments seemed to have achieved metaphorical duality (Melville & Wallace, 2007).
2. *Bundled*. Teachers in these departments enjoyed each other's company, but they did not work closely with one another.
3. *Fragmented*. Fragmented departments were dysfunctional. Strained or nonexistent relationships served to reinforce teachers' isolation.
4. *Split*. Split departments hosted several clearly defined factions, each pursuing its own agenda.

Siskin argued that most high school departments she observed were bundled. Social studies departments, however, were least likely to form bonded groups. This was due in

part to social studies being a “cluster of different and unsettled disciplines” (p. 42) whose members were “unclear on what it is they do, or why it is relevant” (p. 130).

Unfortunately, few studies have directly examined the effects of departmental interactions on teachers’ practice. Fickel’s (2000) analysis of the personal theories of Mr. Franklin, a social studies teacher, secondarily portrayed a department that was, unusually for social studies, bonded (Siskin, 1994). Mr. Franklin and his colleagues had invested considerable energy in collaboratively developing a new freshman social studies course. Although Mr. Franklin’s practice was strongly driven by his personal beliefs and theories, he felt compelled by his peers to cover more material and progress through his curriculum at a faster pace. In this case, the influence of the department-as-community was both helpful in that it promoted teachers’ collective work as curriculum specialists and harmful in that it increased the tension experienced by one of its members.

It may be that social studies departments are prone to generating the kind of pressure for content coverage that Mr. Franklin felt (Fickel, 2000). In a typical bundled social studies department, teachers spend little time engaged in substantive discourse with their colleagues about their practice. Consequently, they must use informal channels of communication when they want to find out what their colleagues are doing. Given the notoriously hectic workday of the average teacher, this usually means a quick conversation over lunch. Goodlad (1984) observed that the typical faculty lunch period is neither refreshing nor relaxing, and is, therefore, hardly conducive to substantive professional conversation. When two social studies teachers compare notes over lunch, they may only be able to give the time period, topic, or unit they are currently covering in

the most cursory detail. The effect of these brief exchanges is to heighten awareness of one's content coverage relative to that of one's colleagues (Palonsky, 1986). If a teacher finds herself "behind" her peers by an era or two, she must speed her students through her curriculum or risk being branded as ineffective (Hartzler-Miller, 2001; Lortie, 1975). Unfortunately, this causes teachers to emphasize content coverage and perpetuates the simplistic view of the learned individual as one who is stuffed full of discrete facts (Onosko, 1991).

Role of the department chair. As departments are but vaguely sketched in the literature, so too is the department chair. This person occupies an ambiguous position somewhere between an administrator and a teacher (Bliss, Fahrney, & Steffy, 1996; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007). Although they are ostensibly entrusted with the leadership of their department members, it is unclear whether they are meant to be instructional leaders in a broad sense or supervisors in narrower evaluative terms (Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007). Department chairs have limited power at their disposal, typically manifested by participating in the hiring process, developing and assigning courses, selecting texts and exams, and setting the tone for the department and its overall program of operation (McCartney & Schrag, 1990). Because they are rarely responsible for evaluating teachers, department chairs possess little positional or deontic power (Tirri & Puolimatka, 2000). When they wish to alter a teacher's practice or departmental norms, they must win their colleagues over to their side through charm or favors, perhaps with the promise of a choice room assignment or lighter teaching load for the following

year (McCartney & Schrag, 1990). However, chairs are likely to find that their obligations outstrip their authority (Lortie, 1975).

A nuanced theoretical model is needed to elucidate the complexity of the department chair's leadership task. Chairs may, at first glance, appear weak because they lack the power to make significant changes to the systems in place in their schools. They are at the mercy of school administrators in most policy matters, including establishing or modifying school-wide rules, changing students' placement in classes, and evaluating teachers' performance. An exclusive focus on the department chair's legislative impotence obscures other components of the leadership task in which the chair enjoys more latitude. These conceptual components are treated by Bolman and Deal (2003) as paradigmatic lenses or frames through which different aspects of leadership can be investigated and acted upon. The structural frame describes leadership that focuses on designing and adjusting structures to best accomplish tasks, and a great deal of a department chair's work is ignored with this point of view. On the other hand, department chairs appear much more dynamic when the observer employs the human resource, political, and symbolic frames. The human resource frame positions leadership as the job of supporting and empowering followers, the political frame construes leadership as the act of identifying and exploiting the (often informal) power networks that develop in bureaucratic organizations, and the symbolic frame positions leadership as a form of theater in which leaders convey inspirational symbolic meaning to their followers (the "audience") through their words and deeds.

Department chairs are capable of freely acting in each of these frames. They are ideally positioned in the school hierarchy to be knowledgeable about their department members' personalities and professional capabilities. They know what their teachers want and can use this knowledge to motivate them. Because they are likely to have been teachers in their schools prior to being selected as chair, they are able to call upon (or steer clear of) the teacher cliques that wield de facto power; similarly, they can take steps to reduce destabilizing factionalism within the department when it arises. While Bolman and Deal's (2003) four frames help clarify the department chair's leadership tasks, it should be noted that in reality a chair's actions are seldom undertaken from the perspective of a single frame. Selecting a novice teacher to lead a department inservice may be an attempt to bolster her confidence, but it may also be a political and symbolic act with broader repercussions.

What work occupies department chairs' time? Bliss et al. (1996) surveyed 20 social studies department chairs to determine their primary responsibilities. The most frequent responses were categorized as administrative, including adopting texts, ordering supplies, allocating monies, and scheduling classes. The next most emphasized duties involved communication, such as leading meetings, acting as a liaison between the administration and teachers, and disseminating information. Finally, the third most commonly cited tasks were instructional in nature, including curriculum planning, portfolio assessment, and training. The respondents did not perceive instructional leadership to be at the heart of their job. Moreover, additional survey data collected by Bliss et al. indicated that there was no correlation between the roles and responsibilities

department chairs reported for themselves and department members' perceptions of chairs' instructional leadership. The researchers speculated that these initially puzzling results may have stemmed from the fact that chairs mentored individual teachers and did not provide instructional leadership for the department as a whole. As a result, teachers did not perceive their chair's personal attentions as constituting "leadership."

The department chairs studied by McCartney and Schrag (1990) faced significant barriers to providing instructional leadership for their teachers. As with the chairs surveyed by Bliss et al. (1996), these department chairs spent a great deal of time attending to administrative duties. Moreover, insufficient planning time, heavy teaching loads, a lack of resources and supplies, and failing instructional technology prevented them from focusing on curriculum innovation and reform. What influence they did have on their teachers' practice was largely informal. They used their interpersonal skills in small, dyadic interactions to persuade and cajole colleagues to accept their position. Similarly, Zepeda and Kruskamp (2007) reported that department chairs pursued instructional leadership with individual teachers rather than with the department at large. They prioritized mentoring beginning and struggling teachers, although their administrative duties restricted the amount of time they could spend on this task.

McCartney and Schrag (1990) argued that strong departmental leadership coupled with a culture of collegiality would be required for systematic reform of curriculum and practice to take root in high schools. Unfortunately, the research reviewed in this chapter emphasizes how difficult such reform would be to implement. Consider the challenges faced by department chairs. As quasi-administrators lacking a mandate to effect

instructional improvement within the department, their ability to influence their colleagues' practice is largely restricted to the dyadic interactions they can squeeze into their harried schedules. It is clear that sustained focus on instructional leadership at the departmental level requires the support and commitment of school administrators.

Department chairs would also benefit from a clear and explicitly articulated vision of their role that broadens their responsibilities beyond the merely administrative.

Alternatively, department chairs may pursue reform on a smaller scale. Dick (1976) found that small pockets of innovation formed even in departments that were generally traditional and focused on administrative concerns. It may be that these findings represent the multiple agendas of split departments (Siskin, 1994).

Professional Learning Communities

PLCs are a type of collaborative structure that has attracted a great deal of interest and praise in recent years. Advocates claim that PLCs have the potential to dramatically increase teachers' professional standing and student achievement. Indeed, DuFour and Eaker (1998) argue that "the most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as professional learning communities" (p. xi). What follows is not a comprehensive review of the large and steadily growing body of research on PLCs; readers seeking a broader treatment are encouraged to consult Hord (1997). I will summarize theoretical and empirical literature on the following topics: characteristics of PLCs, factors that facilitate and sustain PLCs, and PLC outcomes.

Characteristics of PLCs. The concept of “community” is difficult to precisely define. Consequently, there is no universally recognized definition of a PLC (Williams et al., 2008). Hord (2009) argues that a PLC is the sum of the words that comprise the term: (a) PLC members are professionals, people who share a commitment to ensuring their students learn well, (b) they engage in learning, activities that enhance their knowledge and skills and help them teach more effectively, and (c) they come together as a community, a group of colleagues who study topics that interest them. Although whole schools can be construed as PLCs, the term is often used to describe discrete microcommunities within the larger school environment.

What distinguishes a community of learners from a group of educators?

Unfortunately, there is no simple checklist that can be used to make this determination. As a result, a school may, in the interest of becoming a “PLC school,” implement organizational modifications that do not significantly improve or increase teachers’ collegial interactions (DuFour, DuFour, Lopez, & Muhammad, 2006). On the other hand, a team of teachers collaborating on an action research project, for example, may function as a PLC without being identified as such (see Harris & Drake, 1997, for example). Moreover, the structure and operations of PLC microcommunities in high schools differ considerably because of variations in faculty size and complexity and allocation of professional development time, among other contextual factors (Mason, 2003). As a result, researchers and theorists (Barth, 1990; DuFour et al., 2006; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Hipp et al., 2008; Hord, 1997; Hord, 2009; Mason, 2003; Nelson, 2009; Servage,

2008; Williams et al., 2008) have attempted to describe the characteristics and behaviors of effective PLCs. Four themes run throughout their findings:

1. *PLCs foster authentic, meaningful collaborative work.* PLC members identify significant problems or shortcomings that they wish to solve. They then set goals for their professional learning and work as a collective to achieve them.
2. *PLCs codify a vision for teaching and learning.* This vision establishes the beliefs and values that PLC members share. It also delineates specific student deficiencies in skills or content knowledge that the PLC members will seek to address.
3. *PLC members collect and analyze student data to improve teaching and learning.* These data are derived from a variety of formative as well as summative assessments.
4. *PLC members feel comfortable taking risks.* They share details of their practice that they would probably not otherwise share with other teachers because of the norm of silence that prevails in most high schools (Onosko, 1991; Siskin, 1994). Moreover, PLC members offer and accept constructive criticism of teaching practice.

Factors that facilitate and sustain PLCs. As the preceding discussion indicates, participation in “real” PLCs requires that teachers overcome the isolation and independence that seem to typify their work. Furthermore, they must be empowered to set their own agenda for professional growth. These things are unlikely to happen without support from the broader school community. Indeed, the following three factors have

been identified as essential to facilitating and sustaining effective PLCs (Cranston, 2009; DuFour et al., 2006; Hipp et al., 2008; Hord, 1997; Hord, 2009; Huffman, 2003; Nelson, 2009; Supovitz & Christman, 2003):

1. *PLC members' capacity for collaborative work.* Predictably, collaborative work requires that teachers possess certain skills and dispositions. They must be capable of communicating effectively with their colleagues. They must also have trusting, professional relationships with their colleagues that enable them to focus on issues related to teaching practice during PLC meetings.
2. *Principal support for distributed leadership.* Fostering leadership within PLCs requires that the school principal abandon the all-knowing mien. Rather than dictate policy and demand obedience, principals must respect and nurture the autonomy and professionalism of teachers. To that end, PLCs should be allowed wide latitude to set their own agendas. Moreover, principals should take care to codify the authority and expectations of PLC leaders to reduce the ambiguity of the relatively “flat” relationships that teacher colleagues usually nurture (Lortie, 1975). Finally, principals should collaborate with teachers to develop a school-wide vision for teaching and learning. This vision provides PLCs with guidance in developing and pursuing their goals.
3. *Supportive structures.* Meaningful collaborative work requires sufficient time and an appropriate location. Professional development can be provided to help increase teachers' capacity to engage in collaborative work. In addition, administrative staff should be charged with facilitating PLC work. For

Unfortunately, high schools present structural and cultural challenges to fostering PLCs. Opportunities to collaborate are restricted by compartmentalization of teachers in subject area departments, and top-down leadership stifles teachers' initiative (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Siskin, 1994).

PLC outcomes. Little (2003) argued that an "optimistic premise" is assumed by most researchers and theorists of PLCs: namely, that the intellectual, social, and material resources of a professional community promote teachers' learning, lead to changes in teachers' practice, and strengthen the collective capacity of schools to engage in reform (p. 913). However, few empirical studies have examined the nature and effects of teachers' collegial relationships. The "black box" of teacher collegiality has yet to be explored, which casts doubt on the validity of the optimistic premise (p. 915).

The results of a handful of studies that seek to illuminate the black box of teachers' collegial relationships suggest that PLCs may contribute to teachers' professional development. Harris and Drake (1997) conducted a three-year case study of a high school in which all teachers had been required to join an action research team and collaboratively investigate an issue of importance to the school. Based on interview data, the researchers concluded that most teachers believed the action research teams positively affected their practice. They appreciated exercising greater control over their professional development, and they believed the interdisciplinary makeup of the teams helped foster a culture of collaboration in the school. However, the study participants also reported

concerns with the action research teams. Most significantly, teachers resisted the principal's policy of mandatory participation by refusing to attend meetings and doing little or no work. Additionally, collaborative work was time consuming and increased teachers' work loads. This problem was particularly acute during the first two years of the study when the teachers were attempting to resolve their uncertainty regarding the purpose and procedures of action research. The principal's decision to allot three years for the action research projects provided teachers with the time to work through their initial confusion and become comfortable with each other as research colleagues.

Little (2003) investigated high school English and math teachers' professional interactions within clearly defined, purpose-driven groups (e.g, departments, the "Academic Literacy Group") (p. 915). Based primarily on analysis of audio- and videotaped records of situated interaction among teachers, Little concluded that the teacher groups seemed to possess many of the characteristics of effective PLCs: they focused on problems of practice, collected and analyzed student data, and offered and accepted criticism. However, discussion of teaching practice in these episodes was "discrete, condensed, and desituated" (p. 936). Teachers did not adequately develop the context of the classroom episodes they talked about, nor did they provide sufficient details of their in-class behaviors to allow their colleagues to know what was meant by phrases such as "setting norms," for example (ibid.). Moreover, teachers' desire to confront problematic issues conflicted with pressure to move on to other topics. Conversation on any single issue tended to be brief and left unresolved. Nevertheless, Little contends that the participants' collaborative talk was meaningful. It allowed the

participants to define their identities as teachers and justify their decision making to themselves and their colleagues.

Finally, Wynn and Brown (2008) sought to determine whether the influence of PLCs contributed to the retention of beginning teachers (i.e., those with less than four years of teaching experience) in districts with high attrition rates. The participants were drawn from a number of schools that were all identified as “PLC schools,” although some had not implemented structural reforms to create PLC microcommunities. The beginning teachers reported the following characteristics of their schools as contributing to their decision to remain in the teaching profession:

1. *Culture of collaboration.* The participants spoke of feeling welcomed by their colleagues, particularly veteran teachers who took time to offer assistance when requested. Moreover, the beginning teachers appreciated opportunities to continue their professional learning through participation in workshops and PLC groups. Principals arranged substitutes and paid fees to allow the teachers to take time off from their duties.
2. *Supportive conditions.* Beginning teachers likened their school communities to supportive families. That is, mutual trust and respect permitted teachers to share their concerns with one another without damaging their collegial relationships. In addition, the participants appreciated the material support offered by their principals. For example, beginning teachers praised principals who responded to requests for supplies and technology

3. *Supportive and shared leadership.* The participants conceived of effective school principals as engaging in a “balancing act” (p. 52). That is, they felt it was important for the principal to maintain a consistent vision for education while being open to teachers’ suggestions. In addition, beginning teachers valued the feedback from their principals during their informal observations. However, official evaluations were dismissed as formalities that provided little in the way of guidance or constructive criticism.
4. *Shared norms and values.* The teachers reported sharing with their colleagues a commitment to providing their students the best possible educational experiences. Professional growth was seen as key to ensuring that teachers upheld high expectations for student achievement.
5. *Deprivatization of practice.* Each school site had a full-time peer mentor who was charged with offering support to beginning teachers. The beginning teachers praised their mentors for providing helpful feedback and teaching tips.

Wynn and Brown concluded that principals play a key role in establishing the climate and structures of PLCs that support the difficult work of novice teachers.

Students

The powerful mediating effect of high school students on teachers’ instruction has been well documented (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Students come to school day after day to learn content that they may have little interest in and complete numerous tasks that may veer from boring to baffling. Nevertheless, students are well aware that education is

a prerequisite for success in life. In a capitalistic sense, diplomas and degrees equal dollars, and so schooling is conceptualized by students and their parents as a valuable commodity (Labaree, 2000). Consequently, researchers have observed students exerting pressure on their teachers to reduce the ambiguity and risk of tasks (Doyle & Carter, 1984). Goodlad (1984) described an iterative cycle in social studies in which students demanded that teachers give the “right” answers, with students required to reproduce these knowledge items on objective tests. Students’ objectivist orientation helps account for the conservatism of social studies practice (Levstik, 2008). Teachers cannot afford to violate the forms of the traditional, positivist knowledge paradigm lest they incur the wrath of their students. McNeil (1986) argues that the bureaucratic structure of public education promotes students’ objectivism by removing knowledge from any kind of meaningful context. Schooling is a closed cycle in which content area information is depleted of substance to serve no other goal than furthering the needs of the organization (i.e., credentialing children). In this environment, students are encouraged to treat knowledge as a tool with only temporary utility.

Another strand of research in this area investigates how teachers vary their practice according to different populations of students. Merryfield (1998) found that student characteristics, including their backgrounds, abilities, limitations, experiences, interests, behaviors, and responses, were significant influences on the instructional choices made by both beginning and veteran global studies teachers. Similarly, Evans (1990) concluded that social studies teachers’ practice was determined in part by the clientele they teach. The labels attached to students and classes (e.g., remedial, Advanced

Placement) shaped teachers' perceptions of what they can and cannot accomplish with those populations, and teachers adjusted their instruction accordingly. DeWitt (2007) found that teachers with both college-bound and non-college-bound classes employed a much more traditional, teacher-centered approach with the former. They justified this approach on the grounds that their college-bound students needed to be prepared for the pedagogy typically employed by university lecturers.

Textbooks and Other Curricular Materials

Johnson and Avery (1999) argue that textbooks, along with national committee reports and college entrance exams and requirements, are responsible for the de facto standardization of history instruction in the United States. However, not all social studies teachers incorporate textbooks in their practice in the same way. Research reveals significant variation in textbook usage among teachers. Furthermore, the influence of curriculum guides on teachers' practice is greatest for those teaching a course for the first time.

Kon (1995) concluded that teachers at the elementary level employed one of three models of textbook use after adoption of a new social studies text: (a) textbook as curriculum, in which teachers treated the content of the text as their primary resource and its sequence of chapters as their curriculum, (b) text as active but not primary resource, in which teachers incorporated the new text into a preexisting curriculum superstructure, and (c) text as limited resource, in which teachers used the new text sparingly or not at all. Which model teachers used depended on a complex array of personal and contextual variables, many of which were discussed previously in this chapter. The strongest

influence on teachers' use of textbooks was their personal philosophy of teaching and learning. For example, teachers who tended toward a traditional view of social studies were more likely to base their curriculum directly on the textbook.

Archbald (1997) found that almost all high school social studies teachers in three highly centralized school districts used textbooks mainly as a tool to help them sequence content and develop writing assignments (their students, however, read very little of what was assigned to them, and teachers expressed doubts that their students were capable of comprehending much of the material in the textbooks). Whereas textbooks enjoyed broad use among teachers, curriculum guides produced by district specialists did not. These documents were employed mainly by novice and veteran educators who needed help selecting content for courses they were preparing to teach for the first time. Similarly, Archbald and Porter (1994) concluded that teachers looked to district policy (i.e., curriculum guides) when deciding on selection and sequencing of topics and pacing of coverage. However, the influence of district policy was much less than that of the constant pressures of classroom life.

Section Summary

Social studies teachers are responsive to the local school context. While the impact of some contextual elements, such as administrative policy and textbooks, is unclear or heavily contingent on teachers' personalities and experiences, other elements, including peer interactions and students, factor much more significantly into teachers' practice. Social studies departments are more likely than others to function as places for teachers to commiserate with one another and blow off steam (Palonsky, 1986; Siskin,

1994). However, teachers measure their pacing against that of their peers, and informal exchanges at department meetings or at lunch tend to reinforce the tendency toward shallow coverage of content. Moreover, social studies teachers adjust their pedagogy according to their perceptions of students' needs and limitations. Finally, a growing body of research on PLCs suggests that purpose-driven, collaborative communities of teachers may lead to numerous benefits, including improvements in teaching practice. However, much work remains to be done in this field as teachers' collegial relationships remain largely unexplored in the literature.

Summary of the Literature

King, Newmann, and Carmichael (2009) offer the following sober assessment of the present state of social studies practice:

Learning tasks still tend to call for memorizing and reporting on specific information and content, rather than asking students for higher-level thinking, interpretation, or problem solving. Subject matter is covered, not examined in ways that produce in-depth conceptual understanding. Schoolwork is regarded largely as a series of contrived exercises necessary to earn credentials (grades, promotions, and diplomas) required for future success. (p. 43)

Why is this so? What forces compel many high school social studies teachers to adopt an approach to their practice that is similar in most respects to what Goodlad (1984) documented 25 years ago? In this chapter I have reviewed the research that explores the influences on social studies teachers' practice. The following themes emerge from my analysis of the literature:

- SBER, the latest in a series of attempts to overhaul schools, proposes that teaching and learning can be reformed through the imposition of content area standards and high-stakes testing.
- However, public schools are institutions that are remarkably adept at protecting their basic structures, and teachers develop their own professional standards from the context of their practice. Too little is known about how social studies teachers respond to content area standards (especially in the absence of high-stakes testing) to predict SBER's chances for long-term success. However, it is likely that other factors will exercise a stronger influence on social studies teachers.
- Because of the amorphous nature of social studies, the absence of rationales for teaching it, and teachers' apprenticeship of observation in predominantly survey-style courses, high school social studies teachers tend to approach their practice with an implicit mandate to cover as much content as possible. Thus, traditional, transmission-style pedagogy persists in social studies despite criticism lodged against it.
- The department-based interactions of social studies teachers tend to reinforce their drive toward content coverage. While social studies departments are often friendly, welcoming places, they are seldom sites that foster sustained dialogue about practice. Informal conversations among social studies teachers are usually brief and designed to check pacing. "Slow" teachers are therefore encouraged to do less with more content.

- Other elements of the local school context, including administrative policies, students, and textbooks and other curricular materials, form a web of influences on social studies teachers' practice. Because the nature of these elements necessarily varies from school to school, and because teachers' beliefs and professional standards mediate their effects, it is important to consider the influence of each school's context on its own terms.

This study will investigate high school social studies teachers' conceptualizations and responses to standardization of practice within their department.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I describe the methodology used in my study of high school social studies teachers' perceptions of standardization of their practice. In the first section, entitled *The General Perspective*, I explain the perspective that governed my research. In the next section, *The Research Context*, I provide relevant details about the research context, including the setting, the background variables that influenced the results of the study, and the role I played as a researcher. I then describe the process used to identify and select participants for my study in the section entitled *The Research Participants*. Next, in the section, *The Instrument Used in Data Collection*, I explain how I constructed the interview protocol used to gather data. In the next section, *Procedures Used*, I outline the steps taken gathering the data, and in the following section, *Data Analysis*, I explain how I analyzed the data and prepared the results for presentation and discussion. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the study methodology.

The General Perspective

I approached this study with what Merriam (1998) calls an interpretive, or qualitative, research perspective, through which reality is conceptualized as a continually shifting tapestry composed of the social experiences of individuals. Using inductive methods of inquiry, interpretive researchers strive to understand the meaning individuals assign to their experiences. I determined that interviews would be the ideal tool to sample the nuance and complexity of my participants' responses to the forces that compel or hinder standardization of their practice.

The type of research I used was the case study. Merriam (1998) defines a case as a “single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 27). She argues that a case study can be further distinguished as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. The first characteristic refers to its focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon; that is, it is specific and contextually bound. Because it is descriptive, a case study offers rich, thick description of the entity under investigation. This allows the effects of the interaction of multiple variables to emerge in the text of the study. Finally, the heuristic quality of a case study refers to its ability to enlarge the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (pp. 29–30). I treated each participant’s reflections on the 2008–2009 school year as a single case, and by comparing these cases I hoped to illuminate the factors that promote and impede standardization of practice within a high school social studies department.

My research questions were:

1. What do social studies teachers understand standardization of practice to mean?
2. To what degree do social studies teachers believe their practice is standardized within their department?
3. In what ways do social studies teachers believe their practice should be standardized?
4. What factors do social studies teachers identify as impeding standardization of practice within their department?

5. What factors do social studies teachers identify as promoting standardization of practice within their department?

The Research Context

The social studies teachers who participated in this study were employed by a large urban school district in Arizona and taught in Metro High School, a comprehensive high school with an enrollment of nearly 3,000 students (Metro is a fictitious name used to preserve confidentiality). During the 2008–2009 school year in which this study took place, the social studies department of Metro High School was composed of 18 individuals who taught a variety of courses, including government, world history, American history, and psychology. Moreover, the department offered a number of honors, Advanced Placement, gifted and talented, and ethnic studies alternatives to the core courses. Typically, a full-time teacher was assigned five class periods to teach and two planning periods. The department was chaired by an experienced educator who received a third planning period in order to facilitate the completion of her additional duties. She held department meetings in her classroom.

In previous years, Metro High School teachers met twice a month in their departments from 2 to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays. The district reserved that time for professional development of teachers, which was treated as part of their contracts, and students were excused from school early in order to free teachers from their duties. Each school's administration had the latitude to design a professional development program in accordance with district goals and initiatives. When professional development time at Metro High School was not used for department meetings, teachers were asked to attend

faculty meetings, grade district-mandated quarterly writing responses, or participate in community-building events such as faculty barbecues, among other activities.

Additionally, the time was used for professional development programs promoted by the district, such as Skillful Teacher or Critical Friends training, which teachers had the option of attending.

For the 2008–2009 school year, the administration reduced the number of department meetings from 10 per semester to three. In exchange, three out of every four Wednesday afternoons were set aside for PLC meetings. Citing the work of Richard DuFour (2004), the administration defined the intent of PLCs as follows: “To focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively, and hold yourself accountable for results” (p. 6). PLCs were composed of six to eight teachers from any combination of disciplines and grade levels, and their membership was self-selected. Each PLC’s specific goal (referred to as a SMART goal, an acronym consisting of the words **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**ealistic, and **t**imely) was set by its membership. As the acronym suggests, an appropriate SMART goal needed to be achievable within a single school year and had to be measurable with empirical data. Moreover, PLCs had to select from one of three topics when developing their SMART goals: writing common curriculum, such as pacing calendars or common assessments; implementing strategies to improve student reading achievement; or closing the math, writing, and reading achievement gap among targeted school populations. The administration provided teachers with models of appropriate SMART goals, such as the following:

All American government students will earn a minimum of 70% on the 9-week and semester common research and writing assignments developed by our team.

This assessment will be based on the current pacing calendar which is aligned to national and state standards. (Personal communication, March 10, 2009)

The administration reviewed and approved each PLC's membership and SMART goal.

PLCs were required to spend the first two or three meetings creating behavioral norms that would govern members' conduct. Then, following development and approval of a SMART goal, PLCs were instructed to regularly review student work and other data and adjust their practice according to their findings. PLCs were directed to request professional development from the administration whenever they felt they needed specific assistance. Finally, PLCs presented the results of their work to one another once at the end of the first semester in December and then again at the end of the school year in April.

The Metro High School social studies department formed two PLCs, one composed largely of world history teachers and several American history teachers, and the other consisting of mostly government teachers. Several department members joined other PLCs that were not affiliated with the social studies department. Two participants in this study belonged to the world history/American history PLC, while the third participant joined a cross-curricular PLC focused on increasing the use of expository text in teachers' curricula. These PLCs met on campus in separate locations of their choosing.

Additional Influences during the Year of the Study

During the 2007–2008 school year, the administration directed the social studies department to develop common curricula for world history, American history, and government. Moreover, the department was asked to work on writing common

assessments, which were to be phased in during the following school year. The department complied with the first request by assigning an equal portion of the state social studies standards for the three primary subject matters to each quarter of the school year. These pacing calendars were submitted to the administration at the end of the year with the understanding that the teachers would use them to align their curricula in the coming year. While the department did not complete any work on common assessments, due in part to confusion about what test format the administration expected, the school year ended with the department's understanding that the requirement for common assessments would return in August. Indeed, the administrator assigned to evaluate the social studies department repeated the request for common assessments during the first department meeting of the 2008–2009 school year.

Another influence on the social studies department during the year of the study was a change in district leadership. A new superintendent took office at the beginning of the year and announced a move toward decentralization for the district. Her policy, referred to as the “75-25 ratio,” theoretically granted three-quarters of control over schools and teaching to the schools themselves. The superintendent made it clear that while schools would enjoy more freedom to set their own agendas, they would be expected to demonstrate results in the form of increased student achievement. The 75-25 ratio was used by Metro High School administrators to justify the autonomy granted to PLCs. In addition to giving her blessing for more decentralization, the new superintendent revised the district's priorities for professional development. She

advocated the Understanding by Design program and Marc Prensky's (2001) work on bridging the gap between digital immigrants and digital natives.

The district also hired a social studies curriculum coordinator for the 2008–2009 school year. This person organized professional development opportunities for social studies teachers across the district, including workshops for learning how to operate the interactive whiteboards that were installed in the classrooms of all Metro High School social studies teachers during the second semester. The social studies curriculum coordinator also chaired a committee on applying the Understanding by Design model to social studies, which one of the participants in my study joined.

However, in many teachers' minds, these factors paled in significance next to the grim pall cast over the district by the worst national economic crisis since the Great Depression. It became evident during the last few months of 2008 that precipitously rising unemployment and a shrinking tax base would result in large cuts to Arizona's education spending for the following year. As the spring semester began, teachers worried about the severity of the reduction in force (RIF) that was assumed to be inevitable. Who would the district let go? Would second year teachers be safe? Who in the department would be RIFed? Early in April, the teachers had their answer: With the exception of those teaching in difficult-to-fill positions such as math, science, and special education, all teachers with less than four years of experience in the district would be RIFed at the end of the school year. This resulted in two teachers in the social studies department receiving pink slips, including one of my participants. RIFed teachers could be rehired given the confluence of a number of variables, but it was possible that the open

positions would be filled by transferees from other schools. In addition to those suffering the psychic trauma of impending unemployment, the chair of the social studies department grieved for her RIFed teachers and struggled to put together a master schedule for the 2009–2010 school year despite unresolved questions about personnel and course offerings. Moreover, department members who were retained mourned the pending departure of their outgoing colleagues, and it was often remarked as the end of the year approached that school morale was as low as it had ever been.

Thus, despite changes in district policy that held out the possibility for teachers to exercise greater autonomy, a severe economic downturn had a depressing effect on teachers.

The Researcher's Role

It is necessary for researchers to clarify their perspective, beliefs, biases, and personal relationships with their research site and participants because all of these things can affect the trustworthiness of the researcher and his findings (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). In my case, it is important to provide information about my involvement in the Metro High School social studies department because my unusual role in the school hierarchy offered me, as a researcher, a blend of the benefits of being a fully vested participant and outside observer.

I transferred to Metro High School at the beginning of the 2007–2008 school year, where for the first time in eight years as an educator I was a member of a social studies department and taught only social studies courses (specifically world and American history). During that year I got to know my colleagues and internalized the norms of the

department. As a new member of the faculty, I was particularly grateful to find in my department chair a helpful, friendly colleague who eased my transition into the school. During our regular department meetings, I was struck by the sense that my peers were intelligent professionals who were committed to doing their best for our students. On the other hand, I was also puzzled by the teachers' reluctance to engage in sustained dialog about issues of curriculum and instruction. Beyond superficial exchanges over the lunch table that usually began, "Well, where are you at this week?" I never knew much about what my colleagues were teaching and what they were trying to achieve with their practice. As I discussed in Chapter 1, my curiosity about my colleagues' practice inspired me to conduct this study.

At the end of that year I applied for and was selected for the job of program coordinator and teacher mentor, a quasi-administrative position at Metro High School that took me out of the classroom. While I had enjoyed my time as a social studies teacher there, I was beginning my dissertation and realized that the new position would not require me to dedicate my evenings and weekends to planning and grading, thus freeing time for writing. Moreover, it would offer me flexibility in my work schedule to conduct my study once it came time to do so. Consequently, I began the 2008–2009 school year with a different set of responsibilities. Although I was technically no longer a teacher in the Metro High School social studies department, I had developed a strong bond with the department. So, while my job occasionally had me otherwise occupied during professional development times, I usually attended social studies department meetings and I chose to become a member of one of the two social studies PLCs.

However, recognizing that my role had changed, I spoke less and listened more at department meetings than I would have as a teacher, and at PLC meetings I did not strongly advocate for my positions.

When I began seeking to enroll participants in my study in March 2009, I came to the process with an insider's knowledge of the department and its members. With the exception of the new teachers, the people I approached were my friends and colleagues. They were comfortable with me and knew that as a researcher I would treat them with sincerity and respect. On the other hand, because I was no longer teaching in the department, I felt that I could observe its business with less partisan eyes. I believe that the circumstances of my employment at the school encouraged my participants to be remarkably forthright and honest with me. I have attempted to reciprocate as best I can by honoring their perspectives in this document.

The Research Participants

Once I decided to study standardization of practice in a high school social studies department, I knew it would be important to recruit Linda Byrd, the department chair, as one of my participants (all names are fictitious to preserve the confidentiality of my participants). I felt that her perspective would be invaluable in making sense of the influences on department members' practice. Thankfully, she agreed to participate after I explained the study to her.

I initially planned to recruit a small number of participants who taught the same courses. My decision was informed by Maxwell's (2005) conceptualization of purposeful selection, which he describes as "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or

activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 88). I reasoned that teachers with similar course loads are more likely to share information about their practice with one another. Moreover, in a discipline like social studies where the content often drives instruction, standardization should be expected to take place (if it does at all) within the level of individual subject matters. Because Linda taught world history, I would need to recruit two other world history teachers. However, my participant selection was driven by an additional criterion: with the exception of the department chair (who had been in schools for 32 years), I sought teachers with less than 10 years of experience in the profession. This was done to increase the possibility that my participants would be flexible and willing to collaborate with their colleagues.

This narrowed the pool of potential recruits to two world history teachers. Barbara Walker, new to Metro High School but with nine years of teaching experience, agreed to participate; the other teacher declined due to prior commitments. At this point I was forced to reconsider the purpose for my participant selection. Recruiting the third participant from American history or government would naturally weaken any claims I might make about the purported effects of standardizing influences on world history teachers' practice. On the other hand, I realized that there would be value in recruiting a teacher of a different subject matter who was relatively new to the profession. Doing so meant that my findings would represent a range of experiences and, therefore, also distinct perspectives and responses to standardizing influences. Moreover, I would be

able to make (admittedly tentative) claims about a broader segment of the social studies department.

None of the government teachers met my requirements. Fortunately, Dorothy Cibert, an American history teacher in her third year in the profession, agreed to participate in my study. I then had three participants and was ready to begin data collection using the interview protocol I had developed, which will be discussed in the following section.

The Instrument Used in Data Collection

I developed my interview protocol based on Seidman's (2006) theory and format of in-depth interviewing. According to Seidman, the purpose of interviewing is not to get answers to questions or test hypotheses, but to "[understand] the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). To achieve this understanding, it is necessary to have the context provided by the personal histories of the participants. I believed that in-depth interviewing would provide the richest, most trustworthy representation of my participants' experiences as social studies teachers responding to standardization of their practice.

I developed a three-part interview protocol in accord with Seidman's (2006) model. The first interview should produce a life history aligned to the topic of investigation. Consequently, I wrote questions that would prompt the teachers to share the incidents that shaped their practice. I found Lortie's (1975) series of biographical questions to be a useful model on which to base my own. My participants were invited to talk about their memories of being students in social studies classrooms, the lessons they

learned from their formal teacher preparation, and their experiences in other departments or grade level teams. I also asked my participants whether they considered themselves to be social studies or history teachers because I anticipated that how they identified themselves might clarify their responses to subsequent questions.

The second interview should elicit the participants' thoughts and feelings about their present experiences. Because I wanted to know what the participants considered to be influences on their practice, as well as whether they believed their practice was standardized within the department, I included questions about the following issues: what they identify as their curricula; how they create or acquire their curricula; what they want to accomplish with their classes; how they define the words "standard" and "standardized"; the information they have about their colleagues' practice and how they come by that information; and what goes on at department and PLC meetings. I derived these questions from my interpretation of the research on teaching practice in social studies, standards-based educational reform, and department-based collegial work.

The third interview should provide an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of experiences discussed in the second interview. My questions prompted the participants to assess the results of their practice for the year to date, recall and comment on memorable department and PLC meetings, evaluate the work of the department and their PLC, and determine how they would adjust the ratio of department to PLC meetings (if at all) and why. I also asked my participants to consider what the future might hold for the Metro High School social studies department.

I wrote slightly different versions of the interview protocol for each participant. The variations in the questions were partly the result of the different roles and responsibilities of the participants. Linda, the department chair, was asked questions about her leadership, while Dorothy was asked about her interactions with fellow American history teachers. Moreover, I used the results of my classroom observations to derive questions about specific aspects of participants' practice. During one of my observations of Barbara's world history class, for example, I was prompted by statements she made during a writing task to ask if one of her goals included teaching her students how to conduct historiography. Note that data from classroom observations were not used to make judgments about the participants' practice; for more information about the role classroom observations played in my study, please refer to the section below entitled *Procedures Used*.

As a courtesy to my participants, who had been given a copy of the protocol ahead of time, I tried to ask the interview questions in the order they were written. I departed from the protocol on several occasions when it seemed important to pursue an unanticipated lead. My questions were generally open-ended, and I included exploratory follow-up questions in case my participants needed prompting or if they failed to mention something that I considered important. A copy of the interview protocol is provided in Appendix A.

Procedures Used

After obtaining permission to conduct this study from my dissertation committee, the University of Arizona's Human Subjects Review Board (see Appendix B), the school

district in which my participants work (see Appendix C), and the Metro High School administration (see Appendix D), I approached each of my participants when they were alone and explained the study to them. I answered their questions, provided them with a copy of the consent paperwork, and then gave them time to consider their choice.

I resolved that my participants should feel they were always treated with dignity and respect. Seidman (2006) asserts that researchers must take care to avoid exploiting their participants:

Research is often done by people in relative positions of power in the guise of reform. All too often the only interests served are those of the researcher's personal advancement. It is a constant struggle to make the research process equitable, especially in the United States where a good deal of our social structure is inequitable. (p. 13)

I wished to pursue data collection in a manner that honored my participants' professionalism and hectic schedules. After they had elected to enroll in my study and signed the consent form, I met with each of them individually to set up a tentative schedule for observations and interviews. I made it clear to them that this was not to be a "gotcha" study in which I attempted to catch them doing or saying something "wrong" in order to prove a point. Rather, I wanted data collection to be an opportunity for them to represent themselves in whatever light they thought best. Consequently, I arranged my schedule to accommodate times for observations and interviews that were convenient for the participants.

I observed each participant teaching one full class period prior to each interview. I did not create a protocol for these observations; instead, I scripted lessons by hand, noting the participants' teaching moves at regular intervals and identifying all tasks students

were asked to complete. I transcribed my handwritten notes and used the results of the observations to augment and adjust the interview protocol. I did not, however, use data from observations to make judgments about my participants' teaching abilities. Three observations conducted over a two-month period near the end of a school year simply did not provide the amount and quality of data needed to create fair and valid representations of the participants' practice. Thus, data from classroom observations were only used to develop the interview protocol and were not included in data analysis.

Interviewing took place from April 23, 2009, to May 15, 2009. I sent each participant a copy of the interview protocol at least a day in advance. The participants were free to select a time and location for the interviews, each lasting from an hour to an hour and a half. I recorded the interviews with a digital voice recorder and took notes by hand in case of technical errors. This precaution paid off when I failed to activate the voice recorder during the first 20 minutes of an interview.

I transcribed each interview within two days of its initial recording using a word processing program. I endeavored to avoid procrastinating at this task because I wanted to hear and see the participants' words when my memory of what they said was still fresh in my mind. I had learned from previous experiences that data analysis proceeds more efficiently when transcriptions are made in a timely manner. I printed out copies of the transcriptions and read them carefully, making note of any points I wanted to clarify at subsequent interviews. Once all interviews had been transcribed, I proceeded to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

At the conclusion of data collection, I had 170 double-spaced pages of interview transcriptions to work with. I had begun to see themes developing during the interview process as I compared the statements of my participants. I needed to organize the data in the transcriptions in such a way as to bring those nascent themes to the foreground. I employed the constant comparative method of data analysis developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Merriam (1998) summarizes the basic strategy of the constant comparative method as follows:

The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated. (p. 159)

Before the data could be readily compared, I needed to transform its cumbersome structure into something more streamlined. I will now describe the steps I took to accomplish this task.

First, I read through the electronic version of each transcript and extracted units of data (Merriam, 1998) that addressed one or more of my research questions. I treated a participant's statement as a unit of data if it seemed potentially meaningful for later analysis. Data units were at least one sentence long, and to keep them easy to manipulate I partitioned any unit longer than a paragraph and maintained the separate pieces in adjacent positions to preserve its meaning. Data units were copied from the transcript and pasted into one or more of five spreadsheet documents, each keyed to one of my research questions. These spreadsheet documents were formatted so that the participants'

comments were arranged parallel to one another, thus facilitating cross-case comparison. When this process was finished, I had duplicated many data units that seemed relevant to two or more of my research questions.

I printed out copies of the spreadsheet documents and coded the data units by categories. Following Merriam (1998), I considered categories to be concepts indicated by data and not the data itself. I ensured that my categories were mutually exclusive so that a second sorting of the data would eliminate initially duplicated units. I then created a second set of five spreadsheet documents, each one again representing one of my research questions. I transferred the data units into these spreadsheet files and organized them according to the categories I had developed. During this process, I refined categories when a close analysis of the constituent data revealed additional layers of distinction; for example, the category “teacher autonomy” became “teacher autonomy (curriculum)” and “teacher autonomy (pedagogy).” I also ensured that all units were placed in only one category in only one research question.

After all the data units had been reorganized by categories, I printed out the results as new spreadsheet documents. I used these documents, as well as the interview transcriptions, to write profiles for each of my participants (Seidman, 2006). In order to represent my participants’ perspectives as accurately as possible, I wrote the profiles in the first person and relied on the participants’ own language (indeed, 90% of the wording was taken directly from the interview transcripts). Profiles contained the following sections: a summary of the participants’ biographical information, a description of the factors the participants had identified as influencing their practice, and the participants’

assessment of standardization of practice in their department. The latter two sections were further divided into subtopics loosely based on my categorization scheme. I organized the profiles this way in order to clearly and accurately present the results of my analysis to my participants. I sent the participants their profiles by e-mail with instructions to read them, correct any mistakes, subtract or add content as needed, and return the revised documents. Writing the profiles and making them available to my participants advanced my data analysis in several ways: (1) member checking – my participants examined and endorsed their cases, a process that bolsters the trustworthiness of research findings (Creswell, 1998); (2) refining my analysis – writing the profiles helped me arrange the data in streamlined narratives and made it easier to compare the cases and identify themes; (3) preparing biographies of my participants – I used the biographical section of the profiles to introduce my participants in Chapter 4.

Once my participants returned revised copies of their profiles to me, I was ready to finalize the themes that relate the categories to one another. I examined each case individually and compared them to one another. Although there was a considerable degree of variation in my participants' perceptions, I was able to identify abstractions that linked their experiences as social studies teachers coming to terms with standardization of their practice (Merriam, 1998). These conceptual linkages formed the substance of my conclusions, which are presented in Chapter 5.

Summary of the Methodology

In this chapter I explained the methodology used in my qualitative study of high school social studies teachers' perceptions of standardization of their practice. The methodology is summarized as follows:

1. I employed a case study design within an interpretive research perspective. Each participant's experiences in the 2008–2009 school year were treated as a single case, and comparisons were made across cases to derive the results of the study.
2. The study was carried out in a large, urban high school in Arizona. During the year of the study, the social studies department met less often due to the implementation of PLCs. Additional influences on the participants included standing requests by school administrators for standardized curricula and common assessments, policies introduced by a new superintendent, and RIFs resulting from a severe economic downturn.
3. I had taught in the social studies department the year prior to beginning the study. Consequently, I approached the study as a nonparticipant observer with an insider's knowledge of the department.
4. I attempted to recruit three participants who shared the same teaching load and had less than 10 years of experience in the profession. An exception was made to the latter criterion in order to recruit the department chair. While I was only able to enlist two world history teachers, I recognized that recruiting the third participant from a different subject matter offered benefits to my study.

5. I developed a three-part interview protocol for use in data collection. I wrote slightly different versions of the protocol for each participant. The questions were generally open-ended.
6. I observed the participants teaching one full class period prior to each interview. I used my notes from these observations in order to adjust the interview protocol. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for use in data analysis.
7. I followed the constant comparative method of data analysis. My process involved modifying the format of the data, coding data units by categories within the research questions, writing profiles of the participants for use in member checking, and conducting cross-case comparisons with the categorized data in order to generate theory.

4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter I discuss the results of my study of high school social studies teachers' perceptions of standardization of practice within their department. The chapter begins with a profile of each participant. I then present the results of the study using my five research questions as an organizer. My research questions were:

1. What do social studies teachers understand standardization of practice to mean?
2. To what degree do social studies teachers believe their practice is standardized within their department?
3. In what ways do social studies teachers believe their practice should be standardized?
4. What factors do social studies teachers identify as impeding standardization of practice within their department?
5. What factors do social studies teachers identify as promoting standardization of practice within their department?

The Study Participants

The three participants in this study, Linda Byrd, Barbara Walker, and Dorothy Cibert, are introduced through their profiles. As discussed in Chapter 3, these profiles were used for member checking, and the versions included here were endorsed by the participants themselves. They are written in the first person, and approximately 90% of the wording is taken directly from the interview transcripts. The profiles include the

following information about each participant: their well-remembered experiences as students, with a focus on their memories of social studies classes; their reasons for becoming high school social studies teachers; the lessons they learned from jobs they held before becoming teachers; their reflections on their formal teacher preparation; their assessments of departments or grade level teams they belonged to before joining the faculty at Metro High School; the classes they taught during the 2008–2009 school year; what they understood the terms “social studies” and “history” to mean, as well as whether they considered themselves to be social studies or history teachers; their goals for their practice; and their general approach to accomplishing their goals. In addition to the above information, one participant, Linda Byrd, described her role as Metro High School’s social studies department chair and how she typically ran department meetings during the year of the study.

Linda Byrd

I was born in North Carolina and raised in Virginia. I earned a Bachelor’s degree as an English major and a history minor, and later I completed a Master’s degree in the special needs of gifted and talented students. I recall that my 10th-grade English teacher was an inspiration to me in becoming an educator. She was young and innovative, and I admired her a lot. She was the first one in our school to teach *Lord of the Flies* and the first one to really talk about imagery and symbolism and allegories, and I just found the class to be really interesting. I did well in her class in terms of her literature tests, but I have to say that my world history teacher was very similar, and I found that I did better on those examinations and in that coursework than most of the other students. However,

my other high school classes were very traditional. We wrote research papers and carried around note cards, and we rarely had films. I remember my government teacher and my American history teacher basically speaking in a monotone, showing no passion or interest in the subject whatsoever. In fact, my American history teacher used to lecture sitting in her desk, her chin in hand, looking out the window. And I do not remember anything but reading our books and taking tests, and that's about it.

When I went to college I knew I was going to pursue English or history because I loved both, but I really couldn't decide. My father weighed in and thought that English would be a much more utilitarian major in terms of getting a job. I suppose he was right, because after I graduated, teaching certificate in hand, I was hired as a correspondent for a mutual funds company, and I got the job because I had been an English major. Prior to that job, I worked my way through college as a bank teller, and I have to say that there was a lot of satisfaction in balancing the drawer at the end of the day. It's black or white—you either balance out or you don't. So it's interesting that I really like teaching, because you never get that black or white balance sheet at the end of the day. As a teacher, the results of a day's work are always shades of grey, and it's never clearly defined what you have accomplished.

As was the case in high school, my undergraduate coursework was very traditional. I took the required classes in my major and minor, and then I took the basic adolescent psychology course because I knew I was going to be a secondary school teacher. We took our technology classes, which at the time consisted of learning how to operate a reel-to-reel projector and those types of things. We took our methodology

classes, where we wrote lesson plans with a template that required us to differentiate between general and specific objectives. The main difference between then and now is that, at that time, we wrote from a teacher perspective and now everything is written from a student perspective. I finished the program with my student teaching, and one little extra note about it is that I was placed in a school that had been newly integrated that year, so I had a policeman standing outside my classroom in the hall. My mentor teacher was an African-American woman who was an English and French teacher and had been working at the school for black students until that year, so it was her first year in the white high school. It was a unique and very interesting student teaching experience, more so than I realized at the time.

Before my husband and I moved to Arizona, I had worked in public education for 22 years as a teacher and as a GATE [gifted and talented education] program facilitator in Colorado, Kansas, and Michigan. I had worked in middle and high schools, mostly as an English teacher, although in Michigan in the 1990s I had taught a ninth-grade social studies survey course that included history, government, geography, and economics. When we moved to Arizona, I applied for an English position at Metro High School, and I did the interview and taught my demonstration lesson in poetry with the English department chair on the panel. But after the panel had decided to offer me a job, the assistant principal said they had two jobs to choose from: I could either teach regular senior English or the global studies course in the GATE program. I decided to do the global studies GATE job, which put me in the social studies department, and I taught regular world history along with global studies. Now, 10 years later, I am a regular

history teacher, and that's what I was hired to do. I have always taught the GATE global studies class, which is a joy to teach and I've really loved it. I also teach the co-op class with a special education teacher, and for five years I taught an Advanced Placement European history class, which I really enjoyed. Having taught history here, more or less by happenstance and not really as a result of preplanning on my part, I have discovered that I have a passion for teaching history that I never had for teaching English. I enjoyed the literature, and I enjoyed talking about it with the students, but I never really felt adequate in evaluating kids' writing. So I found coming into history was a huge relief, and I love it, and I'm delighted that I'm ending my career in that discipline.

I became the chair of the social studies department three years ago, and I will say that sometimes I give an impression that it's a stressful job. In all honesty, there is consternation and concern, but not necessarily stress involved. On Wednesdays the students are sent home an hour early, and the extra hour is designated by the district as professional development time. In past years, two Wednesdays out of a month were used for department meetings; this year, however, that number has been drastically reduced due to the introduction of the PLCs. I think we've had all of six department meetings in the whole year. Since they're so infrequent, the first 20 minutes of a typical department meeting are given over to dispensing information that I've been told to bring to my department's attention. I'll usually have to annotate and clarify as we work through the agenda. Then I usually use the next 40 minutes to address controversial topics that need to be discussed. I put those at the end so that we can get the business part taken care of and then spend time on other things. This year we've really not worked as a whole

department on curriculum or instructional issues as we did in the past, because those issues may or may not have been handled in individual PLCs, depending on which one a person joined. This year, department meetings are really just about taking care of business. The district administration tells the school administration to do something, the school administration passes it on to us, and we take care of it in department meetings. It's basically just clerical and business issues, but it hasn't always been that way. There have been other years when we've spent time working on curriculum and instruction, but this hasn't been one of them.

What I think my role should be as the chair brings a lot to the dynamics of the department. If you compared the science and the social studies departments, for example, I think you would find that the way they function has a lot to do with the personalities of their chairs. I try to be really focused on making sure that people in my department feel like they haven't gotten a bad deal teaching here. I try to make sure everybody is dealt with fairly and that there isn't a little hub of people who get special perks, be they courses, rooms, or planning periods. If I can meet a person's preference without unduly inconveniencing someone else, why not do so? I want department members to feel like their opinions and expertise are valued. Since the department chair is not the ultimate authority, I think that the collegial approach is the right one to take when working with my peers. Moreover, chairs at this school really have no formal power. They don't conduct evaluations and they are not asked or expected to observe the teachers in their department. I do think the department chair knows better than the administration when a department member is not teaching the subject matter in his or her classes as well as it

ought to be. That information is usually supplied by the teacher, as in, “I only get to this point in history by December,” or something like that.

Prior to coming to Metro High School, there were two English departments that I taught in that have been extremely influential on my practice. The first one was when I was a brand new teacher working with a group of 14 women, most of whom were type A, highly achieving, and very bright. It was an extraordinarily stimulating environment with a constant sharing of ideas, projects, and mutual admiration. It was probably a wonderfully ideal gift to me as my first teaching experience, and I taught in that department for four years. The second department that really affected me was in a very small, rural school in Michigan where there were just three of us teaching English, and because of that we were very close. We had to constantly schedule films, novel sets, and use of the library, and I knew to a very minute degree what was going on in their classrooms, as they did in mine. We were in and out of each other’s classrooms constantly. While we were very different personalities, we really complemented each other. The one negative experience I had was in a middle school in Kansas. There’s just no way to control for this, but for some reason people just taught in isolation in their classrooms. I don’t even remember meeting together very often and discussing anything related to education. I taught there for four years but there’s not much color to my memory about that time. I do know one person in my department was not competent and was very paranoid. This person spoke poor grammar and was teaching English, and another person in my department had emotional problems. I think it was just a series of unfortunate relationships put in the same place at the same time.

When in social situations people find out that I'm a public school teacher, they always ask me, "What do you teach?" I probably answer "social studies" or "history" about equally. While I don't have any great preference between the two labels, when I think of social studies I think of psychology, anthropology, sociology, economics, global studies, and environmental studies. On the other hand, when you talk about being a history teacher the implication to me is that you are teaching factual content (or at least as much as it can be factual). You are teaching a chronology of events, as recorded by a myriad of different people with different perspectives, from which we learn to make better decisions for our future. Social studies is really more about themes and emotions, and it's broader than history. While social studies to me is a little more of a middle school term, and history is more of a high school term, I really do think at the high school level it is incumbent upon history teachers to be very oriented toward social and global studies in the classroom. The two should intersect. For example, my first lesson on imperialism this year was about what motivated Europeans to go to Africa, India, and China to build their empires. Then we looked at what innovations allowed that to happen, as well as the factors that made the Africans, Indians, and Chinese vulnerable to conquest. All of that is history to me. But then I had the students read an interview with an African chief in which he provides his perspective on European imperialism and the impact that it had on him and his people. So we started with history but then I interjected this social science piece because it's very tangible and specific about how the history affected this person. The primary source was an illustrative part of the history we had been looking at.

I think my primary goal as a world history teacher is to make the students see themselves as members of a global society. Secondly, I want them to explore these historical themes, which can be expressed as the themes of religions and belief systems, science, technology, revolutions, empire building, and power and authority. All of these themes are present and evident in every society and culture, from the earliest civilizations to contemporary ones, and through them students can see that there's a lot of commonality in history. My third goal is to trace the evolution of the world's cultures and civilizations and to recognize that all of them have great achievements and all have periods of darkness and shame. I also believe it's important for the students to become aware that there are many points of view in the world and that at certain times in history major points of view have never been considered, such as those of minorities in any particular geographic area and of women in almost any culture. Their input has not been included in the historical data that we use in our textbooks, and it is important to rectify that omission. Learning about this has benefits for everybody, not just the young women and the minority kids.

I believe that since we have 90 minute blocks it's imperative for students to read, write, speak, and listen in a class period. Beyond that, I'll usually begin a unit with a map if it's relevant, and then the students will either do a fact check or they'll read a primary source and answer a couple of questions that get them to evaluate the validity of the point of view of the author. And, depending on whether I want to spend more time on the unit, we might do a project involving concrete skills, like drawing a map. Every other unit I try to find something that the students can actually create in response to what they've

learned, like drawing editorial cartoons. Finally, I've decided that I'm going to try to incorporate document-based writing responses in the honors class I'll be teaching next year. That type of writing is really valuable because you are actually analyzing and synthesizing, and I think you're also doing some evaluation because you are determining which of a given set of documents is most useful in terms of supporting your point of view. That's all of the higher-level thinking skills. To tell you the truth, after years of doing the formal research paper where kids make note cards and do outlines and go through the standard process, I really found that most kids struggle with it. I don't think that kind of writing is valuable to the majority of students throughout their lives, and most of them copy vast amounts of data that they don't understand. That's why I prefer for students to read and then give a free response as opposed to writing formal research papers.

Barbara Walker

As an undergraduate I attended a university and a community college in Arizona for a semester each before relocating to California. I attended half a dozen colleges and universities there, eventually graduating with a degree in mass communications. I subsequently completed a post-baccalaureate teacher certification program and earned a Master's degree in educational leadership. Before all that, I attended public schools in my home state of Arizona. Although I am now teaching world history, my memories of my social studies teachers are mostly negative. I felt like I had fat, loser football coaches as my social studies teachers all through school. I seem to remember watching a lot of movies, such as *Tora! Tora! Tora!* Why would you ever show that movie? What a waste

of time! I remember that my American history teacher never left his desk. He sat in his corner, far, far away, like the farthest corner from the door while we worked out of the book. I don't remember his name; I remember what he looked like sitting at that desk. But then just by pure luck the Berlin Wall fell and all of communism fell while I was in government class, so it was a teachable moment for government teachers all over. I had the perfect year to have real life issues to learn from, and I guess that concept of education being relevant has molded me a little. I know my government teacher lectured quite a bit, but it was contextual, and I know we talked about current events. I also remember the graphics she used to help us understand political systems. We had to take free enterprise back then, and I actually really liked that semester class. I don't recall much of it now, but the teacher was witty and knew her stuff. She had worked through different simulations and things like that to help us understand concepts that are difficult for teenagers. Besides, it was much more interesting than *Tora! Tora! Tora!*

I worked as a journalist for a time, but after I moved back to my home town I became dissatisfied with my career when I found myself merely rewriting AP [Associated Press] copy. I also wanted to start a family, and a career as a broadcast journalist would have prevented me from spending time with my children. After I completed my certification program I taught career and technical education classes for four years. However, due to the state's strange certification requirements, I was unable to teach a media class, which would have been ideal for me given my professional background. Because of my writing skills I thought about teaching English, but I felt a strong affinity to social studies due to all the political science and history coursework I

had taken. I changed districts and taught in a middle school social studies department for four years because there were no high school jobs available at the time. When a position on the social studies department at Metro High School opened up I applied for it and was hired.

When I started teaching I had to do a lot of on-the-job learning because, to be frank, my teacher preparation program was completely worthless. That's probably being too harsh, because I did have two or three teachers I learned a lot from. But in general they assigned us a lot of collaborative work that was assumed to have been done but rarely was. I attended classes on Saturday mornings with elementary people, secondary people, prospective science and social studies teachers—we were all just thrown together regardless of our backgrounds or disciplines. It felt kind of like a diploma mill. That is, the faster the better, you pay your money and show up on Saturday and everybody gets the grade. I made a lot of bad classroom management choices early on because I just hadn't had any of that kind of training. The caveat with that is that I'm not sure you *can* teach many pedagogical skills effectively. Some stuff you just have to learn from experience.

Joining the Metro High School social studies department has thrown into stark contrast the time I spent in my former departments. In both of my previous teaching positions, there was a significant amount of overlap of my practice either within my department or with other people on my grade level team. When I taught middle school social studies my grade level team members and I were one team. The English teacher on my team was across the hall from me, and the math and science teachers were next door

to each other in the other hallway, and we overlapped on a significant number of things. We'd accomplish this mainly by standing in the hallway during passing periods and talking about what we were doing that week and what we would be doing the following week. I recall that once a month we had a grade level team meeting, but they weren't particularly significant. Our collaboration as a team wasn't assumed or even fostered by the administration. We certainly didn't have any bureaucratic structures in place to promote collegiality. A lot of it had to do with our personalities; indeed, that collaboration isn't happening there now that I'm gone. The social studies teacher who took my place has no interest in working closely with my former colleagues, who bemoan my loss. It's not that this new teacher can't do his job; he simply doesn't want to collaborate.

In my first position as a career and technical education teacher, I was literally responsible for teaching my students the basics that would keep them safe and happy when they moved up to things like auto and carpentry. It was, therefore, necessary that I articulated my curriculum with the teachers who had my kids in later years. I provided my colleagues information on which kids had aptitude and which kids they needed to monitor for safety's sake.

The 2008–2009 school year is my first teaching at Metro High School. Currently I teach only world history, but I will take on additional preps next year. I prefer to think of myself as a social studies teacher because even history isn't just about imparting facts like it might have been in years past. It's now about how we interact with each other and the world around us. I probably sound really touchy-feely and silly, but the students

aren't going to remember the dates. They're going to remember how acting this way caused this event to happen. They're going to remember how this nation interacted with this nation and as a result there are now contemporary crises. It's social science because it's teaching them to engage with the world around them in a constructive way. It includes study of trends, causes and effects, and evaluating and predicting based on given behaviors. My students and I had a discussion this year about how history at this level is recognizing themes in past events and the patterns in human decision-making that resulted in terrible things or wonderful things so that we can recognize them in our present and future. I think that if you want to nurture good thinkers, which I perceive to be a significant part of my job, you have to be more focused on examining themes and providing relevant examples that promote better understanding and consideration on the part of the students.

I think a thematic approach to social studies suits the organizational structure of the human brain so that students can learn. I'm not interested in advancing my opinion on what historical content is most important. I want to teach my students to think critically, to evaluate information, to be able to communicate their opinions and to see themes in history that are interesting and that can be predictive about what will be the outcome of things that happen in government and society. I don't see teaching historiography as one of my goals, but I do want to engage them in critical thinking when they read primary sources or current events. If I can get them to the point where they can evaluate primary source documents, recognize cause and effect relationships between different cultures, and track how those cultures have progressed through the years, then they will have a

fighting chance to hold on to some of the information I teach them and apply it later in life. That said, preparing my students to be good citizens is not one of my goals this year. I very much saw it that way in middle school, but I simply don't have enough time at the high school level. It's fine if it integrates into what we're already covering, such as developing empathy for the people who voted for Mussolini and Hitler and then realized they made the wrong choice. However, it's hard enough to make the content relevant for the kids, and I'm unable to make direct connections between citizenship and most of what we're studying.

I try to have a high degree of differentiation in each unit I teach. I find that my students consistently do better when I provide differentiated learning as opposed to when I just lecture and assign reading. I'm also a firm believer in best teaching practice, which includes knowing the objective you are trying to reach, using questioning methods that make them think and keep everyone engaged and accountable, varying instructional practice for the diversity of your students so that everyone can have an area of success, and being physically present and moving around the classroom. Probably because of my beliefs and because of the poor social studies teaching I was exposed to, I find myself apologizing to the kids when I have to lecture. I know I shouldn't apologize because sometimes there's a need for direct instruction. I try to be reflective and look at my progress based on my assessments. I do a variety of them. There's little tiny things like bellworks and exit slips, and then I will assign questions in the textbook after we've worked on something in class, or there's a written test or presentation, or some kind of

performance assessment where they demonstrate what they've learned individually or collaboratively.

Dorothy Cibert

I was born, raised, and attended school in Arizona. I can't recall a specific incident that made we want to go into teaching. I think it's something that crosses through the heads of all little girls, as in, "I could be a teacher someday." While I love history, I didn't have overwhelmingly positive experiences with social studies in high school. I don't really remember much about my world history class, and my government class was a complete and utter joke. My Advanced Placement American history teacher, however, is someone I aspire to emulate. She was scary, a commanding physical presence, and more importantly she challenged me and kept me engaged in the content. I've always been interested in history, but in a school setting it's very easy to disengage. She made it interesting. There were a lot of critical thinking pieces in that class. If she asked you a question, you would obviously have to answer, but you would also have to defend your answer. She made me think, and my experience has been that that doesn't happen in a lot of classes. Though she lectured quite a bit because she had to cover a lot of material, I also remember a lot of group work in her class, and I think those experiences were more interesting and more fun because they were hands-on and the responsibility for learning was handed over to us.

I didn't enter college with plans to teach. Indeed, I wanted to be a meteorologist, but after I took a meteorology class and was told, "You have to do Math 8,442," I was like, "Yeah, no." So then I started looking at other career options. I wound up doing some

research for the College of Education. I did some observations at a school and decided that I would like to look at the programs offered by the college, and then I kind of went from there. I was also inspired by some of my outstanding high school teachers, including my American history teacher and an amazing theater teacher. I actually wanted to go into theater education, but after many long discussions, my father helped me see that it would be easier to get a job as a history teacher, because to get a job as a theater teacher in this town somebody has to die or retire. I was a little upset about that at first, but then once I got into the course of study I was really, really happy that I went with history because I'm a nerd and I love it.

So I became a history education major and a theater education minor. In all honesty, I think I got more out of my theater methods course than my history methods course. The professor for my theater methods course had us writing lesson plans and unit plans, and that was the only class where I was required to teach actual lessons, which was very valuable to me going into student teaching. On the other hand, I felt talked at in my history methods class. It was kind of frustrating. Luckily, I had good experiences observing in local middle and high schools. I completed my student teaching in a small, rural high school where I was fortunate to have two mentor teachers with completely different styles. I got along with them and had really good experiences with both of them, and I'm very grateful for that.

Before I was hired at Metro High School I worked in retail, and while that job didn't have much to do with education I consider it relevant because it helped me develop my interpersonal skills. Working with the general public was an eye-opening experience

and I'm really glad I had that experience because college education classes do not prepare you for all the schmoozing and bureaucratic b.s. that goes with life as a high school teacher. I've also worked as a counselor at both a summer camp and at a local guest ranch, and I'm really glad I had that experience because kids are completely different beings, and I think I would have been very frustrated as a high school teacher if I hadn't had that experience working with children. Even though the camp kids were younger than the students I currently teach, many of the management techniques I picked up as a counselor work just fine in my classroom.

Because my teaching position at Metro High School is my first, I don't have much experience working in other departments, social studies or otherwise. My only point of reference for departmental work comes from my time as a student teacher, and that school was so small we didn't even have departments. I remember the only professional development session we had seemed irrelevant. I remember weekly faculty meetings in which the principal was very pretentious and said things that didn't make a lot of sense. My impression was that the teachers attended those meetings just because they had to. They paid attention to the really important stuff, like the stuff that affected the kids, but ignored everything else. I don't know if the principal talked down to the teachers because he didn't think they would get it without talking to them that way, or if he was just not entirely sure what he was doing. I thought that there would be a lot more discussion. I thought the teachers would get a little bit more say. I didn't think that there would be such severe disrespect. In any situation involving labor and management there will be dissension, but there should also be mutual respect almost for respect's sake

because the workers and the boss are colleagues. In schools you are working together toward the betterment of the students. I was surprised there wasn't more of that collegial sense between the administration and the teachers.

I was hired right at the beginning of the 2006–2007 school year to teach in the social studies department of Metro High School. This is my third year here at the school, and I currently teach American history and an alternative to that course entitled *Native American Perspectives*. Although my department is called the “social studies” department, I consider myself to be a history teacher. I think social studies is more of a middle school term because at that level I think you're trying to get kids to understand patterns of interaction between people. You do a lot of activities that aren't quite as specific in terms of content, so the kids get a more generalized view of the world. I think it's different for high school because the state standards at our level are so focused on content. I give my students more background information than they would get as junior high students. For example, I'm required by the standards to teach the students what happened at the Battle of Chancellorsville, the Battle of Vicksburg, and the Battle of Gettysburg, as opposed to showing them the kind of relationships that existed between people who were actually fighting in the Civil War and those who were back home.

In terms of my practice, I consider myself a good teacher when (a) the students are engaged, (b) they're enjoying history, and (c) they're getting something out of it. If I can see all those factors, then I consider myself a good teacher. I want my students to have fun. I would say that my goal for my American history class is to get my students as far forward in American history as I can. I want to get them as close to modern times as I

possibly can while keeping them engaged, because I know from personal experience how boring history can be. I also want my kids to get skills, and I want to give them as many different perspectives on history as possible because history has for a long time been the version of events told by the winners, and the winners aren't the only people involved in the story. However, I don't think preparing young people to be good citizens is one of my goals. This is going to sound like a copout, but I think it depends in part on your definition of what is a good citizen. While I think I can give my kids tools, I can only encourage them to do the right thing. They are going to choose to do whatever the heck they want, and my influence on them is slight because I'm such a tiny part of their lives. Most of them have four to six other teachers, depending on their schedules, and they have their parents and their friends. So while I can encourage them to be good citizens, what they choose to do as adults is completely up to them.

When I first started teaching, I mostly lectured and the kids mostly took notes, but I hope that now my kids don't perceive that as all that we do. This year I've been trying a couple of different things. The kids are still taking notes in the traditional way, and I still lecture more than I would like to, but I've been providing a few more structures for taking notes, like visual organizers and things like that. I've also been doing a lot of discussion because I want to ensure that they understand what I'm talking about and I want them to be engaged in the conversation. I believe you can maintain student interest while teaching historical content. I think it comes down to giving the kids the responsibility for learning, and this is something I learned from my student teaching. That is, you set up the activity and then get the kids involved. That way they get the facts and

the information, but you've handed the responsibility for learning over to them and you make them do the work. It makes your job a lot easier. I use a lot of primary sources, which I usually break down for the students because getting them to read expository text is like pulling teeth.

Question One: What Do Social Studies Teachers Understand Standardization of Practice to Mean?

As discussed in Chapter 2, “standard” and “standardization” are ambiguous concepts. How they are defined and the uses to which they are put depend in part on one’s perspective and goals (Kordalewski, 2000). While all the participants described standardization of practice in roughly similar terms, they indicated that it serves multiple ends. Moreover, although all three participants associated the word “standard” primarily with the state social studies standards, there was considerable variation in the reported influence of the state standards on their practice.

Four Purposes for Standardization of Practice

The participants agreed that standardization of practice means aligning their curriculum, methodology, and teaching philosophy to shared norms. This appearance of consensus is belied by the fact that they attributed different purposes to standardization. The participants identified four such purposes: reducing the disruption caused by students who transfer from class to class, ensuring equity in teaching and learning, enabling administrative oversight of teachers’ practice, and enforcing conformity with the state’s assessment policy.

Reducing the disruption caused by student transfers. All three participants acknowledged that an important purpose for standardizing practice within the department is to facilitate student transfers from one class to another. “Standardization,” Barbara said, “means covering the same amount of time in history so things like moving from class to class don’t become a giant burden on the teacher or the pupil.” This perspective on standardization did not seem to require that teachers align their methods, lesson plans, or philosophies. The focus, as Dorothy observed, is on achieving a standard curriculum sequence: “It’s kind of difficult when you’re in the 1800s and the kid who comes into your class has been in the 1900s or the 1700s.” According to Linda, this was one of the school administration’s stated goals in mandating curriculum norming for the social studies department during the 2007–2008 school year:

As the department chair, I was told, “We are going to develop a common curriculum so that if a student goes from this class to that class, the teachers should be at least within a month of each other in terms of the sequencing.”

Ensuring equity in teaching and learning. Two of the participants reported that standardization of practice promotes equity for both students and teachers. This interpretation of standardization seemed to emphasize normalizing the workload teachers assign as well as the content they cover, as argued here by Barbara: “‘Standardized’ is making my class equally compelling, equally challenging, as the other world history classes . . . it means giving the student equal opportunities, and trying to cover the same amount of time in history.”

Moreover, Linda stated that standardization across subject matters is necessary to help students progress through the sequence of social studies courses: “I do think that

when you have a lot of people and you are trying to . . . work effectively with each other, and build upon what each other is doing, the sophomore teachers need to do what they need to do to get the kids ready for the next grade.” In Linda’s view, alignment of curricula across subject matters facilitates teaching and learning at all levels of the department.

Enabling administrative oversight of teachers’ practice. Linda was the only participant to suggest that standardization of practice is meant to help Metro High School administrators monitor and evaluate teachers. She observed that in the past, before she arrived at the school, the social studies curricula were sequenced thematically rather than chronologically, as has been the norm during her tenure. She speculated that pressure from the administration may have resulted in the change of sequencing:

I think, probably, it is thought that if you feel common curriculum is part of good teaching, it’s much easier to monitor that in a chronological arrangement than in a thematic arrangement. Standardized curriculum is much easier to develop if you just say, “Everyone starts at this point in history, and this is where you should end up.”

Enforcing conformity with state assessment policy. Of the three participants, Dorothy expressed the strongest aversion to the word “standardization.” She linked it with testing: “I have issues with standardized testing. It makes me very uncomfortable just because I have personal issues with standardized assessment.” Dorothy’s issues derived from her lack of faith in the validity of the AIMS, Arizona’s standardized test battery. According to her, the year that she took and passed the AIMS test as a high school student was “the year that the people who wrote the test couldn’t pass it. At that point I lost all respect for it, and I haven’t really gained any back.” Despite the fact that

the AIMS did not include a social studies component during the year of the study, Dorothy associated standardization with teaching to what she considered to be an invalid test.

The State Social Studies Standards and Standardization of Practice

All three participants reported that the state social studies standards play a role in standardization of practice. They did not agree, however, as to the nature and degree of the standards' influence. Each participant described her own pattern of usage of the standards, which are identified as follows: standards as a limited resource, standards as a framework for the curriculum, and standards as the core of the curriculum.

Standards as a limited resource. Linda relegated the state social studies standards to the periphery of her practice. When she came to Metro High School with minimal prior experience teaching social studies, she turned to the state standards for guidance in building her curriculum. "When I looked at the standards," she reported,

I found that they pretty much follow chronologically with a standard world history textbook. I ascertained that if I basically worked through the textbook, I could find justification for anything I taught from there in the standards. After I realized that, I never looked at them again.

Moreover, she argued that the world history standards contain references to more content than could ever be covered with average high school students in a single year. Indeed, the standards' focus on discrete content knowledge items rather broad themes was itself a problem in Linda's eyes. She compared teaching to the standards to her own experiences as a student in social studies classes, which she described as "memorizing the names of

generals, the names of provinces, and not really getting that abstract knowledge that I think is really the essence of a social science class.”

Although Linda minimized the influence of the state standards on her practice, she acknowledged their utility for other teachers. As the chair of the social studies department, she was responsible for helping to acclimatize new members. Although the department lacked prescriptive curriculum guides for the various subject matters, Linda indicated that the state standards constitute one resource that new teachers can turn to in planning their curricula: “A teacher coming into this building can get the standards, and a textbook, and I can show the teacher, ‘If you really need some help, these are the two units we think you should aim for.’”

Standards as a framework for the curriculum. Unlike Linda, Barbara considered the state standards to be an active influence on her practice. “I start with the standards,” she explained, “because they give me a framework. And then I look for themes and ways that I can overlap stuff.” She reported returning to the standards once per quarter in order to evaluate her progress. Barbara noted that the standards constitute a flexible framework at best, because her lessons varied in response to her students’ needs, abilities, and limitations.

Although Barbara considered the standards to be useful, she identified in them the same limitations as did Linda. She offered the following criticism regarding the densely packed standards documents: “It is impossible to [teach to every standard]. There are very, very few students I teach that can pass a cumulative test at the end of the year with the very best teacher and meet all those standards.” She also echoed Linda in criticizing

the state standards' focus on disconnected knowledge items: "They're much more based in this fact, that fact, this fact, and if you want good thinkers, which I see as a significant part of my job, then you have to be more thematic." She reported that Metro High School administrators had "expressly directed me not to worry about the standards," by which she meant that the administration had sanctioned her approach to sacrificing content coverage in order to accommodate the exploration of themes in world history.

Standards as the core of the curriculum. Of the three participants, Dorothy accorded the state standards the most influence on her practice. "I'm teaching from the creation of the United States as far forward in history as I can get," she said, because "it's required by the state of Arizona. I'm required to give the students an encompassing, sweeping, non-biased view of American history." She reported examining the standards once a month to check her progress, a practice which developed out of her concern that "if somebody from the state level really wanted to, they could come down here and check on us and make sure we were teaching the standards." More proximally, she worried about receiving negative evaluations from her administrators. As a relatively new teacher lacking Arizona's equivalent of tenure, she did not enjoy the same job security as many of her peers and felt compelled to "mind my p's and q's and make sure I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing."

Although she identified the state standards as the core content of her curriculum, she expressed frustration at their influence on her practice. "While I believe we need an idea of what we need to teach," she argued,

I'm really resistant to the people up in the state department of education telling me how to run my classroom when I know most of them haven't been in education, or at least a classroom setting, for quite a long time.

Dorothy felt that teaching methods that promote coverage of the standards, namely, lecturing and note taking, conflicted with her goal of keeping students engaged and interested in history. She believed that incorporating games, group work, and other high-interest activities into her practice set her in opposition to mainstream social studies teaching. Despite this tension, she felt free to experiment because Metro High School administrators had “encouraged me to do activities that deviate away from lecturing and taking notes. They've been very, very supportive with that.”

Summary of the Results of Question One

The study participants agreed that standardization of practice requires alignment of their curriculum, methodology, and teaching philosophy to shared norms. However, they identified different purposes for standardization of practice, including reducing the disruption caused by student transfers from class to class, ensuring equity in teaching and learning, enabling administrative oversight of teachers' practice, and enforcing conformity with the state's assessment policy. Furthermore, each teacher described a different pattern of usage of the state social studies standards. For Linda, the state standards were a limited resource that merely duplicated her textbook's sequence of chapters and units. However, she recognized that the state standards provided guidance to new teachers attempting to build their curricula for the first time. In contrast, Barbara perceived the state standards as a flexible framework for her curriculum. She felt empowered by the administration to cover fewer standards in order to present historical

themes and teach her students critical thinking skills. Dorothy, a novice teacher, believed the state standards constituted the core of her curriculum. She relied on teacher-centered pedagogy to present a comprehensive survey of the content described in the standards, which conflicted with her commitment to providing her students with fun and interesting educational experiences.

Question Two: To What Degree Do Social Studies Teachers Believe Their Practice Is Standardized within Their Department?

In order to assess the degree of standardization within their department, the participants measured their practice against three more or less distinct referents characterized by their level of generalizability to the department as a whole. These referents, in order from least generalizable to most, were as follows: the participants' sense of professional responsibility, the participants' knowledge of their peers' practice, and the participants' perception of departmental norms.

The Participants' Sense of Professional Responsibility

All three participants expressed their commitment to uphold principles of professional conduct for teachers and evaluated their practice in light of those standards. Professional conduct was construed by the participants as providing their students an overview of historical content knowledge and making conscientious decisions with regard to their practice.

The responsibility to provide an overview of content knowledge. As they discussed in their profiles, Linda and Dorothy associated history at the high school level

with teaching a body of factual knowledge about the past. Consequently, they believed they were responsible for “broadening” their students’ knowledge base by “covering” as much of the chronology of their respective subject matters as possible. Both teachers discussed striving to finish a school year with a quick survey of the 1950s and 1960s; their inability to do so during the year of the study was a matter of concern for both of them. At the end of the spring semester, Linda was “about two weeks off from where I usually am, and I’m not really sure why that is. But if I’m not there, I take responsibility because I’m the teacher.” Dorothy blamed her failure to reach her target point in American history on dwelling too long on certain units, such as those on the American Revolution and the Civil War.

In contrast to Linda and Dorothy, Barbara minimized the importance of covering a body of historical content knowledge. As expressed in her profile, she placed a higher priority on developing her students’ reasoning abilities. Although she acknowledged that her approach to her practice necessitated sacrificing coverage of content, she maintained a similar pace through her curriculum as her fellow world history teachers. Indeed, all the participants finished the year with a brief survey of World War II.

The responsibility to uphold the standards of the profession. As with members of any professional group, teachers distinguish themselves from laypeople by internalizing a set of beliefs, standards, or propositions that guide their decision making (Soder, 1990). These standards may be explicit and systematically taught to new members of the profession, or, as was the case with two participants in this study, professional standards may be implicit and interpreted from the context of practice (Lortie, 1975). Linda and

Dorothy spoke about good teaching in what seem to be subjective, moral terms (Goodlad, 1990). Linda described her decision making as follows: “The art of teaching and the choices of emphasis in what one teaches are subjective, but . . . I make those choices in a conscientious manner.” Dorothy emphasized teachers’ obligation to their students: “I think consensus would be, ‘We’re doing the best of our ability to teach the kids.’ I think if we have that consensus, then we’re okay.”

In contrast to Linda and Dorothy, Barbara deemphasized the moral or artistic dimension of teaching in describing her professional standards. Instead, she underscored the importance of employing “best practice,” a term she used to refer to a set of effective teaching methods that included questioning to maintain student interest, individualizing instruction to match learners’ needs, and conducting formative assessments to inform instruction. Barbara attributed her beliefs about effective practice to her background in middle school. She argued that middle school teachers receive extensive training in pedagogy, whereas “at the secondary level you have learned your subject matter, and as almost an afterthought you’re taught how to pass it on.”

The Participants’ Knowledge of Their Peers’ Practice

The participants naturally reflected on their knowledge of their peers’ practice in assessing the degree of standardization within their department. In addition to discussing what they knew about their peers’ pedagogy and curricula and identifying the sources of their knowledge, each participant also identified characteristics of her practice that she believed set her apart from her colleagues. As will be clear from their comments, the participants differed in their evaluations of standardization in the department. Two

distinct viewpoints emerged from the data, that of the world history teachers on the one hand and the American history teacher on the other.

Knowledge of their peers' pacing and concepts covered in lessons. Linda and Barbara, the two world history teachers, agreed that their knowledge of their peers' practice was limited. Barbara reported that "I only have a vague understanding of what the other three [world history] teachers do. . . . I'm pretty clear of the concepts they're trying to cover, but not their lessons." Linda added that her understanding of what and how the other world history teachers taught was contingent on what they chose to share with her: "If a teacher describes an activity or an event in the classroom, on a day to day basis that constitutes what I know." According to the participants, most exchanges between world history teachers seemed to be motivated by the need to check their pacing against one another. Barbara observed that "[the world history teachers] seem to be moving through the standards at about the same rate, and we seem to overlap in how we set up our curriculum." Despite the limitations of their knowledge, Linda and Barbara felt that the world history teachers constituted a strong and supportive team. Moreover, Barbara was able to state with confidence that at the end of the school year the world history teachers were all concentrating on helping their students see relevance in history by building connections between significant post-World War II events and contemporary society.

Whereas Linda and Barbara acknowledged deficiencies in their understanding of their peers' practice, Dorothy seemed to know even less about what her fellow American history teachers did in their classrooms. She reported sporadic and brief exchanges with

her colleagues primarily motivated by the desire to adjust her pacing relative to theirs. As a result of these informal contacts, Dorothy perceived a “huge lack of consistency” in the material the American history teachers were covering. Moreover, she expressed regret that she did not enjoy more collegial relationships with her peers. Linda, from her vantage point as the department chair, confirmed Dorothy’s assessment of the lack of communication among the American history teachers. She noted that “most of the teachers who volunteer . . . what has happened in their classrooms on a daily basis tend to be the world history teachers.”

Sources of the participants’ knowledge of their peers’ practice. The participants agreed that informal venues, rather than department or faculty meetings, were important sources of information about their peers’ practice. The faculty lunch room was perhaps the most significant of these sites for Linda and Barbara. For example, Linda reported that “within my department, the only thing that I usually know on a day to day basis is what is discussed at the lunch table.” Barbara attributed many of her interactions with her fellow world history teachers to eating with them in the lunch room. On the other hand, Dorothy did not perceive the faculty lunch room as a major source of knowledge of her peers’ practice. This is due to the fact that she was the only American history teacher to routinely eat in the faculty lunch room.

In place of direct interactions over the lunch table, Dorothy reported relying on the students for information about her peers’ teaching:

I just basically know from what I hear from the kids. . . . I hear things, but it’s all pretty general. I know some teachers are a little more interested in geography, some teach American history through war, and some people are far more structured than I am.

Barbara also cited her students as a means of assessing the degree of standardization within the department. Unlike Dorothy, however, she believed that the students “see [the world history teachers] as standardized,” that is, “equally fair, equally difficult.”

The participants' exceptionalities. In talking about their colleagues' teaching, each participant identified aspects of her own practice that set her apart from her peers. Linda felt that because of her age she was more traditional in the content she included in her curriculum and more conservative in her teaching methods. As discussed previously, Barbara believed she was more focused on pedagogy than her colleagues. She spoke about experiencing “culture shock” upon moving to the secondary level and observing that her peers wanted to be thought of as specialists in their subject matter. Moreover, she expressed feelings of inadequacy stemming from her lack of historical content knowledge relative to her colleagues. Finally, Dorothy understood herself to be the “oddball” of the department because she strove to maintain student interest and engagement by incorporating “incredibly random” tasks into her curriculum. She also believed that her youth helped her better relate to the students than her peers.

The Participants' Perception of Departmental Norms

As organizational units endowed with administrative and institutional authority, subject area departments may establish explicit standards of practice that members are expected to uphold (Melville & Wallace, 2007). These may range from the abstract, such as departmental mission statements, to the more prescriptive, such as pacing calendars or curriculum guides. The participants agreed that their department lacked either kind of documented standards. Moreover, they spoke about the lack of coordination or alignment

among world history, American history, and government, the three subject matter groups in the department.

Lack of explicit departmental standards (abstract). As discussed previously, Linda and Dorothy stressed the responsibilities of social studies teachers to survey the chronology of world and American history and conduct their practice in a thoughtful, conscientious manner. Moreover, both participants claimed that their colleagues shared their beliefs. Dorothy stated, “I truly believe that all the teachers in the department are doing everything they can for the students, and they’re doing this because they truly enjoy teaching.”

However, Linda acknowledged that “[a departmental philosophy] has not been explicitly discussed since I have been here. What is our belief system as teachers of social science? I have never been a party to that discussion.” She argued that there was a “tacit understanding” among the teachers regarding their standards of practice, but

that’s really shaky ground with this department. If I were to tell you, “I think this is common ground,” it would be absolutely my opinion only, and I wouldn’t really know unless I brought it up in the department.

The lack of discussion at the departmental level about teaching philosophy accounts for Barbara’s observation that “I really have no clue if the other teachers share my beliefs and goals.”

Lack of explicit departmental standards (particular). Dorothy was the only participant to comment on the absence of department-approved curriculum guides or other aids. She bemoaned the fact that “there’s no set curriculum, no set pacing calendar. We have an idea of what we’re supposed to teach, but there’s no set plan for any of us.”

She felt this absence most keenly with her Native American Perspectives on American History course:

Trying to figure out what exactly the curriculum of the Native American Perspectives class is supposed to look like has been my greatest challenge this year, because nobody really knows. They're like, "Here, teach this class." You get a vague idea from the name of the course and the course description. This is good in some sense because you have liberty with the material and you're not restricted to a regimented course. But in this case with the Native American Perspectives class it's been trial and error, and a lot of times I haven't been entirely sure where to go.

Lack of alignment among subject matters. Barbara observed on several occasions that department members seemed to share an insular or clannish view of their subject matters: "In fact, and I hate to speak for everyone, I think that our department seems like three completely different programs. There's no overlap in understanding." Linda's discussion of her process of selecting information to incorporate in her curriculum suggests that pressure for coverage facilitated the segmentation of the department: "The Revolutionary War is in my history book, but I don't cover that. I don't really do anything I feel like I can leave to another teacher, because we're covering world history."

Summary of the Results of Question Two

To assess the degree of standardization of practice within the social studies department, the study participants used three referents: their sense of professional responsibility, their knowledge of their peers' practice, and their perception of departmental norms. Whereas Linda and Dorothy believed they were responsible for surveying content knowledge and making good decisions on behalf of their students, Barbara felt obliged to employ "best practice" methods to develop her students' critical

thinking skills. While the participants believed department members were united by a shared commitment to their students, they knew very little about their peers' practice. They relied mainly on informal sources of information (e.g., conversations over the lunch table) to help them adjust the pacing of their curricula relative to their peers. The department did not possess explicit norms, such as curriculum maps or a mission statement. Dorothy, a novice educator, expressed frustration at the lack of direction provided by the department.

Question Three: In What Ways Do Social Studies Teachers Believe Their Practice Should Be Standardized?

The participants agreed that the level of standardization of practice within the department was not what they thought it should be. They identified a number of means whereby greater standardization could be achieved. Moreover, they expressed the desire to coordinate their practice with that of teachers of other content areas.

Increasing Standardization of Practice within the Department

The participants discussed the following eight factors as ways of increasing standardization of practice within their department: developing a departmental philosophy or mission statement, aligning the curricula and pedagogy of teachers from the three subject matter groups, sharing techniques and methods in department meetings, implementing common assessments, increasing the number of department meetings, making department meetings more professional and productive, observing other teachers' practice, and improving the PLC model.

Developing a departmental philosophy or mission statement. The participants believed that the department would benefit from a consensus on teaching philosophy, which Barbara defined as “the reason you’re teaching and your ultimate goals.” Dorothy felt that developing a “unified idea of what we all need to be doing” would help the department set its own priorities and resist the “bunch of different ideas” promoted by the district and the Metro High School administration (see question four for additional discussion of the participants’ perceptions of the effects of school leadership on their practice).

While they were clear in their desire for a departmental philosophy or mission statement, Linda and Dorothy also believed it was important to preserve teacher autonomy. “I do think that there should be two or three common belief statements that we can all agree on,” said Linda, “but I don’t think that it is absolutely critical that we are lockstep in our individual philosophies regarding education.” Dorothy was careful to note that “coming up with some common ideas that we’re all teaching” would “not in any way, shape, or form [require] the teachers to alter their curriculum.”

Aligning the three subject matter groups. Barbara believed that aligning the curricula of the three subject matters would help students in entry-level classes acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in subsequent classes:

A purpose for our department could be to figure out the things the kids should be able to do and the general ideas they should learn by the time they leave world history. The American history teachers go into those things in detail, and it would be a lot easier for the students to do well if they’ve had that background.

Sharing techniques and methods in department meetings. Linda expressed dissatisfaction with the structure and business of department meetings during the year of

the study (refer to her profile for her sketch of a typical department meeting). She proposed the following as an alternative paradigm for department meetings: “Teachers always say they just want to sit and talk about ideas. ‘How do you handle this? How do you handle that?’ If I were to structure this for my own department, that’s the way I would do it.” She envisioned teachers identifying topics of interest, such as managing students’ use of restroom passes or teaching vocabulary effectively, and sharing their techniques and strategies relating to these topics. Although she was optimistic about the reception this would receive among the teachers, she couldn’t be entirely sure “because we’ve never tried [it].”

Dorothy’s reflections on her PLC seem to support Linda’s desire to reinvent the department meeting structure. “I don’t know exactly what department meetings are supposed to look like,” Dorothy observed,

because I only know what they do look like given the past three years. However, I found the PLC to be far more . . . this is going to sound really, really snobby, but I found it to be a far better use of time than department meetings.

She described the business of department meetings as disseminating information and occasionally making decisions regarding interesting or problematic issues. By contrast, Dorothy felt her PLC “was about discussing curriculum and strategies. . . . Basically, it was one of the first times we’ve been able to discuss what’s working in the classroom and what’s not. It’s exciting because it’s never happened before.” It is likely that Dorothy represents at least one social studies teacher who would appreciate sharing methods and strategies in department meetings.

Implementing common assessments. The participants were conflicted about the potential for common assessments to standardize practice within the department. The addition of a social studies component to the AIMS battery was rejected out of hand by Dorothy due to her scorn for the test. Linda believed that a social studies AIMS test would merely be a redundant reading exam, and would therefore have little effect on her practice: “The only way it would be doable would be to make the students read historical passages and then ask them questions, either about what they’ve read or social impact, point of view type questions.” She dismissed the idea that an AIMS social studies test would assess students’ recall of factual knowledge because she felt it would not be possible to come to agreement as to which information ought to be tested. By contrast, Barbara thought the pressure of an AIMS social studies test would cause her to shift her energies to test preparation. She balked at this prospect because, like Dorothy, she considered AIMS to be an invalid test. On the other hand, she believed social studies was the “bastard stepchild” of the district due to its exclusion from the state test. She speculated that standardized testing would bring legitimacy and district resources, such as money for curriculum development, to social studies. Barbara wondered whether the net effect of an invalid test might be to raise the standing of social studies and boost the department’s standards of practice.

Whereas a hypothetical high-stakes social studies test was not popular with the participants, a series of end-of-course exams was enthusiastically championed by Dorothy. “I want some sort of assessment that’s developed by teachers, not people from the department of education,” she said. She thought this could be accomplished with

teachers gathered from all over the state, with the results of their work distributed for review by social studies departments and individual teachers. She was not clear about the format such end-of-course exams should take, but she felt they didn't need to be confined to conventional structures like multiple choice or essay tests.

Increasing the number of department meetings. The participants acknowledged that most of the measures they recommended for increasing standardization of practice would require a great deal of time to implement, and time was a resource in short supply at Metro High School (lack of time as a barrier to standardization is discussed in detail in question four). Nevertheless, Linda and Dorothy argued that the number of department meetings should be increased. Dorothy believed this would provide her with more opportunities to work with her colleagues and learn from them, while Linda felt that meeting as a department at least once a month promoted the camaraderie required for collegial relationships: "I really do believe that if you are working as a department, you need to touch base, see everybody, share a cookie, and bring up issues that others may not be aware of."

Making department meetings more professional and productive. Although Dorothy expressed the desire for more department meetings, she did so on the condition that they be conducted in a more professional and productive manner: "The department should talk about what we are teaching, how we are teaching it, and people should stop acting like babies." She argued that department leadership, whether that of the chair or another teacher, was needed to prevent the squabbling and complaining that she felt

characterized typical meetings. See question four for more information about the participants' reflections on department business.

Observing other teachers' practice. From her vantage point as the chair, Linda observed that the teachers in her department demonstrated an uneven distribution of skills and abilities. For example, she believed the younger teachers were more proficient in using technology, whereas the older teachers were more efficient in managing their classrooms. Peer observations, she argued, would enable teachers to see their colleagues in action and learn from them: "I think we would all pick up techniques and maybe do some self-correction."

Improving the PLC model. Dorothy was enthusiastic about her involvement in her PLC because it facilitated the exchange of ideas and techniques among herself and her peers. Consequently, she did not believe the PLC model as implemented at Metro High School needed changing. However, Linda and Barbara, whose assessment of their PLC was more mixed than Dorothy's, felt the PLC model could be improved.

Both participants referred to one or more PLC meetings held during the school year as approximating their ideal. Linda spoke in the following terms about several meetings in which two teachers were instructing the rest in the use of newly installed interactive whiteboards: "Everyone was really engaged and they were asking the presenters to demonstrate things. The time went by pretty fast and we had a pretty good time, and I was thinking to myself, 'This is what a PLC really is.'" Barbara's reflections on a different series of meetings seem to indicate that she shared a desire with Linda for the PLC to foster collegiality and collaboration: "I can't tell you exactly what we talked

about, but the sense of camaraderie and the sense that we were talking about something that was important and was going to make us better teachers was palpable for me.”

Linda did not offer suggestions for improving the PLC model, but Barbara argued that what was needed was not adjustments but an entirely different collaborative structure. She felt the PLC model’s emphasis on pursuit of a research goal slighted collegial discussion and reflection. She preferred the Critical Friends model, which she described as “[one in which] you actually self-select people with whom you collaborate on some level in your work, either in terms of focus or overlap of curricula or instructional practice, and have those conversations about problems in teaching that have you stumped.”

Increasing Standardization of Practice with Teachers of Other Content Areas

The participants expressed an interest in standardizing their practice with that of teachers of other content areas. Barbara and Dorothy agreed that “overlapping” the curricula of social studies, English, and science teachers, for example, would help students perceive the interconnectedness of knowledge and permit teachers to explore topics and themes in greater depth. Moreover, Linda believed that working closely with the English department chair would lead to the implementation of clearer, more effective standards for teaching writing: “The English department chair definitely wants to somehow integrate what a writing assignment should look like when it is assigned with what techniques teachers need to adopt or implement to support that assignment. And I agree with her.”

Summary of the Results of Question Three

The participants believed the degree of standardization of teaching practice within the department could be increased through the following means: (a) developing a departmental philosophy or mission statement, (b) aligning the curricula of the three subject matter groups, (c) using department meetings as a forum for sharing teaching techniques, (d) implementing common assessments, (e) increasing the number of department meetings, (f) making department meetings more professional and productive, (g) implementing a system of peer observations, and (h) improving or replacing the PLC model. In addition, the participants indicated a desire to standardize their practice with that of teachers from other content areas.

Question Four: What Factors Do Social Studies Teachers Identify as Impeding Standardization of Practice within Their Department?

The participants identified a number of factors that impeded standardization of practice within their department and with teachers of other content areas. These factors are closely interrelated, but for the sake of clarity they are discussed separately. They are as follows: the size and organization of Metro High School, ineffective school-wide leadership, poor professional development, time constraints, ineffectiveness of the PLC model, incompatible personalities in the department, the needs and limitations of students, lack of consensus on content and assessment in social studies, teacher isolation and autonomy, ambiguity of teaching outcomes, and teacher fatigue.

The Size and Organization of Metro High School

Metro High School boasted an enrollment of nearly 3,000 students during the year of the study. These young people could choose from a substantial array of courses taught by a large and diverse faculty. Although the school's size provided opportunities for students that were unavailable at other district high schools, it was unusual for teachers to know which of their colleagues shared their students. Barbara observed that this presented an obstacle to "overlapping" her curriculum with that of teachers from other content areas. She contrasted her present situation with her former middle school position, in which "the work had a lot to do with collaborative curriculum and early intervention with students, because we all had the same students. So it's strange not to know anyone else who has the same kids that I do."

Ineffective School-wide Leadership

All three participants believed the Metro High School administration failed to provide consistent, effective leadership; they argued, in turn, that weak leadership impeded standardization of teaching practice. The participants emphasized the following problems with Metro High School leadership: shifting priorities, inconsistent enforcement of policy, demand for accountability, and lack of oversight of teachers' practice.

Shifting priorities. The participants believed the administration abandoned policies, programs, and paradigms almost as soon as they were adopted. This rapid cycling did not allow time for any one innovation to bear fruit. Linda remarked that the introduction of the PLC model during the year of the study represented a break with the

previous year's administrative agenda, and that this contributed to teachers' skepticism and reluctance to embrace change:

Depending on the department, it was a source of great irritation that we changed horses midstream. Last year everything was about aligning curriculum to get ready for common assessments, and then this was heaved aside. It's always a major problem in education that teachers are fairly certain that if they wait out whatever the current trend is, it too will pass and they won't have to engage in making any changes to teaching style or curriculum.

Referring to the same change in administrative priorities, Dorothy felt that "it was really frustrating . . . that they were like, 'Do this, do this, do this . . . oh, just kidding, we're not going to do this.'" Moreover, the abundance of programs introduced by the administration, each accompanied by its own set of jargon, rendered communication and collaboration among teachers more difficult.

Although Barbara had not been at Metro High School long enough to form an opinion of the administration's vision, she observed that principals are susceptible to pressure from district administrators, teacher associations, student groups, and parents. They are therefore often forced to bend their own desires to those of other education stakeholders: "It seems that the site administrator is the whipping boy for every customer base, and they also have the least ability to stand up for themselves in the larger administrative hierarchy."

Inconsistent enforcement of policy. Barbara joked that "it's kind of cool when you have five assistant principals. You can keep going to all of them until you find the one that answers your question the way you want them to. It's like having five mothers."

Although intended as humor, her comment reflects the participants' belief that the Metro High School administrative team did not interpret and enforce policy in a consistent

manner. According to Linda, this made it difficult for departments to comply with standardizing policies such as the mandate to develop common assessments: “If you’ll remember, the definition for what is a common assessment . . . was very grey, very squishy, very undefined. It was determined by which administrator was talking about it and at what time on what day.”

Demand for accountability. As discussed in question three, Linda expressed the desire to change the structure of department meetings to permit teachers to discuss their practice and sharing techniques and strategies among their colleagues. However, she believed the administration’s need to hold teachers accountable for their hour of released time each Wednesday stood in the way of implementing her idea: “How can we be held accountable for discussing ideas effectively? What’s our product? I don’t think the administration has a problem with professional conversation. I think they value that, but they don’t know how to validate it.”

Lack of oversight of teachers’ practice. When asked about the extent to which the participants felt free to pursue their own interests and agendas in their classrooms, all three responded that they perceived few, if any, barriers to doing so. Indeed, Barbara commented that “I feel like I can do whatever I want in my class and no one would notice.” Although she appreciated this freedom, she was dismayed that the administration seemed so distant from her classroom. She believed that the resulting lack of accountability did nothing to correct low standards of practice: “The reality is I could be hitting kids in my class and no one would know the difference.”

Barbara did not know how the administration could enforce accountability without inspecting teachers' lesson plans, a prospect that offended her sense of professionalism. Moreover, she did not think administrative evaluations made much of an impact on her practice: "There's no real constructive feedback I've ever gotten from my administrator." Linda concurred, saying that there was "a real problem with evaluations." She could recall being observed by "very, very few evaluators where I really cared or found the evaluation to be a helpful tool."

Linda also shared her frustration with the administration's seeming inability to take corrective action with teachers she identified as needing it. As the department chair, a role that brought her into regular contact with every social studies teacher, Linda was privy to more information about her peers' practice than the other participants in this study. She found it "personally irritating when a person is habitually out of bounds, off topic, from the core subject matter he or she is hired to teach." Although she reported voicing her concerns to the administration, the resulting administrative action, which she described as a series of talks between the offending teacher and an assistant principal, was invariably ineffectual: "When it has been addressed at the administrative level, I know from the administrator and from the teacher that there really isn't any change in behavior."

Poor Professional Development

Linda and Dorothy did not believe their practice was influenced by professional development offered at Metro High School. Reflecting on her years at the school, Linda observed that "coming up with something that the majority of people find a good use of

their time and professionally enlightening every Wednesday afternoon for an hour has been a hurdle that no one seems to be able to get over.” Consequently, she believed that the administration routinely resorted to make-work activities just to fill the time. On the other hand, Dorothy acknowledged that her peers seemed to acquire “bits and pieces” out of the professional development activities they participated in. However, she believed that these bits and pieces did not produce a lasting impact on teachers’ practice.

Time Constraints

As shown in question three, each participant desired a greater degree of collaboration and standardization with her peers within and beyond the department. While they cited a number of factors to explain why this was difficult to achieve, none seemed more daunting to the participants than the limited amount of time available to work with other adults. Reflecting on her disappointment with the social studies department’s apparent failure to develop coherent standards of practice, Barbara wondered, “Is the purpose of the department to achieve something? I don’t know. We would need a lot more time and buy-in if that were the case.”

Limited in any school year, department time was even scarcer during the year of the study due to the introduction of PLCs. As Linda explained, some issues that would normally have been addressed during department meetings, such as common assessments, were ignored because “those were handled in individual PLCs or not, depending on what a person joined to do.” Linda elaborated that “you cannot have common assessments when people are not meeting regularly in their departments to develop them.” Instead, on the rare occasions when the department met, the time was

spent on what Linda referred to as “business,” by which she meant disseminating information, responding to administrative requests, and fulfilling routine departmental obligations like nominating the outstanding social studies student from the senior class.

The participants reported that time constraints affected their PLCs as well as the department. Barbara indicated that discussion with her fellow PLC members was usually confined to “getting through the week. You know, ‘What went well last week? What went well this week? This lesson rocked, do you want it?’ That kind of stuff, and not to the level of our deep belief systems.” She believed that substantive examination of teaching philosophy would not occur in the PLC without more meetings. Furthermore, all participants observed that tension was caused by the department and the PLCs competing for the same limited pool of time. Dorothy’s statement reflects her ambivalence about how best to allocate this time:

Because we did a lot of PLC work this year, I don’t think that we’ve had enough department meetings to have accomplished anything. I really did like my PLC, but I think it’s definitely a catch-22. You need to have department meetings, but you need to have these professional learning communities, and what’s a good balance for both?

Ineffectiveness of the PLC Model

Linda and Barbara agreed that the PLC model was a flawed attempt to promote collaboration among teachers. “It seems to me,” Linda said, “that you cannot force people to be a professional learning community. That evolves on its own.” She compared a “real” PLC to scientists conducting an experiment: in both cases, a question or problem unites the group in authentic, meaningful inquiry. By contrast, “if they have to sit around and first generate a question that doesn’t evolve as a natural consequence, it seems to me

that it's an artificial construction from the get-go, and that sabotages the effectiveness of a PLC." Regarding her PLC's SMART goal, which focused on improving students' ability to read and interpret maps, charts, and graphs, Barbara remarked that "I felt like we were compelled by our administrator to go with it." She believed that the resulting lack of enthusiasm for the goal among the PLC membership doomed it to failure:

At one point we had a SMART goal, but we didn't care enough to get a good baseline for our testing so we could have adequate data. I am just as responsible for that as anyone. Then only two of the six of us ever administered the pretest and we found out immediately that it was so flawed that we couldn't use the data. But by that time we were so far into the year that we had to abandon our goal.

At the end of the school year, Barbara lamented that "I certainly don't think we did anything in our PLC that helped me feel confident about teaching maps and charts and graphs. I'm not certain I cared if I did that anyway."

Moreover, both participants reported confusion among the PLC members regarding the purpose of their meetings. Barbara believed that the "PLC is supposed to be professional development through action research, but nobody has the norming process and all that. The PLC model needs to be better understood." Even Linda, who as a department chair had more opportunities than other teachers to learn about the implementation of PLCs directly from the administration, said, "The philosophy of the PLC . . . was not clear to me for several weeks." Both teachers argued that the lack of clarity surrounding the introduction of PLCs wasted time and limited their overall effectiveness.

Unlike her fellow participants, Dorothy was positive about her PLC and felt that it facilitated the exchange of ideas and strategies among teachers. Her assessment of the PLC model will be discussed in question five.

Incompatible Personalities in the Department

The participants agreed that an incompatible mix of personalities in the department limited the amount and quality of collaborative work accomplished during department meetings. In addition to discussing the sometimes contentious nature of those meetings, the participants also shared their concerns about the possible negative effects of changes in department composition for the following school year.

Contentious department meetings. Although she described department meetings as “structured,” thanks to the efforts of Linda, the chair, Dorothy also felt that “there’s lots of unnecessary discussion and arguing.” Barbara observed that “there seems to be a lot of antagonism based on, I think, political views as much as curriculum and instructional views. It’s far deeper seated than anything that’s happened since I’ve been there.”

Barbara and Dorothy used similar language to describe their argumentative colleagues: “babies,” “three-year-olds,” and “warring brothers.” They viewed Linda’s style of dealing with the department as that of a “referee” or “placating mother” trying to keep the peace. Consequently, both participants believed the possibilities for meaningful collaborative work were limited. “Curriculum norming would be a dangerous line to tread with the personalities in our department,” said Barbara. Dorothy indicated that her

peers' self-interest prevented them from putting the interests of students ahead of their own:

They can't just suck it up and do what's best for the kids and for the department, which is incredibly frustrating. They're told to do something and they don't do it. There's a huge sense of entitlement in our department, a sense of, "Why me? It's not in my job description."

As a result, she believed that meaningful exchange of ideas and techniques would only be possible among a small, like-minded number of her colleagues.

Uncertainty regarding changes in the department composition. As discussed in Chapter 3, a shrinking budget forced the district to announce a sweeping reduction in force. Two teachers in the Metro High School social studies department, including Dorothy, received RIF notifications. There were many questions and few answers regarding the department composition in the following school year. The study participants feared that new department members could damage what cohesion the department enjoyed. "We don't know who will be coming in," said Linda,

and if the people coming in don't want to be here, if they are weak teachers, or if they are former administrators who have not been in the classroom for a long time and who are used to calling the shots, it may not go well for the department.

Barbara predicted "status quo" for the department if the two young, "optimistic" teachers who had been RIFed did not return or were not replaced with comparable members.

The Needs and Limitations of Students

Each participant described being forced to adapt or compromise her practice based on the needs and limitations of her students. They seemed to view these changes to their practice as divergences from "normal" or standard social studies teaching. Linda

reported cutting back on her use of objective assessment instruments since coming to Metro High School because “the students here do not do very well on objective tests as a large group in regular classes.” In their place, she employed subjective tools such as projects and simulations. While she believed her students found these types of assessments more engaging and interesting, their results were more difficult to interpret than those obtained from objective instruments. As will be discussed in a subsequent section, this contributed to her difficulty in reliably gauging her effectiveness as a teacher.

Barbara also felt that she had compromised her practice in response to her students’ needs and limitations. Following the initial work of her PLC, she had tried to incorporate lessons on interpreting maps at the beginning of each unit. However, “I gave up on testing them on anything to do with maps because they’re scared to death of them, and it hurt the rest of my assessments because they assumed failure and avoided studying.” Moreover, she had largely abandoned homework because “the culture is that you don’t do your homework. So I couldn’t count on the fact that they would have that knowledge to forward the discussion, which is the only reason I ever gave homework.” As a result, she lectured more often than she wanted to and lamented that “there’s probably a level of depth that got lost as well because I have to do that stuff in class rather than have a deeper conversation.”

Lack of Consensus on Content and Assessment in Social Studies

As discussed in Chapter 2, evidence suggests that social studies is distinct from other content areas in accommodating many approaches to curriculum design and

pedagogy (Stodolsky, 1988). Barbara indicated that this quality of social studies made it impossible for her to identify a standard set of concepts and themes that every student should learn: “I don’t want to say, ‘These are the eight things you have to know,’ because a different culture, a different place, a different age group of teachers may not agree with me.”

A related problem described by the participants was the inability of the department to agree on the content and format of common assessments. “I just don’t think common assessment is possible,” said Barbara. “The problem is we all assess in such different ways, so some kids would always be at a disadvantage because they wouldn’t know the test. So that would mean we would all have to start teaching to that medium.” Moreover, Linda believed that choosing either a performance assessment or objective test format would present serious problems. On the one hand, a performance assessment, which she indicated would require individual teachers to select from a “smorgasbord of tools for assessment, such as a diorama or a test or a paper,” would not really be common and would not serve to standardize teachers’ assessment. However, an objective, multiple-choice test would require teachers to agree on the specific knowledge items that would be included. According to Linda, “It could take months to write a test that everyone would agree is fair and valid,” time the department did not have.

Teacher Isolation and Autonomy

For teachers to develop standards of practice, they must be able and willing to spend a significant amount of time collaborating with one another. Moreover, teachers must be open-minded enough to adapt their practice when their beliefs, pedagogy, or

curriculum conflict with the standards promulgated by the majority. The participants did not believe that either of these conditions prevailed within their department. Their description of their own and their colleagues' practice seems to indicate that isolation and autonomy were significant elements of the culture of the Metro High School social studies department.

Isolation. Linda acknowledged that teaching is commonly thought of as a profession that isolates its practitioners: "In some ways it is almost like being self-employed, because once the door is shut, you really are accountable to the kids and to your own work ethic." Whether or not the degree of isolation they experienced could be described as "normal," the other participants expressed dissatisfaction with their lack of contact with their peers. Barbara believed that she had "never had a teaching job that feels as isolated as mine at Metro High School does." Similarly, Dorothy bemoaned the fact that "there's not a lot of collaboration. . . . I don't see a lot of people in my department, with the exception of lunch. I don't see people, and I believe that's important."

Teacher autonomy. Dorothy doubted that standards of practice would ever prevail in her department because her colleagues "are so set in their ways that they're not willing to look at other people's curriculum and ideas, and they think that what they're doing is always right and they're not willing to do anything else." Linda recast Dorothy's criticism in terms of teacher professionalism: "They feel that within their classrooms they are the final word and have the expertise to determine what they should teach." Indeed, when asked whether she thought the department could develop a standardized

curriculum, Linda responded in the negative: “Absolutely not. I don’t think it is possible, ever, under any circumstances, because of the differences in delivery, and those differences are determined by the human beings delivering the curriculum.”

Ambiguity of Teaching Outcomes

It is difficult to imagine standardization occurring among professionals who lack the capacity to reliably gauge the effectiveness of their practice. The study participants seem to indicate that this is the case for social studies teachers at Metro High School. Linda described teaching as a “guessing game” in which “you think, ‘The students have it,’ and they don’t, or conversely, things have gone well, and the payoff is that most of the kids show they did learn.” Barbara concurred that “I have a really hard time measuring my effectiveness. . . . I don’t think that we have an effective grading method to tell me whether the students understand what I’m teaching them.” Moreover, Dorothy remarked that “apparently I’m a good teacher because that’s what I’ve heard in my observations.”

Teacher Fatigue

Teaching is a demanding and exhausting profession that leaves its members with little time to do much of anything else. Linda cited the chronic physical and emotional fatigue caused by the stress of teaching as a factor contributing to the lack of success of her PLC: “We teach all day, we plan lessons—that is our life. At the end of the day on a Wednesday, to come up with something that is enriching, enlightening, and interesting for our peer group has not worked out.”

Dorothy pointed to her involvement as a guest director for the school's drama program during the first semester as a significant drain on her energy. Consequently, she was forced to compromise her own standards for her practice just to make it through the year:

I think I was a little lazier this year from being tired from stress and outside activities. . . . Unfortunately, that may be the reason I still lecture a little bit, because I have this information and it's already prepared, and I don't have to do a lot of prep work. I'm not proud of that, but teaching can be kind of exhausting.

Summary of the Results of Question Four

The participants believed that the following factors prevented standardization of their and their peers' practice: (a) the size and organizational complexity of Metro High School, (b) the administration's shifting priorities, (c) inconsistent enforcement of administrative policy, (d) the administration's need for professional development to produce tangible results, (e) lack of oversight of teachers' practice, (f) poor professional development, (g) time constraints, (h) ineffectiveness of the PLC model, (i) chronic bickering and unprofessional behavior in department meetings, (j) uncertainty regarding the department's future composition, (k) the needs and limitations of students, (l) lack of consensus on social studies content and assessment, (m) teacher isolation and autonomy, (n) ambiguity of teaching outcomes, and (o) teachers' fatigue.

Question Five: What Factors Do Social Studies Teachers Identify as Promoting Standardization of Practice within Their Department?

Several factors that contributed to standardization of social studies teachers' practice emerged from the interviews with the participants. These factors included:

federal and state education policy, Metro High School administrative policy, participation in professional development, participation in PLCs, pressure applied by the department, the perception of the curriculum as a survey of historical content knowledge, student failure rates, and textbooks.

Federal and State Education Policy

Federal education policy, specifically No Child Left Behind (NCLB), was mentioned by the participants as establishing a national mandate for control over public education. Dorothy believed NCLB had succeeded in rendering “core classes” boring and stifling, and Barbara believed that it regulated who, what, and how teachers teach. However, the participants did not indicate that federal education policy directly influenced their practice; rather, it provided the rationale used to justify the school administration’s policies, including directives to create common assessments and curricula.

As discussed in question one, the participants reported mixed effects for state education policy in the form of state social studies standards—refer to that section for a detailed discussion of how state standards influenced the participants’ practice. One additional component of Arizona’s education policy, the requirement to become certified in structured English immersion (SEI), was cited by Linda as a factor in her teaching: “I do believe that in a class period a student should read, write, speak, and listen. So, that’s simplistic. We’re supposed to do it anyway because of the SEI regulations. We’re always supposed to have these language goals.”

Metro High School Administrative Policy

Barbara and Dorothy said they attempted to comply with the administration's requirement that all teachers identify and post objectives for each lesson. They did not believe, however, that this policy had any appreciable effect on the quality of their practice. Barbara labeled the administration's interest in the form of lessons over their substance as "ludicrous." Similarly, Dorothy complained that

I have issues with objectives. I know, according to the state and the administration, that objectives are "important," and note that I'm doing air quotes. . . . What I've been told by all my students is, "Miss, as long as we have an idea of what we're doing and why it's important, we're OK."

Dorothy reported that the only point on which she had ever been criticized during an evaluation was failing to post her objectives; she subsequently strove to conform with this policy, presumably to avoid receiving negative evaluations.

As the chair and official representative of the department for the administration, Linda felt "some pressure to at least go through the motions of presenting the desires of the administration and put together an appropriate response to whatever they request be done." Consequently, she sequenced the curriculum of her regular world history course chronologically rather than thematically, as she would have preferred. Moreover, she stated, "I am the one who will have to answer to the administration's question, 'What has your department done to develop curriculum so that a new teacher coming into this school knows what he or she is expected to teach?'" She added, however, that the administration's enthusiasm for standardizing curriculum "ebbs and flows from year to year."

Participation in Professional Development

As discussed in question four, the participants considered the professional development offered at Metro High School to be of a generally perfunctory quality. However, Barbara, who had enrolled in a series of Understanding by Design (UBD) curriculum development workshops along with another world history teacher, believed that professional development provided opportunities for collaboration: “The collegiality with my coworker, and assessing our curriculum and where we emphasized things . . . and going through the standards and compartmentalizing the information so we could be more efficient and effective was helpful.” On the other hand, she dismissed the content of the workshops, saying, “I’m never going to write a UBD curriculum.”

Participation in PLCs

As mentioned in question four, Dorothy found her PLC to be stimulating and rewarding: “We shared our ideas and got new reading strategies. I really liked it.” She joined a PLC focused on improving student reading because “I’ve had so much trouble with expository text, so I’ve been pretty desperate to find a more meaningful way to bring it to my kids.” She described several reading strategies she had acquired from her PLC members that she believed had strengthened her practice. Dorothy attributed much of the impetus of her PLC to the two teachers who assumed leadership of the group: “Honestly, they came up with the draft SMART goals and we voted on them. We were all like, ‘That sounds good.’ And we kind of went with their goals because they were the facilitators and had done this before.”

Despite their criticism of what they perceived to be the artificial nature of the PLC, Linda and Barbara's comments indicate that their PLC did affect their practice to a limited degree. According to Barbara, the focus of her PLC changed after the SMART goal was abandoned:

Our PLC was about the younger people trying to get the older people feeling competent in the new technology. That was fine, and I thought it helped us to hit mastery level and seemed to be appreciated by the two or three that are actually using the technology.

Speaking as an "older" teacher attempting to make the best use of new technologies in her classroom, Linda was grateful for the training. However, she worried that the younger teachers did not fully share in the benefits of these sessions.

Pressure Applied by the Department

Although Linda and Dorothy described the department's work on curriculum mapping during the 2007–2008 school year as a minimal attempt at complying with the administration's wishes, Linda believed that the accompanying discussion about standardizing curriculum influenced two teachers in particular: "I know that they have made an effort to view their courses as survey courses more than they used to, and that both of them are further along the continuum this year than they ever used to get." She acknowledged that the discussion, along with the tacit pressure for teachers to conform to the prevailing method of sequencing curricula, would not have occurred without the administration "leaning on us." However, Linda was careful to note that the teachers' revision of their practice

had nothing to do with where the administration wanted it to go, as in we should have a common curriculum, but rather the business of saying, "You're supposed

to be teaching world history. How can you not talk about China or Africa?" That had a lot more impact on their thought processes.

The Perception of the Curriculum as a Survey of Historical Content Knowledge

Linda and Dorothy's belief that a high school history course must provide a survey of content knowledge seemed to provide standards against which they measured their practice and that of their peers. "I think if you're teaching a history class," Dorothy argued, "you need to address history." She felt teachers should be free to pursue their own goals with their practice "as long as you're not cramming your beliefs down their throats and as long as you cover the history."

Similarly, Linda stated, "I'm hired to do a job here. I am hired to teach world history. . . . I am hired to work with young people, to broaden their knowledge base." She believed that the same standard applied to the rest of the department: "We are teaching primarily prep school level survey classes, and when other teachers say, 'I only go this far in the curriculum,' then I know, or it is my personal belief, that they need to somehow realign their curriculum."

Student Failure Rates

Student failure rates were used by two participants to measure their effectiveness. Curiously, although both Linda and Barbara described striving to keep their failure rates below the same threshold, they did not acknowledge a common source for the number. Barbara reported being told by one of the assistant principals, "'Maybe I'm concerned when there's more than 15% failure,' or something like that." On the other hand, Linda

could not recall ever being directed to maintain her failure rate at or below 15%; rather, she had been using this number as her personal standard for years.

Textbooks

Each participant reported treating her textbook as an occasional resource at best. However, Linda and Barbara acknowledged that the textbook was a common source of ideas for their practice. “I don’t use the textbook every day,” said Linda, “but in terms of the ebb and flow of history, I don’t object greatly to the major units presented in the standards or the textbooks.” Similarly, Barbara argued that “almost all of us use those themes out of the textbook as touchpoints for the kids to say, ‘Look how this time in history and place mirrors what happened here across the world, 500 years later.’”

Summary of the Results of Question Five

The following factors were identified as promoting standardization of practice within the department: (a) federal and state education policy, (b) Metro High School administrative policy, (c) opportunities for collegiality afforded by professional development workshops, (d) participation in PLCs, (e) pressure applied by the department, (f) the perception of the curriculum as a survey of historical content knowledge, (g) student failure rates, and (h) textbooks.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a summary of high school social studies teachers’ beliefs about standardization of their practice. The five research questions addressed: social studies teachers’ perceptions of the meaning of standardization of practice, their

assessment of the degree of standardization of practice within their department, the ways in which social studies teachers believe their practice ought to be standardized, the factors that stand in the way of the teachers' practice being standardized, and the factors that promote standardization of their practice.

5. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This chapter summarizes the study of high school social studies teachers' beliefs about standardization of practice. The following sections comprise the chapter:

- Statement of the Problem
- Review of the Methodology
- Summary of the Results
- Analysis and Discussion of the Results

The analysis and discussion of the results includes recommendations for educators and suggestions for additional research.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to explore high school social studies teachers' perceptions of the degree of standardization of practice within their department. Whereas standards-based educational reform (SBER) policy emphasizes achieving uniformity of educational outcomes, standardization of the beliefs and behaviors that constitute teachers' practice is largely ignored (Olsen & Sexton, 2009). What standardization of teachers' practice should entail, as well as how it should be brought about, is left to discretion of school administrators and teachers themselves (Lemons et al., 2003). Empirical research can potentially illuminate the standards that guide social studies teachers' practice and identify means through which social studies departments can attain a desired level of standardization of practice.

Review of the Methodology

As explained in detail in Chapter 3, this study employed a qualitative perspective to explore and understand the participants' experiences as members of a high school social studies department. By uncovering patterns and themes in the participants' conceptualizations of their practice and the practice of their peers, my goal was to describe the standards that governed social studies teachers' practice and identify the factors that promoted and impeded standardization of teachers' practice. Three social studies teachers from Metro High School—Linda Byrd, Barbara Walker, and Dorothy Cibert—participated in this study. Linda was also the social studies department chair during the year of the study.

A case study approach was employed to gather each participant's reflections on her experiences during the 2008–2009 school year. Using a sequence of three in-depth interviews developed by Seidman (2006), the following topics were explored in detail: (a) the participants' life history, (b) their experiences during the year of the study, and (c) their interpretations of the meaning of their experiences. This sequence of interviews is designed to establish the context necessary to understand the participants' responses. Each participant's responses were analyzed as individual cases and then compared to develop the study findings.

Summary of the Results

This section is organized according to the findings for each research question.

Social Studies Teachers' Perceptions of Standardization of Practice

The participants described standardization of practice as the alignment of their curriculum, methodology, and teaching philosophy with shared norms. In addition, four purposes for standardization of practice were identified:

- Standardization of curriculum pacing and sequencing reduces the disruption caused by students who transfer from one class to another. According to Linda, school administrators cited this as their goal when they requested that the department develop common curricula during the 2007–2008 school year.
- Standardization of practice promotes equity in teaching and learning. All students enjoy equal opportunities to learn in their social studies classes, and teachers ensure that their students are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to proceed smoothly from one course to the next.
- Standardization of curriculum sequencing facilitates administrative oversight and evaluation of teachers' practice.
- Standardization of practice ensures conformity with the state's assessment policy. Although Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS), the state's battery of high-stakes tests, did not include a social studies component during the year of the study, one participant associated standardization with "teaching to the test."

The participants also discussed the influence of the state social studies standards on their practice. Although Linda had turned to the state standards early in her tenure as a social studies teacher at Metro High School, she found they merely repeated the sequence

of units presented in her textbook. Moreover, she disagreed with the state standards' focus on content knowledge. She consequently ignored the standards, although she did recognize their value for new teachers looking for help with curriculum development. On the other hand, Barbara regarded the state standards as a framework from which she built her curriculum. She did not feel obliged to cover every standard and objective because she believed that doing so is impossible with an average group of students. Rather, she felt it was important to sacrifice breadth of content in order to teach important themes and critical thinking skills. She reported that the administration sanctioned her treatment of the standards. Finally, Dorothy considered the state standards to be the core of her curriculum, and she felt obliged to cover as much content prescribed by the standards as possible. As a relatively new teacher, she worried that she possessed less job security than her peers, and teaching to the standards was one method of avoiding disciplinary action. However, she believed that teaching to the state standards forced her to rely on methods, such as lecturing, that conflicted with her goal of keeping students engaged and interested in history. She had received the administration's blessing to experiment with high-interest, nontraditional methods, including games and group work.

The Degree of Standardization of Practice within the Social Studies Department

The participants assessed the degree of standardization of practice within the department according to three referents. The first and least generalizable was the teacher's sense of personal responsibility. Linda and Dorothy described their duties as social studies teachers as providing an overview of historical content knowledge and making conscientious decisions that benefit their students. Barbara, however, believed

she was responsible for developing her students' critical thinking skills and using teaching methods she collectively labeled "best practice." While the teachers expressed some frustration in upholding their responsibilities as social studies teachers, they did not indicate that their practice deviated considerably from their personal standards. Moreover, despite dismissing content coverage as a goal of her practice, Barbara maintained a similar pace through her curriculum as the other participants.

The next referent the teachers used to assess standardization of practice within the department was their knowledge of their peers' teaching. The world history teachers, Linda and Barbara, knew the concepts and topics their subject matter peers were teaching only when this information was volunteered. They nevertheless felt that the world history teachers supported each other and pursued common objectives in their lessons. By contrast, Dorothy, the American history teacher, had little contact with her peers and knew very little about what they taught. She believed there was little consistency among the practice of her subject matter colleagues. Each teacher also identified aspects of her personality or approach to teaching that set her apart from her peers.

The participants used what they knew about their colleagues' teaching to adjust the pace of their curricula. Most of their knowledge of other teachers' practice was acquired through informal channels, such as conversations held in the faculty lunch room or students' descriptions of other social studies teachers.

The teachers drew upon department-wide norms as a referent to gauge standardization of practice. Although there was a sense that department members shared a commitment to doing their best as teachers, the teachers acknowledged that the

department lacked an explicit philosophy to guide the teaching of social studies. Moreover, the teachers believed that there was little alignment of curricula among the three subject matters. Furthermore, Dorothy was frustrated that the department lacked specific, prescriptive curriculum guides, particularly for a course she was teaching for the first time.

Social Studies Teachers' Desire for Increased Standardization of Practice

The participants identified eight ways that standardization of social studies teachers' practice could be increased:

- The creation of a departmental philosophy or mission statement was described as a means to establish a unifying purpose for social studies instruction. This would allow the department to set its own agenda and resist administrative interference. However, a departmental philosophy would not be binding or prescriptive. Individual teachers would still enjoy the autonomy to conduct their practice according to their beliefs and preferences.
- Aligning the curricula of the three subject matters would also increase departmental unity and better prepare students for the sequence of social studies courses they must take.
- Department meetings could be a forum for teachers to exchange methods and discuss problems they encounter in their practice.
- Common assessments in the form of end-of-course exams received mixed support from the teachers. As with a departmental philosophy, end-of-course exams would provide some direction for teachers' practice. However, the

participants rejected common assessments developed by the state on the grounds that they would not be responsive to the needs of students and teachers. Moreover, it was unclear what format common assessments of social studies should take.

- The teachers felt that the department should meet more often than was the norm during the 2008–2009 school year. Meeting at least once per month would promote camaraderie and provide more opportunities for teachers to collaborate.
- In addition to increasing the quantity of department meetings, Dorothy believed they should be more professional. Strong leadership could minimize unproductive arguing and focus teachers' attention on substantive issues of social studies practice.
- Peer observations would allow teachers with different abilities and skill sets to learn directly from their colleagues, thus distributing effective teaching techniques and approaches more evenly within the department.
- The world history teachers, Linda and Barbara, were critical of the PLC model introduced by the administration during the year of the study. They believed that it could be adjusted to promote more collegiality and collaboration among PLC members. However, the teachers did not agree on the nature of these adjustments. One suggestion was to replace PLCs with another collaborative structure, such as Critical Friends. Moreover, Dorothy, who belonged to a

different PLC than the other two participants, was satisfied with the PLC model and did not believe it needed to be changed.

In addition to increasing standardization of practice within the department, the social studies teachers believed it was important to work more closely with teachers from other departments. “Overlapping” the curricula of the various content areas would enable teachers to pursue topics and concepts in greater depth. For example, writing instruction in social studies could be improved by co-developing standards for written work with the English department.

Factors that Impede Standardization of Social Studies Teachers’ Practice

The perceived barrier to standardization of interdepartmental practice was the large size and complex structure of Metro High School. It was rare for teachers to know which of their colleagues shared their students. Consequently, it was difficult for them to “overlap” their curricula with one another.

A number of obstacles to intradepartmental standardization were identified:

- The Metro High School administration lacked a coherent, consistent set of leadership priorities. A push for the development of common curricula and assessment initiated in the 2007–2008 school year was sidelined during the year of the study because of the introduction of PLCs. The teachers attributed their colleagues’ cynicism and conservatism of practice to the administration’s habitual cycling through policies and programs.
- Moreover, the administrative team did not consistently enforce policy. The teachers found it difficult to understand and comply with the administration’s

mandates, such as the directive to develop common assessments, because each administrator had a different interpretation of policy.

- The administration's need to hold teachers accountable stood in the way of teachers engaging in professional conversation. Linda believed that the administration needed tangible, measurable products to validate teachers' professional development time. Consequently, the collegial exchange of ideas and methods, which she believed does not produce measurable results, would not be sanctioned by the administration.
- The participants believed the administration did not adequately monitor teachers' practice. As a result, substandard practice could persist unchecked. For example, Linda reported that the administration did not take effective corrective action with department members whose curricula habitually departed from social studies. Moreover, the teachers felt that the administration's evaluations were not very helpful.
- Professional development was described as perfunctory and uninspiring. Consequently, teachers did not believe that it made much of an impact on their practice.
- There was little time available for teachers to work with their colleagues. They felt this was a serious barrier to standardization of their practice. Moreover, they were conflicted about the allocation of professional development time for department and PLC meetings. On the one hand, they did not believe that much could be accomplished with so little time available

to the department. However, the teachers also felt that more time spent in PLC meetings would have given them the opportunity to explore their beliefs about teaching social studies.

- Two participants, Linda and Barbara, believed the PLC model was ineffective. They argued that it did not promote professionalism and collaboration. Furthermore, the teachers were unclear about the intent of the PLCs, and they felt that the administration failed to provide teachers with enough norming in the PLC model.
- Department meetings were characterized as contentious and unproductive because of personality conflicts among teachers. Barbara and Dorothy perceived Linda as engaging in peacemaking rather than instructional leadership. As a result, the teachers felt that professional discussion of such topics as curriculum norming would be difficult to achieve. Moreover, they worried that changes to department composition in the following school year could exacerbate existing tensions.
- The limitations of Metro High School students forced the teachers to compromise their standards of practice. Linda described avoiding objective tests because her students did not perform well on them, while Barbara lamented that she had given up on assigning homework because it was seldom completed. As a result, she was forced to lecture far more than she preferred.
- The ambiguity of social studies was identified as preventing the identification of standard concepts and themes that all department members should teach.

This was also cited as an obstacle to the development of common assessments.

- The participants believed they were largely isolated from their colleagues. This problem seemed to be due as much to the culture of the school as to its structures. Indeed, the teachers perceived their colleagues' resistance to collaboration as a means of preserving autonomy.
- The outcomes of teaching were described as ambiguous and unpredictable. Uncertainty regarding their effectiveness made it difficult for participants to know whether their practice reflected their professional standards.
- The teachers cited fatigue as a barrier to standardization of practice. For example, Linda felt that teachers were simply too tired at the end of the day to invest much energy in professional development.

Factors that Promote Standardization of Social Studies Teachers' Practice

While many forces stood in the way of standardization of teachers' practice, they also identified several factors that promoted it:

- As discussed previously, the teachers expressed a range of responses to state education policy in the form of social studies standards. An additional, albeit weak, standardizing influence was Arizona's requirement for teachers to become certified in structured English immersion (SEI). Linda indicated that teachers' lesson plans were supposed to reflect SEI guidelines.

- The teachers felt pressure to comply with administrative policy. While this led to uniformity in some aspects of their practice, they did not agree with the administration's priorities. For example, Barbara and Dorothy chafed at the administration's requirement to post objectives for each lesson in a prominent place in the classroom. From her position as the department chair, Linda believed she was responsible for maintaining the department's appearance of acting in accordance with the administration's desires. Thus, she was obliged during the 2007–2008 school year to make a token effort to develop common curricula, despite her experience that the administration's enthusiasm for the subject waxed and waned.
- Although the teachers were critical of professional development offered at Metro High School, Barbara mentioned that a series of workshops she participated in provided time for collaboration with one of her colleagues. She was clear that she had little interest in the ostensible substance of the workshops.
- Unlike her fellow participants, Dorothy was enthusiastic about her PLC and credited her adoption of effective methods of reading instruction to participation in her PLC. Two factors seemed to account for her positive experience: (a) she was strongly motivated to join a particular PLC in order to improve her practice in specific ways, and (b) her PLC was led by two teachers with specialized training in literacy instruction.

- Linda believed that discussion in department meetings about developing common curricula motivated two teachers to attempt to cover a broader range of content during the year of the study. She was clear that their adoption of a survey approach to teaching social studies was attributable to tacit pressure exerted by the department, not to the administration's mandate to follow a common curriculum.
- The teachers' view of high school social studies courses as surveys of historical content knowledge was a strong standardizing influence on their practice. This was most evident with Dorothy and, to a lesser extent, Linda. Indeed, even though Barbara minimized the importance of content coverage, she indicated that her pacing through her curriculum was similar to that of her colleagues.
- Two participants, Linda and Barbara, strove to keep the failure rates in their classes below 15%. Although they used a common metric, they did not attribute it to the same source.
- The teachers felt that their textbooks were a common source of content and themes. However, they reported only occasional use of textbooks in their practice.

Analysis and Discussion of the Results

As a report on the reflections of three high school social studies teachers, the study findings are bound to a particular group of people in a particular place and time. Although they are not widely generalizable, some findings do relate to the literature

described in Chapter 2. They are organized here into three broad themes: conceptualization of professional standards of practice, obstacles to achieving standardization of practice, and experimentation with school structure to create microcommunities of professional learners, hereafter referred to as micro-PLCs. Following the discussion of those themes are recommendations for educators and suggestions for further research.

Conceptualization of Professional Standards of Practice

Although the teachers did not use the word “professional” to describe themselves, the standards with which they measured their practice and that of their colleagues reflect the professional model of teaching described by Feinberg (1990). That is, they located excellence of practice in the methods they used rather than the results they obtained with them. In accordance with her profile presented in Chapter 2, Dorothy thought of herself as a history teacher charged with providing her students a sweeping overview of factual knowledge about the past. Her principal concern regarding her colleagues’ practice was that they did the same. Similarly, Linda reported being irritated by department members who habitually failed to take a survey approach to teaching their classes. Barbara differed from the other participants in stressing the importance of using sound pedagogy to teach critical thinking skills. Nevertheless, her standards still refer to the conduct of practice, not its outcomes (i.e., what students demonstrate they have learned).

Moreover, the participants seemed to judge their practice against the kind of moral, artistic criteria described by Goodlad (1990). Linda and Dorothy referred to the importance of making decisions in the best interest of students. This was a poorly defined

standard of practice that could accommodate almost any approach to teaching. On the other hand, Barbara identified specific teaching methods as examples of “best practices.” While she sought to share her knowledge of best practices with her colleagues, she did not consider her approach superior. This is evidence of Kordalewski’s (2000) definition of standards as relative concepts.

The study findings indicate that social studies teachers’ process-oriented standards may partly account for their resistance to prescriptive, outcome-based guidelines for their practice. The administration’s mandate for the department to develop common assessments was unpopular among teachers and all but ignored during the year of the study. While a number of factors account for this, it is significant that the participants doubted whether common assessments were even possible. They believed that the multiplicity of approaches to teaching in the department made it difficult to select a test format that would correspond to every teacher’s practice. Moreover, the creation of objective, multiple choice tests would require departmental consensus on the information to be assessed, which was also considered unlikely. This supports Stodolsky’s (1988) argument that social studies is an ill-defined content area that accommodates wide variety in pedagogy and content selection. Finally, the teachers identified the ambiguity of teaching outcomes as an impediment to assessment of any kind. Each participant found it difficult to measure her effectiveness from day to day, and they doubted whether common assessments would provide more reliable and valid data than their individually-developed quizzes, tests, and projects.

Similarly, the state social studies standards did not function as a standardizing influence on the teachers' practice. Linda dismissed the standards outright, stating that they specified too much content to be reasonably covered in a school year. In addition, she felt they fostered a stultifying, inert approach to social studies teaching. Barbara concurred, reporting that she interpreted the document as a flexible framework for her curriculum rather than a set of prescriptions for her practice. Dorothy was the only participant to accord the state standards a significant role in her teaching. As a new teacher, she felt the need to protect her job security by complying with state, district, and school policies, even when she disagreed with them. Furthermore, Dorothy expressed the same need for guidance in curriculum design as the novice social studies educators studied by Archbald (1997). Given the absence of department-approved course blueprints, Dorothy was forced to rely on the state standards, her textbook, and what little information she could glean from her peers.

Whereas the teachers largely rejected instruments and policies that promoted outcome-based standards, they expressed strong support for the development of a philosophy of social studies teaching. This proposal for increasing departmental standardization is consonant with the professional model of teaching (Feinberg, 1990). The participants believed that a departmental philosophy would provide teachers with a unifying goal or mission. Unlike the rationales for social studies described by Morrisett and Haas (1982), however, a departmental philosophy would be brief, consisting of two or three broad belief statements. Moreover, it would not be binding on teachers' practice, so department members would continue to be free to teach as they see fit. This proposal

may seem baffling to members of other professions whose standards of practice are defined by a strong technical culture. As Lortie (1975) demonstrated, teaching lacks such a culture. In their profiles in Chapter 4, the participants pointed to exemplary educators, not their formal teacher preparation, as seminal influences on their practice. Only Barbara, a former middle school teacher, delineated components of best teaching practice, which she believed were not taught to or expected from high school teachers. Given the lack of shared models of teaching, it is no surprise that the participants favored a proposal for standardization that would preserve their colleagues' autonomy. Additionally, because a nonbinding philosophy would pose only a minimal threat to teachers' independence, it would likely cause little dissension within the department. According to Hanvey (1971), the pressure to maintain harmony among teachers is a significant element of the culture of public schooling, and the participants felt that the Metro High School social studies department could ill afford more bickering and infighting.

Finally, the participants' desired means of standardizing practice, including a shared vision for social studies teaching, continual and meaningful learning, and collaboration to solve problems of practice, reflect some of the characteristic behaviors of effective PLCs as described in the literature (Barth, 1990; DuFour et al., 2006; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Hipp et al., 2008; Hord, 1997; Hord, 2009; Mason, 2003; Nelson, 2009; Servage, 2008; Williams et al., 2008). However, the participants conceived of PLCs only as the specific structural reform initiated by the administration, not as an ideal or model of collegial relationships. Consequently, PLCs seemed to offer only a limited

possibility for standardizing social studies practice according to the participants' beliefs. The implications of divorcing the PLC ideal from its structural elements are discussed in the section of this chapter entitled *Recommendations for Educators*.

Obstacles to Achieving Standardization of Practice

The findings indicate that three major barriers may stand in the way of social studies departments achieving standardization of practice. Although they are discussed separately here, these barriers collectively serve to minimize substantive communication and collaboration among department members. Consequently, they encourage teachers to pursue their own agendas for social studies. The barriers are: low capacity of the department; absence of a clear, consistent vision for standardization of practice; and isolating aspects of school structure and culture.

Low capacity of the department. Debray et al. (2003) found that a school's capacity for internal accountability was the most important factor in determining whether its teachers aligned their curricula with mandated standards. This seemed to be true of Metro High School's social studies department. The participants' responses to questions about departmental interactions reveal a focus on "business," i.e., discussing news and responding to administrative requests. Whereas the science department studied by Melville and Wallace (2007) designed and carried out its own professional development program, Metro High School social studies teachers were entirely dependent on the school administration. Moreover, the participants had only conjectural knowledge of collective expectations for practice. They believed their colleagues shared a commitment to doing their best for their students, but this had not been addressed in a department

meeting (at least not during Linda's tenure as chair). Additionally, teachers did not gather and collectively analyze student data.

If Siskin's (1994) conceptualization of the bonded department is the ideal to which social studies department aspire, low capacity presents a serious challenge to attaining it. How can a social studies department develop shared expectations for teachers' practice in the absence of norms of collegial behavior? Modifications to school and department structures may offer some leverage for change; this idea is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Absence of a clear, consistent vision for standardization of practice. McCartney and Schrag (1990) concluded that the success of systematic efforts to improve social studies teaching is dependent on strong support from school administrators. This, in turn, requires administrators to possess a clear, consistent vision of the standards to which social studies teaching should be held. The results of this study suggest that the absence of such a vision at the administrative level may give rise to a contradictory, counterproductive policy milieu that reinforces teachers' isolation and idiosyncrasies. Linda and Dorothy reported frustration among department members stemming from the administration's sidelining of common curricula and assessments in favor of PLCs. Although Dorothy was enthusiastic about her PLC, she nevertheless felt it would be in the department's best interests to insulate itself against the administration's ephemeral mandates. The teachers described their colleagues' disillusionment with the administration's transient priorities. Consequently, they minimized their investment in

the administration's initiatives as a means of protecting their autonomy from the influence of what they perceived to be inconsistent leadership.

Of course, promulgation of a consistent, compelling vision for standardization is not solely the responsibility of school administrators. It is reasonable to expect department chairs to play an important part in guiding their colleagues toward shared standards of practice. However, this study confirms previous researchers' conclusions that ambiguity inherent in the department chair's role limits their capacity to engage in department-wide instructional leadership. As was the case with the department chairs studied by Bliss et al. (1996) and McCartney and Schrag (1990), Linda reported spending much of her time on administrative duties. She did not use department meetings as a venue for instructional leadership. On the other hand, Linda clearly held strong opinions about the way social studies should be taught at Metro High School, and she described working with teachers on a case-by-case basis to bring their practice in line with her standards. However, she was frustrated by the administration's weak responses to her requests for help with certain teachers who deviated from what she considered to be appropriate practice. Whether Metro High School administrators expected department chairs to be instructional leaders, and if so, what they thought instructional leadership should look like within the department, could not be determined with this study as designed.

Isolating aspects of school structure and culture. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 characterizes schools as having institutionalized structures and forms that exert powerful influences on teachers' practice. Specifically, teachers' isolation and

independence are reinforced, while collegiality and interdependence are discouraged. However, because these aspects are considered to be inherent to public schooling, they are generally not noticed or commented on. Such appeared to be true of Metro High School. In her profile presented in Chapter 4, Barbara contrasted her present disconnectedness from her peers with her past experience as a member of a tightly integrated grade level team. Similarly, Dorothy felt she did not have enough contact with her fellow American history teachers. Whereas these two participants believed their isolation was abnormal, Linda did not question teachers' distance from their colleagues.

Similarly, the teachers indicated that their extremely heavy work loads absorbed their time and energy and kept them from substantive work with their colleagues. However, they did not question whether teachers should be kept so busy in the first place.

Experimentation with School Structure to Achieve Micro-PLCs

The final set of conclusions drawn from the study relate to the effects of experimenting with structure to achieve standardization of social studies teachers' practice. Although department chairs are granted power to discharge numerous duties, including disbursing resources and coordinating the collective activities of their subject matter colleagues, they have limited power over the organizational features of the department. Attempts to significantly alter departmental structures are unlikely to succeed, or even be attempted, without administrative endorsement. Linda described her desire to reorganize department meetings so that teachers could discuss problems they encounter in their practice and develop common solutions. However, she did not implement her plan to increase departmental collegiality because she feared it would fail

to produce tangible results the administration needed to validate professional development time.

Whereas organizational modifications are unlikely to be initiated by department chairs, administrators have more latitude to experiment with school structures. The introduction of PLCs represented a significant and controversial example of structural experimentation at Metro High School during the year of the study. PLCs were ostensibly compatible with the administration's mandate for common curricula because teachers were given the option of making the creation of pacing calendars or common assessments their PLC's SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely) goal. However, interdisciplinary PLCs, such as Dorothy's, effectively split departments. Although all world history teachers, including Linda and Barbara, met together nearly every Wednesday afternoon, the entire department assembled only once every two months. Moreover, this meant that Dorothy had only three hours per semester set aside for working closely with her fellow American history teachers. Consequently, the participants did not believe common curricula and assessments to be feasible given the change in structure brought about by the PLCs. There was simply not enough time to write them and too little opportunity to build consensus for them.

The PLCs divided the participants in much the same way as they split the department. Linda's analogy of a research team conducting an experiment is an apt illustration of her and Barbara's criticism of their PLC. Because there was little support among the members for the PLC's SMART goal, both participants felt their PLC work was inauthentic and forced. When it became clear in the second semester that their

SMART goal was no longer workable, the group chose to use PLC meetings as a means of learning how to use the interactive white boards that had recently been installed in all social studies classrooms. The teachers did not resist participation in the PLC, as was reported by Harris and Drake (1997); rather, their disaffection with the PLC structure caused them to adapt it to better match their needs and interests, a process that seems to fit Cuban's (1991) model of teachers' selective implementation of reform policy. By contrast, Dorothy enthusiastically described her PLC in terms that closely resemble the highly motivated research team of Linda's analogy. Her interdisciplinary PLC was driven by a shared desire to learn effective methods for teaching reading. It provided Dorothy, a novice teacher, some of the kinds of professional assistance enjoyed by the beginning educators in Wynn and Brown's (2008) study, including a collaborative culture and material support in the form of new teaching techniques. If the other members of Dorothy's PLC had similarly positive, productive experiences, it is likely that the group represented an effective micro-PLC (Hord, 2009).

The variance in the participants' experiences with their PLCs supports the prior findings that micro-PLCs depend on the culture and resources of the broader school community for support (Cranston, 2009; DuFour et al., 2006; Hipp et al., 2008; Hord, 1997; Hord, 2009; Huffman, 2003; Nelson, 2009; Supovitz & Christman, 2003). The lack of a school-wide vision for teaching and learning in Metro High School, for example, left Linda and Barbara's PLC grasping for direction and purpose. Moreover, the administration failed to provide teachers with sufficient orientation to the PLC model, and the requirement that PLCs achieve their SMART goals by the end of the school year

meant that there was very little time for teachers to acclimate themselves to the demands of collaborative work. Inadequate support from the broader school community strained the capacity of Linda and Barbara's PLC. On the other hand, Dorothy's PLC benefited from the knowledge and leadership of two experienced teachers. The study findings suggest that structural modifications alone cannot guarantee the creation of effective micro-PLCs; rather, they emerge from environments that support and nurture them.

My analysis of the participants' experiences with their PLCs indicates that experimenting with a department's structure may give rise to a paradox. On one hand, social studies departments in large, urban high schools may find it difficult to overcome the barriers to standardization of teachers' practice discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Siskin's (1994) research suggests that social studies departments are less likely to form bonded groups than other content area departments. They are, therefore, less likely to possess the capacity to engage in systematic examination and improvement of teaching practice (Debray et al., 2003). As such, modifying the structure of the typical social studies department to nurture micro-PLCs, as appeared to happen with Dorothy's PLC, may be a way to promote standardization of teachers' practice on a more modest scale. However, because departments are invested with institutional legitimacy, teachers may oppose policies that weaken or split them. The study participants, including Dorothy, believed that PLCs prevented the department from engaging in anything other than administrative business. Thus the paradox: organizational modifications to a department may succeed in creating micro-PLCs, but teachers are likely to perceive them

as a challenge to the department's legitimacy. Sustained, widespread resistance to such structural modifications may threaten their long-term prospects.

Recommendations for Educators

This study illustrates the powerful influence of teachers' beliefs and personal standards on their practice. For social studies teachers, as Onosko (1990) argued, self-imposed pressure to survey a great deal of history is likely to define their curriculum and teaching methods. Moreover, the kind of informal collegial interactions described by the participants tend to reinforce teachers' need to cover content in order to keep pace with their peers. It is important, therefore, for departments to foster discussion of their members' beliefs about teaching social studies. This dialogue should involve examination of philosophies, not merely exchange of teaching techniques. Bringing normally tacit assumptions into the light of a public forum may help social studies departments negotiate a shared mission. This may lead to the standardization of practice desired by the study participants. Additionally, it may provide departments with a justification to pursue alternative approaches to teaching social studies, which may be less focused on shallow coverage of content than is the norm (King et al., 2009).

Such dialogue, however, runs counter to the culture of silence and autonomy that prevails in many schools. Department chairs who want to bring their colleagues together in substantive conversation may not attempt to do so because they lack an explicit mandate to engage in instructional leadership. Thus, department chairs and administrators should seek to clarify the ambiguity that characterizes departmental leadership. It is not enough for principals to merely announce that department chairs are instructional leaders;

administrators and department chairs should work together to define and set specific benchmarks. The creation of a departmental philosophy or mission statement, for example, might be a major goal that department chairs work to achieve. School administrators could set aside other professional development priorities to provide plenty of time for department-based collaboration. However, the research reviewed in Chapter 2 indicates that department chairs are saddled with a significant amount of administrative work. It may be difficult for them to be true instructional leaders when there are schedules to be created, resources to be disbursed, and paperwork to be filled out. Principals who wish to promote standardization of social studies teachers' practice should, therefore, also reduce department chairs' administrative workload or provide them more time to complete these duties.

This study also demonstrates that policies designed to promote teachers' professionalism and collegiality are unlikely to succeed if they are not predicated on a clear, consistent vision for improving teachers' practice. Administrators must take the time and energy to communicate this vision to teachers. It may be, for example, that school administrators desire more thoughtful, less shallow social studies instruction. As was the case in this study, administrators may approve of teachers sacrificing coverage of every state standard in favor of teaching students critical thinking skills through study of themes in history, politics, and economics. This goal must be made clear to all teachers, especially those new to the profession who lack job security. They should feel secure in experimenting with nontraditional approaches to teaching social studies. Furthermore, reform initiatives that seek to create micro-PLCs should be represented as embodying a

model or ideal of professional conduct, not simply the latest educational fad. As Cuban's (1998) work demonstrates, teachers judge reforms in part on their longevity. The perception that PLCs are treading on the heels of previous failed education programs will limit their legitimacy and influence on teachers' practice.

Administrators should carefully consider the potential impact of modifications to the structure of departments. Splitting departments, whether through the implementation of PLCs or other collaborative initiatives, is fraught with risk as discussed in the preceding section. Rather than break up departments to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration, administrators could encourage the formation of micro-PLCs that correspond to the core social studies subject matters. For the typical social studies department, this would result in PLCs for world history, American history, government, and so on. This proposal would fold the advantages of micro-PLCs into the traditional department structure. Subject matter colleagues would meet regularly in PLC meetings to pursue common goals for their practice. The work of these separate professional communities would receive direction from the department as a whole, which would be responsible for establishing a common mission and possibly also a shared general approach to teaching social studies. In this way, the department and PLC structures would be integrated as an organic, productive whole, which would prevent or reduce some of the conflicts reported by the study participants. However, the size and complex structure of most comprehensive high schools will remain a barrier to the creation of a school-wide collaborative culture. School leaders should prioritize finding ways of

decreasing teachers' artificial compartmentalization without threatening the legitimacy of content area departments.

Suggestions for Additional Research

The beliefs and goals of Metro High School administrators seemed either opaque or inconsistent to the study participants. This was a matter of concern to the teachers because they could not be certain what standards their administrators used to evaluate the efficacy of their policies, including PLCs and the directive to develop common curricula and assessments (Cuban, 1998). It would be valuable to supplement social studies teachers' perspectives with those of school administrators. Doing so would illuminate the points of divergence between social studies teachers' standards of practice and the conceptions of standardized teaching and learning held by administrators. In addition to making a valuable contribution to the research literature on standardization in education, this knowledge could be applied by administrators and teachers wishing to pursue a common vision for excellence in social studies teaching.

Linda and Barbara's descriptions of their experiences as middle school teachers suggest that teacher groupings (e.g., grade level teams) at the pre-secondary level may be more likely to demonstrate the characteristics of effective PLCs and facilitate standardization of their members' practice than is the case in the typical high school social studies department. This study could be repeated with a team of middle school social studies teachers to investigate this hypothesis. It may be that variations in school size and structures may exert a stronger influence on teachers' practice than was reported in this study.

As a report on case studies of three teachers' experiences from a single school year, the scope of this study was largely restricted to description and analysis of the status quo for a social studies department. The study findings do not permit us to make reliable, valid conclusions about how social studies teachers' practice changes as a result of their participation in collaborative structures (i.e., the department, PLCs). Considering the peripheral position the department occupies in the literature on social studies teaching, this is a question that cries out to be investigated. An appropriate study design, therefore, would involve the researcher in a school site over a period of two or more school years. This person would supplement interviews of teachers with observations of their practice. Furthermore, the researcher would attend department meetings and observe other collaborative structures that may be in place. A longitudinal study incorporating empirical observation of teaching and collegial interactions would illuminate the relationship between social studies teachers' practice and their department membership. Alternatively, the researcher, possibly a member of the department under investigation, may take a more direct role in fostering standardization of social studies teachers' practice.

Whether researchers attempt to analyze the reality of schooling as they find it, or reshape that reality, they should strive to be responsive to their participants' beliefs and values. A strain of disappointment and disaffection with social studies teaching as it exists runs throughout much of the literature (see, for example, King et al., 2009). This reflects the distance between researchers' standards for good teaching and the standards high school social studies teachers bring to bear in their classrooms. While it may be true

that a great deal of social studies instruction falls short of the claims made by proponents of the discipline (see, for example, National Council for the Social Studies, 1994), there is little to be gained in adopting a paternalistic approach toward public school teachers. As education professionals, teachers deserve to be treated as full partners in efforts to develop the standards that should guide their practice.

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Part I: Establishing the Participant's Background

1. In what year were you born?
2. Where were you born?
3. Where were you raised?
4. Where did you attend high school?
5. What college(s) did you attend?
Exploring: What course(s) of study did you take there? In what year(s) did you earn your degree(s)? Are you taking courses right now? Where and what courses, and for what purpose?
6. Can you recall what led you to pursue a career in teaching?
Exploring: What led you to decide to teach (participant's current courses)? *If the participant did not set out to teach social studies*—what led you to switch from your original content area?
7. Could you describe any jobs you've held besides teaching that you consider important?
8. How did you come to teach at this school?
9. Would you describe your position here, please?
Exploring: What grade levels/courses do you teach, extracurricular activities, and so on.
Linda only: What do your duties as the department chair entail?
10. Can you describe a memorable social studies teacher or professor you've had?
Exploring: Do you consider this person to have been particularly effective or ineffective? Why? Has your opinion of this person changed since you were his/her student? If so, why?

11. Can you please describe a particularly effective social studies lesson you experienced as a student? It need not have been taught by the memorable teacher you just talked about.

Exploring: What was the content you were studying? What did the teacher ask you to do? What was the teacher doing? What made this lesson effective for you?

12. What does a person need to know to be effective in your position?
13. What does a person need to be able to do to be effective in your position?
14. Let's go back to your teacher preparation. Can you describe the formal process you went through?

Exploring: What did you learn? What, if anything, would you change about your teacher preparation program or about teacher preparation in general? Why?

15. Can you describe a "turning point" experience where you realized you had become an expert teacher?
16. Can you put into words what you think of as the ideal student?
17. Now can you describe the type of student that presents the most challenges for you?
18. Can you describe the experiences you've had in previous departments or grade level teams you've belonged to?

Exploring: What happened in a typical department/grade level team meeting? Can you describe the leadership style of the department chair/grade level team leader?

Dorothy only: Can you describe your impressions as a student teacher participating in staff/department meetings?

19. Throughout this interview I've used the term "social studies" several times. Do you think of yourself as a social studies teacher, a history teacher, or something else entirely?
20. That about wraps up all my questions. But before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you consider important about your background that I didn't ask you about?

Part II: Reconstructing the Participant's Recent Experiences

1. I'm interested in the influences on your curriculum. But the word "curriculum" has no single accepted definition. So if I asked you to show me your curriculum, what would you point to?

Exploring: What sorts of tasks do you typically ask your students to complete?

Are there some tasks you'd like to have your kids do, but you don't assign them?

Why or why not?

2. Can you describe the process you go through to arrive at your curriculum?

Exploring: What resources do you turn to or rely on most in this process? How, how often, and when do you use the state standards? To what extent does the administration influence your curriculum? Do you have a fairly firm idea of where your curriculum will go throughout the year, or would you say your curriculum emerges over time?

3. In an educational context, what do the words "standard" and "standardized" mean to you?

Exploring: Do you think you have a "standardized" curriculum? Why or why not?

4. What are you trying to achieve with (participant's classes)?

Exploring: How do you want your students to have changed as a result of taking your class? Do you see yourself as preparing your students to be good citizens?

Why or why not? *Regarding a recently observed lesson*—how closely did the lesson I observe meet your criteria for success?

5. How do you know whether you are doing the kind of job you want to do? In other words, how do you measure your effectiveness as a teacher?
6. Do you have a hard time evaluating your own work? What I mean is, is it difficult for you to tell how well you are teaching?

Exploring: Why is (or isn't) it difficult?

7. There is currently no AIMS test for social studies. Would you want one?

Exploring: Why or why not? What effect do you think an AIMS social studies test would have on your teaching? How would you feel about state-mandated end-of-course exams?

8. Do the other teachers in the social studies department share your beliefs and goals?

Exploring: How do you know? Is it important for there to be consensus on teaching philosophy in the department? Why or why not?

9. Typically, how much do you know about what your fellow (participant's subject matter) teachers are doing in their classes?

Exploring: How do you come by this information?

10. Can you tell me about eating lunch in the faculty lunch room? What goes on in there?

11. If you wanted to ask someone else to help you with your teaching, who would you turn to and what kind of help would you ask for?

12. To what extent are you free to go about your work as you think best?

13. Can you describe a typical department meeting?

Exploring: What work does the department do in these meetings?

14. Can you describe a typical PLC meeting?

Exploring: What work does the PLC do in these meetings? What do you see as the major differences between department and PLC meetings?

15. Would you like to work more closely with other teachers at this school?

16. Before we finish this interview, is there anything that you want to say about what has transpired during this school year that I didn't ask you about?

Part III: The Participant Reflects on the Meaning of Her Experiences

1. We've reached the end of another school year. As you reflect on everything that's happened, what stands out in your mind about this year?

2. Overall, to what extent do you think you accomplished whatever goals/objectives you had set for your classes/students for this year?

Exploring: How do you know?

Linda only: To what extent do you think you accomplished whatever goals/objectives you had set for the department this year?

3. To what extent did your teaching change this year compared to previous years?
Exploring: If so, what was the source of the change(s)?
4. During the first department meeting of the year, the assistant principal responsible for evaluating social studies teachers told us that common assessments needed to be in place by the end of the year. Do you agree with that view?
Exploring: To what extent did the department work toward accomplishing this goal? Why?
5. At that same department meeting, the same assistant principal told us that the department needed to identify and focus on teaching “enduring understandings”—eight or ten content items, skills, and/or concepts. Do you agree with that view?
Exploring: To what extent did the department work toward accomplishing this goal? Why?
6. Can you describe the most memorable department meeting of this year?
Exploring: Why does it stand out in your memory?
7. Can you identify what you would consider to be the major achievements, accomplishments, or breakthroughs of the department this year?
8. How does the work of the social studies department this year compare with that of last year?
Barbara only: How does the work of the social studies department this year compare with that of the grade level team you were a member of last year?
9. Now tell me about your PLC. Can you describe the most memorable PLC meeting of this year?
Exploring: Why does this meeting stand out in your memory?
10. What were your PLC’s major achievements, accomplishments, or breakthroughs?
Exploring: Do you think the PLC structure accomplished what the administration had in mind for it to accomplish? Why or why not?

11. If given the choice, would you spend more time in department meetings, in PLC meetings, or would you leave the present ratio pretty much alone? Why?
12. What do you think the immediate future holds for the social studies department?
Exploring: What challenges or problems should the department attempt to address next year?
13. Admittedly, our ability to see into the future is pretty limited. Nevertheless, what do you think is in store for the social studies department in the next five years?
14. Do you see yourself teaching high school social studies for the foreseeable future?
Linda only: When you retire and look back on your teaching career, what do you think will be among your proudest memories?
15. We're going to wrap up this final interview, but before we do, is there anything else you'd like to say that I didn't ask you about?

APPENDIX B

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL



Human Subjects
Protection Program

1618 E. Helen
P.O. Box 245137
Tucson, AZ 85724-5137
Tel: (520) 626-6721
<http://irb.arizona.edu>

March 25, 2009

Lucas Schippers, Doctoral Student
Advisor: Paul Robinson, PhD
Teaching & Teacher Education
College of Education
PO Box 210069

RE: Project NO 09-0229-00 Standardizing Purpose: The Role of the Department in Facilitating High School Social Studies Teachers' Responses to Standards-Based Educational Reform

Dear Mr. Schippers:

We received documents concerning your above cited project. Regulations published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [45 CFR Part 46.101(b) (2)] exempt this type of research from review by our Institutional Review Board. Note: A copy of your Consent Form, with IRB approval stamp affixed, is enclosed for duplication and use in enrolling subjects.

Please be advised that **clearance from academic and/or other official authorities for site(s) where proposed research is to be conducted must be obtained prior to performance of this study. Evidence of this must be submitted to the Human Subjects Protection Program office.**

Exempt status is granted with the understanding that no further changes or additions will be made either to the procedures followed or to the consenting instrument used (copies of which we have on file) without the review and approval of the Human Subjects Committee and your College or Departmental Review Committee. Any research related physical or psychological harm to any subject must also be reported to each committee.

Thank you for informing us of your work. If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact this office.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Boyd

Elizabeth Boyd, Ph.D.
Assistant Vice-President, Research Compliance & Policy
Office of Responsible Conduct for Research

EB:mm
cc: Departmental/College Review Committee



APPENDIX C
SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL



March 25, 2009

Lucas James Schippers
5034 East Montecito Street
Tucson, AZ 85711

**Project Title: Standardizing Purpose: The Role of the Department in
Facilitating High School Social Studies Teachers'
Responses to Standards-Based Educational Reform**

Dear Mr. Schippers,

I am pleased to inform you that your request to conduct research in the Tucson Unified School District has been approved for the 2008- 2009 school year. We require that you:

- Provide the principals with an overview of the study and ask them to sign a copy of the attached consent form. I need to keep copies of the forms in your file so please mail the forms to me.
- Obtain signed consent for each participant then forward the consent forms (originals or a copy) to the Principal before you begin your study.
- When you complete your study please forward a copy to me (an electronic file is preferred).

If your study is a multi-year project you must re-apply annually. If you have any questions please call me.

Sincerely,

Dynah Oviedo-Lim, M.A.
Research Project Manager

APPENDIX D

SCHOOL SITE APPROVAL

2008-2009 School Year

PRINCIPAL OR DEPARTMENT HEAD PERMISSION FORM

Request To Conduct Research In a TUSD School
or Department During the 2008-2009 School Year

All researchers must have their projects officially approved by the External Research Review Committee before approaching you for consent. When approved, researchers are sent a letter indicating that their project has been officially approved. Researchers need to provide you with a copy of this for your records. Please indicate whether you approve or disapprove of this study being conducted in your school or department and return this form to Accountability and Research.

Please note that this researcher has permission to contact you for the current school year only. The researcher must re-apply annually to conduct multi-year projects. If you have questions contact Dynah Oviedo-Lim at 225-5418.

Lucas Schippers

 Researcher's Name

is

GRANTED **NOT GRANTED** permission to conduct a study entitled:

Standardizing Purpose: The Role of the Department...

 Name of Study

in Tucson High Magnet School

 School or Department Name

And Monardo

 Principal or Department Head Signature

4-3-09

 Date

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