DIRECTING CURRICULUM THROUGH STANDARDS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE 2010 TEXAS STATE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

By
Norman Smith

Copyright © Norman Smith 2012

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING, LEARNING & SOCIOCULTURAL STUDIES

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
WITH A MAJOR IN TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2012
As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the document prepared by Norman Smith entitled Directing Curriculum through Standards: A Content Analysis of the 2010 Texas State Social Studies Standards and recommended that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date: 3/30/2012
Dr. Alberto Arenas

Date: 3/30/2012
Dr. Patricia Anders

Date: 3/30/2012
Dr. Kevin Vinson

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate’s submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Date: 3/30/2012
Dissertation Director: Dr. Alberto Arenas
STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the library. Brief quotations from this dissertation are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgement of source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or part may be granted by the copyright holder.

SIGNED: Norman Smith
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my thanks and utmost appreciation to my doctoral committee: Dr. Alberto Arenas, Dr. Patty Anders and Dr. Kevin Vinson for guiding me through this process. Special thanks goes to Dr. Alberto Arenas for agreeing to take over as my committee chair after Dr. Vinson left to pursue another academic opportunity, as well as presenting to me the idea for this dissertation. I would also like to extend a special thanks to my friends and family for their support throughout this long and challenging process.
DEDICATION

To:

My wife, Julie, for her love and support as well as her willingness to edit;

My daughter, Mairen, for being without daddy for long hours away to write;

My parents and sister who have always believed in me and supported all my pursuits;

My in-laws for their support and love.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................................... 10

LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................................... 11

ABSTRACT ...................................................................................................................................... 12

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 14

  1.1 Statement of the Problem ........................................................................................................ 14

  1.2 Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................... 21

  1.3 Research Questions ............................................................................................................... 22

  1.4 Scope of the Study ................................................................................................................ 23

  1.5 Limitations of the Study ....................................................................................................... 23

  1.6 Definition of Terms ............................................................................................................. 24

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE ........................................................................................... 27

  2.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 27

  2.2 The Four Curriculum Ideologies ......................................................................................... 28

  2.3 Early Struggles in the History and Social Studies Curriculum .................................... 36

  2.4 Contemporary Struggles in the History and Social Studies Curriculum .................. 42

  2.5 The Effects of Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism on Curriculum through State and National Standards ........................................................................................................... 55

    2.5.1 The Effects of Neoconservatism and Neoliberalism in England and the United States ................................................................................................................................. 58

  2.6 Conservatism and Education ............................................................................................... 62

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY ........................................................................................................... 66

  3.1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 66

  3.2 Content Analysis ................................................................................................................ 66

  3.3 Ideological Beliefs Held by the Researcher ...................................................................... 74

  3.4 Data Collection .................................................................................................................. 77

  3.5 Data Analysis ..................................................................................................................... 78

  3.6 Trustworthiness ................................................................................................................ 83

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS: TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STANDARDS ......................................................................................................................... 86
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introductory Section of the Elementary Standards</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Knowledge and Skills Section for Social Studies: Elementary School</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten through Grade 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 The History Strand</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The Geography Strand</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 The Economics Strand</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 The Government Strand</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 The Citizenship Strand</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 The Culture Strand</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10 Social Studies Skills Strand</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11 Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS: TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDLE SCHOOL STANDARDS</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introductory Section of the Middle school Standards</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Knowledge and Skills Section for Social Studies: Middle school</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 The History Strand</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 The Geography Strand</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 The Economics Strand</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 The Government Strand</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 The Citizenship Strand</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 The Culture Strand</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10 The Social Studies Skills Strand</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11 Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS: TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH SCHOOL STANDARDS</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Introduction</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Introductory Section of the High school Standards</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENTS--CONTINUED

6.3 United States History Studies Since 1877................................................................. 282
   6.3.1 The History Strand......................................................................................... 284
   6.3.2 The Geography Strand................................................................................ 303
   6.3.3 The Economics Strand.................................................................................. 305
   6.3.4 The Government Strand............................................................................... 310
   6.3.5 The Citizenship Strand............................................................................... 312
   6.3.6 The Culture Strand...................................................................................... 317
   6.3.7 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand .............................................. 323
   6.3.8 The Social Studies Skills Strand................................................................. 326
   6.3.9 Concluding Thoughts for United States History Since 1877.................... 328

6.4 World History Studies......................................................................................... 329
   6.4.1 History Strand ............................................................................................ 333
   6.4.2 The Geography Strand................................................................................ 338
   6.4.3 The Economics Strand................................................................................ 340
   6.4.4 The Government Strand............................................................................... 343
   6.4.5 The Citizenship Strand............................................................................... 345
   6.4.6 The Culture Strand...................................................................................... 349
   6.4.7 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand .............................................. 354
   6.4.8 The Social Studies Skills Strand................................................................. 356
   6.4.9 Concluding Thoughts for World History Studies....................................... 358

6.5 World Geography Studies................................................................................... 359
   6.5.1 The History Strand ..................................................................................... 362
   6.5.2 The Geography Strand................................................................................ 363
   6.5.3 The Economics Strand................................................................................ 365
   6.5.4 The Government Strand............................................................................... 367
   6.5.5 The Citizenship Strand............................................................................... 369
   6.5.6 The Culture Strand...................................................................................... 372
   6.5.7 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand .............................................. 376
TABLE OF CONTENTS--CONTINUED

6.5.8 The Social Studies Skills Strand ................................................................. 378
6.5.9 Concluding Thoughts for the World Geography Studies Course....... 381

6.6 United States Government ........................................................................... 383
6.6.1 The History Strand .................................................................................. 385
6.6.2 The Geography Strand ............................................................................ 389
6.6.3 The Economics Strand ............................................................................ 390
6.6.4 The Government Strand .......................................................................... 392
6.6.5 The Citizenship Strand ........................................................................... 395
6.6.6 The Culture Strand ................................................................................ 397
6.6.7 The Science, Technology and Society Strand ........................................ 398
6.6.8 The Social Studies Skills Strand ............................................................. 398
6.6.9 Concluding Thoughts for the United States Government Course .... 401

6.7 Conclusion .................................................................................................... 402

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ............................. 406
7.1 Introduction .................................................................................................... 406
7.2 Discussion ...................................................................................................... 406
7.3 Implications ................................................................................................... 417
7.4 Limitations .................................................................................................... 418
7.5 Recommendations for Future Research ..................................................... 419

APPENDIX A BLOOM’S TAXONOMY VERBS ........................................ 421
REFERENCES ..................................................................................................... 423
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary History Strand ........................................101
Table 2 Bloom's Taxonomy Elementary Geography Strand ..................................107
Table 3 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Economics Strand ...............................110
Table 4 Bloom's Taxonomy Elementary Government Strand ..............................118
Table 5 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Citizenship Strand ...............................123
Table 6 Bloom's Taxonomy Elementary Culture Strand .....................................127
Table 7 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Science, Technology, and Society Strand..........................................................................................................................134
Table 8 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Social Studies Skills Strand ....................143
Table 9 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School History Strand ................................164
Table 10 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Geography Strand ..........................181
Table 11 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Economics Strand ..........................191
Table 12 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Government Strand ........................204
Table 13 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Citizenship Strand ..........................218
Table 14 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Culture Strand ...............................234
Table 15 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Science, Technology, and Society Strand..........................................................................................................................251
Table 16 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Social Studies Skills Strand ..........261
Table 17 Bloom’s Taxonomy High School United States History Since 1877 .......284
Table 18 Bloom’s Taxonomy High School World History Studies ......................332
Table 19 Bloom’s Taxonomy High School World Geography Studies ................361
Table 20 Bloom’s Taxonomy High School United States Government .................385
LIST OF FIGURES
Figure 1: Categories for data analysis ................................................................. 81
ABSTRACT

In 2010 the Texas Education Agency adopted newly rewritten curriculum standards for the state’s social studies courses K-12. The period leading up to the adoption of the state standards proved to be quite contentious as the new standards made their way out of the writing committees and into the public realm. The issues brought forth from initial readings of the standards appeared in the national spotlight as educators and the general public from around the country began voicing their concerns. Many of these concerns centered on the belief that the Texas State Board of Education had rewritten the standards to reflect a more politically conservative world view along with an emphasis placed upon traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs. Members of the state board argued that the state’s previous standards reflected a politically liberal world view and that the board needed to bring balance to the standards. As the arguments and concerns spread throughout the United States, the Texas State Board of Education did make some changes to the rewritten standards and adopted them in 2010 which would lead to the implementation of the standards for the 2011-2012 school year.

The purpose of this study was to assess if the newly rewritten standards actually demonstrated a politically conservative preference as well as an emphasis upon traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs. As my analysis progressed I discovered the need to include information regarding an economic preference for capitalism, a focus on Texas and United States history while minimizing world
history and a preference for memorizing information while limiting critical thinking in the standards.

Through the process of content analysis I discovered that many of the criticisms placed upon the newly rewritten social studies standards did in fact demonstrate a politically conservative leaning while promoting traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs. My analysis and research further revealed that the state board of education did promote the economic system of capitalism while limiting the study of other economic systems found throughout the world. In regards to the preference for Texas and United States history versus world history my analysis did confirm a limited presence of world history in the standards; however, my research also revealed that this particular issue is not only limited to the state of Texas, but a number of other states in the U.S. Finally, during the process of analysis I realized that the majority of the objectives found throughout the standards began with verbs found on verb lists from Bloom’s Taxonomy. By using Bloom’s Taxonomy I learned that the majority of objectives found throughout the K-12 standards operate in the lower half of the Taxonomy rather than the upper half meaning that there is an emphasis placed on lower order thinking skills rather than higher order thinking skills.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Control for the curriculum is nothing new in American education. Different groups have attempted to impose their own ideological beliefs on the curriculum since the beginning of public schooling in the United States. These groups come from all walks of life, ranging from political and philosophical groups to religious groups just to name a few. We can compare their attempt to gain control to that of a swinging pendulum (McConaughy, 1915). As the pendulum swings in one direction certain groups gain a foothold on the curriculum to the dismay of those groups at the other end of the arc, and eventually the pendulum reverses its swing diminishing the control of the previous power holders as it methodically returns to the opposite side of the curriculum spectrum. In between these swings the various groups promote their ideas and beliefs while attempting to eliminate the changes of the previous leaders. Flinders and Thornton (2009) believe that at its most fundamental level, curriculum theory, research and development center around three questions: “What do schools teach, what should they teach, and who should decide” (p.1)? Academics have argued over these three questions for over a century now, and as the debates continue so do the attempts at reforming or changing the American curriculum.

The movement for curriculum reform has centered on both the purpose of the curriculum as well its content. Historically speaking, academics have
separated these movements in curriculum reform into four distinct ideologies: Scholar Academic, Social Efficiency, Learner Centered and Social Reconstruction (Schiro, 2008). Each of these ideologies focus on the purpose of curriculum while promoting academic content that reinforces the specific purpose. As we continue to look to history to better understand these we find that different interest groups and individuals attach themselves to these various ideologies in order to promote their own beliefs about what the American schools should be teaching. The debates that began over a century ago about what we should be teaching continue to the present, and Pinar (2004) eloquently described the purpose of these debates when he stated, “The school curriculum communicates what we choose to remember about our past, what we believe about the present, what we hope for the future. Curriculum debates—such as those over multiculturalism and the cannon—are also debates about the American national identity” (p. 20). Henderson and Kesson (2004) provided further insight about why the curriculum debate has become such a volatile issue when they explained curriculum in terms of culture, “What we teach our children embodies what we most value in our society. The curriculum, in all its complexity, is the culture. Embedded in it are our values, our beliefs about human nature, our visions of the good life, and our hopes for the future. It represents the truths that we have identified as valued and worth passing on” (pp. 206-207). These debates have led to tenuous alliances among the proponents of the aforementioned ideologies in order to diminish the influence of those in control of
the curriculum at that time in our history (Kliebard, 2004 & Schiro 2008). This struggle continues on today at the national, state and local levels and continues to involve itself in American politics.

The numerous groups and ideologies vying for control over the American curriculum have focused on various subject fields ranging from the traditional academic courses to the vocational courses (Kliebard, 2004). Depending on the ideology of a curriculum group, certain courses or subject fields take on a greater importance than others. In May of 2010, the Texas state school board dramatically changed the state’s social studies standards so that it would reflect what school board members defined as a more politically conservative reflection of its standards because a majority of the board’s current members believed that the previous standards reflected that of a politically liberal agenda (Texas Textbooks, 2010). The Texas state school board members have demonstrated that a powerful way to control curriculum changes is through control and oversight of state educational standards. Because of these changes, Texas has become a focal point of national attention in regards to the American curriculum.

In terms of curriculum, Texas is an important state because of its sheer population size. Texas is one of the few states that can actually influence curriculum change in the United States because of the number of text books its schools purchase (Texas Textbooks, 2010). Because many states have moved to textbook adoption they must review and rely upon what these companies create (Robelen, 2010). According to Robelen (2010), Gilbert T. Sewall, director
of the American Textbook Council, stated “Publishers want to use as much of the Texas edition as possible in what they’re selling nationwide.” However, in Robelen’s (2010) article he includes Jay Diskey’s, Association of American Publishers executive director of the school division, belief that publishers are working to customize textbooks and other instructional materials to meet the needs of different states and school districts. Diskey also believes that what has happened in Texas will lead states and districts to evaluate publishers’ materials more closely (Robelen, 2010). Regardless of this argument, there is a fear among many educators, scholars and politicians that because of Texas’s influence on the content of these materials, many states will adopt these new books which could reflect the agenda of the Texas State School Board’s new state educational standards.

The changing of the Texas state social studies standards did not happen overnight. We can trace the current development of the state’s educational standards as far back as the 1980’s (Texas Textbooks, 2010). Major proponents of changing Texas’s social studies standards have been and are members of the Religious Right who first began advocating for changes in textbooks which has ultimately led to their desire to change the state’s standards. However, various citizen organizations, like People for the American Way, entered the fray to resist the changes in textbooks to ensure that the textbooks would accurately reflect United States and world history (Texas Textbooks, 2010). The battle for control
of Texas’s curriculum has continued on and once again has exploded into the national spotlight.

The Texas State School Board began working on these changes in 2007 when politically conservative candidates won a majority of seats on the board in the state’s election. After the election, Governor Rick Perry selected Don McLeroy as the school board chair (Texas Textbooks, 2010). Organizations like People for the American Way have described McLeroy as holding far-right political beliefs because of his actions regarding changes in Texas’ textbooks. For example, he promoted the removal of the age of the universe from the science standards, while requiring teachers to teach, what his opponents describe as, “evolution denialism and climate change denialism” (Texas Textbooks, 2010, p. 1). McLeroy and his supporters’ efforts to influence the science curriculum eventually led to the challenging and rewriting of the Texas social studies standards.

In addition to including Don McLeroy, the Texas State School Board also selected David Barton as a curriculum expert to sit on the panel to rewrite the state’s social studies curriculum standards. Barton heads an organization called WallBuilders, whose mission is to “prove’ that the United States was founded to be a Christian nation” (Boston, 2009, p. 7). Boston (2009) explained that Barton believes that law in the U.S. should be biblically based and that America’s founding fathers did not intend for our nation to follow the structure of separation of church and state. Barton does not possess a background in American history;
he actually earned a bachelor’s degree from Oral Roberts University in 1976 in the field of “Christian Education” (Boston, 2009). After completing his university education, Barton went on to teach math and science at his father’s, pastor of the Aledo Christian Center, fundamentalist Christian school. Because Barton’s “research” supports many fundamentalists’ beliefs that the United States was built upon Christian principles, he has become a popular voice for the religious right. According to Boston (2009), “He has appeared on programs alongside TV preacher Pat Robertson and fundamentalist radio honcho James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, rallying fundamentalist shock troops to oppose secular government and church-state separation” (p. 8). Barton has not attempted to hide his religious and political beliefs, and his influence extends beyond Texas.

Although Barton lacked academic credentials to serve on a panel whose purpose was to rewrite Texas’ social studies standards, he did serve as an advisor to California’s Academic Standards Commission in 1998 (Boston, 2009). Boston (2009) stated that Barton was appointed by a conservative member of the Commission to “critique proposed social studies/history standards” (p.8). During his appointment, Barton used his new position to attack those standards that supported the development of religious freedom as well as attempting to remove any mention of the separation of church and state (Boston, 2009). Barton was nearly successful in his goals for the California standards. It was not until the organization Americans United, an advocate of church-state separation,
intervened that the California Academic Standards Commission chose not to accept Barton’s suggestions (Boston, 2009). Barton has not limited his reach to the public schools of Texas and California. Barton is also an active member of the National Council on Bible curriculum in Public School (Boston, 2009). The goal of this organization is “to persuade public schools to adopt a fundamentalist-oriented Bible curriculum under the guise of teaching “about” religion (Boston, 2009, p.8). In fact, Barton serves as a member of the council’s advisory board (Boston, 2009). By including an individual such as David Barton early in the standards writing process, the Texas State School Board demonstrated its intent to promote social studies standards that reflect a conservative view of United States and world history.

The battle over the Texas state social studies standards came to a head in May of 2010 with the adoption of the state school board’s newly rewritten standards. Supporters of the revised standards, such as conservative activist Phyllis Schlaftly, have heralded the changes as “kicking ‘liberal bias’ out of the standards” (Texas Textbooks, 2010, p. 2). In an attempt to add what the board has determined as balance to the standards, a list of politically conservative individuals and organizations have been added for students to study. These additions include the aforementioned Phyllis Schlaftly, Newt Gingrich, the Moral Majority and the Heritage Foundation (Texas Textbooks, 2010). While there is nothing inherently wrong with including individuals and groups from all walks of life in the social studies standards, we must make sure that we do just that—
include all individuals and groups in the standards. Unfortunately, this is not what occurred in the revising of the standards. As these previously mentioned individuals and organizations were added, important historical labor and civil rights leaders such as Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Ted Kennedy and Sonia Sotomayor were removed (Texas Textbooks, 2010). The changes do not stop there. The standards now reflect the belief that Joseph McCarthy was vindicated in his actions during his political era (Texas Textbooks, 2010). Members of the Texas educational community as well as the national education community feel that these changes now represent an unbalanced view of United States and world history, and that the 2010 standards clearly promote a politically conservative bias which contradicts the board’s belief that they have returned balance to the standards.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Former Texas State school board member, Don McLeroy, stated that “the Texas history curriculum has been unfairly skewed to the left after years of Democrats controlling the board and that he just wants to bring it back into balance” (USA Today, 2010). Board members who voted in favor of these changes in the state’s history standards also believed that the previous standards reflected a liberal political agenda.

The process by which these standards were changed has come under heavy national scrutiny. Many educators have criticized these changes for politicizing education reflecting United States Secretary of Education, Arne
Duncan’s desire to leave politics out of curriculum design and debate (USA Today, 2010). Attempting to remove politics from curriculum design is a difficult if not impossible task. What we should be striving for is a curriculum that accurately and fairly reflects the many beliefs and views held throughout the history of the United States and the rest of the world. Curriculum should include an accurate representation of the histories of all peoples and that we give voice to all minority groups and women to ensure a fair historical treatment of all stakeholders. The purpose of this study is to examine if the Texas State School Board has implemented changes to their state standards which reflect a politically conservative ideology of history while promoting Judeo-Christian beliefs, a single sided view of capitalism as a benevolent economic system, the limitation of world history, the reflection of a balanced political representation of United States and early American history and a focus towards memorization of information versus critical thinking.

1.3 Research Questions

**Question 1** Do the 2010 Texas State Social Studies Standards reflect a politically conservative view of the United States? If so, how?

**Question 2** Do the 2010 Texas State Social Studies Standards demonstrate a preference for Judeo-Christian beliefs over other religious view-points? If so, how?

**Question 3** Do the 2010 Texas State Social Studies Standards promote a single-sided view of capitalism as an economic system? If so, how?
Question 4 Do the 2010 Texas State Social Studies Standards focus more on United States History and Texas History while limiting the inclusion of world history?

Question 5 Within the introductory section of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies standards documents, the authors state that critical thinking is an important component in these adopted social studies standards. Do these standards reflect a commitment to critical thinking or is an emphasis placed on student memorization of information?

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study analyzes the 2010 Texas state social studies standards. The analysis begins with the state’s kindergarten standards, proceeds through the elementary school standards, and finishes with the secondary school standards. The study only includes the social studies standards for courses which include United States History, early American History and World History.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to an analysis of the Texas State Social Studies Standards. The study was further limited to only those standards which focused on United States History, early American History and World History. The Texas State Social Studies Standards also include course standards for the academic fields of Psychology, Sociology and Research Methods; however, these standards were not included in the analysis. Therefore, this study is not
generalizable to the other academic content standards approved by the Texas State Board of Education in 2010 which were implemented in the 2011-2012 school year.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Content Analysis- “Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. As a technique, content analysis involves specialized procedures. It is learnable and divorceable from the personal authority of the researcher. As a research technique, content analysis provides new insights, increases a researcher’s understanding of particular phenomena, or informs practical actions. Content analysis is a scientific tool” (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18).

Conservatism- “Conservatives believe in individual responsibility alone, not social responsibility. They don’t think government should help its citizens. That is, they don’t think citizens should help each other. The part of government they want to cut is not the military, not government subsidies to corporations, not the aspect of government that fits their worldview. They want to cut the part that helps people. Why? Because that violates individual responsibility” (Lakoff, 2011).

Constructivist Leadership- “the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a shared purpose of schooling” (Lambert, 2003, p.423).
Criteria of Selection- “objective analysis of messages conveyed in the data being analyzed is accomplished by means of explicit rules…, which must be formally established before the actual analysis of data” (Berg, 2004, p. 267-268).

Curriculum- “curriculum refers in a broad sense to the substance or content of schooling, that is, to the knowledges, methodologies, and dispositions that constitute the experiences and the outcomes of schooling…. There is a formal curriculum that defines the core substance of schooling and an experienced curriculum that is taught and learned in the classroom” (Doyle, 1992, p. 487).

Latent Content- within content analysis, it refers to how “the analysis is extended to an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data… latent content is the deep structural meaning conveyed by the message” (Berg, 2004, p. 269).

Liberalism- George Lakoff divides liberalism into 2 branches: theoretical liberalism and political liberalism. For the purposes of this study I will use his definition for political liberalism: political liberalism “characterizes the cluster of political positions supported by people called ‘liberals’ in our everyday political discourse: support for social programs; environmentalism; public education; equal rights for women, gays, and ethnic minorities; affirmative action; the pro-choice position on abortion; and so on” (Lakoff, 2002, p. 21).

Manifest Content- within content analysis, it refers to “those elements that are physically present and countable…manifest content is comparable to the surface structure present in the message” (Berg, 2004, p.269).
Neo-conservatism- “Neo-Conservative values are highly traditional and include themes such as national identity, the family, morality, historical continuity with the past and a sometimes xenophobic rejection of alternative cultural values” (Crawford, 1996, p.208).

Neo-liberalism- “a market based view of the world that conceptualizes the good life largely as pursuit of wealth and material consumption within a highly competitive market-based system” (Sleeter, 2010, p. 194)

Site Based Management- “Site-based or school-based management shifts decision making authority from the central office to the schools. It reverses a trend, evident at least since the mid - 1960's, to try to improve school performance through general-purpose inструкtures of public policy - regulation, mandate, enforcement, and legal action. According to the theory of site-based management, all decisions of educational consequence are to be made at the school and none may be compelled by regulation in the district” ("What is site-based," 2010).
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The history of education in the United States reflects numerous attempts at creating a unified curriculum for all schools and academic subjects. These attempts continue at the national, state and local level. Curriculum developers, politicians, teachers, parents and students have much at stake when discussing the curriculum of our schools. While all school subjects face curriculum development and refinement, the fields of History and Social Studies have garnered much attention, and often this attention is fraught with tension and displeasure for all involved in the process of their design. Therefore, this chapter will include a review of early curriculum design struggles in History and Social Studies. I will then move to a discussion of contemporary curriculum development issues for History and Social Studies to provide a foundation for understanding the adoption of the 2010 Texas State History and Social Studies standards. The final section of this chapter will be a review of the role of politics in the design and implementation of curriculum in the nation’s schools, specifically looking at the growing influence of neoliberalism and neoconservatism on curriculum through the implementation of state standards and the push for national standards.
2.2 The Four Curriculum Ideologies

In order to gain a better understanding of where curriculum movements are heading, it is important to understand where we have been and what the different ideologies offer us in regards to changes in the current curricula used in the United States. While federal and state governments continue to influence school districts around the country through the enforcement of standards (Sleeter, 2010), ultimate control over what curriculum a school district chooses to implement rests with the state school board and the community it serves. Therefore, the four curriculum ideologies Schiro (2008) describes are utilized throughout the United States at the same time depending on the beliefs and desires of the communities these school districts and boards serve. The ultimate goal of each ideology is to develop an educated individual, but each has its own purpose for the achievement of that goal and the approaches used by educators varies between these philosophies as well.

The Scholar Academic Ideology took hold in the late 19th century. The ultimate goal of scholar academics is “acculturating children into society in such a way that they become good citizens” (Schiro, 2008, p. 13). In order to achieve this end, students study the academic disciplines, which embody the “shared knowledge” of the educated adult population (Schiro, 2008). According to Schiro (2008), this shared knowledge has been “collected by and residing within the academic disciplines found within colleges and universities” (p. 13). Specifically, these academic disciplines carry names such as history, mathematics, chemistry,
etc. what we have come to know as core academic classes in modern schools. More importantly, these courses reflect those academic disciplines found in higher education (Schiro, 2008). For curriculum workers who submit to this ideology, “It is the knowledge…of the academic disciplines that forms the content of the school curriculum” (Schiro, 2008, p. 13). Ultimately, scholar academics wish to introduce children to the “disciplines of knowledge” (Schiro, 2008, p. 17) and eventually help them “become active members of that discipline” (p. 18). Instead of simply teaching students about a particular academic discipline, scholar academics want students to learn, think and behave as actual university academics (Schiro, 2008). Therefore, the ultimate goal of scholar academics is to continue the growth of an academic discipline by creating new scholars within the various academic fields. Eventually this shared and learned knowledge will be passed on from generation to generation.

The Scholar Academic ideology continues to survive in curriculum development and has seen periods of growth and domination since its start. Looking to history we see that this particular ideology has reached high levels of activity in the 1890s, between 1950 through 1975 and it appears to be on the rise once again in the early part of the twenty-first century (Schiro, 2008). Even though this ideology is currently experiencing renewed activity, there have been points where little activity gave rise to the other ideologies, such as the Social Efficiency ideology.
During the decline of the Scholar Academic ideology in the early twentieth century, Franklin Bobbitt introduced the Social Efficiency Ideology in 1913 (Schiro, 2008). Bobbitt demanded that educators study the scientific techniques of production that industry used and to implement these techniques in the American curriculum (Schiro, 2008). To further his cause, Bobbitt published his book *The Curriculum* in 1918. This book presented his desire to create a curriculum designed through scientific technique (Schiro, 2008). Bobbitt (1918) believed that the purpose of education was to prepare children for specific activities in adult life. He further believed that these specific activities were observable in everyday life and that one need only “go out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which these affairs consist” (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 42). He goes on to note that these affairs will be both numerous and diverse, but that they will also be “definite, and particularized” (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 42). According to Bobbitt (1918), it is through these affairs that we will see “the abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations, and forms of knowledge that men need” (42). These become the objectives of Bobbitt’s curriculum, and curriculum designers then develop experiences through which children can achieve these necessary objectives thus preparing them to become productive adults (Bobbitt, 1918). Therefore, the overarching purpose of the Social Efficiency ideology is to prepare people to live and take part in society. This means that education serves a dual purpose according to Schiro (2008). He explains that the purpose of education for those who subscribe to this ideology is first to “perpetuate the
functioning of society, and second, to prepare the individual to lead a meaningful adult life in society” (Schiro, 2008, p. 63). Ultimately, children learn how to function and contribute as adults in our society and then they continue to perpetuate our societal model for future generations.

The Social Efficiency ideology has experienced varied levels of activity like that of the Scholar Academic ideology. According to Schiro (2008), it experienced its first peak in the 1920’s shortly after Bobbitt introduced it as a new form of curriculum development, and then met a brief decline in the 1930’s. However, activity once again increased in the 1950’s reaching another peak in the 1960’s where it again fell into decline. It has regained attention in the early twenty-first century and activity appears to be on the rise with renewed interest (Schiro, 2008). Interestingly, while the Social Efficiency Ideology had taken a hold on many curriculum developers, around the same period of time the Learner Centered Ideology provided a different view of what the American curriculum should look like.

We can trace elements of the Learner Centered Ideology as far back as the early seventeenth century. One of the earliest contributors to this ideology, John Amos Comenius, “emphasized that learning is developmental and that it progresses from concrete experience to abstract thought” (Schiro, 2008, p. 112). For Comenius, the individual or the student learned through doing and taking part in activities which required the learner to actually do what he or she was learning (Schiro, 2008). For instance, a student would learn to write by writing, to paint by
painting, to sing by singing, etc. Through these elements, Comenius provided a rudimentary foundation for Learner Centered Ideology; however, scholars have credited Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile*, published in 1762, with the ideas central to the ideology as a whole (Schiro, 2008). In *Emile*, Rousseau (1762) describes children as naturally good and society corrupt and that the purpose of education was to nurture this goodness while protecting children from the evils of society until they reached adulthood and could then resist corruption on their own. With this in mind, Schiro (2008) describes Rousseau’s desire for childhood to be a time period which is enjoyed and “not hurried through; that learning should proceed developmentally from direct experiences with nature to sensory experiences with concrete objects to abstract ideas; and that children’s natural growth should be the focus of education” (112). These early beginnings of the Learner Centered Ideology would eventually find their way to the United States and in the nineteenth century would take hold on the American Curriculum.

For curriculum developers who subscribe to the Learner Centered Ideology, their sole focus is the learner. Educators must always keep in mind the needs and interests of the learner and remember that,

The curriculum is to organize itself around the individuals’ intentions to learn rather than educators’ intentions to teach them; around what individuals want to learn rather than around what educators want them to learn; and around individuals’ learning styles rather
than around teachers’ preferred teaching styles. (Schiro, 2008, p. 102)

Furthermore, Learner Centered educators believe in the freedom and autonomy of the learner, and that all students have the right and ability to choose what they will learn (Schiro, 2008). It is important to note that this does not mean the learner determines the curriculum, but instead makes choices about what to learn within the curriculum. Educators still implement objectives for learners by making choices about what materials to provide them within the classroom (Schiro, 2008). Students then use these materials in ways that interest them, which leads to the study of reading, science, mathematics, etc. By determining the interests of the learner, the educator can then provide materials that lead to the achievement of the curriculum’s objectives.

As with the previous ideologies, the Learner Centered ideology has seen highs and lows in terms of activity. It appears to have reached its highest peak in the late 1920’s through the early 1930’s and then declined until the 1960’s. It reached another high level of activity around 1975 and once again declined but never disappeared (Schiro, 2008). Schiro (2008) argues that “the whole language movement, constructivist philosophy, and the ideology’s promotion of authentic assessment maintained Learner Centered influence on education until the end of the 20th century” (131). While the Learner Centered Ideology and the Social Efficiency Ideology fought for control over the American curriculum, a fourth
ideology, the Social Reconstruction Ideology, gained interest among curriculum developers.

As the name implies, the Social Reconstruction Ideology focuses on the reconstruction of society. Educators and curriculum workers who subscribe to this particular ideology, “assume that our society is unhealthy—indeed, that its very survival is threatened—because the traditional mechanisms developed by society to contend with social problems are incapable of doing their job” (Schiro, 2008, p. 133). Because they believe that society is somehow broken, they also, “assume that something can be done to keep society from destroying itself” (Schiro, 2008, p. 133). These two fundamental beliefs require that Social Reconstructionists create a vision of a society that is better than the one that currently exists as well as a plan on how to create this better version of society (Schiro, 2008). Inherent in this particular ideology lays the belief that the path to reconstructing a better society rests with education. According to Schiro (2008), it is through a well-designed curriculum focused on social reconstruction, that education “has the power to educate people to analyze and understand social problems, envision a world in which those problems do not exist, and act so as to bring that vision into existence” (p. 133). Because of these beliefs, Social Reconstructionists promote a more obvious political agenda than the previous three ideologies. They do not shy away from this aspect of the ideology, in fact, they unabashedly embrace it.
With the intent of transforming society into a better version of itself, the Social Reconstruction educator must involve him or herself politically. Schiro (2008) states that, “Social Reconstructionists emphasize that all educators promote one political agenda or another. If educators’ instructional efforts are not directed toward social reconstruction, then they are directed toward social maintenance—which is simply the opposite side of the political agenda” (p. 153). However, by promoting a political belief like this or any political belief, educators walk a very fine line of what the American public deems acceptable in their children’s education. Critics of the Social Reconstruction Ideology often refer to this as a form of social acculturation or imposition (Schiro, 2008). This criticism leads Social Reconstruction educators to argue “that social acculturation is unavoidable and that education cannot avoid being biased…. [They] believe that social acculturation is an inevitable consequence of living in social groups” (Schiro, 2008, p. 153). It is not surprising to see that this ideology gained a foothold during the Great Depression, when many Americans had felt disillusionment about the state of society at that time. Individuals felt a need to reconstruct society into something better, and it is during this time that the ideology reached its highest peak (Schiro, 2008). By 1950 it lost much of its support until the mid-1960’s through approximately 1975, where it regained much of its prowess as a curriculum ideology, only to once again lose support in the 1980’s (Schiro, 2008). However, since its last decline it has been making a slow but steady come back. Its strongest points appear to coincide with times of
economic downturns, and as the economy recovers the ideology seems to recede from popularity amongst the American public.

2.3 Early Struggles in the History and Social Studies Curriculum

History and Social Studies as academic subjects in American schools have faced numerous battles in the past as well as the present. Kliebard (2004) has gone so far as to describe these battles as “fierce culture wars” (p. 236) because of the content that this particular curriculum includes. Debates over what to incorporate in the History and Social Studies curriculum often includes defining ideas such as democracy, national identity and civic virtue, all of which carry heavy emotional attachment to those involved in the debates; however, it was not until the early part of the twentieth century that questions arose about whether the subject of history was able to accomplish this or if a broader field of studies, Social Studies, was needed to accomplish this. To gain a solid understanding of the modern development of school subjects in the United States, we need only look to the Committee of Ten report published by the National Education Association in 1894. This report has affected core academic subjects in secondary education since its inception. (Kliebard, 2004)

At the end of the nineteenth century, the Committee of Ten published its report on secondary school studies which included reports written by subcommittees about major individual academic subjects, including History. When describing the subcommittee for History Kliebard (2004) stated, “The Conference on History, Civil Government, and Political Economy was a
distinguished one” (p. 237). This subcommittee was headed by Charles Kendall Adams, president of the University of Wisconsin, and included such members as James Harvey Robinson, author of *Mind in the Making* (1921), as well as Woodrow Wilson, then a faculty member at Princeton University (Kliebard, 2004). This subcommittee’s final recommendations included,

a sequence of courses whereby history would be studied every year from the seventh to the twelfth grades: American history and elements of civil government in the seventh, Greek and Roman history in the eighth, French history in the ninth, English history in the tenth, American history again in the eleventh, and finally “a special period, studied in an intensive manner” in the twelfth. (Kliebard, 2004, p. 237)

The selection of these courses reflected the Committee of Ten’s desire to create a curriculum directed at preparing students for college whether or not students had chosen to pursue a college education upon completion of high school. This curricular decision faced a great deal of controversy, so the National Education Association created a new committee, which became known as the Committee of Seven (1899), to conduct a study on this issue and then report its findings to the American Historical Society (Kliebard, 2004). Not only did the Committee of Seven report on the issue of college entrance, but it also reported on the value of history and its “contribution to intellectual development” (238).
The Committee of Seven (1899) declared in its report, *The Study of History in Schools* that the curriculum of America’s schools should not be narrowly focused on the purpose of preparing all students for the requirements of a university education, but it should instead focus on preparing children to become productive young men and women. As far as the study of history was concerned, the Committee of Seven (1899) believed that students should not only study aspects of the physical world, but more importantly, the study of history should demonstrate the development of the human race. The Committee (1899) further noted that the study of history could perpetuate students’ intellectual growth by teaching the process of cause and effect as it related to human affairs. As with the Committee of Ten’s report, the Committee of Seven (1899) offered its recommendations for courses of study in secondary schools, which according to Kliebard (2004) was slightly shortened to “ancient history in the ninth grade, European history, medieval to modern in the tenth, English history in the eleventh, and American and civil government in the twelfth” (p. 238). For a short period of time history had a foothold in American schools, but the struggle between History and Social Studies would continue.

With the rise of the Social Efficiency Ideology in the early part of the twentieth century, we can see a renewed interest in the Social Studies curriculum. To deal with this resurgence in interest, the National Education Association appointed a new committee in 1916, which once again included James Harvey Robinson (Kliebard, 2004). The new committee’s report, *Cardinal*
**Principles of Secondary Education: A Report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education** (1918), offered similar recommendations to that of the Committee of Seven (1899) report for Social Studies but it included that the goal of education should be one of “social efficiency” (National Education Association, 1918, p. 9). The committee’s (1918) recommendations for Social Studies were divided between six years of study which was further divided into two “cycles,” the first of which delineated a course of studies for grades seven through nine, followed by a course of studies for grades ten through twelve including alternatives from which students could choose. Grades seven through nine would study European history, American history and civics, while grades ten through twelve would repeat studies in European and American history followed by a new addition titled Problems of Democracy (National Education Association, 1918). Kliebard (2004) points out that the most notable change between the two committees’ reports is the loss of Ancient history in the Cardinal Principles’ report. The lack of notable changes in the Cardinal Principle’s report would not go unnoticed, and serious challenges to both reports were on the horizon.

Perhaps one of the most notable challenges to the reports of the Committee of Ten, the Committee of Seven and the Cardinal Principals’ report came from David Snedden in 1917 (Kliebard, 2004). Snedden (1917) immediately began to question the factual based foundation of the curriculum, and the “memorization of highly concentrated facts and generalizations of almost encyclopedic extent and variety” (cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 240). He further
questioned “how facts and generalizations in history would function in the future lives of the students” (Kliebard, 2004, p.240). For Snedden (1917), the study and memorization of historical facts and dates provided little to the development of society which he ultimately believed was the purpose of education. Snedden (1917) further argued that the “demonstrated needs of society and of individuals must determine [the] objectives” (cited in Kliebard, 2004, p. 240) of education. Following these guidelines for the purpose of History as a subject in America’s schools would push it to the back burners of the curriculum. Snedden's recommendations for History would not go unchallenged, especially from those encamped within the Scholar Academic Ideology.

With this newly perceived threat to the discipline of History, historians came together under the direction of the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1920 to report on curriculum which they felt should be taught in the nation’s schools. By this time, these academics had accepted the title of Social Studies for this course of studies in elementary and secondary schools instead of History and that an important goal of the curriculum was to promote citizenship education. The Commission on the Social Studies, as it was known, included scholars from various academic fields within the social studies, such as political scientists, geographers, and historians, as well as educators. The AHA received further support for the commission’s efforts from the Carnegie Commission with a $50,000 grant. The Commission on the Social Studies included many notable members, such as Charles Beard and Franklin Bobbitt, but because of the
members’ diverse ideological views on curriculum the outcome lacked unity eventually opening it to outside criticism. It appears as though the members of the committee foresaw the possible criticisms of the day and attempted to include a broad view of Social Studies to include the possibility of multiple perspectives for the curriculum’s goals. To some extent Snedden was pleased that the committee regarded civic education as important but he was displeased with the notion that the study of Social Studies was a means to an end rather than the promotion of what he believed was acceptable civic behavior. The AHA’s committee never brought the debate over what to include in the curriculum to a close and as the committee continued to produce its recommendations the final outcome was that of political controversy and turmoil. The final volume in the committee’s publication drifted towards collectivism and away from History and Social Studies. (Kliebard, 2004)

The debate between whether to teach History or Social Studies never came to a complete close, but Kliebard (2004) notes that “an implicit compromise seems to have emerged. Social Studies overwhelmingly became the preferred term for the subject, but the actual content remained predominantly historical” (p. 242). Ultimately the teacher decided on the curriculum of the class, rather than the numerous committees vying for control. However, History had become a mainstay in the American curriculum with student enrollment in the course doubling between 1890 and 1910. By the late 1940’s one third of the high school population was registered in an American history course and by 1956 students
were required to take two Social Studies courses to graduate from high school
which stemmed from the belief that the goal of the courses was to promote good
citizenship. Due to the numerous Social Studies courses offered at that time,
approximately 98, it is difficult to ascertain what was actually required of students
in these courses. Debate continued about the History and Social Studies
curriculum, but in the late twentieth century that debate would shift to content
standards which were being used as a means to influence the curriculum.
(Kliebard, 2004)

2.4 Contemporary Struggles in the History and Social Studies Curriculum

In the last 30 years or so, control for the American curriculum has entered
a relatively new arena. Instead of attempting to rewrite curriculum for school
subjects, federal, state and local governments have worked on developing,
refining, implementing and enforcing standards for the subjects taught in
America’s schools. We can trace the impetus of the current standards movement
back to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence
state of crisis, which brought the focus on the state of our schools to a national
level. Fore (1998) explained, “School curricula, traditionally viewed in the USA as
a local responsibility, became an important state and national issue” (p. 560).
Apple (2001) noted that “the transformation of educational policies and
practices—or the defense of democratic gains in our schools and communities—
is inherently political” (p. 410). As of 2010 each state has a set of adopted
standards imposed upon their schools by the state governments through each state’s department of education. The purpose of these standards is to ensure accountability to all stakeholders in education. In order to enforce school accountability the states have moved to standardized testing to judge if schools are successfully meeting the requirements set forth in the standards. It is through the implementation of these standards that federal and state governments have influenced the curriculum of schools. The adoption of the 2010 Texas state History and Social Studies standards may represent the most recent attempt at influencing the curriculum, but it is not the only example of using standards to influence curriculum.

In 1992 President George H. W. Bush’s administration granted a contract to the National Center for History in the Schools of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). The Bush administration requested that the Center for History develop and write a set of voluntary national standards for United States and world history (Foster, 1998). To assist in funding efforts for this project, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the United States Department of Education provided a combined $1.75 million (Elson, 1994). The Center presented the final report in 1994 which included a broad agreement between representatives from education, parent teacher groups, and other organizations interested in the curriculum of history in the schools (Appleby, 1995). The co-directors, Charlotte Crabtree and Gary Nash, adamantly defended the process of collaboration utilized to develop and write these new United States standards for
history and emphasized to the public the democratic process they followed throughout the standard’s creation (Foster, 1998). The National Center for History in the Schools (1994) produced three separate publications as a result of their efforts: *National Standards for United States History: Exploring the American Experience, Grades 5-12; National Standards for World History: Exploring Paths to the Present, Grades 5-12; and National Standards for History in the Schools: Expanding Children’s World in Time and Space, Grades K-4*. According to Foster (1998) these new national standards could be broken into two types: historical thinking and historical understanding. The standards developed for historical understanding focused on content while the standards for historical thinking focused on process (Foster, 1998).

Foster (1998) explained that historical understanding provided the content or the information the students needed to learn in their history courses. The required knowledge for United States history was broken into 10 eras ranging from era 1, “Three Worlds Meet, Beginnings, to 1620” to era 2 “Civil War and reconstruction, 1850-77”, to era 10, “Contemporary United States” (p. 155). The Center created a total of 31 standards which covered the 10 designated eras of study. Five of these standards were devoted to historical thinking. These five standards included, “(i) chronological thinking; (ii) historical comprehension; (iii) historical analysis and interpretation; (iv) historical research capabilities; and (v) historical issues, analysis and decision-making” (p. 155). To help educators with these standards, each of the three reports from the National Center for History in
the Schools included suggestions for classroom activities at different grade levels which were intended to combine historical thinking and understanding. For example, students studying the Civil War and its causes could be asked to develop an argument using researched historical evidence on the premise that the war was unavoidable due to sectional differences in the United States. The students could choose to defend or refute this premise based on their research and understanding of the war. However, even with numerous examples for the different types of lessons and activities teachers could use provided with the standards, there was no guarantee that America’s school districts would implement them. The implementation of a national curriculum and standards in the United States has faced numerous internal hurdles,

By tradition and designs US education is explicitly decentralized. Accordingly, although the national standards for history offered the potential to influence the history curriculum at local and state levels, widespread adoption of the standards appeared possible only if they met the practical concerns of classroom teachers, matched the demands of local testing and curriculum policies, and adhered to the existing content of widely adopted textbooks. (p. 156)

Further complicating matters with these newly created standards was that they demonstrated an all-inclusive approach to history content without any thematic grounding. Foster (1998) describes the content of study as one where “students in the US were required to study an impressive, but largely impractical, sweep of
chronological events” (p. 156). With a vast amount of information to learn, students also needed to tackle the requirement for historical thinking. This also proved to be a difficulty with these national standards because “they fail[ed] to illustrate in any formalized way how students’ historical thinking might progress or develop as children mature” (p. 156). This proved to be a downfall for these standards that would help contribute to their end. (Foster, 1998)

One of the strengths of the standards developed by the National Center for History in the Schools was the inclusion of activities by which students could reach the goals of the standards. As previously stated, Crabtree and Nash included a plethora of activity examples that educators could use in the classroom when integrating the standards with the curriculum. It did not take long for attacks on these new national standards to appear, and in fact, the attacks began just before they were released to the public. Opponents of the national standards used the vast amount of example activities from which to launch their attacks. Lynne V. Cheney, then chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities during the Bush administration in 1994, led the attacks by political conservatives. Ironically, she approved the initial funding for the standards project. She was quoted in The Wall Street Journal describing these new standards as “The end of history” (Cheney, 1994), and Foster (1998) describes her diatribe as “a scathing attack which chiefly focused on the Standards for United States history” (p. 157). Foster (1998) explained that Cheney accused the authors of the national standards, Crabtree and Nash, “of promoting a politically
correct ‘revisionist agenda’ which devalued the achievements of the great white men of America’s past” (157). To support her accusations against the authors of the national standards, Cheney (1994) actually counted the number of times non-traditional groups or non-white groups were mentioned in the standards documents. To visually represent the discrepancies she encountered in her analysis of the standards, Cheney (1994) created a bar graph where she noted that individuals such as Paul Revere and Thomas Edison went unmentioned, while Joseph McCarthy and the Ku Klux Klan were named nineteen and seventeen times respectively. This began the onslaught of other political conservatives, such as Rush Limbaugh, talk show host; Pat Buchanan, former presidential candidate; and Phyllis Schafly, lawyer and president of Eagle Forum, regarding the national history standards. The Eagle Forum is a conservative and family interest group founded in 1972 (“Eagle Forum,” n.d.). Crabtree and Nash attempted to “illustrate how many of the examples used to discredit the standards were taken out of context and distorted to suit a right-wing political agenda” (Foster, 1998, p. 158). However the damage had been significant and “on 18 January 1995 the US Senate condemned the standards by a vote of 99 to 1. The White House cautiously distanced itself from the debate, and…the Senate rejected the entire concept of national standards” (Foster, 1998, p. 158). For a time the idea of national history standards disappeared from public attention while the states continued to develop and adopt their own set of standards for their schools to follow.
In 1995 the state of Virginia adopted new Social Studies standards for its elementary and secondary schools. The adoption process that took place in Virginia at that time was comparable to the process that took place in Texas in 2010. During the writing and revision process of the 1995 Virginia standards, Governor George Allen’s hand selected committees along with State Board members debated with professional educators over “opposing conceptions of the nature of knowledge, the role of social critique and the purpose of social studies education” (Fore, 1998, p. 559). Governor Allen appointed Michelle Easton, a former US Department of Education official during the Regan administration (1981-1989), to the Governor’s Commission on Champion Schools and Virginia’s State Board of Education. According to Fore (1998), Easton indirectly asserted that Virginia’s schools and teachers were responsible for the educational “crisis” in the state because they were failing to focus on academics. The only way to combat these failures was through the creation of rigorous standards measured through standardized academic testing to ensure accountability (Fore, 1998). Easton proved to be an important influence on the creation of the standards, and she was not alone in her task.

Governor Allen provided Easton an ally in her fight to create rigorous, measureable standards for the state of Virginia in the person of Lillian Tuttle. Allen appointed Tuttle to the Governor’s Commission on Champion Schools in 1994, and she was selected to chair the Commission’s academic standards and testing subcommittee (Fore, 1998). Tuttle was known for her fight against the use
of the “expanding horizons” elementary social studies curriculum which had been in use throughout most of the United States for decades (Ravitich, 1988). Fore (1998) describes this curriculum as one which is concerned with children’s various developmental stages. She explains the curriculum as follows:

In the early grades, it emphasizes concepts from anthropology, sociology and psychology. Beginning with a focus on the self in kindergarten, the home in first grade, the school in second grade, etc., the curriculum attempts to help students develop an understanding of human universals, specifically how people live and work in groups and how they interact with each other and their environments. (Fore, 1998, p. 564)

Camicia and Saavedra (2009) state that “the expanding horizons model structures learning so that younger students study the concrete and proximal and older students study the abstract and distal” (p. 504). Camicia and Saavedra (2009) explain that the expanding horizons models promotes an ethnocentric view of the world because it focuses on the central experiences of the child while not including the world outside of the child’s experiences. Tuttle believed that the expanding horizons curriculum was non-academic, and she chose carefully selected research that supported her position. She relied heavily upon Egan’s (1983) “Social studies and the erosion of education.” Egan (1983) held that children possessed the ability to develop historical understanding at an earlier age than previously believed. Egan (1983) stated “the main organizing principle
evident in the present social studies curriculum [expanding horizons] is based on a highly dubious interpretation of what children know best” (200), and by what they know best he refers to as the child’s immediate surroundings. He argues that children have learned a great deal that does not deal with their surroundings such as morals and ethics from their parents and other authorities and that by the time they enter formal schooling “they are eager to make sense of the world around them using intellectual tools” (Egan, 1983, p. 200). He further argued that because of these already present intellectual tools, children can use them to understand “Greek history as they use them to understand their own experiences” (Egan, 1983, p. 200). Tuttle used this evidence to promote the inclusion of more historical content in the earlier grades (Fore, 1998). Her push to remove the early horizons curriculum and replace it with the committee’s own standards gained steam because Egan’s arguments were quite persuasive. His argument that children possessed the necessary tools to learn more than just their immediate world credited children with a greater capability to learn about history than those who supported expanding horizons appeared to.

Easton and Tuttle continued to focus on their belief that Virginia’s curriculum had failed its students and much of the blame for this focused on teachers. To further their assertions for the need to include more historical content in the early grades, they turned to Diane Ravitch’s paper (1988) “Tot sociology”. In this paper, Ravitch (1988) argued for more historical content such as myths and legends in the early grades rather than following the expanding
horizons curriculum. Ravitich proved to be a valuable ally in Easton’s and Tuttle’s fight, and she was brought in to speak at a meeting between state board members and educators to promote these changes in the Virginia state standards (Fore, 1998). Through their efforts, Easton and Tuttle began to sway members of the Virginia state board to their line of thinking, most notably Democratic board members, Alan Wurtzel, and State Board of Education President Jim Jones. With a stronghold on the direction of the new Virginia standards, Easton and Tuttle were ready to begin the process of guiding the creation of the standards. With the full support of Governor Allen and public opinion on their side, they began to influence and eventually rewrite the Virginia state standards for social studies.

To facilitate the process of rewriting the Virginia state social studies standards, the Virginia Department of Education, run by its newly appointed Superintendent of Public Instruction, William Bosher, chose to contract out this job to the state’s school districts. Newport News Public Schools won the contract for the revision of the social studies standards and began to revise them following the conditions set forth in the contract. The contract stipulated that the standards had to be rigorous, measurable, concise and free of jargon. Upon completion of the revised standards, Newport News would present its revisions to the Department of Education who would then test them against the stipulations of the contract and finally present them to the Board of Education for final review. This was the process outlined in the contract for Newport News Public Schools;
however, the Department of Education would add a subcommittee, the academic standards and testing subcommittee of the Governor’s Commission on Champion Schools, to the process of review after Newport News submitted its first draft of the revised standards. Newport News was also notified that its revised standards would not be sent to the State Board until they had been approved by the new subcommittee. By doing this, Superintendent Bosher provided Governor Allen’s hand selected team control over the entire revision process. (Fore, 1998)

With ultimate control over the standards revisions in hand, Tuttle’s subcommittee immediately rejected Newport News Public Schools’ draft of the standards and declared the revised standards difficult to test because they were both non-academic and non-specific. The subcommittee went as far as to claim that the revised standards were also politically biased (Fore, 1998). According to Fore (1998), Sylvia Kraemer, a subcommittee member, argued that the authors’ inclusion of analyzing diverse cultures and ethnic groups in regards to their impact on the United States was proof of “ideological instruction” (p. 570). This was the opening the Governor’s Commission on Champion Schools, a hand selected committee appointed by Governor Allen in May 1994 whose purpose was to design a plan that would return academic integrity to the schools of Virginia (Fore, 1998), needed to take over the drafting process of the standards. Shortly thereafter, the Commission presented its version of the standards based on cultural literacy to the State Board who then released the standards to the
public without comment (Fore, 1998). But the subcommittee’s revision of the standards would not go unchallenged.

Virginia teachers and Parent Teacher’s Associations attended the public hearings to oppose the Commission’s revised state standards in droves. Opponents of the standards argued that they were developmentally inappropriate for young children and that they failed to promote the development of thinking skills as well as those skills needed for participating as an American citizen. Many of the teachers who chose to speak at the hearings decried the new standards as having a conservative bias along with a Western slant (Hsu, 1995). The Virginia State Board of Education quickly learned that they could not adopt the Commission’s revised standards as they were written because of opposition from the Virginia Education Association, a powerful lobbying group in the state legislature (Fore, 1998). Therefore, the board required further revisions to the newly drafted standards. State social studies leaders believed they had gained an opportunity to present their own draft of revised standards which they felt promoted a compromise between the Newport News team and the Governor’s Commission on Champion Schools (Fore, 1998). Tuttle and Easton refused this attempt because they claimed that educators did not receive permission from the State Board to create an alternate version of the standards and that the Board needed to maintain total control over writing process (Fore, 1998). The Virginia State Board of Education agreed with Tuttle and Easton and in May 1995, the
Board appointed a special task force of educators, and business and community leaders to develop another draft of the standards.

In order to maintain control over the development of the state standards, Tuttle and Easton along with Board member Allen Wurtzel elected to sit in on meetings of the subcommittee drafting the new standards for social studies (Fore, 1998). Fore (1998) believes that, “The fact that they chose the history subcommittee indicates the significance of the content of the history curriculum to the Allen team” (p. 571) and goes on to describe the meetings as “contentious” and filled with “major disagreements” (p. 572). Eventually, “a small writing group drafted a composite of the individual subcommittee reports to present to the Board” (p. 572). The board began to make revisions to the content that it had been presented with. Tuttle and Easton still found some standards objectionable, and decided that the best way to take total control over the content of the standards was to introduce a motion to create an editing committee comprised of four Board members to produce the final product (Fore, 1998). The Board approved this motion and even granted conditional approval to the new standards. Tuttle and Easton represented half of the committee with the final two members being Wurtzel and Jones, the two democratic board members they had won to their side early in the standards debate. These four began to make “extensive changes to the standards that had been conditionally approved by the full board” (Fore, 1998, p. 572). Four educators were invited to take part in the editing process; however, they had no vote in the process and had little to no
influence in the process (Fore, 1998). Tuttle, Easton, Wurtzel and Jones had gained control over the final version of the standards, and these edited standards were never sent back to the full Board for approval (Fore, 1995). It was through this process that Virginia gained its newly revised standards. This process illuminates how political control over standards creation can influence the curriculum of the Nation’s schools. Once hotly debated among scholars and philosophers, curriculum development had now entered the political arena at the state and federal levels.

2.5 The Effects of Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism on Curriculum through State and National Standards

The influence of neoliberalism and neoconservatism on American education has been profound, to say the least. The growing interrelationship of these two social, political and economic movements has continued to impact the curricula of our schools in history and social studies as well as all other content areas through a competitive free-market judged by standards based assessments (Apple, 2001, 2004). The United States continues to face a growing and continued push for the privatization of the American school system; this push reflects the ideals of neoliberalism. Neoliberals believe that relying on the competition of the free market system will promote better performing schools while forcing underperforming schools to change their methods. Sloan (2008) explains that “Central to neoliberal ideology is the idea that the unfettered market, not democratic institutions, should be the organizing agent for nearly all
political, social, economic, even personal decisions” (p. 557). Giroux (2002) argues that neoliberals attempt to undermine the existence of public schools through the free-market system. With this intense push for the free-market in schooling, consumers require a method to judge the performance of the nation’s schools. This is where neoconservatism enters the debate on education because of neoconservative ideologues’ push for standardized measures of school performance (Apple, 2004).

Neoconservatives believe that the influence of what they describe as progressive educational movements has created a cultural ignorance among students which is demonstrated through their lack of historical factual knowledge (Crawford, 1996). They also believe that we can repair the current problems in education by returning to a traditional educational paradigm, this paradigm reflects an idealized or “romanticized” vision of the past, and that this vision can be achieved through rigorous academic standards assessed by rigorous standardized testing (Apple, 2001, 2004). When we look at the 2010 Texas state history and social studies standards we can see these beliefs manifested throughout the addition of a plethora of facts that teachers are expected to cover in their history courses. Through the use of these standards and assessments, consumers of schools in a free-market system can then judge which schools are the best and which are substandard ultimately supporting the competition prevalent within the neoliberal ideology. However, what we are finding is that this push for competition in the free-market system has actually proved harmful for
students and student achievement (Apple, 2001, 2004, Sloan, 2008). This process creates numerous issues that actually perpetuate many of the same problems schools now face, and can in fact aggravate them, instead of eliminating them (Apple, 2001, 2004).

Few educators will argue with the public’s widely held belief that America’s schools have many problems. Issues such as race, gender, socio-economic status and social justice continue to plague us. Part of the reason for the birth of numerous educational ideologies stems from these problems and issues in our society (Kliebard, 2004). One of the mandates of the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires a closing of the education gap we find with race and gender and a demonstration of academic improvement of all students each year. In order to assess this, America’s schools are required to report standardized test scores to state governments and the federal government. Schools who fail to demonstrate annual yearly progress (AYP) receive a reprimand from the state which can include a loss of funds and, if after a number of years these schools continue to demonstrate a lack of improvement, they can be taken over by the state which has the option of removing the principal and faculty if deemed appropriate. Students who attend failing schools are provided the opportunity of using vouchers to attend charter and private schools instead of their failing schools. (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002) NCLB demonstrates the influence of neoliberalism and neoconservatism on American Education. The implementation of standards based testing provides communities the opportunity to compare
their schools with each other; this is reinforced with labels such as “failing” or “excelling” from the government. The use of the voucher system further supports the idea of a free market system in education because it allows, and even encourages, parents to use government money to send their children to private or charter schools which are not publicly run. Many neoliberals have described public schools as “government schools” in order to support their criticism of public run systems (Apple, 2001, Friedman, 1995, Richman, 1994). However, the free-market system has failed to provide much diversification and curriculum improvement from the traditional model followed by public schools (Power et al., 1994, Apple, 2001, 2004). Gillborn and Youdell (2000) believe that the free-market system of neoliberalism has failed to successfully remove the inequalities that continue to exist in schooling. In fact, Apple (2001, 2004) argues that the standards and assessment push of neoconservatives along with the choice of schooling by neoliberalism has actually reinforced these inequalities.

2.5.1 The Effects of Neoconservatism and Neoliberalism in England and the United States

In order to fully comprehend how neoliberal economic ideologies combined with neoconservative educational standards can affect curriculum in the United States, we need only look across the Atlantic to England. Apple (1996, 2000, 2001, 2004) has done a great deal of work investigating the influence of neoliberalism and neoconservatism on education in other countries in order to help us better comprehend the possible outcomes of implementing such policies
here in the United States. The information and data he provides in his research demonstrates that policies promoted by neoliberals and neoconservatives fail to remove the problems of inequality which a free market educational system claims to alleviate and instead continues to entrench the problems of the achievement gap (Apple, 2001, 2004). Apple (2001) described England’s neoconservative enforcement of standards and testing in a neoliberal free market as one that changes the focus of the school “from student needs to student performance and from what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school” (p. 413). In essence, because parents have the ability to choose a school in a free market system, the schools need to find students who provide them with higher test scores in order to establish their credibility as a good school. In order for parents to judge which schools were successful, England published school test scores, and these were used as the basis for determining the good schools from the bad, leading the schools to search out “motivated” parents with “able” students (Apple, 2001, p. 413). Perhaps what is most notable in this process of schools looking at students in terms of what the child can do for the school is the negative effects this paradigm shift has on special education students. “‘Special needs’ students are not only expensive, but deflate test scores” (Apple, 2001, p. 414), and because of this, schools in the free-market system promoted in England began to shy away from these students and shifted monetary resources traditionally used for special needs students towards marketing and public relations. Maintaining high test scores based on standardized assessments in a
neoliberal economic system lead to the disenfranchisement of populations that have fought so hard to gain equality in the educational system of England, and we can see that happening in the United States as well.

Kris Sloan's (2008) study of Glendale elementary school delineates the negative effects of the enforcement of neoliberal management styles upon administrators, faculty and students in the United States. Sloan (2008) illuminates in her study that the district’s shift from a site-based management style to “a more centralized, corporate management structure left Glendale teachers and administrators both frustrated and vulnerable” (p. 563). This shift was one that moved to a more neoliberal business hierarchical structure, which is a top-down system. School principals in a system such as this become instructional leaders rather than shared constructivist leaders (Cuban, 1988) as promoted in a site-based management system. When this shift in management styles took place, the school’s principal, who had been previously trained by the school district administration to employ a constructivist leadership style, found herself in a precarious position (Sloan, 2008). When the principal sided with teachers against newly implemented district mandated curricular measures, an assistant superintendent chastised this behavior as unprofessional. After this event, numerous rumors began to surround the principal’s job security. Many teachers believed that she would lose her job if the school failed to receive the state rating desired by district officials, and these rumors proved true when the school fell just short of receiving that desired rating (Sloan, 2008). As Sloan
(2008) explains, “The newly introduced, neoliberal discourse on leadership, in the end, limited the abilities of teachers, even community members, to meaningfully affect changes in school curriculum” (p. 564). The new program adopted by the school district required a strict testing regimen which limited all stakeholders in their ability to transform the curriculum in meaningful ways for the students and community (Sloan, 2008). This new testing regimen led to some disturbing confessions by the teachers of Glendale elementary school.

As part of the new curriculum program adopted by the school district, the administration possessed the ability to track student test scores in conjunction with student grades. The superintendent believed that as long as teachers strictly followed the newly prescribed curriculum, students’ grades and test scores would closely match one another (Sloan, 2008). Because of this belief, teachers began to adjust student grades of those courses tested to ensure comparability. Sloan (2008) states, “several Glendale teachers informed me that they lowered students’ quarterly grades in ‘tested’ subjects rather than have a discrepancy between the two send a ‘red flag’ to district level administration” (p. 568). This also led to a higher attrition rate of teachers at Glendale elementary school, causing the school to lose many of its good teachers (Sloan, 2008). Sloan (2008) further indicates that before the implementation of the district’s newly adopted curriculum, students’ test scores indicated steady gains as well as progress towards closing the achievement gap; however, since the implementation of the new accountability system, the school has only achieved a “Recognized” rating
from the state only once in 1997, while the other years they received an “Acceptable” rating (Sloan, 2008).

The implementation of state standards and the continued debate over national standards for curriculum in the United States demonstrates the movement for more political control over what to include in the curriculum. The influence of neoconservative ideals of a romanticized past on the creation of history and social studies standards along with the desire to enforce these standards through testing has led to frustration for educators, concerned parents and community leaders. The adoption of the 2010 Texas state history and social studies standards gained national attention because many believed the standards promoted a shift to a neoconservative ideal about our nation’s past. The standards do appear to place a heavy emphasis upon historical names and dates which reflects the “cultural knowledge” that Crawford (1996) referred to in her work and the “romanticized” past of which Apple (2001, 2004) described. I will discuss these issues more fully in my analysis of the Texas state history and social studies standards.

2.6 Conservatism and Education

Finally, a major influence upon American education has been the conservative movement. Conservatives are heavily interested in education in the United States and have fought against progressive movements that have appeared in the development and evolution of our nation’s schools. What is at issue for conservatives in our schools is their belief that they have “seen their
system of values under attack—from feminism, the gay rights movement, the ecological movement, the sexual revolution, multiculturalism, and many more manifestations” (Lakoff, p. 229, 2002). Conservatives see the values of these morals taught in schools and feel that their moral values are under attack because they do not share these morals and, in fact, believe that the types of morals they see taught in schools have led to society’s ills (Lakoff, 2002). Lakoff (2002) further argues that conservatives believe that their moral system is “the only true American moral system” (p.229). Taking this into account explains why many conservatives argue that including multiculturalism, feminism, gay rights, etc. falls under the guise of liberalism. Liberals believe that we need to teach these aspects of history as advances, “moral advances—-in American culture and civilization” (Lakoff, p. 231, 2002). Because these are seen as advances that means there exists a dark side to American history, and by studying our past abuses conservatives may feel that we are disparaging America rather than supporting it; however, Lakoff (2002) explains “That this is not putting down America. On the contrary, it is part of the glory of America that the truth of past abuses by our government and our society at large can be told and the abuses corrected for future generations” (p. 231). Because public schooling includes a study of multiculturalism and the like, and their belief that their moral system is under attack, many conservatives have fought public education. These conservatives have allies in this fight in the form of conservative Christians (Lakoff, 2002). Conservative Christians who can afford to, have been home
schooling their children or creating private schools in an attempt to keep their children away from these ideas, and “feel that they should not have to pay for public education they don’t use—and can’t if they are to control what their children are taught and who they associate with” (Lakoff, p. 232, 2002). Public education has not been dismantled in the United States so this has led many conservatives to attempt to influence educational standards, and these attempts have proven successful in places like Texas.

Many conservatives believe that a liberal approach to education has led to diminished standards in our schools. In order to correct this Lakoff (2002) argues that conservatives believe that the social problems affecting our schools can be solved by adopting “conservative political policies, and using private enterprise and competition to produce high quality schools” (p. 233). By adopting conservative values and morals and their notion of self-discipline and creating standards based upon “the classics of Western culture that are tried and true and have withstood the test of time” (Lakoff, p. 234, 2002) we can cure the ills of our current educational system. We can see standards that represent conservative morals and values in the 2010 Texas state social studies standards. Conservatives would like to see a system in place that uses rewards and punishments, along with a rigorous system of grading that fails those students who do not perform to their set of standards (Lakoff, 2002). The way the Texas state standards have been written could allow for a standardized assessment to easily evaluate if the standards have been covered in classrooms. A process
such as this will reward hard work and self-discipline and allow the cream to rise to the top while forcing those who are weaker to either work harder next time “or go through life as failures” (Lakoff, p.234, 2002) as viewed through a conservative lens. Lakoff (2002) points out that this is in stark contrast to a liberal view where children are nurtured and encouraged to ask questions rather than to regurgitate answers. In the conservative view of education students learn because of rewards and punishments versus a system where students learn because they are interested and it is important to them.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the specific methodology used in the research study. The first section of chapter 3 explains and describes the process of content analysis. The second section discusses the curriculum and educational ideological beliefs of the researcher in the study in order to disclose any personal bias the researcher may have. The third section describes the methods of data collection used in the current study. The fourth section of chapter three describes the process of data analysis in the study. The fifth section discusses the trustworthiness of the study and includes the procedures used to avoid bias to ensure validity.

3.2 Content Analysis

Content analysis is a technique in which researchers can examine written documents or transcripts of recorded communication (Berg, 2004). However, if we look at content analysis in a larger perspective, we understand that it is “any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1968, p.608). Looking at content analysis this way means that researchers can conduct an analysis on anything containing text or anything that can be translated into text such as videotapes and even photographs (Berg, 2004). In order to achieve and maintain an objective analysis, researchers must follow explicit rules called criteria of
selection, and these criteria must be selected before the researcher can begin an analysis of the data (Berg, 2004). Berg (2004) states, “The criteria of selection used in any given content analysis must be sufficiently exhaustive to account for each variation of message content and must be rigidly applied so that other researchers or readers, looking at the same messages, would obtain the same or comparable results” (p. 268). Sellitz et al. (1967) describe this as a type of reliability of the measures utilized by the researcher and eventually a validation of the study’s findings. During the development of the criteria of selection, categories will begin to emerge, and it is important that the researcher attempt to keep as much of the exact wording of the text as possible. Furthermore, it is important that the researcher refrain from using “superficial applications of irrelevant categories” (Berg, 2004, p. 268). By adhering to this process, the researcher is better able to eliminate personal bias which otherwise might lead him or her to only include material which supports his or her hypothesis (Holsti, 1968). In order to further strengthen the validity of content analysis researchers must decide how to limit the analysis.

Content analysis can be limited in two ways: manifest content and latent content. Manifest content simply refers to the number of times that certain textual elements, such as words or phrases, are actually present, while latent content refers to the process of interpretive reading of the symbolism present within the text (Berg, 2004). Researchers have debated which of these two should be used in a formal analysis; however, Berg (2004) believes that it is useful to utilize both
in the process of data analysis and offers a basic rule to follow in this process, the researcher should include “at least three independent examples for each interpretation” (p. 270). Berg (2004) further notes that during the process of analyzing latent content that the researcher should provide “detailed excerpts from relevant statements (messages) that serve to document the researchers’ interpretations” (p. 270). Following this process helps the researcher avoid bias in the data analysis process while offering evidence to support his or her findings. Once the researcher has decided to use manifest content, latent content or a combination of both, he or she must decide the level at which he or she plans to sample and which units will be counted.

The process of sampling includes differing levels or elements depending upon what the researcher wants to analyze. Researchers may choose to remain at one level/element or utilize various levels/elements during the analysis of the text under study. Berg (2004) describes these levels/elements as follows: “words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, sections, chapters, books, writers, ideological stance, subject topic, or similar elements relevant to the context” (p. 271). This is not an exhaustive list of levels that a researcher may use, and the researcher can certainly choose to analyze other types of messages. Most importantly, the researcher must be sure to choose conceptual levels appropriate to the message he or she has chosen to sample (Berg, 2004). Once the researcher has decided upon the level of his or her study, it is time to move into the process of coding all data.
The process of coding in a content analysis requires a great deal of time and effort from the researcher. To begin the process of coding, the researcher must first select the types of categories data can be sorted into. Strauss (1987) explains that researchers can design categories in one of three ways: inductively, deductively or a combination of the two. The process of induction requires that researchers fully engulf themselves in the text in order to discover the themes embedded in the various messages (Abrahamson, 1983). Berg (2004) notes that “the development of inductive categories allows researchers to link or ground these categories to the data from which they derive” (p. 273). The process of deduction relies on the creation of categories from a theoretical perspective, and then the text provides the means by which a hypothesis can be tested (Berg, 2004). Finally, researchers may use both induction and deduction in the process of determining categories for the text as Berg (2004) argues,

Certainly, it is reasonable to suggest that insights and general questions about research derive from previous experience with the study phenomena. This may represent personal experience, scholarly experience (having read about it), or previous research undertaken to examine the matter. Researchers, similarly, draw on these experiences in order to propose tentative comparisons that assist in creating various deductions. Experience, thus, underpins both inductive and deductive reasoning. (Berg, 2004, p. 273)
Once the researcher has identified the categories it is time to decide what elements to count in the text.

When conducting a content analysis, researchers may choose from seven major levels/elements. Sellitz et al. (1959) and Berg (2004) define these levels/elements as words, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts, and semantics. Researchers can choose to simply conduct an analysis of one of the seven levels/elements or they may choose to include a combination of these levels/elements. Researchers who focus on a word in their content analysis have chosen to analyze the smallest level/element in written text which often results in a frequency distribution of the specific word chosen for analysis. Those who choose to analyze themes will generally look at simple sentences, a sentence with a subject and predicate. Berg (2004) believes that analyzing themes is more useful than single words, but the researcher must decide in advance in which location a theme will be searched for, such as in a paragraph, chapter, etc.

Researchers who choose to analyze character are actually analyzing the number of times a person is mentioned rather than just words. The next level/element Sellitz et al. (1959) and Berg (2004) describe is the paragraph. According to Berg (2004) “The paragraph is infrequently used as the basic unit in content analysis chiefly because of the difficulties that have resulted in attempting to code and classify the various and often numerous thoughts stated and implied in a single paragraph” (p. 274). When analyzing an item, the researcher is looking at an entire message which could come in the form of a book, a speech, an interview,
Berg (2004) states, “The use of concepts as units to count is a more sophisticated type of word counting” (p. 274). Researchers who choose to analyze concepts are actually looking at ideas in a message, such as the idea of maturity. Researchers then go through the message and count the number of words that represent that specific idea. Using concepts as the element of analysis often leads to latent content rather than manifest content (Berg, 2004). The final level/element that a researcher can choose to analyze is semantics. When analyzing semantics, researchers include a count of words but go further and look at how the words are used in the text, they are looking at the strength of a word used in a sentence when compared to the overall feeling of the rest of the sentence (Sanders & Pinhey, 1959). Once researchers have chosen which level/element or levels/elements will be analyzed, they begin the process of open coding.

The purpose of open coding is simply to open the analysis as widely as possible. Therefore, before a researcher begins to make interpretations or ask questions from the data that comes forth during the process of coding, he or she must ignore these until all information has been coded (Berg, 2004). By doing this, the researcher is better able to perform a complete and thorough analysis of the data. Strauss (1987) offers four guidelines for researchers when conducting the open coding of a content analysis: “(1) ask the data a specific and consistent set of questions, (2) analyze the data minutely, (3) frequently interrupt the coding to write a theoretical note, and (4) never assume the analytic relevance of any
traditional variable such as age, sex, social class, and so forth until the data show it to be relevant” (p. 30). By following these suggestions during the process of open coding, the researcher will be better prepared for the next task of a content analysis: coding frames.

After researchers complete open coding they then move into coding frames. Berg (2004) equates this to the accomplishment of content analysis. “The first coding frame is often a multileveled process that requires several successive sortings of all cases under examination. Investigators begin with a general sorting of cases into some specified special class” (Berg, 2004, p. 280). In other words, the researcher conducts an intensive coding around a single category. Once this is accomplished, researchers continue the process until all the data has been sorted and classified. If need be, these classifications can be further subdivided as needed during the coding process (Strauss, 1987, Berg, 2004). As the researcher discovers more questions and answers more categories and classifications are needed. This process must be exhaustive to ensure that all the data has been thoroughly analyzed. Upon completion of the coding process and analyzing all the data the researcher must test and verify his hypothesis.

In order to test and verify the research hypothesis, numerous scholars recommend a process described as negative case testing (Berg, 2004; Creswell, 1998; Denzin, 1978; Lindesmith, 1952; Manheim and Simon, 1977; Robinson, 1951). In this process, the researcher begins by simply making a hypothesis
based on an observation he has made from the collected data. Once a hypothesis has been made, the researcher then meticulously searches through all the data and attempts to locate the existence of any negative cases, in other words, the researcher attempts to find cases that do not fit the hypothesis. If the researcher discovers a negative case he must either reformulate the hypothesis to include the negative case or discard the hypothesis all together, or he can simply choose to discard the negative case. Discarding a negative case should only take place once the researcher has demonstrated that the case is not part of a pattern. Once these decisions have been made for each negative case discovery, the researcher must finally make a close examination of all cases to verify the analysis. (Berg, 2004) Howard S. Becker (1998) iterates the negative case testing process in his approach which he calls the null hypothesis trick. More importantly, Becker (1998) believes that researchers must approach their data with the belief that no patterns or relationships exist in the data and that during the analysis the researcher must identify the possible conditions needed for the creation of patterns. Esterberg (2002) explains that a researcher using the null hypothesis trick should state that a relationship does not exist and then search for evidence that clearly supports the existence of a relationship. Berg (2004) does point out that there are concerns for this type of analysis process, for example he states that “the search for negative cases sometimes neglects contradictory evidence or distorts the original hypothetical relationship” (p. 284).
In order to avoid these concerns he offers a list of safeguards that a researcher should implement:

First, whenever numbers of cases allow, examples that illustrate a point should be lifted at random from among the relevant grouped cases.

Second, every assertion made in the analysis should be documented with no fewer than three examples. Third, analytic interpretations should be examined carefully by an independent reader to ensure that their claims and assertions are not derived from a misreading of the data and that they have been documented adequately. Finally, whenever inconsistencies in patterns do emerge, these too should be discussed in order to explain whether they have invalidated overall patterns. (Berg, 2004, p.284)

By including these safe guards in the research design, the researcher can avoid the action of exampling coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Exampling is simply discovering or looking for examples that fit with the researcher’s predetermined beliefs about his theory instead of allowing for the natural development of patterns in the data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). “A common rule of thumb is that a minimum of three occurrences of something can be considered a pattern” (Berg, 2004, p. 287). Through this process the researcher can feel more secure in verifying his hypothesis of the analysis.

3.3 Ideological Beliefs Held by the Researcher

In regards to education and curriculum I hold numerous beliefs about the purpose of education and curriculum design, as all educators do. I believe that
social studies and history courses are very important for all students. Through the study of people, culture, geography and history students learn that their country and world are ever changing. These courses provide students with the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about the past, the present and the future. It is through the study of history that we learn about past mistakes as well as triumphs. This provides a citizenry the ability to learn from the past and allows us to avoid making the same mistakes in the present and the future. It also provides us with the ability to look at what has proved successful in the past so that instead of starting from scratch and reinventing the wheel, to some extent, we have a solid platform from which to begin new processes or ideas. Therefore, I believe it is imperative that all students receive a comprehensive study in the field of social studies. These studies should include American history and world history. Students should study cultures from around the world because many of those cultures have found their way to the United States. Students must understand the many differences and similarities between peoples of all cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds in order to gain a greater understanding of our country and world. As educators, it is our job to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the importance of these studies.

The curriculum of our schools is a living entity, or I believe it should be. As scholars, we know that knowledge does not stagnate. We are constantly learning and discovering new things. The curriculum should reflect those changes as we come across and understand them. The social studies and history curriculum of
our schools must include the good, the bad and the ugly. Teachers need to be allowed to present this information to students so that the students can evaluate and analyze the information while receiving guidance from the teacher. Each of us holds certain political biases and beliefs. As educators it is our job to keep these in check. We must present the curriculum to students in a way that encompasses all beliefs and knowledge, not just those that we feel exemplifies our own beliefs. Therefore, when designing curriculum as well as curriculum standards those involved in the process must maintain a measured eye.

Curriculum design and standards design are highly political acts and can promote heated arguments during the process of creation. However, we must ensure that curriculum and standards decisions never demonstrate purposeful bias. A well-educated student will be able to make his or her own decisions about world events if provided with appropriate and historically correct information. Students must learn to think for themselves, and it is the job of educators to help students develop the tools necessary for critical thought.

I believe that social studies and history courses must include more than just rote memorization of historical figures, events, dates and places. Students must also learn how to evaluate these and explain their relevance to the history of our entire world. Students should be able to explain the importance of our past and demonstrate how the past affects our present and future. Social studies and history courses are an integral part of the American school’s curriculum. If we relegate it to just a course of simple facts then we do our students a disservice in
their education. Learning to think as historians helps to promote a fully informed citizen of our country and the world.

Finally, political ideologies play an important role in this study. Therefore, it is important to include an explanation of my own political ideology. My political beliefs, like many people, color how I see the world. I was raised in a politically conservative home. This explains why I initially registered as a Republican. Even though my political affiliation was with the right, I never voted strictly adhering to party lines. In fact, my ballots reflected more of an independent bend more than anything else. My beliefs have never simply fallen completely left or right on the political spectrum. Although I have never officially changed political parties, I now consider myself an independent centrist. Fiscally I lean towards the right, but socially I lean towards the left. When the 2 sides come into conflict with each other, more often my left leaning social side prevails; however, this happens only after I have placed a great deal of thought and time into formulating a conclusion.

3.4 Data Collection

The data for this study was obtained from the 2010 History and Social Studies standards adopted by the Texas State School Board to be implemented for the 2011-2012 school year. These state History and Social Studies standards are made available to the public on the Texas Education Agency’s public website, www.tea.state.tx.us. This study does not include any participants and is solely an analysis of these adopted content standards.
3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through the process of content analysis. Before beginning the process of analyzing the standards, I spent a great deal of time reading through the entire standards documents for elementary, middle and high school. After completing my first reading of each of the documents I gained a better understanding of how the standards documents were formatted. The formatting of the standards proved to be helpful during the actual analysis because it allowed me to move through each of the documents to look for supporting evidence as well as negative cases that might refute my initial findings. Once I gained a solid grasp on the formatting of the documents I began another reading of each document by looking for themes, words or phrases that represented political preferences or biases in the standards. I chose to go with this category first because this was one of the major issues brought forth by the Texas board of education. The process I used was relatively simple, as I read each standard and its supporting objectives I used a blue highlighter to mark any information that appeared to show a political preference for either conservatism or liberalism. I also made notes beside the highlighted information as to whether I thought it demonstrated a conservative or liberal preference. After completing my reading for this first sorting I then conducted research on historical information in the standards that I thought might demonstrate political preferences. When I learned that selected information demonstrated a bias or preference I then separated that information into three subcategories: liberal ideology, conservative
ideology and no political ideological bias (See Figure 1). After completing this process for my first category I then moved on to my next sorting.

For the second sorting of the standards I chose the category of religious preference or bias. I chose this category because it gained much attention during the rewriting process of the standards. As with the political preferences category I read each standards document looking for words and phrases that demonstrated religious preferences as well as standards that reflected the separation of church and state. Using a pink highlighter this time, I highlighted information that fit within this category. After completing my sorting for this category, I then returned to the selected information and noted if it demonstrated preference or bias in any way. Once again, I went through and conducted research on the selected information to make sure that my analysis was accurate. Information that demonstrated bias was sorted into Judeo-Christian and other world religions (See Figure 1). Any information that I had selected in my reading as possibly biased that proved not to be was removed from the analysis. I also used this as an opportunity to find negative cases that refuted any bias or preference. After completing my first two sortings I found the need to include two more categories. When I began the process I was only looking at political bias and religious bias, but after a number of readings it was apparent that other themes arose.

The third category I selected for inclusion in my analysis was the inclusion of history. As I read through the standards I realized that there was an absence of world history throughout elementary and middle school. After completing my
second sorting I began a third by reading through each document this time looking for words and phrases geared towards world history and U.S. history. Using an orange highlighter I went through the standards and objectives highlighting information that fit my criteria of world and U.S. history. While highlighting I made notations as to whether the information reflected world or U.S. history. Once I completed this reading of the standards I then went back to the selected information and further separated the U.S. history standards into the subcategories of U.S. history and Texas state history (See Figure 1). After completing this sorting I moved on to the final category of my analysis.

The fourth category that revealed itself to me during my analysis was economic systems. Once again I conducted another reading of each of the standards looking for words and phrases that reflected a bias or preference towards an economic system. Using a green highlighter this time, I highlighted information that dealt specifically with economic systems or philosophies. I also made notations next to the standard as to whether it appeared to be concerned with capitalism, socialism or communism. Once I finished my initial sorting I then separated the economic category into two subcategories: capitalism/free market and other economic systems (See Figure 1). With my sorting completed and categories selected I moved on to analyzing each of the categories and
subcategories for themes to determine if preferences or biases actually existed.

Once the standards were categorized by their changes, I then moved into an analysis of what the changes demonstrated in relation to the study’s research questions. During the process of categorizing the standards, I realized that each of the standards began with a verb or verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix). Benjamin Bloom, along with his colleagues published the Taxonomy in 1956 in the work, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook 1: Cognitive Domain*. The purpose of this Taxonomy was to provide a system of classification for educational goals. Bloom’s Taxonomy is broken into 3 major sections: the cognitive domain, the affective domain, and the psychomotor domain (Travers, Elliott, & Kratochwill,
1993). The list of action verbs found in the Texas state standards fall in the cognitive domain. This domain is divided into 6 classes: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Travers, Elliott, & Kratochwill, 1993). These 6 classes can be divided into 2 levels: higher-order thinking skills and lower-order thinking skills. The 6 classes move from lowest to highest in the taxonomy where knowledge is the lowest skill and evaluation is the highest skill (Travers, Elliott, & Kratochwill, 1993). Travers et al. (1993) explain the six classes in the following ways. The lowest of the 6 classes is knowledge. At the knowledge level students are expected to recall specific facts. Moving into the second class, comprehension, students should be able demonstrate an understanding of what is communicated. The third class of Bloom’s taxonomy is application. At the application level students are expected to generalize abstract information, and then use this information in concrete situations. The fourth class in the taxonomy is analysis. Students operating in this class should demonstrate the ability to deconstruct a given problem into smaller parts and then show the relationships between these subparts. The fifth class of the Taxonomy is synthesis. Here, students are expected to take different parts of a task or information and put them together to form a whole. Finally, class 6 is evaluation. This is the highest of the 6 classes and sits atop Bloom’s Taxonomy as requiring the highest level of critical thinking. Students operating in the evaluation class should be able to use different criteria to make judgments about information or tasks (Travers, Elliott, & Kratochwill, 1993). Since the Taxonomy is broken into
higher-order thinking skills versus lower order-thinking skills I decided to examine, through averaging, if the standards supported the State Board’s claim in the introductory portion of the standards of the importance of critical thinking. In order to complete this, I simply used the action verb list (appendix) and highlighted all of the verbs the state board used. I then averaged the number of action verbs used at each level of Bloom’s Taxonomy to judge if the standards’ strands operated in the upper portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy or the lower portion of the Taxonomy. Finally, by analyzing the 2010 standards I attempted to discover if the social studies standards actually demonstrate a political preference, economic preference and/or a religious preference. I also hoped to learn if the changes in the standards actually reflected a more balanced change as the Texas State School Board has argued.

3.6 Trustworthiness

Before I began the study, I proposed my research questions and methodology to my doctoral committee. Upon receiving approval from my committee, I began the study. The analysis of the study was written in such a way as to provide complete transparency through the entire process. I provided complete written descriptions of the process and the obtained data. Throughout the process of data analysis I employed the null hypothesis trick suggested by Becker (1998) as described in the content analysis section of this chapter in order to verify my findings. This method requires that the researcher approaches his analysis with the idea that there are no themes within the content selected for
analysis that supports his hypothesis. When information appears that refutes the null hypothesis the researcher can make a case for his hypothesis. Through this process the researcher must find more than one example that refutes the null hypothesis and the recommended number was three examples. The null hypothesis trick is a method that utilizes negative case analysis. By combining these methods I was able to determine if the themes that appeared during the analysis contained enough evidence to support my hypothesis. When using these methods throughout my analysis I only included information that was supported by a minimum of three examples throughout the standards documents. To further ensure honesty and trustworthiness during the study I used the peer review process with outside readers who have earned their doctorates. I asked colleagues who have their degrees in history and education to review my analysis of the standards after having read the actual standards. I specifically asked them to critique the historical accuracy of the information I presented as well as any areas where my own political biases might appear. If they discovered any I asked another peer to review the same information without sharing the previous critique of the analysis. If this peer provided a similar critique I either rewrote the analysis for that specific information or removed it completely after having a lengthy discussion of each evaluators’ critiques as supported by Creswell (1998). In the situation of a rewrite I then asked my reviewers to critique what I specifically rewrote. During the sorting process I spent a great deal of time researching historical information that I was unsure of
as well as seeking out colleagues in the field of history to ask questions about this information. I did not rely upon a single colleague for this information; I went to multiple sources to confirm historical accuracy to ensure that the information I learned was free from bias and demonstrated what was generally accepted in the academic history community.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS: TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STANDARDS

4.1 Introductory Section of the Elementary Standards

Each of the standards documents for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies is broken into an introductory section and a knowledge and skills section. The introductory section provides a description of the course along with an explanation of the requirements for that grade level or course level. The introduction is an important part of the standards documents because it provides educators with specific instructions and definitions that must be implemented in the grade level or course level curriculum. The introduction includes 8 parts in the elementary standards document. 8 parts each begin with a specific description for the purposes and goals for that particular year of instruction.

Beginning in kindergarten, according to part 1, students study social studies beginning with a student’s self, home, family and classroom. As students progress through each year of schooling, part 1 demonstrates a movement away from the self and gradually into the outlying community, state, region, country and eventually the world. Part 1 includes references to geography, sociology, anthropology, citizenship and history. Beyond these references, part 1 includes a specific guideline that students study American beliefs as represented by symbols, customs and celebrations that help define the American national
identity. The first part then denotes the inclusion of technology as an aspect of study. Part 1 finishes with the statement that students will practice “problem-solving, decision-making, and independent thinking skills.” As students move through each academic year, they are expected to demonstrate a greater understanding of each of the previous parameters of introductory part 1; therefore, the authors include more information which teachers must cover at each grade level.

Part 2 undergoes minor changes from kindergarten through the fifth grade. These changes include the addition and subtraction of materials and resources for each academic year. There are years where the authors remove recommended materials and resources and then reinstitute the removed recommendations, sometimes, the next academic year. At its most basic description, part 2 presents the materials and resources recommended for each academic year. The authors of part 2 have written it in such a way as to allow educators some freedom of choice in the selection of materials; however, the freedom of choice is tempered by the use of the word “encouraged” when describing the materials that might be used. As one reads through each iteration of the second part from kindergarten through fifth grade, it appears that the recommendations for materials in many of the courses lack continuity and cohesion from year to year, and at times these examples appear almost random except when the course focuses on specific periods of study in United States.
history as exhibited in the introductory parts for fifth grade, eighth grade and

United States History Since 1877.

Beginning in kindergarten, teachers are encouraged to use “rich materials” and the following resources: museums, historical sites, presidential libraries and preservation societies at the local and state level. The authors use the word “motivating” to describe the recommended choice of resources to use in the classroom. In part 2 for kindergarten and first grade, the authors provide no examples of the “rich materials” that can be used. The first example of these “rich materials” is found in the second grade and includes: nonfiction texts, primary sources, biographies, folklore, poetry, songs and artwork. As they do at each grade level, the authors have described these materials as “encouraged” instead of using a term such as required. Furthermore, the addition of on-line tours has been added to the list of “motivating resources”. In third grade part 2 has undergone some minor changes. In the list of “rich material,” primary sources and folklore have been removed and replaced with founding documents. The recommendation of on-line tours has also been removed from the list of “motivating resources” without any additional changes. Part 2 in the fourth grade again demonstrates some changes. To begin, the authors now include the use of primary and secondary sources in regards to the source material for the course. Founding documents and nonfiction texts have been replaced with biographies, novels and speeches, with a new caveat which includes local topics when appropriate. There are no changes in respect to the “motivating resources”. In
fifth grade, part 2 only demonstrates a single change, and that is the removal of the caveat encouraging the use of local topics when appropriate. All resources remain the same for the fifth grade.

Part 3 of the introductory section of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies remains exactly the same for each of the social studies courses from kindergarten through fifth grade. It begins with a statement regarding the 8 strands of the knowledge and skills section of the standards’ document which explains that these” strands of the essential knowledge and skills for social studies are intended to be integrated for instructional purposes.” This statement provides teachers a directive for the use of these strands which is that they should not be perceived as separate entities, but as parts to the whole. After this initial directive, part 3 goes on to explain that this includes all the skills and knowledge which will be presented later in the documents for each grade level or course, as in the case of high school. The authors then include the statement, “A greater depth of understanding of complex content material can be attained when integrated social studies content from the various disciplines and critical-thinking are taught together.” Here the authors provide teachers with their overarching philosophy of the standards. They believe understanding can be achieved through curriculum integration when paired with critical-thinking. Finally, part 3 concludes with important guidelines for the remainder of the document in terms of word choice. It is here that the authors provide the terms “such as” and “including.” The authors explain that “Statements that contain the word ‘including’
reference content that must be mastered, while those containing the phrase ‘such as’ are intended as possible illustrative examples.” These terms become very important in the knowledge and skills section of the standards, and will be used to help explain how these standards attempt to promote or reinforce certain political and ideological beliefs in chapter 5.

Part 4 of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies remains exactly the same for each of the social studies courses from kindergarten through fifth grade. This part of the introductory section focuses solely on the economic system of the United States. This is also one of the shortest introductory parts in the standards document. It states that “Students identify the role of the U.S. free enterprise system within the parameters of this course and understand that this system may also be referenced as capitalism or the free market system.” These are the only parameters provided in terms of grade level or course level. As the document moves into the knowledge and skills section, more information is provided regarding what information and knowledge teachers are expected to cover at each grade level and course level. What is most notable about part 4 though is the synonyms the authors have provided for free enterprise system: capitalism and free market system. When reviewing the knowledge and skills section for each grade level and course level, the authors refrain from using the term capitalism and instead use free market system or free enterprise system even when comparing this system to other systems such as socialism and communism. If the authors are going to include the term capitalism
in their definition of free enterprise, then it is logical to assume that the term would appear throughout the standards document. However, its absence from the documents except in this particular part becomes conspicuous. There appears to be an attempt to promote the positive connotation that the word free carries with it. I will discuss this finding in greater detail later in the chapter.

Part 5 of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies remains exactly the same for each of the social studies courses from kindergarten through fifth grade. This part of the introductory section provides the format for the knowledge and skills section of all grade levels and courses. The knowledge and skills section is broken into the following subsections: history; geography; economics; government; citizenship; culture; science, technology and society; and social studies skills. The authors explain that students will build a foundation in these sections of the social studies courses and that the content will utilize appropriate material for each grade level or course level. They further explain that a foundation in these sections of the social studies course “enables students to understand the importance of patriotism, function in a free enterprise society, and appreciate the basic democratic values of our state and nation as referenced in the Texas Education Code (TEC) §28.002(h).” It is this portion of part 5 that demonstrates a subtle push by the authors and lawmakers to promote their own values and beliefs. The study of patriotism and its many facets certainly has a place in a social studies course, but here the authors are imposing their belief that patriotism is important. This subtle approach to include their own
values and beliefs will be covered in greater detail when I present my findings of the knowledge and skills section of the standards documents.

Part 6 of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies remains exactly the same for each of the social studies courses from kindergarten through fifth grade. The purpose of part 6 is to provide a definition for the term constitutional republic. The authors state that "students understand that a constitutional republic is a representative form of government whose representatives derive their authority from the consent of the governed, serve for an established tenure, and are sworn to uphold the constitution." The point made in this section of the standards document sets up some parameters for the knowledge and skills section. The authors continually iterate in the knowledge and skills section the concept of the United States as a constitutional republic. What is noteworthy about this in the knowledge and skills section is that when the authors cover Texas state history, they refer to the state government as a democracy. It is difficult to assess the authors’ reasoning for creating a dichotomy such as this, since there is a perpetual reinforcement in the standards that the United States is a constitutional republic, rather than a democratic republic or simply a democracy. There does appear to be a preference by the authors which I will delve into when I present my findings of the knowledge and skills section later in this and later chapters.

Part 7 of the introduction for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies undergoes a single change from kindergarten through the fifth
grade. This change appears in the third grade; however, the building blocks for this change are laid during the previous school years. The beginning of part 7 for grades k-2 begins with a statement regarding assessment at either the federal or state level that “Students must demonstrate learning performance related to any federal and state mandates regarding classroom instruction.” This statement disappears in the third grade. After this the authors move into the major focus of part 7, which is clearly demonstrated after the second grade. The overarching purpose for part 7 incorporates Texas Education Code §29.907. This education code mandates participation in Celebrate Freedom Week. According to TEC §29.907, the purpose is,

(a) To educate students about the sacrifices made for freedom in the founding of this country and the values on which this country was founded, the week in which November 11 falls is designated as Celebrate Freedom Week in public schools. For purposes of this subsection, Sunday is considered the first day of the week.

(b) The agency, in cooperation with other state agencies who voluntarily participate, may promote Celebrate Freedom week through a coordinated program. Nothing in this subsection shall give any other state agency the authority to develop a program that provides instruction unless funds are specifically appropriated to that agency for that purpose. (TEC §29.907)
In grades kindergarten through second, students are not required to participate in Celebrate Freedom Week according to Part 7 of the standards documents. This is interesting when one considers the importance of the early primary school grades in regards to indoctrination. Because of this there appears to be an attempt to refrain from indoctrinating students, but rather preparing them for a better understanding of the meaning of freedom in the United States. However, the authors do state that, “primary grades lay the foundation for subsequent learning.” To emphasize the importance of this, the authors further state that the standards in the knowledge and skills section will include information directly related to this event, which they define as patriotic. No detailed explanation is provided as to why grades kindergarten through the second are excluded from participating in this mandatory celebration, the authors simply imply that the Texas Education Code does not require it. Perhaps a better understanding can be achieved by looking at the changes that occur in part 7 in grade 3 and throughout the remainder of the standards.

In grade 3, part 7 undergoes a dramatic change. First, the authors have removed any reference to mandated assessments. Second, the authors go into a great deal of detail regarding what teachers must cover in all social studies classrooms during Celebrate Freedom Week. According to Texas education Code §29.907 the week designated for this celebration is the week of November, 11, which happens to be the United States’ federal holiday Veterans’ Day. The authors do provide a caveat that Celebrate Freedom Week can be moved by a
school district’s board of trustees as long as it is a full week of school. During Celebrate Freedom Week, teachers are required to provide instruction directly focused on the Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution including the Bill of Rights. The focus of study over these historical documents requires “instruction concerning [their] intent, meaning, and importance.” In terms of the Declaration of Independence, teachers “must include the study of the relationship of the ideas expressed in that document to subsequent American history.” The authors specifically include the relationship of the Declaration of Independence “to the rich diversity of our people as a nation of immigrants, the American revolution, the formulation of the U.S. Constitution, and the abolitionist movement, which led to the Emancipation Proclamation and the women’s suffrage movement.” Perhaps this is why students in grades k-2 are not required to participate in Celebrate Freedom Week, due to the substantial amount of information that must be covered during that week of school. The state might feel that students at these grade levels lack the necessary skills and mental development to grasp these concepts. However, this is just conjecture because as previously noted; the standards document lacks a detailed explanation for these students’ exclusion.

Subsection 2 of Part 7 in grades k-5 includes a single mandate. It requires that all students study and recite a portion of the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence. Students are not required to recite the entire Preamble, only the first 2 sentences. Once again, the authors fail to provide an explanation or
educational justification for this, they just simply state that it must be studied and recited. Looking back at part 6 of the introduction might lend some explanation as to the purpose of this requirement. Part 6 mandates that students understand what a constitution republic is, and in the definition the authors provided, they directly state that it “is a representative form of government whose representatives derive their authority from the consent of the governed….” The portion of the Preamble that students must recite ends exactly at the statement, “that to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.” It appears that the authors of these standards are attempting to reinforce part 6 of the introduction through the required recitation of the Preamble in part 7. This reinforcement is also found throughout the knowledge and skills section of the document.

The lack of change from each grade level presents some concerns. Even though teachers are required to discuss the intent and meaning of the Declaration and how it influenced the creation of the U.S. Constitution and historical social movements, their appears to be little concern over scaffolding this information so that each grade level builds upon the previous. Although subsection 1 of part 7 clearly states that Celebrate Freedom Week can be adjusted to a different week of the school year with approval of a school district’s board of trustees, their seems to be little concern over the appropriate timing for inclusion of this required material in regards to the curriculum. For example, if a school board has not decided to change the week for this celebration, teachers
may have to incorporate information into the class that does not fit with what is being learned at that moment in the class. Instead of learning and studying this information in its proper historical context, students may have to jump forward or backward in order to meet the state's requirements for this celebration. Even if a school district's board of trustees realized the importance of presenting material in its proper historical context that does not mean that all grade levels or course levels cover the same material at the same time. Studying historical documents is an important part of a social studies class, but unless the material fits within the context of the curriculum, it becomes a mere speed bump in the course rather than something meaningful.

Part 8 of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies remains exactly the same for each of the social studies courses from kindergarten through fifth grade. This part of the introductory section is a fairly short statement which focuses upon the founding documents of the United States. Specifically, students must “identify and discuss how the actions of U.S. citizens and the local, state, and federal governments have either met or failed to meet the ideas espoused in the founding documents.” This directive needs to be looked at in relation to the curriculum of the particular grade level or course level. The majority of the standards focus on the United States and the state of Texas. Since the social studies standards in grades K-5 only focus on American and Texas state history, teachers should have no difficulties fulfilling the requirements of this part of the introduction.
Previously, the introductory section of the Texas essential Knowledge and Skills Elementary only contained 4 parts instead of the 8 included in the rewrite of the standards. As far as course descriptions of each grade level are concerned there were little to no changes. The only changes that do appear in the course descriptions come in the form of wording, and nothing else. What appears as new in the introductory section is the inclusion of parts that specifically identify free enterprise and its definition; the inclusion of constitutional republic and its definition; the inclusion of the statement about state and federally mandated testing along with Celebrate Freedom Week beginning in grade 3; and finally part 8 which requires students to discuss the failures or accomplishments of citizens in regards to the United States’ founding documents.

4.2 Knowledge and Skills Section for Social Studies: Elementary School

Kindergarten through Grade 5

While the introductory section of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies includes various changes, it is within the knowledge and skills section of this standards document where the most information is provided in regards to what the Texas state school board expects its schools to cover in the social studies curriculum. In this second section, knowledge and skills, the authors have divided it into 8 different strands: history; geography; economics; government; citizenship; culture; science, technology, and society; and social studies skills. As students go through the school system, the information covered in these strands generally increases. Upon initial review of the Texas Essential
Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Elementary, one encounters a vast amount of information that teachers must cover. Here is where the introductory portion of these standards comes into play. Each academic year, beginning in kindergarten, the authors have listed historical individuals, events, celebrations and topics that students must study along with examples of the preceding that might also be studied in addition to those required. To denote the difference the authors use the term “including” for mandatory material and the phrase “such as” for material that is recommended as examples for inclusion, as I discussed earlier in this chapter. In order to fully explore my findings of the 8 strands at the elementary level, I will present each strand separately in the following subsections.

4.3 The History Strand

At the elementary level of the social studies standards, the history strand is written as an overarching objective. At each grade level the objectives for this strand begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective. The authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. Each task begins with 1 of 11 active verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): describe, identify, distinguish, explain, summarize, apply, use, analyze, compare, examine, and create. Only 1 verb has been used that does not appear on the list, place. These terms are especially important in light of introductory statement 3 from the introduction section of the document.
Statement 3 delineates the importance of critical thinking in relation to the strands. Bloom’s Taxonomy (Travers, Elliott, & Kratochwill, 1993) is broken into 6 categories that proceed from low to high. These levels from low to high are: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

According to Travers, et al. (1993), the top half of Bloom’s Taxonomy demonstrates critical thinking. Since the authors denote the importance of critical thinking in the standards, it is logical to assume that their choice of action verbs would demonstrate this in the history strand. This does not occur though; only 16.6% of the objective tasks begin with action verbs at the critical thinking level of Bloom’s Taxonomy. In contrast 80.5% of the objectives begin with action verbs at the lower end of the taxonomy. Breaking the usage of these verbs down even further demonstrates that 56.9% of the objective tasks in the history strand begin with action verbs found at Bloom’s lowest level of the taxonomy, knowledge. At the knowledge level, educators expect students to simply memorize information. Furthermore, 0% of the objective tasks begin with action verbs found at Bloom’s highest level of the taxonomy, evaluation. The highest level included in the upper half of the taxonomy is synthesis, which accounts for 9.7% of the verbs used, and one of the verbs used here also can be found at the analysis level, compare, which does not guarantee that students will be operating at the synthesis level, this can only be ascertained by its actual implementation in individual classrooms throughout Texas. Table 1 provides a breakdown of these numbers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>41*</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>23*</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary History Strand

*the verb describe appears in both the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verb compare appears in both the analysis and synthesis levels.

The actual information contained in the history strand for the elementary school documents demonstrate a progression of information. For example, in kindergarten and first grade, the overarching objectives are identical except for the first. The first objective in kindergarten states that, “The student understands that holidays are celebrations of special events” and then in first grade this objective is expanded upon and states that “The student understands the origins of customs, holidays, and celebrations.” There appears to be a sense of scaffolding occurring here by building upon knowledge that students obtain at one grade level and reinforcing it and adding to it at the next grade level. At each grade level there are only 2 objective tasks. The first objective task for each focuses on local and national holidays only, such as Independence Day. The difference between them is that at the kindergarten level students are expected to explain the reasons for these holidays whereas first graders are expected to “describe the origins of the customs, holidays, and celebrations of the community, state, and nation…..” What is interesting here is the requirement that kindergarten students study patriotic holidays. There is nothing inherently biased
about including the study of patriotic holidays in school, but there does appear to be a focus on patriotism throughout the history strand in the early grades. We must keep in mind that students in K-2 are not required to participate in Celebrate Freedom Week, but by requiring the students to study patriotic holidays, the authors are laying the foundation for the beginning of this requirement in grade 3. The term, or forms of the term, patriot appears a total of 7 times in this strand, with the bulk appearing before the third grade. More importantly, the authors of the standards have included specific examples of historical individuals who they believe exemplify patriotism or good citizenship. These lists include those one would expect such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and even Martin Luther King Jr. The authors also include important Texans to this list as well, such as Stephen F. Austin and Jose Antonio Navarro. Interestingly, the authors place Christopher Columbus on this list as well. Certainly a study of Christopher Columbus is important in the first years of school, but what should be questioned is where he has been placed in terms of these standards. A continued read through the list of historical individuals required and recommended for study demonstrates little connection to the historical period studied as well as the geographical area studied.

In the introductory section of the document, part 1 clearly explains that students begin their study of social studies by focusing on their local community and extending outward from their community into the state, nation and eventually the world. However, looking at the history strand in the elementary standards
demonstrates that the authors have not followed suit in their instructions. While there is a demonstration of studying local historical figures there is a preponderance of examples of individuals who extend well beyond the community and state in kindergarten. For example, historical individuals required for study are Stephen F. Austin, George Washington, Christopher Columbus and Jose Antonio Navarro. These are the only individuals required and there are no examples recommended outside of these 4 men. What is important here are not the requirements for study in the grade level, but an inability by the state board of education to create a document that followed its own directive. Part 1 of the Kindergarten introduction clearly states that “In Kindergarten, the study of the self, home, family, and classroom establishes the foundation for responsible citizenship in society.” If the introduction includes the explanation that students begin with a study of their own community and then move outward from the kindergarten on, then these objectives should follow logically with these guidelines. Instead, what the authors have provided is simply a list of historical individuals who are often repeated throughout the K-5 history strand.

Continuing with the history strand at the elementary level demonstrates a lack of requirements in world history. The history strand for K-5 focuses solely on the study of American history and Texas history. In fact, the students spend all of fourth grade studying Texas state history, and each grade level before and after contain requirements regarding Texas state history. Looking at social studies standards throughout the United States, all the states require a period of study
on state history; however, there is also the inclusion of world history in the elementary grades as well. There are references in the strand on colonization in the United States which requires some form of study of Europe, but there is nothing that is actually required in the standards regarding world history. The actual standards about colonization focus on the United States and Texas rather than Europe and they do not appear until grade 4 where students spend the entire year studying Texas history. For example, history strand number 2 in the fourth grade requires that, “The student understands the causes and effects of European exploration and colonization of Texas and North America.” Here we can see reference to Europe, but the focus shifts to Texas and the United States. The students are expected to learn very little about Europe. Perhaps the authors were attempting to work under their directives of beginning with the students’ local communities and working out as explained in part 1 of the introductory section, but at some point in the elementary standards there should appear some inclusion of world history, especially considering the growth of a child’s cognitive development and how quickly a child’s world expands.

By the end of the fifth grade, Texas students are not required to study any aspect of pre-history nor are they required to cover world history. The focus on grades K-5 in history focus on developing the ideas of patriotism and good citizenship as well by covering historical individuals, events and celebrations that the school board has deemed appropriate exemplars of patriots and good citizens. Furthermore, looking at the choice of verbs used from Bloom’s
Taxonomy demonstrates that students work on memorizing facts and information rather than actually learning to think critically about these historical individuals, events and celebrations as described in the introductory section of the standards.

Finally, we can begin to see the development of the concepts of American exceptionalism as well as Texas exceptionalism in these standards. Students are required to study United States and Texas history, but only the positive historical information while avoiding information that presents the United States or Texas in a negative light. In the elementary history strand this focus is not as prominent as it is in the middle school or high school standards, but the ground work has been laid to indoctrinate students into this line of thinking. As Lakoff (2002) presents in his discussion on conservatives and their view of education, they attempt to refrain from including anything that highlights the past abuses of the United States because it sheds a negative light on the country. The authors of these standards have taken this a step further to include their home state, Texas. Unfortunately, they fail to see that our country’s ability to include a study of our past abuses only strengthens the country because it allows us to correct our mistakes and, hopefully, avoid them in the future (Lakoff, 2002). I will discuss this idea of American and Texas exceptionalism further in the middle school and high school standards.

4.4 The Geography Strand

The geography strand of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards document for elementary school is fairly similar in its requirements
when compared to the history strand. The focus is solely upon the United States and Texas with only a single mention of locations beyond the United States’ borders: Mexico and Canada, which appear in the second grade. As with the history strand, the geography strand is set up similarly. At each grade level the objectives for this strand begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective. The authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. This strand also begins each task with 1 of 12 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): describe, identify, explain, interpret, locate, translate, apply, use, analyze, compare, examine and create. As in the history strand, there is a heavy use of the verb “identify” as well as other verbs which are found at the lower 3 levels of the taxonomy.

When looking at the percentage of verbs used from the lower end of Bloom’s Taxonomy a similar pattern appears. 85.4% of the 55 objective tasks fall below the level of critical thinking; while a mere 16.4% of the objective tasks fall in the area of critical thinking according to the Taxonomy. 54.5% of the objective tasks actually fall into Bloom’s lowest level of the taxonomy, knowledge as opposed to 1.8% of the objective tasks fall at Bloom’s highest level, evaluation. Table 2 provides a breakdown of these numbers. What is more troublesome about the verb used at the evaluation level is that it also appears at the lower level of the taxonomy under comprehension, which could mean that none of the objective tasks would fall under the highest level if it is demonstrated that the
actual task shows no requirements that lead to evaluation. Looking at these findings leads one to believe that the authors have placed an importance upon the memorization of facts and information rather than the critical thinking they state is important in the introductory section of these standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>30*</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>24*</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Geography Strand
*the verb describe appears in both the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verb interpret appears at both the comprehension and evaluation levels.

Examining the actual objective tasks for the geography strand shows a gradual progression of knowledge and skills within this field of social studies. The objective tasks are written in a way that builds upon past skills and knowledge from previous grade levels. Students begin in the kindergarten by learning about the “concept of location” and progressively move along until fifth grade where they must understand “the location and patterns of settlement and the geographic factors that influence where people live.” Here we can see that students move from the simple use of terms associated with location to the actual description of regions and how a region can affect settlements and human migration. Objectives such as this can lead to critical thinking if prompted by the teacher; however, the standard does not require thinking critically about location and region. For example, students could simply regurgitate the information that
settlers moved out west because of population expansion without understanding the causes of expansion or the problems with overpopulation in urban settings or even the effects of western expansion upon Native Americans. In fact there is no mention in the geography strand of these concepts. A majority of the strand at each grade level, K-5 appears to focus on skills used in geography such as map reading and memorizing states and capital cities, for example students in grade 5 must be able to “locate on a map important physical features such as the Rocky Mountains, Mississippi River, and Great Plains.” What is interesting is that there is no objective that focuses on why these locations are important, it is just stated that they are. However, it should be noted that there is some demonstration of critical thinking usually found in the upper grades, such as in the fourth and fifth grade. For example, in grade five the standards require that students “analyze the positive and negative consequences of human modifications on the environment in the United States, past and present.” As well as analyzing “the reasons for the location of cities in the United States, including capital cities, and explain their distribution, past and present.” Here we can see a movement away from simple memorization to actually using the learned information in such a way that requires students to think critically about geography.

The geography strand, like the history strand, contains a great deal of information that students must memorize, but there is an inclusion of skills that students must acquire as they progress through elementary school. Grades k-5 do not include a study of the world, therefore it is not surprising that world
geography is also excluded except for North America and Mexico. The strand
does demonstrate an attempt to include critical thinking, but as these standards
are written the requirement is minimal.

4.5 The Economics Strand

The economics strand of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills
standards document for elementary school is fairly similar in its requirements
when compared to the history and geography strands. The focus is solely upon
the United States and Texas with the only of mention of the rest of the world
when studying products that are either imported or exported in relation to the
United States’ and Texas’ economy. As with the previous strands, the economics
strand is set up similarly. At each grade level the objectives for this strand begins
with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the
overarching objective. The authors complete the objective by including specified
tasks that students must master for that grade level. This strand also begins each
task with 1 of 10 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action
verbs (Appendix): define, describe, identify, explain, give examples, compare,
distinguish, examine, create and evaluate. As in the previous strands, there is an
emphasis on the use of the verb “identify” and “explain” along with other verbs
which are found at the lower 3 levels of the taxonomy.

Careful examination of the economics strand reveals a total of 56
objective tasks throughout kindergarten until fifth grade. Of these 56 objectives,
87.5% begin with action verbs found at the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy of
verbs (appendix), and only 12.5% of the objective tasks begin with verbs found at the upper half of the Taxonomy. A further break down demonstrates that 46.4% of these verbs fall at the knowledge of the list of action verbs and a mere 1.8% is found at the evaluation level. Table 3 provides a breakdown of these numbers.

As in the previous strand, there appears to be an overemphasis on learning facts and information rather than learning to think critically about economics. As in the previous strands, this data reflects a disconnect with the introductory statement that promotes the importance of including critical thinking in the subject matter when compared to the actual written objectives in these standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>26*</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>33*</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Economics Strand  
* the verb describe appears in both the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verb compares appears at both the analysis and synthesis levels.

The economics strand of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, elementary school, demonstrates a definite preference towards an economic system. Earlier in the introductory section of these standards, the authors provide a specific explanation or definition for the free enterprise system. The authors stated, “this system may also be referenced as capitalism or the free market system.” Throughout the K-5 standards the phrases “free enterprise” and “free market” are used interchangeably, but not once is the term “capitalism”
used in any way. The only time the term “capitalism” is used is in introductory statement number 4. The term actually becomes conspicuous in its absence, especially since the authors provided guidelines for its use in the introduction section. Continuing with a close inspection of all the standards also reveals what might be called a preference for free enterprise or the free market system. In grade 4, students are expected to understand “the characteristics and benefits of the free enterprise system….” At no time in grades kindergarten through fifth are students required to give examples or explain the negative effects of free enterprise as an economic system. The focus remains solely upon the positive aspects of the system. According to Allison Linn, a writer for MSNBC.com, many Americans view the phrase “free enterprise” much more favorably than the term “capitalism.” Citing a Gallup poll from February of 2010, reveals that this trend is no coincidence, she stated that the poll “found that 86 percent of Americans had a positive image of free enterprise, while 61 percent had a positive image of capitalism” (Linn, 2010). What is even more revealing is that Linn (2010) also references the removal of the term from these Texas standards. According to Linn (2010), Texas school board member “Terri Leo, explained that capitalism had a bad connotation, like ‘capitalist pig’.” By selectively choosing to use a phrase that is viewed more positively by Americans, the board members demonstrate that they are attempting to influence what the students believe rather than allowing them to make an educated judgment on their own. Students should demonstrate a solid understanding of free enterprise as that is the
economic system of the United States; however, they must develop a complete understanding. Free enterprise does promote competition among companies, but it can also lead to questionable business practices which are found throughout United States history. For instance, many businesses relied upon child labor because it was less expensive, but citizens of the U.S. eventually deemed this practice unethical and required the creation of child labor laws to protect young children. Questionable practices like these lead to the creation of labor unions, which fought for greater safety standards and fair wages. Left unchecked, the U.S. system of free enterprise would continue with these practices. While the United States has gained much from the free market system, there have been negative effects when businesses were left in a truly free market.

From kindergarten through the second grade, the economics strand generally focuses on purchasing goods and the basic concepts of how capitalism, or the free enterprise system, operates in the United States. There is also an inclusion of jobs and their importance in modern American society, for example standard 7 in kindergarten states that, “The student understands the value of jobs.” The objective tasks included with this standard requires that students “identify jobs in the home, school, and community; and explain why people have jobs.” This fits in the economic strand, but it demonstrates a lack of critical thought required by the students. Simply identifying jobs is a basic task and explaining the purpose of jobs does not necessitate an evaluation by the students. How teachers actually implement this standard into classroom
instruction will demonstrate how much critical thinking actually occurs with the students, but the standard falls short of following the directives laid out in the introductory section of the document which discusses the importance of thinking critically in the curriculum. Grades 1 and 2 continue with the development of the idea of the necessity of jobs in a free market system, but these standards tend to reflect more of the consumer aspects of the system for meeting an individual’s needs. The standards also demonstrate the authors’ preference towards individualism versus collective efforts. For example, industries have been able to thrive in the United States because of the American value placed on public education. By its very nature public education is a socialist practice since the taxpayers provide the necessary funding to educate all Americans regardless of race, religion, gender or social standing. These industries rely upon educated workers to produce the goods, materials and services they offer. If not for public education, these industries would have to create their own educated work force. This can be further extended to the creation of public roads and highways which industries rely upon to transport their products. Public roads and highways are funded by taxpayer money which has enabled many industries to find success. If not for the collective effort to build a transportation infrastructure industry would have to pay for it and maintain it itself. By allowing state and federal governments to build the infrastructure, industry and the general public benefit. The United States system of free enterprise has greatly benefitted from collective efforts and the standards should not ignore this.
In grade 3 the economics strand presents 2 new concepts that are not found in the previous grades. The 2 concepts selected for inclusion at this grade level are donating and taxes. Standard 6 in grade 3 states that “The student understands the purposes of earning, spending, saving, and donating money,” which is followed by an objective task that requires that students “create a simple budget that allocates money for spending, saving, and donating.” The inclusion of donating as a part of these economic standards is interesting in that students are expected to master this concept and then to actually create a budget which includes the act of donation. The act of donation is a personal choice made by individuals and this is generally taught in the home. The requirement that students create a budget that must include donations demonstrates the authors’ personal morals in these standards. Studying the concept of donation as a charitable act is certainly worthy of study, but to require that students include it in an activity is somewhat questionable. Charity is a personal choice made by the individual for his or her own personal reasons. While we laud those for donating to charity, we should also understand that there are individuals who are unable to donate for various reasons. Requiring that donation be included is akin to requiring volunteerism. If volunteering is required is it still truly volunteering? Had the standard objective simply included donation as an example of what could be included in a budget there would be nothing questionable in this objective.

Finally, in grade 3 the authors have included the concept of taxation in the economics strand of the social studies standards. At this level, students are
expected to “explain how government regulations and taxes impact consumer costs.” This objective task represents the only mention of taxes in grades K through 5 in the economics strand. There is no requirement that students understand what taxes are, nor are the students expected to understand the purpose of taxation in the United States. This objective fails to build upon any prior knowledge because none is required in the previous grades. The only requirement is that students explain how taxes impact the costs of products. Logically speaking, taxes by their nature raise the costs of consumer products. Without an explanation and study of how taxes are used and their purpose, students will receive a skewed understanding of taxation. Earlier in the economics strand I discuss that the authors fail to include how collective efforts have benefitted the free market system. Here would be an excellent place to include how taxes benefit the greater good. I provided the examples of public education and transportation as important collective efforts supported by a system of taxes that directly benefits businesses. Including an objective on the purpose of taxes and how they are used at this point in the standards would have created a more balanced approach to understanding taxation and allowed for individual students to examine their worth in a free enterprise system, which would lead to critical thinking on the students’ part.

The economics strand in grade 4 provides an interesting look at the authors’ possible views of Texas in relation to the United States. In standard 13, students must understand “how Texas, the United States, and other parts of the
world are economically interdependent.” This particular standard is written in such a way that presents Texas as separate from the United States even though the 2 are interdependent. This separation is iterated in the standard objective tasks numerous times as well, for instance, “explain how Texans meet some of their needs through the purchase of products from the United States and the rest of the world.” Since students are required to spend the entire fourth grade learning about Texas for their social studies course, it makes sense that students would be expected to master standards that reflect the economy of Texas, past and present as well as its place in relation to the world. However, the standards, as they are written, reflect an intent on the part of the authors to treat Texas as a separate entity rather than as a part to the whole, that whole being the United States. At this point in the standards one might point out the difficulty of explaining the complicated concept of domestic purchases in regards to the United States’ economy, but it is important to remember that Texas has a history of separatist movements which might explain the apparent transition from American exceptionalism towards Texan exceptionalism. This separation of Texas and the United States as far as the economics strand is concerned only appears at grade 4 in the elementary standards, however, as I will demonstrate later in the middle school and high school standards, there is evidence to suggest a purposeful separation of Texas and the United States.
4.6 The Government Strand

As with the previous 3 strands of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards document for elementary school, the government strand is fairly similar in its design. The focus continues to remain upon the United States and Texas with the only mention of other forms of government as they appear in relation to the colonial period of America and the eventual settlement of Texas. As with the previous strands, the government strand is set up similarly. At each grade level the overarching objectives for this strand begin with the phrase “the student understands…” and are then followed by the requirements for the objective. The authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. This strand begins each task with 1 of 6 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): describe, identify, name, explain, compare and distinguish. As in the previous strands, there is an emphasis on the use of the verb “identify” and generally a use of verbs at the low end of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

When examining the objective tasks for the standards of the government strand we immediately find that an overwhelming percentage of the 37 total objectives found from kindergarten through the fifth grade fall at the bottom of Bloom’s Taxonomy of action verbs. 91.8% of the objectives begin with verbs found in the lower half of the taxonomy while only 5.4% fall in the realm of critical thinking. Further analysis reveals that 72.9% of the objectives begin with verbs found at the knowledge level, the lowest level of the Taxonomy. None of the
objectives begin with verbs found at the evaluation level of Bloom’s Taxonomy, the highest level. Table 4 presents a breakdown of these numbers. There is a repetition of verbs at the lower ends of the taxonomy, for example, “describe” is found at both the knowledge and comprehension level. Similar results can be seen with the upper end of the Taxonomy, for example the verb “compare” is listed at the analysis and synthesis level. At this point there appears to be a recurring theme within these documents. While the authors point out the importance of critical thinking in the social studies courses during the introduction, the actual standards fail to reflect this belief.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>27*</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>27.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>91.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Government Strand
*the verb describe appears in both the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verb compare appears at both the analysis and synthesis levels.

The government strand at the kindergarten through fifth grade level demonstrates a progression of information and knowledge for students to master and acquire. It also demonstrates the authors’ ideals on beginning with the students’ own home and community and then moving out away from that environment. During kindergarten students are required to “understand the purpose of rules” as well as demonstrating an understanding of “the role of authority figures.” The objective tasks combined with these 2 standards focus on
identifying the general purposes of rules as well as identifying specific rules that “provide order, security, and safety in the home and school.” Students are further required to “identify authority figures in the home, school, and community” as well as explaining how these authority figures create rules and enforce them. What we see here is a basic description of government relying upon the students’ world. As the student matures, this strand grows in terms of the information required for study. By the time students enter the fifth grade they have gained a large amount of information that looks at individuals in government and their roles, the purpose of the branches of government at the local, state and federal level along with a study of important governmental documents such as the Mayflower Compact and the United States Constitution, among others.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, grade four focuses solely upon Texas state history. Therefore, during this academic year, students focus on the development of the Texas state government, from its earliest influences until it joined the United States. This is not unlike the other states where students study their home states. It is here that students first encounter concepts of government formulated outside of American ideas. For example, students are required to “compare how various American Indian groups such as the Caddo and the Comanche governed themselves” as well as identifying and comparing the “characteristics of the Spanish colonial government and the early Mexican governments and their influence of the inhabitants of Texas.” In this standard there is more of a focus upon the use of critical thought in the classroom as
represented by the mandate that students must compare the Spanish colonial government to the early Mexican governments, but objectives like this only go so far. Students are not required to evaluate these governmental systems and why they lead to the current system in Texas and the United States. To support their understanding of these governments, students must also study important documents in Texas history such as the Texas Declaration of Independence and the Texas Constitution. After completing a full year’s study of Texas history, students move into the fifth grade where they cover United States history from 1565 to the present.

As with the study of the government strand in grade 4, students do receive instruction in the early forms of government encountered in Colonial America, specifically looking at the European forms of colonial government. Students are introduced to the concepts of monarchy and representative forms of government, and are required to compare them. What is missing in the government strand for grade 5 are any requirements to cover Native American forms of government and how they influenced American government. Once again there is the inclusion of important historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Here we see a much more focused study of the U.S. Constitution and the previously cited documents. For example, students must “identify the key elements and the purposes and explain the importance of the Declaration of Independence”, as well as explaining the purposes of the U.S. Constitution as outlined in the Preamble along with
explaining the reasons for the addition of the Bill of Rights. Students are also required to study the “basic functions three branches of government” as well as describe the reasons for “the system of checks and balances.” Finally students are asked to compare the responsibilities of national and state governments.

While there are attempts at including critical thinking in this strand, the majority of the government standards reflect a focus on memorization of information rather than using that information to evaluate the concepts of government and put this knowledge into action.

On a final note for this strand I must refer back to the introductory section of the standards document which required the inclusion of Celebrate Freedom week. By the time students have reached the fifth grade they have already covered a great deal of information regarding the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. It appears that the grade 5 government strand provides only a small amount of new information in regards to these documents and their effect on the development of government. By this point, with the mandated inclusion of the study of these documents from grades 3 forward, students should have the ability to perform a great deal of synthesis and evaluation by the time they reach fifth grade.

4.7 The Citizenship Strand

As with the strands 1 through 4 of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards document for elementary school, the citizenship strand remains consistent with the other strands in its design. As with the previous strands, the
citizenship strand is set up similarly. At each grade level the overarching objectives for this strand begin with the phrase “the student understands…” and are then followed by the requirements for the objective. The authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. This strand begins each task with 1 of 8 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): describe, identify, recite, sing, explain, give examples, use and practice. As in the previous strands, there is an emphasis on the use of the verb “identify”.

Beginning with the use of Bloom’s taxonomy of action verbs provides an interesting look at how this specific strand might have been perceived by the standards’ authors. 100% of the objectives found in the citizenship strand from grades kindergarten through fifth fall at the lower level of the Taxonomy. None of the objectives fall at the level of critical thinking. Breaking down these verbs even further reveals that 70.5% of the verbs are found at the knowledge level, Bloom’s lowest in the Taxonomy. As in the previous strands there does appear to be an attempt to scaffold the information that students are expected to cover in the classroom. Kindergarten requires the smallest amount of information to cover while 5th grade demonstrates the largest.
### Table 5 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Citizenship Strand

*the verb describe appears in both the knowledge and comprehension levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>36*</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lower Level of Taxonomy</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upper Level of Taxonomy</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During kindergarten students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of "symbols, customs and responsibilities that represent American beliefs and principles and contribute to our national identity." The objective tasks reflect the choice of action verbs discussed previously. Students must be able to identify the American flag as well as the Texas state flag, recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag as well as a pledge to the Texas flag. The highest order of thinking students must take part in is the use of voting to make group decisions. Students must also specifically “identify Constitution day as a celebration of American freedom.” What is interesting is the inclusion of a pledge to the Texas flag. Earlier in the economics strand I allude to the possibility that the authors have attempted to present Texas as a separate entity, rather than as a part to the whole. The requirement to recite a pledge to the Texas flag supports this idea. There are other states that have written pledges to their flag; however, I was unable to ascertain if these pledges are required by students. Had the authors required the understanding that there was or is a pledge that Texas used when it was a republic in the history strand would fail to raise any red flags or
even simply including it in the fourth grade when the entire year is dedicated to Texas history; however, requiring the Texas pledge to be learned and recited in classrooms as part of the citizenship strand in kindergarten and beyond requires a questioning of the authors’ decisions to include this as a state standard. This specific objective task remains in the first and second grade, disappears in the third grade only to reappear in the fourth grade and once again disappear in the fifth grade. The continued inclusion of this objective through elementary school demonstrates that it is seen as something important for students to remember. Beyond this requirement within the citizenship strand there also begins the repetitive use the phrase “constitutional republic.”

The use of “constitutional republic” appears in the first, third, fourth and fifth grade. The placement of this term in the citizenship strand is interesting. Since the authors provide the definition of a “constitutional republic” in the introductory section of the standards as “a representative form of government” why is there an emphasis on this phrase in the citizenship strand rather than the government strand? Perhaps this was done because they further explain in the definition that “the representatives derive their authority from the consent of the governed.” One of the major focuses in the citizenship strand is defining good citizenship, and they include the use of voting as a citizen. This would tie in the concept that elected officials receive their authority to govern through the people as mandated in the constitution. Therefore, these officials must follow the constitution. The use of “constitutional republic” becomes even more important at
the secondary level of the standards as students are asked to analyze certain amendments. However, this will be covered in detail when I present my findings of the high school standards document later in this chapter.

The citizenship strand generally focuses on what it means to be a good citizen. The standards require the study of Americans past and present who the authors believe represent the traits of good citizenship. Individuals such as Benjamin Franklin, Eleanor Roosevelt, Paul Revere, Sojourner Truth, Navajo Code Talkers, Sam Huston, and Ann Richards are suggested as examples for study. The standards include individuals of importance to American history as well as Texas history. There appears to be an attempt to include individuals of various backgrounds, but as in previous strands there seems to be little continuity in the examples provided in the document. What would be useful for teachers is that the examples fit with the period of study during the school year. It is important to keep in mind that these individuals are simply recommended for inclusion, not required, so teachers certainly have some leeway in who they include in their classrooms.

4.8 The Culture Strand

The culture strand is formatted in an identical fashion to all of the previous strands. The standards begin with the overarching objective, “the student understands…” and then finish with the specific concept that must be learned. The authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. This strand begins each task with 1 of 6 verbs
that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): describe, identify, explain, summarize, analyze and compare. As in the previous strands the verb identify is used most often.

In their writing of the objective tasks for the culture standards, the authors have included more than 1 action verb from Bloom’s list in some of the objectives. However, there is a continued emphasis on the use of verbs from the lower 3 levels of the Taxonomy when compared to the higher 3 levels. From kindergarten through fifth grade, the culture strand is comprised of a total of 24 objective tasks. Of these 24 objectives, 74.07% of the verbs used to begin each objective are listed at the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy, while 25.9% of the verbs used are found at the higher half. Of the 74.07% in the lower half, 48.1% are found at the knowledge level, Bloom’s lowest on the taxonomy. Of the 25.9% in the upper half, 0% of the verbs are listed in the evaluation level, the highest of the Taxonomy. The culture strand is developed in a manner that reflects the authors’ beliefs that study should begin within the students’ homes and communities early on and then expanding outward as the children grow. However, the growth is limited to culture within the United States and Texas specifically, and the study of culture is once again composed of mostly factual information with little insight into the development of a culture and what makes up a culture.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>37.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Culture Strand
*the verb describe appears in both the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verb compares appears at both the analysis and synthesis levels.

During kindergarten students are expected to cover only four objective tasks that have been separated into 2 standards. In these standards, “The student understands the similarities and differences among people” and “The student understands the importance of family customs and traditions.” The objectives associated with the first standard are relatively simplistic and require that students “identify similarities and differences among people such as kinship, laws and religions” and they must also “identify similarities and differences among people such as music, clothing, and food.” At the kindergarten level, these tasks require little thought in identifying the differences in clothing music, religion, food, etc. These objectives reinforce the focus on general information rather than the implementation of critical thought. Students are simply asked to identify the differences without the expectation of explaining the reasons or purposes of these differences. However, there is some implementation of critical thought in the second standard when students are expected to “describe and explain the importance of family customs and traditions” as well as comparing “family customs and traditions” in the objectives. Perhaps the movement towards
critical thinking here demonstrates reliance upon the students’ previous knowledge learned in the home environment. Unfortunately, the authors failed to take into account that some students come from broken homes or families that have no customs or traditions, nor does it look at the different types of family now prevalent in the United States, which would have provided a firmer foundation upon which to study family customs and traditions or the lack of them.

Continuing through the elementary grade levels, students are expected to study various aspects of culture and where culture might be embedded. For example, in the first grade students begin to study “beliefs, customs, language, and traditions of families and communities” while beginning to study how these aspects of culture can be found in legends and folktales. The authors actually recommend including Aesop’s fables at this grade level for study. This particular objective actually promotes a fairly high level of critical thought because it is requiring students to demonstrate an understanding of how culture can be found in narratives and how they reflect our own beliefs and practices as a culture. The second grade continues with the inclusion of literary pieces for inclusion where students are expected to “identify selected stories [and] poems” that reflect the “local cultural heritage” as well as including art work such as paintings and statues. At this level we also find the inclusion of cultural celebrations that students should be able to identify the significance of along with the expectation that students “compare ethnic and/or cultural celebrations.” It is important to note here that no specific celebrations have been listed in this standard at grade 2, so
it appears that teachers are supposed to choose which celebrations to include. This tends to break from the previous trend of the objective tasks because statements like these have included examples that the state board recommends in the other strands. This break from the format continues at grade 3. The objective task for the first standard objective task is similar to that in grade 2; however, instead of merely identifying ethnic or cultural celebrations, students are expected to “explain the significance of various ethnic and/or cultural celebrations in the local community and other communities.” Here again is an attempt to include critical thinking in the standards, but there is a lack of specific cultural or ethnic celebrations as in grade 2. It appears that teachers will also have to choose which celebrations to include or exclude based on the communities which they serve. Perhaps what we are seeing at these 2 grade levels is an attempt to appease local communities by allowing them to cover culture and celebrations important to them, but this does not fit the pattern that has presented itself in the previous strands. Another possible conjecture that might be made is that the authors of this strand felt that it lacked in importance when compared to the other strands, which might explain why it only has 24 objectives. Unfortunately, there is really no sure way to know why specific celebrations have been excluded in name.

What is interesting in the grade 3 culture strand is the inclusion of the role of heroes as a standard in the development of culture. Certainly, heroes do demonstrate the embodiment of certain cultural ideals, but what is interesting is
the selection of heroes chosen for these standards as either examples or
requirements. In this particular standard, students study heroes at both the state
and national level, for example, students must “identify and compare heroic
deeds of state and national heroes, including Hector P. Garcia and James A.
Lovell, and other individuals such as Harriet Tubman, Juliette Gordon Lowe,
Todd Beamer, Ellen Ochoa, John ‘Danny’ Olivas, and other contemporary
heroes.” Furthermore, students must also “identify and analyze the heroic deeds
of individuals, including military and first responders…” Including an analysis of
what deeds are heroic is commendable, because it is requiring students to think
about what is heroic; however, there is no connection to how this displays parts
of culture. Heroic deeds are different from culture to culture, but what we can see
here is the inclusion of dangerous acts or acts that required the sacrifice of one’s
own life. For example, Harriet Tubman was a conductor on the Underground
Railroad; James Lovell was an American Astronaut as was Ellen Ochoa and
John Olivas; Todd Beamer was a passenger on the September 11 flight that was
taken down in Pennsylvania before terrorists could guide the aircraft to their
desired target. This is not to say that none of these individuals are heroes, but
they do demonstrate acts that are or were inherently dangerous. Other forms of
heroism are not represented in these standards, nor do these objectives require
students to explain how these individuals reflect our cultural beliefs in heroism.
Once again, the standard breaks down to simply memorizing facts and
information rather than real critical inquiry.
In grade 4 students focus solely on a study of Texas history, and this is reflected in the culture strand as well. The standards are written very similarly to the standards in the previous elementary grade levels, for example, the first standard in the culture strand for the fourth grade states that, “The student understands the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to Texas.” The objective tasks that follow this standard reflect this specific directive and the authors provide a list of specific individuals and celebrations required for study along with examples that are recommended for study. As in the previous grade levels students are required to identify similarities and differences among the various cultural groups found in Texas. However, the standards at this grade level continue to promote simple identification overall, and they lack any in depth study of the dynamics of what makes up a culture.

During the fifth grade students are required to study United States history from 1565 to the present. The culture strand reflects this in its standards. The second standard is similar to the first standard in grade 4, except Texas is replaced with the United States in this instance. As in the earlier grades, there is an inclusion of the arts and literature, but now students are expected to understand “the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created.” The 2 objectives included in this standard reflect this desire, however, there is little critical thinking required of the students to actually accomplish this task. In the first objective task, students must be able to “identify significant examples of art, music, and literature from various periods in U.S.
history such as the painting *American progress*, ‘Yankee Doodle,’ and ‘Paul Revere’s Ride.’ Here we can see that the objective requires the use of rote memory skills; however, there is an attempt to include some thought about culture in regards to this objective in the second objective task. Objective task 2 requires that students “explain how examples of art, music, and literature reflect the times during which they were created.” In Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) the action verb “explain” falls at the comprehension level, which is one step above the lowest level, knowledge. While this objective does improve the standard somewhat, it stills fails to promote critical thinking.

A careful study of the culture strand in the elementary grades reveals an emphasis on identifying different aspects or parts that comprise a culture, but there is no demonstration that students actually learn the intricacies of any particular culture. There is a large focus on learning information that can be memorized as reflected in the inclusion of identifying individuals and celebrations related to various cultures, but there is no evidence to suggest that students are required to learn about the actual history of different cultures and how they came to the United States or how they have actually impacted and changed the dominant culture of the country as well as Texas. Part of the issue that leads to these inadequacies in the culture strand is the lack of inclusion of world history studies throughout the elementary social studies standards. Without a solid background in world history it is difficult to teach students about the many cultures found in the United States. However, if students were tested on basic
information, a simple multiple choice assessment would suffice and help
demonstrate to the state school board that students have learned the information
required of them.

4.9 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand

The format of the science, technology and society strand follows suit with
the previous 6 strands. The standards begin with the overarching objective, “the
student understands…” and then finish with the specific concept that must be
learned. The authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that
students must master for that grade level. This strand begins each task with 1 of
4 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix):
describe, identify, explain, and predict. Of these 4 verbs, predict actually can be
found at 3 different levels of the Taxonomy: comprehension, application and
evaluation. Where these objectives ultimately fall on the taxonomy relies upon
their implementation in the classroom. Once again, the verb “identify” is used
often, but for this particular strand “describe” is used 1 more time than “identify.”
These 2 verbs are used a total of 13 times to begin the objectives required for
study in this strand.

The science, technology and society strand is the smallest strand in the
elementary standards. This particular strand includes a total of 17 objectives from
kindergarten through the fifth grade. Of the 17 objectives, 100% of the action
verbs used to begin each task falls in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy, while
11.76% fall in the upper half. However, this must be tempered because there is
only 1 verb used found in the upper half—predict. Whether the actual objective demonstrates critical thinking will rely upon its implementation in the classroom. Of the 100%, 76.4% fall at the knowledge level, the lowest level, and the full 11.76% fall at the evaluation level, the highest level, of Bloom’s Taxonomy of action verbs (appendix). This strand continues to reflect the desire of the authors to begin a study of these standards by beginning in the students’ homes and progressively moving away and into the community, state and country. As previously noted, this is the smallest in the elementary standards, with only 19 objectives total. Upon closer review of this strand, one will notice that there is only a single standard for each grade level. Because the previous strands include multiple standards, it appears that this strand was considered less important than the others. As demonstrated in the previous strands there is an emphasis on rote memorization and basic comprehension. In fact, these standards and the attached objectives fail to even demonstrate use of technology, just describing and identifying technology and its effects on individuals and societies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>76.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>11.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Bloom’s Taxonomy Elementary Science, Technology, and Society Strand
*the verb describe appears in both the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verb predict appears at the comprehension, application and evaluation levels.
Beginning in kindergarten, students focus on the use of technology in their homes and schools. The standard states that “the student understands ways technology is used in the home and school and how technology affects people’s lives.” The objectives which follow require that students actually identify examples of technology in their homes and schools, while asking them to “describe how technology helps accomplish specific tasks and meet people’s needs.” To complete the standard the students are then required to describe how their lives would change without modern technology. In order to prepare students to meet this standard, teachers are going to need to provide background knowledge into the actually meaning of technology. Since the emphasis has been placed on modern technology, students will require knowledge of what constitutes modern. In the previous strands, the authors generally provide examples of what to include in objectives like these, but none are provided. This could allow for some degree of academic freedom for teachers, but this may reflect a perceived lack of importance on this strand when compared to the other strands.

In the first grade, the science, technology and society strand begins to emphasize the use of technology in everyday life. Here we can see a greater focus on the affects technology has on people, rather than just the student. The students are required to “describe how technology changes the way families live” to begin with, but they must then describe how technology affects other aspects of life which involves the community as well as the student. For example, in
objective 2 students must “describe how technology changes communication, transportation, and recreation.” Here teachers have the opportunity for some degree of academic freedom. Since there is no specific time period required such as a general term like the present or current, teachers can provide some historical information to strengthen the students’ learning in this particular strand. The final objective for this strand in grade 1 requires that students “describe how technology changes the way people work.” There continues to be a lack of critical thinking required of the students, but an effective teacher can build upon the basic skill of describing and ask students to extend their thinking by predicting future use of technology if he or she were so inclined.

In grade 2 the science, technology and society strand actually diminishes in its use. There is an inclusion of the past and present in the actual standard, but the objectives are simply iterations of those found in the previous grades. Students are simply required to “describe how science and technology change communication, transportation, and recreation,” and instead of how it affects the way people work students must “explain how science and technology change the ways in which people meet basic needs.” The first objective is identical to that found in the first grade, and the second objective lacks a requirement that reflects critical thinking on the part of students.

In grade three, the authors have provided a dramatic shift in the requirements of the science, technology and society strand. During this school year students are actually required to study individuals important to science and
technology. The standard states that, “The student understands how individuals have created or invented new technology and affected life in various communities, past and present.” There are 2 objectives included in this standard, and as in the previous objectives and strands, the focus falls upon memorization rather than critical thinking. In the first objective the authors have provided specific individuals whom students must know: Jonas Salk and Maria Mitchell. Beyond this, the students must also have the ability to identify “others who have discovered scientific breakthroughs or created or invented new technology.” Along with this objective there are examples of individuals recommended for study who fit this requirement, which include Bill Gates and Louis Pasteur. What is interesting here is not who has been included but the way the objective is actually written, especially when compared to the second objective of this strand. Bill Gates and Louis Pasteur are only cited as examples of individuals who might be studied, but the second objective states that students “identify the impact of scientific breakthroughs and new technology in computers, pasteurization, and medical vaccines on various communities.” If students are required to learn about computers and pasteurization, it would seem logical to include Gates and Pasteur as requirements for study rather than just examples. With specific standards and objectives written like this, it presents to readers a lack of understanding or recognition of the connections between the objectives and standards. Finally, we see once again, a focus on rote knowledge rather than critical thinking. Students simply have to identify these individuals and their
impact on communities and the fields of science and technology, which leads me to question whether students actually “understand” how they are related to science, technology and society.

During grade 4 students study this strand in terms of its relation to the state of Texas. As noted several times in earlier sections of this chapter, fourth grade social studies revolve around the study of Texas. The standard for grade 4 is direct and to the point, “The student understands the impact of science and technology on life in Texas.” The individuals included for study all have ties to Texas in some way, and the inclusion of discoveries and inventions all reflect industries important to the state. The third objective does demonstrate a push towards critical thinking because the students are required to “predict how future scientific discoveries and technological innovations might affect life in Texas.” It is important to recognize that this objective could fall into lower level thinking without proper attention from the teacher. Here teachers have the opportunity to include evaluative learning situations or the objective can simply become another task of memorization. The objective is broad enough to allow for a multiplicity of ideas concerning life in Texas, but narrow enough for teachers to simply focus on life as simply an individual living in the state. Life can be taken to include business and industry and how these two facets of life contribute society as a whole, which would help students when applying their thinking to possible predictions.
In the fifth grade students must study United States history from 1565 to the present. The science, technology and society strand reflects this in its standards. The overall standard for this is quite similar to the standard in grade 4, except the authors have removed Texas and simply replaced it with the United States. The first objective is similar in style to that of the fourth grade as well. This objective includes a list of individuals whom the students must be able to identify. This list includes, Benjamin Franklin, Eli Whitney, John Deere, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, George Washington Carver, the Wright Brothers, and Neil Armstrong. The list reflects a fairly broad inclusion of individuals and includes men who have made important discoveries or inventions. However, the list does demonstrate some lack of cohesion. When one reads the list, it seems to be a list pulled extemporaneously from the memories of the authors. Furthermore, why is Neil Armstrong included in a list of men noted for their inventions or discoveries? This is not to say that students should not study Armstrong, but he does not fit the requirements of the objective. It is also interesting to look at the inclusion of John Deere. Obviously his equipment has had an impact on the farming industry of Texas and the United States, but requiring that students be able to identify him as part of their education seems odd. The second objective actually ties scientific discoveries and technological innovations to economics, specifically the “economic development of the United States, including the transcontinental railroad and the space program.” Here we can see a concerted effort to bridge the strands with
one another. History will need to be included in this objective as well as economics and we can even see the inclusion of culture through the study of the transcontinental railroad because of the importance of Chinese immigrants in its construction. Unfortunately, students are only required to identify how “economics have been advanced,” but a teacher has an opportunity to really promote critical thinking even if the objective does not reflect it. The third objective continues with the inclusion of technology in the advancement of communication and transportation, but the authors have also included medicine. Students are only required to explain the benefits of these on society in the U.S. One thing lacking that could help to promote critical thought in students is including the drawbacks as well as the benefits of technological innovations in these fields. In the fifth grade many students have developed an awareness of their environment and world. However, by failing to include the negative aspects of these technological innovations, the authors demonstrate some bias that only good can come from innovations even though history has shown not all innovations are positive. As in grade 4, the final objective for students is to “predict how future scientific discoveries and technological innovations could affect society in the United States.” The opportunity for critical thought among students presents itself again. Whether that is achieved can only be assessed by its implementation in the classroom.

The science, technology and society strand may be the shortest of the strands with the fewest standards requirements, but it does offer numerous
opportunities to pursue critical thinking in social studies classrooms, at least in the upper elementary grades. Whether this actually occurs will rely upon the skills of teachers, and if they can guide their students through large amounts of information that must be learned each school year.

4.10 Social Studies Skills Strand

The final strand of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills social studies standards for elementary school is social studies skills. The format of this strand is set up identically to the previous 7 strands. The standards begin with an overarching objective, but instead of beginning with “the student understands…” these standards each begin with a different verb that reflects a focus on skills rather than knowledge. As in the previous strands the standard is completed with the specific concept that must be learned which is then followed by specific objectives required for study that support the standard. This strand begins each objective task with 1 of 14 verbs or combination of verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): identify, sequence, interpret, locate, use, obtain, analyze, differentiate, research, categorize, create, express, incorporate, and organize. Unlike the previous strands, the verb “identify” is used less often than before; instead there is a heavy reliance upon the verb “use.” On Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs, “use” is found in the lower half of the thinking scale, but it is listed under the application level which is the highest level of the lower end of the taxonomy. It should also be noted that in this particular
strand, many of the objectives begin with a combination of Bloom’s verbs, such as “create and interpret” or “sequence and categorize” to name a couple.

The social studies skills strand is a relatively large strand with a total of 56 objectives. In this particular strand the authors have included the use of the verb “interpret.” “Interpret” is listed in both the comprehension level, the lower half of the taxonomy as well as the evaluation level, the upper half of the taxonomy. Of these 56 objectives a total of 64 verbs were used to begin each statement. 64.06% of the verbs or verb combinations are found at the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy of action verbs (appendix) if the verb “interpret” is included, compared to 43.75% of the verbs found in the upper half of the taxonomy if the verb “interpret” is included in this percentage. Removing “interpret” from the lower half changes the percentage of verbs used at that end of the taxonomy to 56.25%. Removing this verb from the upper half of the taxonomy drops the percentage down to 35.9%. Only 10.9% of the verbs are listed at the lowest level of the taxonomy, knowledge, and 7.8% of the verbs are found at the highest level of the taxonomy, evaluate, but this is only if the verb “interpret” is counted at the highest level. Overall, this particular strand demonstrates higher levels of thinking than the previous strands.
Beginning in kindergarten, the social studies skills strand requires that students take part in what one might call research practice. The authors do not use the specific term research in this strand until grade 3, but in my discussion of the strand I will refer to the process as “research.” The second standard of this strand states that, “The students uses problem-solving and decision making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings.” The objectives written to support the acquisition of this standard reflect basic research skills that a student in kindergarten would be expected to accomplish. For example, the first objective requires that the student “use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.” In this objective we can see a basic process used by an individual in the research process. First a student must identify a problem. The authors are not specific on the type of problem, just that the student must find one. After this the student must then begin the actual research process by gathering information. Here again there are no specific
requirements of where information must be gathered, just that students must find information. Leaving this open allows for teachers to use a process of discovery that students at this age understand. It could be simply experimenting or asking others for information depending on the problem. As information is gathered, students must then actually review the options they find and make a determination of their applicability to their chosen problem, and then actually apply the solution or solutions they have chosen. Finally, the students are required to evaluate the effectiveness of their chosen solution or solutions. This standard is perhaps the most demanding of the students. Students are actually required to apply the skills learned in not only the social studies class, but other courses as well. There is definitely an opportunity for cross curricular knowledge present in this strand and its standards as well. Students can take part in the scientific process depending upon the problem they choose, which also could lead to basic mathematics skills as well as communication skills. In fact, the first standard supports the growth of communication skills in this strand; it states that, “The student communicates in oral and visual form.” Much of this will depend upon the teacher’s implementation of this strand in the classroom, but there is a good opportunity to promote critical thinking among the students at a young age.

Moving into the first grade, the social studies skills strand undergoes minimal development. In fact, the only difference between the kindergarten standards and the first grade standards is the specific inclusion of writing in the first standard at grade 1. The standard states that, “The student communicates in
oral, visual, and written form." The second objective of this standard is changed from the interpretation of maps and pictures to "interpret visuals and written material." Even though the terms maps and pictures have been removed, they can still be included under the term “visuals.” The second standard and its accompanying objectives remain identical to those of the second kindergarten standard. While we can see some development in the strand, it does not really demonstrate a great deal of growth. However, the specific inclusion of written material is a positive step forward for students, but the first objective of standard 1 could also include more than expressing ideas orally. With the interpretation of written materials it would have been logical for the authors to include that students express ideas in written form as well.

During second grade the social studies skills strand includes a third standard beyond communication and problem-solving skills. The first standard in grade 2 mandates that, “The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety sources, including electronic technology.” Reading through the 5 objectives developed to support this standard reveals much of what I express in the kindergarten strand about research. Here though, we can see the purposeful inclusion, along with the authors’ recommendations for the types, of sources used in the research process. For instance, the first objective of standard 1 requires that students “obtain information about a topic using a variety of valid oral sources such as conversations, interviews, and music.” Objective 2 continues with this but it
focuses solely upon visual sources which include "pictures, maps, electronic sources, literature, reference sources, and artifacts." What is most interesting about this standard and its objectives is the use of the word "valid." Finding and using valid sources of information is an important part of research. What is problematic with these requirements is that there is nothing put in place to define what "valid" means. One might argue that common sense dictates what is valid at this age and grade level and that this is part of the teacher’s job, but the lack of providing this meaning breaks from the authors’ previous focus on terms in the other 7 strands. In the other strands there is a heavy focus on the meaning of terms such as “hero,” “capitalism,” and “constitutional republic,” etc., but this attention to detail for meanings of words fails to present itself. If read by itself, one might come to the conclusion that all the examples are “valid” which would be incorrect. What this standard lacks is the inclusion of what makes a source “valid” or “invalid.” Requiring students to evaluate source appropriateness during research would greatly strengthen the desire to promote critical thinking in this strand. The remaining objectives for the first standard then go on to develop skills necessary for using sources, for example, students must “use various parts of a source, including the table of contents, glossary, and index, as well as keyword Internet searches to locate information.” These are important skills for all students to learn and do require some critical thinking when complemented with the remaining objectives. These objectives require that students organize and sequence their information as well as use their reading skills to identify the main
idea of their information along with predicting, comparing and contrasting their material. The second standard includes a change as well. Here students are required to “create written and visual material such as stories, poems, maps, and graphic organizers to express ideas.” This demonstrates a higher order of thinking that students must accomplish when compared to simply interpreting or creating visual and written materials as in the first grade. Students are now expected to produce recommended specific materials. Unfortunately, these products are only presented as recommended examples instead of actual requirements of student work. The remaining standard undergoes no changes.

During the third grade, the social studies skill strand includes only a few changes throughout its standards, but they do demonstrate cross curricular concepts. The three standards of grade 2 carry over in identical fashion to grade 3, as well as the objectives. The changes found occur in the objectives of the first and second standards, which were introduced in previous grades. Here, the term “research” appears for the first time. In the first objective of standard 1 the student must “research information, including historical and current events, and geographic data, about the community and world, using a variety of valid print, oral, visual, and internet resources.” Reviewing the previous objectives dealing with the concept of research, we can see a gradual growth in the scope and design of the process included in this strand at each grade level. It is clear that the process has focused on developing research skills. During grade 3 the authors have finally provided the process with the term, “research,” that has
undergone development. What is most noteworthy is the inclusion of historical research about the world. Throughout the elementary standards, the world has only included North America and Mexico. There is no inclusion of world history throughout the elementary standards. Perhaps this was included to provide teachers the opportunity to incorporate some world history, or it could simply demonstrate that the authors simply used a phrase found in previous versions of the state standards. Beyond this change the objectives follow the pattern found in grade 2, where students must use sequencing and categorization skills as well as the different parts of the sources to find and interpret information, along with the addition of “identifying cause and effect, and comparing and contrasting.” Here again, there is a noticeable inclusion of scaffolding skill development from the previous grade levels. The material that students must create at this grade level also demonstrates some growth. The authors recommend that students use and create “visual graphs, charts, tables, timelines, and maps.” These elements require that students actually require the ability to interpret data, an important skill for future social studies classes. In order to support this specific objective, the authors also include a new objective which requires the use of mathematics to interpret graphs and maps. This objective supports the concept of cross curricular skills in the social studies class, which helps to teach the students the interrelated nature of their academic studies. The second standard continues to reinforce cross curricular studies as well with the addition of a third objective that requires the “use of standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and
punctuation.” In grade three there is a definitive focus on directly including skills learned and acquired in other courses outside of social studies, and this is a positive aspect of these standards. The third and final standard remains identical to that of grade 2. The focus of this standard 3 is upon problem-making and decision making skills. It appears that this is used to support standards 1 and 2 of this strand.

The social studies skills strand in grade 4 undergoes noticeable changes in the objectives portion of two of the three standards, but the overarching standards remain identical to those found in grade 3. In the fourth grade, students spend the entire school year of their social studies course studying the state of Texas; therefore, some of the changes include specific references to completing research about the state. Unlike the previous strands in grade 4, the focus of the strand does not wholly reflect a study of Texas, but instead continues to develop students’ research skills. Students are introduced to the concept of primary sources versus secondary sources in research. The first objective of standard 1 requires that students “differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software; interviews; biographies; oral, print, and visual material; documents; and artifacts to acquire information about the United States and Texas.” What we can see presented in this specific objective is that students develop the ability to decide what constitutes a primary source and what constitutes a secondary source. The authors have seemingly chosen to leave out a definition of what denotes a
primary source versus a secondary source, but they have included examples of
the sources that they believe can be used in the class to teach the differences
between the two. The second objective of standard 1 appears to be a compilation
of objectives 2 and 3 from the third grade. Instead of simply “sequencing and
categorizing information “ as in the third grade, students in the fourth grade must
be able to “analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-
and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea,
summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences
and conclusions.” Upon initial glance this objective appears to be a fairly
formidable set of tasks for students to accomplish. However, if we take into
account that this is actually a combination of two objectives from the previous
grade level, there is not much change. The major change is that students are
now required to analyze information using these previously learned skills, which
is a logical step in the process of scaffolding these skills since the kindergarten.
Overall though, there is nothing new for students to learn, they must only take the
next step in developing these specific skills. To complete this standard there
remains a final change or addition to the objectives of the first standard in grade
4. The fourth objective requires that students “identify different points of view
about an issue, topic, historical event, or current event.” Initially this objective
appears promote the development of taking others’ opinions or beliefs into
account during research, however, the students are only required to identify
different points of view. This does not mean that students are required to
understand the differences, or even explain the differences, only that differences exist. The final objective is exactly the same as grade 3 which requires the inclusion of mathematics skills to interpret social studies information.

The second standard of the social studies skills strand changes through the addition of 2 new objectives. The first objective requires that students, “use social studies terminology correctly” and the second objective requires students to, “incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communications.” The first objective comes at an interesting time, and one might argue that this objective could have been included starting in kindergarten. Another problem with this objective is the lack of defining the actual social studies terms that students must use. Do the authors mean terms such as maps, economics, history, graphs, etc.? There is no specific delineation of these terms, and if it is the terms as previously mentioned, the students should have been using these terms since kindergarten as they appear throughout the standards. Finally, the objective demonstrates what continues to occur in these standards, and that is the emphasis on rote knowledge of social studies rather than developing critical thinking skills. The second objective is stronger than the first and actually supports the objectives of the first standard. Here we see one aspect of how students should analyze material, in written and verbal communication as well as requiring that students provide supporting details for their main ideas. In order to develop critical thinking skills, students will need to include supporting details to help explain or convince listeners or readers of their
work. The final change in standard 2 is found in the fourth objective. The change is minor and simply identifies different products that students must create. At this grade level students must “create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies.” The only thing actually required of students is that they create some form of product, the list of products for this grade level are only suggestions and examples. Therefore, it falls upon the classroom teacher to choose what products or assessments are actually appropriate for students to complete. There still exists some form of academic freedom for teachers in this capacity. The final standard, standard 3, remains identical to previous iterations. It appears that the purpose of this standard is to support the previous standards in the social studies skills strand.

During the fifth grade the standards of the social studies skills strand undergo only a couple of changes. The three standards remain identical to the fourth grade standards and only 2 objectives change in standard 1. The first change is minimal at most. In the first objective, Texas is dropped and the focus is completely upon the United States. This follows logically with the course for grade 5 because students study United States history from 1565 to the present. The authors provide no explanation as to why the study of United States history begins at this particular year, only that students begin study with the colonial period. Beginning at 1565 obviously excludes the study of the indigenous peoples who lived in North America before the arrival of Europeans. The only other change comes in the fifth objective; instead of using mathematical skills to
interpret information students must now, “identify the historical context of an
event.” This objective completes the first standard, and that is it. There is no
other information to explain the meaning of this specific objective, nor have the
authors provided any examples of what teachers might include to achieve this
objective. Because of the lack of information about this objective, teachers will
have to interpret its meaning on an individual basis. What further complicates this
objective is that it lacks any connection to the previous grade levels in this strand.
Up until this objective, it was relatively easy to follow the progression and growth
of skills in the social studies skills strand, but here that structural growth is lost. In
fact, one might even question if this objective actually reflects a skill. The use of
the verb “identify” signifies that students must only be able to recognize
something, “the historical context of an event,” therefore; the students are only
using memorization and knowledge, and no higher order thinking. After this final
objective of standard 1, the document moves into the final 2 standards. These
remaining standards in the fifth grade version of this strand undergo no changes.
They are identical to the fourth grade strand. The incorporation of cross curricular
studies remains an important part of the social studies skills strand in regards to
language arts with a focus on grammar and conventions in writing. The strand
finishes with standard 3 as support for the previous standards as discussed in
the previous grade levels.
4.11 Concluding Remarks

The standards that the Texas State School Board have adopted for the 2011-2012 school year encompass a great deal of information. By beginning each standard objective with a verb from Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) list of action verbs I was able to learn that a majority of these standards focus on rote knowledge rather than the critical thinking espoused in the introductory section of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills Social Studies Elementary standards document. However, it should be noted here that the eighth strand, social studies skills, does demonstrate a greater emphasis on including or promoting critical thinking than strands 1 through 7 do. While a smaller majority of verbs used in strand 8 fall in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy, there is a greater opportunity for teachers to encourage their students to think critically about history. Unfortunately, beyond strand 8, I believe it will be difficult for teachers to cover the vast amount of information required in these standards, which could hinder the development of students’ critical thinking skills. Throughout the remaining 7 strands there is a heavy emphasis on the memorization of names, dates, places and events. Should the state of Texas decided upon incorporating a social studies assessment for students to take, these standards could easily be measured through the use of a multiple choice test, as these measure knowledge rather than skills. This will also allow school districts to evaluate its teachers with the continued growth of measuring teacher abilities by how well students perform of these assessments.
Although the concept of American and Texas exceptionalism was not overly prominent in the elementary standards, when we include the middle school and high school standards it becomes apparent that the standards, particularly in the history strand, have been geared to promote these concepts. The elementary standards provide the foundation upon which the concept of exceptionalism will be developed throughout the social studies standards k-12. Examples of this promotion of exceptionalism are best revealed through the authors’ choice of words when referring to the United States or Texas. Quite often the authors rely upon the term “benefit” when referring to historical practices of the United States and Texas, or the term “influenced” is used in relation to concepts and ideas that have made their way into various cultures. Most prominent though in these standards is the absence of the past abuses of the United States and even Texas. At the elementary level we might refer to mistakes made by the United States or Texas but historical information of this nature never appears. Part of studying history is to learn from our past mistakes so that we can correct those mistakes and ensure that we do not make them again.

The economics strand of these standards provides an interesting glimpse into the beliefs of those who wrote this document. It is clear that there is a focus on capitalism, the economic system of the United States. However, the focus is not necessarily grounded in the concepts and ideas of the system but rather an emphasis on developing the idea of consumerism with the numerous references
to buying at the elementary level. Returning to the introductory section of the standards, the authors make sure to provide a definition of capitalism by defining it as “the free market system” or “free enterprise” and that these terms and phrases would be used interchangeably in the document. However, after this capitalism is never used throughout the actual standards and objectives. If these terms are to be used interchangeably, why did it never happen? Perhaps the authors are acknowledging that the term capitalism carries a negative connotation with it with some individuals while terms or phrases including the word free are much more acceptable to the general public. I will discuss this further in the middle school and high school standards, but the foundation for this focus on consumerism is laid in the elementary standards.

The culture strand is interesting not because of the depth it provides about culture, but because of the lack of it. This strand from grades K through 5 only requires students to know the superficial aspects of what makes up a culture. Some might say that what students are required to know is actually insulting. At the earliest grades we might expect that the focus of the culture strand would be upon those elements that are superficial, such as celebrations and food, and as the students grow the standards should as well, but this does not occur. Students are only required to know the parts of a culture, the celebrations, food and holidays, rather than the meaning of these parts and their history and development. While culture is included in the standards, the students come away
with very little understanding of culture, and this is partly due to the limited historical study in the elementary standards.

The final issue that stands out in these standards comes through the form of absence. The purposeful exclusion of any world history in the elementary standards is unfortunate. According to Martin, et. al (2011)

In half of the states, students begin their formal world history studies in sixth grade. In three states and the District of Columbia, students begin their study in seventh grade, and in two states, world history standards do not appear until eighth grade. Teachers in eleven states can find world history standards for young elementary students and teachers in three states find world history standards beginning in grades 3-5. (33)

Students need knowledge of the entire world, including prehistory and ancient history, to understand how the United States and Texas have been influenced by this history. By only focusing on the United States and Texas in their social studies courses, the students will encounter a watered down version of world history in later grades, specifically high school. When reviewing these standards, the authors made sure to include their philosophy that social studies should begin in the students’ own home and community, and then grow to further communities and states as the student grew. Unfortunately, the authors fail to understand how rapidly students’ worlds grow. There is no reason to exclude the study of world history at the elementary level. In fact, it seems that it would be
difficult to understand the creation of the United States without understanding the
growth and development of our early European ancestors as well as Asia and
every other corner of the world, but students will have to wait for this information
until later in their education. The limited nature of the history strand diminishes
the remaining strands because students will not have a full picture of how history
impacts the development of people, society, countries, etc.

When we look at these rewritten standards and compare them with the
standards they are replacing we can see that there were numerous changes. The
previous standards included names, dates and places as do the newly adopted
standards; however, what is most noticeable in the rewritten standards is the
increase of this information when compared to the previous standards. Many of
the rewritten objectives are simply lists of names and other information that
students must be able to identify. It appears that an emphasis has been placed
on memorizing historical information when compared to the previous standards.
Finally, in the previous standards the use of free enterprise was prevalent as it is
in the rewritten standards. However, in the previous standards the focus was
placed upon the function of free enterprise in the United States rather than the
benefits of the system which tends to be the focus of the rewritten standards. It
should also be noted that the previous standards shied away from the term
capitalism as it is in the rewritten standards.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS: TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, MIDDLE SCHOOL STANDARDS

5.1 Introductory Section of the Middle school Standards

As with the elementary standards, each of the standards documents for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies for middle school is broken into an introductory section and a knowledge and skills section. The introductory section provides a description of the course along with an explanation of the requirements for that grade level or course level. The introduction is an important part of the standards documents because it provides educators with specific instructions and definitions that must be implemented in the grade level or course level curriculum. The introduction includes 8 parts in the middle school standards document. Each part begins with a specific description for the purposes and goals for that particular year of instruction.

Part 1 of the middle school introductory section presents the same parameters found in the elementary introduction. As the students continue to progress further in the standards at each grade level, the standards demonstrate movement away from the home and local community; however, the social studies classes in the middle school grades begin the transition into course specific social studies classes rather than a broad overview found in the elementary grades.
In the middle school standards educators receive similar guidelines to those found in the elementary introductory section of part 2 of the Texas state standards. Teachers are still encouraged in their use of primary and secondary source material in the sixth grade which includes the following: “biographies, autobiographies, novels, speeches, letters, poetry, songs, and artworks.” The authors have recommended museums, art galleries and historical sites as “motivating resources.” Part 2 has gone through some minor changes for middle school, but it continues to include examples previously recommended in the elementary school version. Moving into the seventh grade version of part 2 demonstrates minor changes once again. The examples provided for the encouraged resource materials include only one change. The authors recommend the use of images as a replacement for artworks. The recommendation for “motivating resources” at this level demonstrates the continued use of museums and historical sites, but they also include a return to presidential libraries as well as state and local preservation societies. In eighth grade, part 2 demonstrates a great deal of changes in the authors' recommendations of primary and secondary resource materials. Here, teachers are encouraged to use the complete text of the United States Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and landmark cases of the United States Supreme Court in addition to the resources recommended for the seventh grade; however, instead of images, there is a return to artworks. There are no changes made to the “motivating resources” from the seventh grade version of part 2.
Parts 3 through 8 of the middle school introductory section undergo no changes from those written for the elementary school standards. These remaining 6 parts include identical language to the elementary descriptions and continue to provide the framework of the intent and philosophy for each grade level while continuing to promote the use of the terms free market system and constitutional republic. Furthermore, the continued mandate of Celebrate Freedom Week is reinforced along with the use of historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the United States’ Constitution. More detailed information regarding these parts can be found in chapter 4 which covers the elementary school standards.

Previously, the introductory section of the Texas essential Knowledge and Skills Middle School only contained 4 parts instead of the 8 included in the rewrite of the standards. As far as course descriptions of each grade level are concerned there were little to no changes for the grade 6 document but there were some additions in grade 7 and grade 8. Grade 7 in the previous standards still centered on Texas history, but in the rewritten standards the authors broke the course into specific eras of Texas history. Grade 8 in the previous standards still centered on U.S. history. As they did in the grade 7 standards, the authors made some additions to the U.S. history course. Even with these additions, the content of the courses are similar to the previous course descriptions. What appears as new in the introductory section, as we saw in the elementary standards, is the inclusion of parts that specifically identify free enterprise and its
definition; the inclusion of constitutional republic and its definition; the inclusion of the statement about state and federally mandated testing along with Celebrate Freedom Week; and finally part 8 which requires students to discuss the failures or accomplishments of citizens in regards to the United States’ founding documents.

5.2 Knowledge and Skills Section for Social Studies: Middle school

The knowledge and skills section of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, middle school follows the same format as presented in the elementary school document. As with elementary school, this second section, knowledge and skills, the authors have divided it into 8 different strands: history; geography; economics; government; citizenship; culture; science, technology, and society; and social studies skills. As students continue to go through the Texas school system, the information covered in these strands generally increases as we would expect in any school system. Upon initial review of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Middle School, one encounters a vast amount of information that teachers must cover. The introductory portion of these standards continues to play an important role in the knowledge and skills section as I discussed at the beginning of the elementary school standards. Each academic year starting from sixth grade for the middle school standards, the authors have listed historical individuals, events, celebrations and topics that students must study along with examples of the preceding that might also be studied in addition to those required. As in the
introductory section for the elementary school standards, to denote the difference between what must be learned versus examples of what might be learned, the authors use the term “including” for mandatory material and the phrase “such as” for material that is recommended as examples for inclusion. In order to fully explore my findings of the 8 strands at the middle school level, I will present each strand separately.

5.3 The History Strand

The history strand of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards document for middle school is set up identically to the history strand found in the elementary document. Beginning in sixth grade, students finally study countries outside of North America and Latin America. This is the first instance of actual world studies in the standards including the elementary standards. Unfortunately, it is difficult to actually define this course as world history because students only study the contemporary world. During seventh grade, students return to a study of Texas and in the eighth grade students once again study United States history, this time from the early colonial period to reconstruction. Continuing with the format created for the elementary school standards, at each grade level the objectives for this strand begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective. The authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. The middle school history strand also begins each task with 1 of 11 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): define, describe,
identify, explain, summarize, trace, apply, analyze, compare, contrast, and evaluate. As in the elementary history strand, there is a heavy use of the verb “identify,” but that verb is actually outnumbered by the verb “explain.” The majority of the verbs used from Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list for middle school continue to fall below the level of critical thinking.

The middle school history strand of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards document is made up of 18 overarching standards which are then broken into a total of 69 objectives; this is the largest strand for the middle school standards. Of these 69 objectives, 69.56% begin with verbs listed in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list, with only 30.43% listed in the upper half of the Taxonomy. Breaking these numbers down even further reveals that 33.3% of the verbs listed in the lower portion actually fall at the lowest level, knowledge. Of the 30.43% found in the area of critical thinking, only 4.34% begin with a verb at Bloom’s highest level, evaluation. The trend begun in the elementary standards of focusing on memorizing factual information appears to have carried over into the middle school strand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>23*</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>27*</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>18*</td>
<td>26.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>5.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>69.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School History Strand
*the verb describe appears at the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verbs compare and contrast appear at the analysis and synthesis levels.
Once the students have entered middle school, the history strand begins to look more similar to the high school history strand than the elementary school strand. At this level, students begin to focus more on specific eras, periods or locations more than they had from kindergarten through the fifth grade. During the sixth grade students finally begin to study a small amount of world history.

The first standard of the history strand really encompasses the scope of study for world history; it states, “The student understands that historical events influence contemporary events.” It is evident that this standard focuses more upon contemporary affairs and events more so than an actual study of world history. This focus may prove problematic for middle school social studies teachers because of the complete lack of world history studies at the elementary school level. Up until the sixth grade, the history strand has mainly focused upon United States and Texas history, comprised mostly of historical individuals, dates and events with a little bit of information about North America and Latin America sprinkled in when it supported information regarding the United States and Texas. Middle school students simply will not have the proper historical background to tackle standards that review how historical events influence current events outside of the United States. However, historical knowledge does not appear to be of particular importance in grade 6 especially when compared to grades 7 and 8, where students spend a full year studying Texas followed by a full year studying the United States. The sixth grade history strand includes only two standards with a total of 4 objectives, while the seventh grade history strand
is made up of 7 standards with a total of 29 objectives and the eighth grade history strand is made up of 9 standards and a total of 36 objectives. Just by sheer numbers, we can see that world history has been pushed to the side in lieu of covering and reviewing U.S. and Texas history.

One of the criticisms I make about the social studies standards is the authors’ overwhelming focus upon memorization of historical facts and information. This trend continues in grades 7 and 8, but the minimization of historical world knowledge in grade 6 is just as bad as an overemphasis on U.S. and Texas history in the other grade levels. How can students be expected to connect past historical events with contemporary events without having received information regarding world history? In fact, the authors really make no attempt to include knowledge of world history in this strand, but instead have written objectives with minimal guidance. For example, in standard 1 objective 1, students are required to “trace characteristics of various contemporary societies in regions that resulted from historical events or factors such as invasion, conquests, colonization, immigration, and trade.” This objective, while requiring students to make some connections to history is fairly general in its approach. In the previous grades, many of the objectives included specific information that students were required to learn; however, here specifics have been excluded and the examples provided actually reflects regions all over the world from any period of history, as these events and factors have affected all nations at one point or another. The second objective follows with a similar vague requirement, but it
begins with the word analyze which leads one to reason that some emphasis on critical thinking is initiated here, it states that students must “analyze the historical background of various contemporary societies to evaluate relationships between past conflicts and current conditions.” In order to accomplish this task, students will have to think about societies and their relationships, but only in regards to how conflicts have impacted current conditions. The problem remains in the absence of which societies. Again, the students’ past knowledge acquired through the Texas school system emphasizes United States and Texas history, not world history, and even though the introductory section of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Middle School document states numerous countries that must be included during grade 6, there is no structural foundation upon which to build these standards and objectives.

The second standard of the sixth grade history strand provides teachers with some areas of world history to focus on, but we can immediately see a return to the United States rather than the rest of the world. Standard 2 states that, “The student understands the influences of individuals and groups from various cultures on various historical and contemporary societies.” Here teachers have an excellent opportunity to include some form of world history studies for their students, but the guidance provided by the authors reflect a desire to move closer to the United States rather than the world. For example, the first objective requires that students “identify and describe the influence of individual or group achievements on various historical or contemporary societies such as the
classical Greeks on government and the American Revolution on the French Revolution.” It is important to note that these examples are just that, examples, they are preceded by the phrase "such as" which means that these examples are not required for study, as noted in the introductory section of the standards document. However, it seems that the authors regard these events and individuals as exemplars of what should be studied. Referencing the Greeks on government demonstrates a focus democracy in the world, and this is emphasized by including the influence of the American Revolution on the French Revolution. Both these revolutions resulted in democratic governments. This is not to say that these events and societies are not important, it simply shows the focus of American history even in a course that is supposed to be devoted to world history.

As students move into the seventh grade, the social studies standards return to coverage of the state of Texas. During elementary school, the fourth grade specifically, students spent the entire year studying the state of Texas, and once again in middle school the students are required to study Texas. However, the authors point out in the introduction that during the seventh grade the,

Content is presented with more depth and breadth than in grade 4. Students examine the full scope of Texas history, including Natural Texas and its People; Age of Contact; Spanish Colonial; Mexican National; Revolution and Republic; Early Statehood; Texas in the Civil War and Reconstruction; Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads; Age of
Oil; Texas in the Great Depression and World War II; Civil Rights and Conservatism; and Contemporary Texas eras. (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills)

Simply reviewing the authors’ description for this course reveals that the students are expected to cover a great deal of information, so much so that the course has been broken into separate time periods which act as beacons for the teachers as they move through the plethora of standards and objectives which follow.

There are a total of 7 standards accompanied with 29 objectives for the history strand in the seventh grade. This is quite a large jump in historical objectives when compared to the sixth grade history strand which only includes 2 standards with 4 objectives. The authors demonstrate their belief in the importance of Texas history in comparison to world history here. The first standard requires that “The student understands traditional historical points of reference in Texas history.” The objectives designed to support this standard completely reflect the eras presented in the introductory portion of the standards, in fact they have simply been replicated in the objective and the students are only required to identify them. The second objective focuses on the skill of chronology in history. Unfortunately, even by using the verb apply, which requires more effort on the part of the student, the objective still represents a focus on memorization rather than critical thinking. Students must demonstrate the ability to place historical individuals and events in chronological order or in the correct era. Finally the third objective continues the reliance upon memorization as it requires
students to explain the importance specific dates. For example, objective 3 of the first standard includes “1519, mapping of the Texas coast and first mainland Spanish settlement” along with “1718, founding of San Antonio,” etc. This is not to say that students should not know these dates and their importance to the state of Texas, but by the seventh grade students should be able to extend this information beyond memory and actually analyze how these events impacted Texas both historically and currently. By keeping these standards limited to recall of information, the authors have made it easier to assess students and their knowledge of Texas history through the use of standardized testing, should the state decide to implement this in the social studies courses.

Up until middle school, the history strand has included a great deal of historical names, dates and events which one might consider politically neutral. In other words, the objectives and standards revealed little in regards to promoting one political ideology over another. If anything there has been a major promotion of Texas and United States history only, albeit factually based. However, in the seventh grade history strand the authors include political and social movements. In standard 7, the third objective requires that students “describe and compare the impact of Progressive and other reform movements in Texas in the 19th and 20th centuries such as the Populists, women’s suffrage, agrarian groups, labor unions, and the evangelical movement of the late 20th century.” Within this objective, the only thing that really stands out as misplaced is the evangelical movement of the late 20th century. This is not to say that
studying the movement in its historical terms is inappropriate, but does it belong in an objective which is focused on Progressive and reform movements? The authors may be attempting to instill the idea in students that the evangelical movement is a type of reform movement or even a progressive movement, which it is not. The evangelical movement does demonstrate a conservative movement within religion and society. At this point in the standards, it is difficult to assess the intent of including a religious movement in the historical standards, but as I continue to present my findings in the later grades, I hope to demonstrate that the simple inclusion of ideas and statements in various parts of the standards eventually show the authors’ attempt to promote specific political and religious beliefs in the standards. Taken on their own, they appear relatively harmless, but when looked at in their totality we can see that the authors have overstepped their authority in these standards. This is not to say that the evangelical movement has not had an impact in Texas, the issue within these standards is the amount of attention placed on the movement when compared to other social movements which have had significant impacts as well. The focus, as I plan on showing, is that the evangelical movement overshadows other movements in terms of importance in Texas as well as the rest of the United States. Progressive movements have also played a role in shaping the identity of Texas and the United States. If the standards are to demonstrate balance then there should be similar attention placed on numerous movements, both progressive and conservative.
The remaining 6 history standards and their objectives follow suit to the first standard. A specific era or eras is presented in the standard followed by objectives which include the information that students must master. The objectives of each standard include a list of individuals, places or events that students must know in order to demonstrate understanding each specific standard. There are, however, some objectives that require students to do more than regurgitate names, dates and events. For example, in standard 4 the second objective requires that students “analyze the causes and events leading to Texas annexation.” In Standard 5 the second objective requires that students “analyze the political, economic, and social effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction in Texas.” The seventh standard includes similar objectives for the time periods dealing with the Great Depression and World War II. In the midst of all these objectives requiring mere memorization of facts, the students are confronted with some opportunities to think critically about history and its effects on Texas. Unfortunately, objectives like these are few when compared to the many objectives that remain entrenched in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy. It is also difficult to ascertain if teachers will have enough time to actually provide the depth of knowledge needed to complete these analysis objectives when they have so much factual material to cover in just the history strand.

Moving into the eighth grade, students return to a study of United States history. During this academic year, the study of United States history begins with the colonial era and proceeds through the Reconstruction era. The introductory
section of the eighth grade standards explains that this is the first half of a two
year course of study in United States history. The second year of study takes
place in high school and covers Reconstruction through the present. According to
the description provided in the introduction, the eighth grade social studies
standards have been designed to build upon those covered in the fifth grade. The
eighth grade history strand contains the largest number of standards and
objectives of this strand in the middle school standards document. There are a
total of 9 standards supported by a total of 36 objectives. Once again though,
there is a heavy emphasis upon factual knowledge that can easily be assessed
by standardized measures. However, there is a noticeable attempt at
incorporating critical thinking in grade 8.

As in the first standard of the seventh grade history strand, the focus is on
understanding historical points of reference, instead of Texas though, the
standards shift to the United States during the period of colonization through
Reconstruction. Immediately the authors begin to focus on the memorization of
factual knowledge with the first objective of standard 1. Objective 1 states that
students must, “identify the major eras in U.S. history through 1877, including
colonization, revolution, drafting of the Declaration of Independence, creation and
ratification of the Constitution, religious revivals such as the Second Great
Awakening, early republic, the Age of Jackson, westward expansion, reform
movements, sectionalism, Civil War, and Reconstruction, and describe their
causes and effects.” This particular objective provides a framework for the
remaining standards in the history strand because these specific eras are used as the major focus of study for the history strand. In order to support this objective the authors follow it up with 2 more objectives, but these 2 objectives only reinforce the concept of memorization rather than critical thinking.

The second objective of standard 1 at first appears to require more skill and thinking; however, the skills used to accomplish the objective should have been mastered in previous grades because it requires the application of chronological skills. This objective requires that students “apply absolute and relative chronology through the sequencing of significant individuals, events, and time periods.” Initially, the objective reads as one that requires a great deal of thinking from the students, but when analyzed closely, it only appears impressive because of the authors’ choice of phrasing, specifically “absolute and relative chronology.” This phrase actually means that students place specific historical information in chronological order by its exact date or by its period. Students were required to master chronological skills in the elementary standards, so by eighth grade this skill should be second nature to students. Therefore, the only thing required of students is to memorize the dates and time periods of the historical information they receive during grade 8. In fact, the final objective provides the specific dates that students are required to learn. Objective 3 does require that the students explain the significance of the specified dates, but nothing more is required of students in the first history standard.
The second standard of the eighth grade history strand is fairly short with only 2 objectives included for support. This standard requires that “The student understands the causes of exploration and colonization eras.” This is actually an important standard for students to learn in regards to United States history, but the authors provide little in terms of mastery. The first objective requires that students “identify reasons for European exploration and colonization of North America.” Here again, the students must simply identify the reasons which means more memorization rather than thinking. However, with the way the standards have been designed from elementary school through the eighth grade, it would be difficult to require anything more for students to do than memorize the reasons for colonization because the students have had very little study in regards to world history. Without an in depth study of European history, students lack the prior knowledge to think critically about the reasons for exploration and colonization. This is what makes the second objective questionable in terms of student mastery. Objective 2 requires that students “compare political, economic, religious, and social reasons for the establishment of the 13 English colonies.” This objective does provide the students with specific reasons for colonization that can easily be identified, but without the proper historical background for these reasons, it will be difficult for them to actually compare these reasons. Earlier in these findings I have pointed out the authors’ attempts at scaffolding the information that students are required to learn, but in this instance they have not created the necessary structure to support this objective. Unless the students
have teachers who can somehow include European history into their classrooms, students will not have the prior knowledge to accomplish objective 2 of standard 2.

The third standard for history in the eighth grade provides the next example of including the authors’ beliefs about religion. The focus of the third standard is upon representative government and its foundations in the United States. Again, this is an important standard for students to understand in terms of American government and U.S. history. Initially the standard and the first objective start off with clear intentions of providing students with the basic foundation of this movement as it began in colonial America. Students are required to “explain the reasons for the growth of representative government and institutions during the colonial period.” While not the most critically thought provoking objective, it does focus on something important in our history. These reasons would eventually lead to the creation of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution. This objective is followed up with a second objective which requires that students “analyze the importance of the Mayflower Compact, the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, and the Virginia House of Burgesses to the growth of representative government.” These help to support the mastery of the third standard and provide students with important historical information that laid the foundation for the eventual new government. However, it is the third objective that goes beyond historical information and brings in the authors’ personal beliefs. The third objective requires that students “describe how
religion and virtue contributed to the growth of representative government in the
American colonies.” As in the seventh grade history strand, there is an attempt to
connect religion to the formation of the United States government. These
objectives, found in grades 7 and 8, lay the foundation for students to begin
questioning the principle of separation of church and state in the United States.
While this objective and the seventh grade objective pertaining to religion do not
overtly question this principle, I will demonstrate in the high school standards
how the authors finally bring the outright questioning of this principle into the
standards.

Moving beyond the third history standard, there is a reinforcement of
memorizing historical facts. These facts follow suit with the numerous eras
covered in the eighth grade history strand, and there is an attempt to include
critical thinking within the objectives, but more often than not, the objectives
contain lists of names, dates, events and places which students must be able to
identify or explain. For example, in the fourth history standard the objectives
include a total of 24 historical events and individuals that students must explain.
This is just the fourth standard and the remaining 5 history standards all contain
lists of names and events similar to those found in standard 4. There are
objectives that require students to analyze some of the events required for study
in the history strand, for example in standard 5 students are required to “analyze
the reasons for the removal and resettlement of Cherokee Indians during the
Jacksonian era, including the Indian Removal Act, Worcester v. Georgia, and the
Trail of Tears" (16). How the actual analysis of these events occurs in the classroom can only be assessed by the teacher, but it is interesting that this objective does not include a study of the effects of events like the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears had on the Cherokee Indians. Students are simply required to analyze the reasons according to the objective and nothing more is provided by the authors. For the most part, those objectives which do move into the area of critical thinking according to Bloom’s Taxonomy, generally remain at the lowest level of critical thought rather requiring students to make actual judgments and evaluations using their knowledge of history. It seems that students are only expected to master the why of these events, which can be easily assessed on a standardized exam.

The final issue that might go easily missed appears in standard 9 objective 1 of the eighth grade history strand. The purpose of the ninth standard is for students to study the effects of Reconstruction on the United States in regards to politics, society and economics. The first objective states that students must “evaluate legislative reform programs of the Radical Reconstruction Congress and reconstructed state governments.” At first it is very easy to overlook this objective because it is fairly straight forward and actually requires the students to think critically about these concepts, which is certainly a positive in these standards; however, what is important here is that a term has been omitted from the Radical Reconstruction Congress, and that is Republican. The actual description should be Radical Republican Reconstruction Congress. What must
be asked is why remove the term republican from the description? This is how this congress has been nicknamed in U.S. history. A simple Google search leads to a plethora of hits discussing the Radical Republicans. Perhaps the authors did not like the term radical associated with the Republican Party. They may see it as something negative, especially with the negative connotations currently attached to the term radical, but by purposely omitting this word they demonstrate a subtle bias towards their own beliefs and affiliations.

5.4 The Geography Strand

The geography strand of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards document for middle school is set up identically to the geography strand found in the elementary document. Continuing with the format created for the elementary school standards, at each grade level the objectives for this strand begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective. However, not all of the standards in the geography strand actually begin with “the student understands” because there has been addition in grade 6 and 7. In each of these academic years, 1 standard actually begins with “the student uses.” As with all of the preceding standards the authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. The middle school geography strand also begins each task with 1 of 10 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): describe, draw, identify, explain, locate, analyze, compare, create, pose and answer. As in the elementary geography strand, there is a heavy use of
the verb “identify.” The majority of the verbs used from Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list for middle school continue to fall below the level of critical thinking.

The middle school geography strand of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards document is made up of 11 overarching standards which are then broken into a total of 36 objectives. Of these 36 objectives, 58.3% begin with verbs listed in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list, with only 33.3% listed in the upper half of the Taxonomy. In the geography strand 2 of the verbs the authors have used do not appear on the Taxonomy, pose and answer, and this accounts for 5.5% of the objectives. Breaking these numbers down even further reveals that 41.6% of the verbs listed actually fall at the lowest level, knowledge. Of the 33.3% found in the area of critical thinking, 0% begins with a verb at Bloom’s highest level, evaluation. The highest level for the verbs used in this strand reach the level of synthesis, which is the second highest level on the Taxonomy. As with the history strand, the trend begun in the elementary standards of focusing on memorizing factual information appears to have continued to carry over into the middle school geography strand.
In the history strand, the sixth grade standards received the least amount of attention in terms of sheer number of standards and objectives, and as the grade level increased so did the number of standards and objectives. The Geography strand is quite the opposite. The sixth grade strand includes the greatest number of standards and objectives and as the grade level increases the standards and objectives actually decrease. In sixth grade students are required to master a total of 5 standards with 19 objectives, in the seventh grade it drops to 4 standards with 11 objectives and in the eighth grade it drops to a low of 2 standards with 6 objectives. The geography strand was designed to fit with the actually course material required in the grade level articulations. In sixth grade the students cover contemporary world geography, then in seventh grade the geography shifts to Texas, and finally in the eighth grade the geography content focuses on the United States during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. This may account for the diminution in number of standards for the geography strand from grades 6 through 8. The elementary standards include a great deal of information centered on Texas and the United States and lack any attention on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>15*</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Geography Strand
*the verbs describe appears at the knowledge and comprehension levels, the draw appears at the knowledge and application levels and the verb compare appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.
World studies. Therefore, students need more information on world geography because of the lack of it encountered in the elementary grades and less on Texas and the United States because students are required to master this information in the elementary grades.

In sixth grade the first standard of the geography strands presents the change from the “student understands” to “the student uses.” Standard one states that “the student uses geographic tools to answer geographic questions.” In the elementary grades, the authors provided specific examples of what they meant when using the phrase “geographic tools,” such as maps and globes. However, in the sixth grade and seventh grade standard, the authors have not included any examples of those tools, so it appears that teachers are expected to know what tools to use or simply to use the accumulation of the tools covered in the elementary standards. In the sixth grade this standard focuses on students’ abilities to answer geographic questions, whereas in the seventh grade students use geographic tools to “collect, analyze, and interpret data.” Fortunately, the authors chose to include specific questions that students must be able to answer, and these questions make up the first objective for standard 1 in grade 6. The first objective states that students must “pose and answer geographic questions, including: Where is it located? Why is it there? What is significant about its location? How is its location related to the location of other people, places, and environments?” The authors go on to include more questions in objective 2, which are more focused on specific information rather than broad information.
The second objective states that students must “pose and answer questions about geographic distributions and patterns for various world regions and countries shown on maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases.” These first 2 objectives require the use of these questions by teachers and students as noted by the term “including” in the first objective, which follows the instructions set forth in the introductory section of the standards document about the term “including” and the phrase “such as.” What is notable about the first objective is the simplicity of the questions required for mastery. These questions can all be easily answered by using an atlas, and they fail to demonstrate movement towards critical thinking on the part of students. As in the previous standards, these objectives are easily measurable. This is not to say that these skills lack importance, but by following the standards from kindergarten through middle school, the students should have mastered these skills before leaving elementary school. The second objective actually provides teachers with the “geographic tools” required to achieve the standard and they are simply iterations from the previous grade level articulations. This supports the lack of movement towards critical thinking and instead focusing on basic skills and knowledge.

The first standard in the sixth grade geography strand at first appears to include higher order thinking skills, but these skills are minimal at best. The third objective of standard 1 requires that students “compare various world regions and countries using data from geographic tools, including maps, graphs, charts, databases, and models.” Comparing data actually requires students to analyze
information, but the information required for analysis is vague. Instead of including the types of charts, graphs, maps, databases and models, the authors have left teachers with no recommendations. Depending on the specific tools chosen by the teacher, students may only be required to compare simple information such as population numbers, or more difficult information such as gross national product. The final objective for the first standard is in many ways a reverse of the third. In objective 4 students are required to “create thematic maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases depicting aspects such as population, disease, and economic activities of various world regions and countries.” This objective actually requires the greatest use of students’ skills and understanding. Instead of answering questions about these tools, students must now take the information and create the tools themselves. The objective is also more complete when compared to the third objective in that it actually provides teachers with examples of the type of information to include in this task. While the standard begins by focusing on general informational skills, it does finish with an emphasis on higher order thinking skills.

The seventh grade version of the geography strand only includes the last objective that has been altered to include information dealing directly with Texas. For example, the objective states “students create and interpret thematic maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases representing various aspects of Texas during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.” The authors have also included the verb “interpret” here that was not used in the sixth grade. This might demonstrate the
authors’ desire to create a scaffold for the students. The second objective for the seventh grade version of this standard requires that students “analyze and interpret geographic distributions and patterns in Texas during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.” While this objective includes the use of verbs from the upper half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix), it is somewhat vague. The students must analyze geographic distribution patterns in Texas, but for what purpose? The authors have not provided information regarding the aim of this objective. Once again, this information must be provided or created by the teacher. Do the authors want the students studying population trends during this period, and looking at why the population may have changed in some areas of Texas? This is unclear because of the lack of information. There are certainly points where the lack of specifics in these standards provides teachers with some level of academic freedom, but without a specific aim for the objective it is difficult to assess what students are supposed to master in the first standard. The overarching standard focuses on the specific skill of using geographic tools, but the objectives feel disjointed or even out of place when studied in terms of overall purpose. Finally, as students move into the eighth grade, this particular standard completely disappears.

Moving onto the second standard of the geography strand presents an actual diminishment in expectations from the sixth grade through the eighth grade. In sixth grade the second standard states “The student understands the factors that influence the locations and characteristics of locations of various
contemporary societies on maps and globes and uses latitude and longitude to determine absolute locations” (3). The sixth grade version of this standard appears to focus on students’ ability to locate places on maps and globes. However, with the way this standard has been written it can be confusing to decipher what the actual standard requires. At first, the authors include reference to those reasons for the location of certain places geographically. For instance, certain societies might be found near rivers or major waterways and there are certain reasons or “factors” that have led to the creation of contemporary societies at these points, but looking more closely at the way the standard has been written demonstrates that the actual purpose of the standard is to require map reading, which is reinforced by including the requirement that students use latitude and longitude. The wording in this particular standard leads to confusion because of the way it has been worded. Moving into the seventh and eighth grade this standard has been reduced to “The student understands the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas” in the seventh grade and to “The student understands the location and characteristics of places and regions of the United States, past and present” in the eighth grade. The sixth grade standard actually requires the use of latitude and longitude, but the authors have forgone this task in the seventh and eighth grade iterations. Through all three grades though, the objectives written in support of mastering this standard generally relate to the ability to use maps. For instance in the sixth grade students are required to “identify the location of major world countries such as
Canada, Mexico, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Russia…” and the list goes on even further. There is an attempt by the authors to include some higher order skills by requiring students to “analyze the effects of physical and human factors such as climate, weather, landforms, irrigation, transportation, and communication on major events in Texas” during the seventh grade. The eighth grade objective is similar, but not quite as specific as it requires that students “analyze the effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historical and contemporary events in the United States.” Here again the issue of clarity arises. The authors have failed to include any specific historical events as requirements much less as examples.

Considering the time periods covered in the seventh and eighth grade would one assume that an event like the Dust Bowl should be included in the course of study? Moving into more contemporary topics, should teachers include debated topics such as climate change? Furthermore, are these even the types of historical events the authors had in mind when they created these objectives?

As the standards progress in the sixth and seventh grades, they come to an end in the eighth grade after only 2 standards. This might be considered an area of criticism, but it is important to keep in mind that from students’ early days in elementary school there has been an overwhelming amount of attention placed upon the history and geography of the United States. In the sixth grade the third standard emphasizes how geography can “influence the economic development, political relationships, and policies of society.” The third standard in
seventh grade does not follow or build off of the sixth grade version. In the seventh grade the standards states that “The student understands the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.” The third standard in the sixth grade, once again, was written with the goal of rote memorization and no higher order thinking skills. The objectives require students to identify geographic factors that influence “the location of economic activities” as well as identifying “geographic factors such as location, physical features, transportation corridors and barriers, and distribution of natural resources that influence a society’s ability to control territory.” The ability to identify these as geographic factors is an important skill for students, but they are lacking in analysis. It is one thing for a student to identify these factors, but what is just as important or even more so, is the students’ ability to evaluate these geographic factors. The third standard in the seventh grade requires that students study migration patterns in Texas and actually analyze reasons and purposes for these migration patterns. When it comes to the study of Texas, the authors require higher order thinking skills than those required in the study of contemporary world history and even United States history.

The fourth standard of the sixth grade geography strand moves into a more scientific study of geography. Standard 4 states that “The student understands that geographical patterns result from physical environmental processes.” The 3 objectives that follow actually reflect information that one might find in an Earth science class. For instance, students are required to
“describe and explain the effects of physical environmental processes such as erosion, ocean currents, and earthquakes on Earth’s surface.” The objectives also require that teachers cover information regarding both “renewable and nonrenewable natural resources” and even requiring that students analyze how environmental processes actually affect humans. This standard is quite laudable because of its cross curricular nature. Students have to use knowledge from multiple fields of study to actually master the standard. Unfortunately, standards written such as this one have been few and far between.

The final standard in the sixth grade focuses on the interaction between humans and the environment. The objectives which support this standard focus on how humans have adapted the environment to suit their needs such as building dams, using mining and building systems of transportation. Overall, the final standard presents no forms of author preference and actually demonstrates important components of geographic knowledge. The addition of analysis to the ability to identify these facets of geography helps to strengthen this standard and actually makes it one of the strongest standards in the geography strand.

The middle school geography strand has some high points within these standards. The students are actually expected to use their knowledge of science in relation to geography which provides the students the opportunity to think about geography as more than just places on a map. However, this aside, there is still a major emphasis upon the ability to identify and locate places on a map or globe. This is an important skill for students to master, but by the time students
enter middle school they should have already mastered it. Part of the problem though, is that students have not yet received any real study in world geography, and even in middle school the focus is only upon the contemporary world. As in the elementary grades the writers have geared these standards with a focus towards the United States and Texas. As Martin et. Al (2011) discuss in their analysis of world history standards throughout the United States “in half of the states, students begin their formal world history studies in sixth grade…Teachers in eleven states can find history standards for young elementary students…” (33). If students are beginning their study of world history at an earlier point we can surmise that students are also learning some world geography along the way as well. However, Martin et.al (2011) demonstrates that the issue of refraining from studies in world history exists in states beyond Texas. Therefore, the problems I focus on here for Texas have a good chance of existing elsewhere in the United States.

5.5 The Economics Strand

As with the previous strands, the economics strand follows the same patterns established in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills document. Continuing with the format created for the elementary school standards, at each grade level the objectives for this strand begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective. As with all of the preceding standards the authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. The middle school
economics strand also begins each task with 1 of 10 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): define, describe, identify, explain, trace, understand, analyze, compare, examine, and compare & contrast. Unlike previous strands, the economics strand in middle school uses the verb “explain” the most followed by “identify.” As in the previous strands and grade levels the majority of the verbs used from Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list for middle school continue to fall below the level of critical thinking.

The economics strand for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Middle School is made up of 8 standards with a total of 24 objectives. Of these 24 objectives, 66.6% fall into the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) while 33.3% fall in the area of critical thinking. 33.3% of the objectives actually fall at Bloom’s lowest level, knowledge and 4.1% fall at Bloom’s highest level, evaluation. The trend continues to refute the authors’ explanation of the importance of including higher order thinking skills presented in the introductory section of the standards document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Economics Strand
*the verb describe appears at the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verb compare appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.
During the sixth grade students study the contemporary world and this is reflected in the economics strand for this grade level. The students are required to cover the greatest number of objectives in the sixth grade when compared to grades seven and eight; during grade six the students must master 10 objectives. The first standard requires that “The student understands the factors of production in a society’s economy.” One of the issues that I have attempted to illuminate in these standards is the lack of specific information concerning different terms and their definitions. In this first standard though, the issue does not appear because in the first objective, the authors have provided a definition of the term “factors.” The first objective of standard 1 states that students must be able to “describe ways in which factors of production (natural resources, labor, capital, and entrepreneurs) influence the economies of various contemporary societies.” In this objective, the teacher understands that students must comprehend certain factors in order to achieve mastery of this objective and standard. This objective then moves into one whose focus is on the concept of limited supplies. The second objective continues in the process of students attaining information and knowledge at the lowest level of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix), because students are only required to actually identify the problems that arise from a lack of one or more of these factors of production. The final objective concludes the standard with an attempt to have students understand the impact that a lack of supplies has on international trade, and the international economy. Unfortunately, students are only required to explain the impact rather
than evaluating the impacts. Students only need to regurgitate the information and make small connections to pieces of information in order to demonstrate mastery.

The second standard returns to a focus on the free market system. In the introductory section of these standards, the authors took the time to explicitly define the phrase “free market system,” and made sure that readers understood that free market system is interchangeable with the phrase “free enterprise system” and the term “capitalism.” This entire standard requires that students study the many economic systems found in the contemporary world, such as communism, socialism and capitalism, but the term capitalism is not used here, instead it is replaced with “free enterprise” once again. This should come as no surprise as Linn (2010) learned that the Texas board decided that the term capitalism is seen less positively than the terms free mark or free enterprise and decided to eliminate its use within the standards. At no time in the sixth grade is the term capitalism ever used. In fact, the authors express an underlying focus on the benefits of capitalism while disregarding the negatives that come along with this economic system. The second objective of standard 2 provides this tilt, it states that students “compare and contrast free enterprise, socialist, and communist economies in various contemporary societies, including the benefits of the U.S. free enterprise system.” On initial review of this objective one might argue that it appears relatively neutral, but as I have noted in the elementary standards and beyond this is incorrect. A comparison of various economic
systems is certainly an activity that students should take part in to learn about the numerous systems found in the world, the problem is the subtle attempt to only focus on the positives of the United States’ free enterprise system, while leaving out any mention of the positives of the various systems presented in this objective. Along with the positives, the authors should have also included a study of the negatives as well in order to create neutrality within the standard. It is understandable that the authors would lean towards the positives of capitalism, but these are educational standards which should reflect no partiality towards specific ideologies. The third objective does offer teachers the opportunity to discuss some of the negatives of capitalism, but that is not necessarily the purpose of this objective. Standard 2 objective 3 requires that the students “understand the importance of morality and ethics in maintaining a functional free enterprise system.” It appears that the authors have attempted to include some element of business ethics and practices, which are important in a capitalist system. The focus of this objective is how these ethics and morals continue to grow the system; however, a teacher could use this as an opportunity to bring in the negatives of a system like capitalism. Perhaps a well-practiced teacher could discuss issues of greed in capitalism and even bring to light some of the current issues that have arisen in the most recent economic downtown in world. Finally, to complete the second standard, students are required to “examine the record of collective, non-free market economic systems in contemporary world societies.” Initially, this objective seems neutral. The students must examine how well these
systems have performed, but the objective is lacking one vital component for a complete examination, and that would be the inclusion of free markets throughout the world. Here, again, is a subtle leaning towards capitalism by attempting to remove it from a direct examination of it as a system when placed in relation to non-free market systems. In order for students to gain a fuller understanding of all economic systems, they must be allowed to study these systems against each other. It is not the place of education to promote beliefs, but to provide students with the necessary information to help them formulate their own beliefs.

The final standard, standard 3, in the sixth grade requires students to learn how to read collected data pertaining to economic activity and then make a determination on different societies’ economic levels. The first objective is a list of activities used in economic endeavors and students are only required to define these terms and then provide examples of each. The list of terms includes “agriculture, wholesale, retail, manufacturing (goods), and service industries.” Once again, students are merely required to operate at the knowledge level. One could argue that these terms should have appeared previously in the standards, especially since the objective requires memorization over higher order thinking, but these are important terms for students to understand and know in order to achieve mastery of this standard. Objective 2 presents students with the opportunity to study economic data, specifically noted in the objective are “indicators such as life expectancy, gross domestic product (GDP), GDP per
capital, and literacy.” It is important to note that the authors chose to use the phrase “such as” when compiling this list of indicators, which means that, these are examples of what should be studied and not necessarily mandatory. Finally, the standard finishes with a review of the “effects of government regulation and taxation on economic development and business planning.” Thus far, this has been the only mention of taxation in the 6th grade standards as well as its effects on business in particular. No specific mention of an economic system is reflected in this objective, but by including the numerous economic systems presented in this strand, it would make sense to include mention of them here to further enhance students’ knowledge and understanding of all economic systems, especially considering the role government plays in each system. While the objective appears relatively neutral in terms of bias, it is lacking in substance and depth.

As students move into the seventh grade they return to a study of Texas, and the economics strand represents this transition back into Texas as well. The first standard requires that students study Texas’ evolution from an agrarian society into an urban society. The objectives reflect this evolution of Texas society, but as has been previously established, the objectives require students to perform in the lower half of Bloom's Taxonomy rather than the upper half. Students are required to explain those economic factors that lead Texas away from an agrarian society to an urban one, then they must “trace the development of major industries that contributed to the urbanization of Texas such as
transportation, oil and gas, and manufacturing,” and then conclude with changes in job types and occupation that resulted from the urbanization of Texas. Overall, standard 1 is fairly basic in its requirements and could actually be applied to nearly any American state, as all of these factors have contributed in some way to the change and evolution of American society.

The second and final standard of the economics strand of the seventh grade standards requires that students use higher order thinking skills. Standard number 2 requires that “The student understands the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the World.” As in the economic strand of the elementary standards, there is a subtle separation of Texas from the United States as if the state functions separately from the country. This is reflected in the use of the term interdependence in the standard. The economy of the United States is comprised of a compilation of the economic activities of all 50 states. The first objective requires that students “analyze the impact of national and international markets and events on the production of goods and services in Texas such as agriculture, oil and gas, and computer technology.” This objective requires that students operate at the analysis level of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix), the lowest of critical thinking, and there is a great deal of information and skills needed to accomplish mastery of this objective. While this standard and objective has been designed for the study of Texas, students will have to use their knowledge of world events in order to fully analyze international markets and events. For example, teachers could use the events of September
11, 2001 to explore and analyze how the attacks affected specifically the economy of Texas, but also the United States and the world and how this event actually affected the goods and services. Products such as gas and oil experienced an increase in prices that caused an increase in price for other products. An analysis such as this brings the concept of inflation to the classroom that leads to a greater understanding of the relationship of the various world economies as well as Texas. This type of activity requires more than rote memorization or regurgitation of facts. In objective 2 the authors have returned to a study of the free enterprise system, again there is no use of the term “capitalism,” and how it affects the economy of Texas. In this second objective students must specifically “analyze the impact of economic concepts within the free enterprise system such as supply and demand, profit, government regulation, and world competition on the economy of Texas.” The authors have provided teachers with examples of economic concepts that must be covered in the classroom, but no specific concepts have actually been listed as required as demonstrated by the inclusion of the phrase “such as.” Teachers are simply required to include economic concepts, so in turn one might argue that the concepts provided as examples are required after all.

To conclude standard 2 the students are required to “analyze the impact of significant industries in Texas such as oil and gas, aerospace, medical, and computer technologies on local, national, and international markets.” All of these industries have historical importance in Texas and certainly have an impact on
both national and international markets. It is completely reasonable to require that students analyze how these stated industries actually impact markets and in turn how this affects the Texas economy. Overall, the second standard for the seventh grade requires the most effort in the use of skill and critical thinking from students. The standard begins to tie in the concept that Texas does not exist in a vacuum and both affects and is affected by outside economies.

As students move into the eighth grade, their study of the economics strand centers around the United States. As previously stated, the eighth grade course covers the United States from the early colonial period through Reconstruction. Because this period of study is much broader than that of Texas in the seventh grade, there is one more standard and 2 more objectives. This is not significantly longer than the seventh grade economics strand considering the timeframe covered, but it does provide a little more for teachers to cover in their classrooms. The first standard in the eighth grade economics strand requires that “the student understands why various sections of the United States developed different patterns of economic activity.” In the seventh grade students studied the evolution of Texas from an agrarian to an urban society in regards to economy, and here students take on a similar task, but in a much broader scope, various regions of the United States. Initially, the standards fall back into the old pattern of requiring memorization over critical thought, but there is one instance where students are required to analyze economics in the United States in standard 1. The fourth and final objective requires that students “analyze the causes and
effects of economic differences among different regions of the United States at selected times in U.S. history.” Even though the authors have placed an emphasis on analysis in the objective, the rest of the objective is relatively vague. Is this an instance of academic freedom for teachers, or is it another example of a lack of knowledge on the part of the authors? Upon closer analysis, it appears that it may very well be a lack of knowledge on the part of the authors because of their choice of words in the objective. The reference “selected times in U.S. history” provides support that the authors were unsure of what to place here and instead tried to move to something more general, but ultimately failed at the attempt. Using the term “selected” leads one to understand that there are specific points in U.S. history that need to be covered, but there is no integration of these selected points in the objective. Perhaps the authors meant to reference the previous objectives which included direct references to the slave trade and the plantation system, but without a specific reference to doing this in the fourth objective, teachers are left to surmise what the authors meant on their own. Prior to objective 4, the first 3 standards rely purely upon memorization of information, for example, in objective 1; students must “identify economic differences among different regions of the United States.” This can simply mean students need only identify what a region produces or creates, such as the Midwest known for its farmland, or major industries of the northeast, and even the role of California in the technology industry. The standard offers little in terms of teaching students to think critically about the economy of the United States.
The second standard in the eighth grade economics strand is more explicit in the time period that students must study. In standard 2, students are required to demonstrate an understanding of “how various economic forces resulted in the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century.” This standard provides the only other requirement for critical thinking. The first objective explains that students must “analyze the War of 1812 as a cause of economic changes in the nation.” In order to master this objective, students will need a fairly strong historical background in American History, specifically the events surrounding the War of 1812. The students will need to assimilate this knowledge and synthesize it with the knowledge they have acquired in previous economic standards. What is problematic about this objective is that it relies upon prior knowledge and skills, and as I have demonstrated throughout these standards this cannot be done well with an over-reliance upon rote knowledge versus critical thinking. The students may know the facts and the dates and the definitions, but they may not have developed the skills necessary to combine this information and then use it to analyze something like economics. The question is not one of whether or not this objective is valuable, it is one of whether or not students will have the background skills to demonstrate mastery. To finish the standard, the authors return to identification. In the last objective students need to “identify the economic factors that brought about rapid industrialization and urbanization.” Once again this is a task that can easily be assessed through a standardized
test. Although the standard begins with a strong objective, it ends weakly with memorization.

The third and final standard in the eighth grade economics strand returns students to the concepts of the “free enterprise system.” As in all other iterations of this strand, there is no use of the term capitalism. The objectives written in support of this standard require more explanation and identification from students rather than critical thinking. The first objective mandates that students can actually explain why free enterprise developed in the United States followed by a list of those reasons the authors felt necessary to include, for example, “minimal government intrusion, taxation, and property rights.” These specific reasons the authors provided are required for study as they use the term “including” in the objective. Students can easily access this information through required readings or instructor lecture, with little thought put into the reasons. The second and final objective requires that students “describe the characteristics and benefits of the U.S. free enterprise system during the 18th and 19th centuries.” Again students are simply asked to describe rather than analyze or evaluate, and once again the focus is only upon the benefits of such a system without any reference to the drawbacks. In order for balance to exist in these standards, both the positives and negatives should be included. It is up for students to create their beliefs about economic systems after having been provided a thorough and balanced view of all economic systems in their education.
The middle school economics strand comes down to memorization on the part of students with some attempts to include opportunities for critical thinking. Weaved throughout the economics strand is a subtle push on the part of the authors towards capitalism, or as they have termed it, the “free enterprise system,” as the only system of value. By only focusing on the positives of the “free enterprise system” students receive an incomplete education regarding economics. In order to create a more balanced version of the middle school economics strand, the authors needed to include the positives and negatives of all the systems written into the standards which would also require more critical thinking by the students.

5.6 The Government Strand

The government strand follows the same patterns established in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills document as all of the previous strands from kindergarten forward. Continuing with the format created for the elementary school standards, at each grade level the objectives for this strand begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective. As with all of the preceding standards the authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. The middle school government strand also begins each task with 1 of 8 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): describe, identify, explain, review, summarize, analyze, compare and evaluate. For the government strand the authors have returned to a heavy use of the verb
“identify.” As in the previous strands and grade levels the majority of the verbs used from Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list for middle school continue to fall below the level of critical thinking.

The government strand for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Middle School is made up of 8 standards with a total of 23 objectives. Of these 23 objectives, 73.9% fall into the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) while 26.08% fall in the area of critical thinking. Nearly half of the objectives, 47.8%, actually fall at Bloom’s lowest level, knowledge and 4.3% fall at Bloom’s highest level, evaluation. The trend continues to refute the authors’ explanation of the importance of including higher order thinking skills presented in the introductory section of the standards document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>13.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Government Strand
*the verb describe appears at the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verb compare appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.

The course of study for the sixth grade Social Studies class is the contemporary world, and the government strand is relatively short considering how much could actually be included in a class like this. Instead of covering specific forms of government, the sixth grade strand focuses on 2 types, limited and unlimited government. The authors do provide an example of what they
mean when using the terms limited and unlimited government in the first objective of standard 1, the examples they provide are constitutional and totalitarian. These are simply examples but the students are expected to be able to identify examples of each type as well as describe them. To further reinforce the differences between limited and unlimited government, students are required to compare the two, but students are not required to contrast the 2 types. The third objective for this standard asks students to “identify reasons for limiting the power of government.” Here again, we can see that students are not expected to think about the reasons for limiting governmental power, they only need to be able to point out those reasons for limiting power. These objectives continue to reinforce the importance of memorizing information in these standards versus the development of critical thinking skills. The fourth objective is the more interesting of the first standard, though. This particular objective actually provides some insight into the authors' religious leaning. The fourth objective states that students must “review the record of human rights abuses of limited or unlimited governments such as the oppression of Christians in Sudan.” Overall, this is not an entirely bad objective, but what it provides is some insight into the religious leanings of those who wrote it. Even though the inclusion of “oppression of Christians in Sudan” is used as an example as denoted by the use of the phrase “such as” it does demonstrate a particular leaning towards Christianity. Throughout the standards the authors have taken the time to include multiple examples of information or events that can be included in the course of study, but
this time they have only presented a single example, and it deals specifically with Christianity. Had the authors included multiple examples of human rights abuses throughout the world that included other religious or cultural examples the objective would have remained neutral, but they chose to only point out a Christian example. This is even more interesting when we consider the fact that even the United States has committed human rights violations, but the authors refrain from including an objective that reflects this. I have stated this at different points throughout my analysis and that is the old saying that those who fail to study are doomed to repeat it. By choosing to ignore this in the standards, the concept of American exceptionalism continues to be pushed. Fortunately, they were sure to require an examination of both limited and unlimited governments, but the single example is telling as to how they view the mastery of this objective.

The second standard in the sixth grade government strand deals with the organization of governments throughout the world. The first objective returns to a requirement of identification. In this objective students are expected to “identify and give examples of governments with rule by one, few, or many.” This objective is fairly representative of the majority of objectives in these standards, and that is to memorize information and provide examples from memory. The second objective moves towards specific contemporary countries in the world and students must compare how these societies have organized their governments as well as how they function. This is a decent objective in that it requires students to actually think about these governments beyond a mere
recall of memorized information. The third and final objective is an interesting one because it requires historical knowledge of the world, and as I have discussed throughout these findings, there is no requirement of world history studies in the elementary and middle school standards. The third objective of standard 2 requires that students “identify the historical origins of democratic forms of government such as Ancient Greece.” Ancient Greece is used as an example of the origins of democracy, as reflected in the authors’ word choice of “such as,” but why is this an example and not a requirement? Students of history can explain that the birth of democracy is credited to Ancient Greece. The problem lies in the fundamental flaw of these standards of not including a study of Ancient history by this point for students. In order to fully understand the development of democracy, students need the background knowledge to support learning this information, and although it might be possible to provide students a brief background on Ancient Greece to achieve this objective, the students will still be lacking in their understanding of this. This objective is certainly an important one for students, but without the proper background to assimilate this knowledge, students are left with little in terms of mastery. However, perhaps this is not as important to the authors, because they begin the objective with the verb “identify” which means that students are expected to memorize the information and not necessarily understand it.

Moving into the seventh grade, students return to their study of Texas. The government strand for grade 7 is the shortest of this particular middle school
strand with only 2 standards and 5 objectives. The first standard focuses upon the Texas Constitution and students are expected to understand “the basic principles reflected in the Texas Constitution.” The first objective is again one that requires identification skills on the part of students. The principles, laid out in the first objective, which students must identify are “limited government, republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights.” The objective simply requires students to be able to identify how these principles are reflected in the state constitution, but students are not required to explain what these terms mean or how they apply to their own lives. The second objective moves into some higher order thinking skills as it requires students to compare the Texas Constitution to the United States Constitution which includes the Texas Bill of Rights. Because of the mandatory inclusion of studying the U.S. Constitution from elementary school forward by the state legislature mandating Celebrate Freedom Week, students should have the background knowledge necessary to accomplish this specific objective. The only question that remains is if students will be able to compare the Constitutions using the terms presented in the first objective.

The second standard required of the seventh grade students is designed to specifically assess students’ knowledge on how the state of Texas has structured its government and defined its functions through the state constitution. The first objective delineates government at the municipal, county and state levels, and requires that students can describe their structures and functions at
each level. The second objective requires that students “identify major sources of revenue for state and local governments such as property tax, sales tax, and fees.” Finally, the third objective actually requires students acquire knowledge on the funding of public education in Texas. The third objective includes such funding sources as taxes and bonds as well as state and federal funding. This standard and its objectives are straightforward and clear in its requirements and represents no political leaning on the part of its authors, and remains neutral. The cohesion of the standard is a little difficult when it comes to the third objective because the idea including public education at this point seems to come out of nowhere, which supports the idea that while the authors have attempted to scaffold the information in these standards, they may not have had the curricular and pedagogical background needed to fully appreciate how the standards should be structured.

As students enter the eighth grade they return to a study of the United States. The government strand for eighth grade students comprises the greatest number of standards and objectives, with 4 standards and 11 objectives. Just using the total numbers used for this strand it is apparent that the authors feel the eighth grade strand is more important than sixth grade strand which covered contemporary world governments. The first standard requires that students understand “the American beliefs and principles reflected in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and other important historic documents.” What is lacking here is an explanation of what American beliefs and principles
the authors are referring to in this standard. Part of the problem with a standard like this is the attempt to compartmentalize American beliefs and principles. These beliefs and principles are as varied as the citizens of the United States and there was much debate about what to include in all of these documents, so to try to simplify them into one standard is difficult at best, and perhaps this is why the authors chose not to provide specific beliefs and principles. What are important and very relevant for students to study are the documents. The first objective of this standard expects students to “identify the influence of ideas from historic documents, including the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, the Mayflower Compact, the Federalist Papers, and selected Anti-Federalist writings, on the U.S. system of government.” The inclusion of all these specific documents is historically important to understanding the evolution of the early forms of government in America through the contemporary government. The issue with this objective is that it only relies upon students’ ability to memorize the information and then identify these influences rather than going into greater depth and evaluating how these all came together to create the modern system of government practiced in the United States. The objective also lacks clarity when it references the use of “selected” Anti-Federalist writings. The use of the term “selected” is vague because nowhere in the standards does it state which writings must be included. Teachers only know that they must include some of them, but which ones? By including a term like “selected” reveals that the authors
have specific pieces in mind for inclusion, so it is imperative that these pieces are specified if students are to achieve mastery.

As the objectives in the first standard continue to move forward there remains a focus on memorization rather than critical thinking. The second objective is a simple task for students to achieve after they have received direct instruction on the Articles of Confederation. The objective requires that students “summarize the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation.” Students should know the strengths and weaknesses, but they need to also understand what made these strengths and weaknesses what they were and what lead the citizens of the United States to decide that this document would not be suitable to lead the nation forward. The third objective requires a little more effort from the students, but nothing that cannot be accomplished through direct instruction. In objective 3, students must “identify colonial grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence and explain how those grievances were addressed in the U.S Constitution and the Bill of rights.” Here there is an attempt to create a connection between the two documents presented in the objective, but it does not go so far as to require an actual understanding of why the colonists selected the grievances listed in the Declaration. It does require that students can explain how the grievances were addressed in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, but that does not necessarily mean that students need to understand the issues behind the grievances. This objective though, as many before it and after it can easily be assessed through standardized measures. The fourth objective is
simply a repeat of the first objective of standard 1 in the seventh grade version of this strand; the only change comes from the replacement of “Texas Constitution” with “U.S. Constitution.” For the most part the final objective is suitable, but I do question the absence of Anti-federalism in the objective. If it were not for the Anti-Federalists, there would be no Bill of Rights, and the Bill of Rights contains many of the principles Americans regard as most important.

The second standard for the eighth grade government strand requires that students understand the amendment process of the United States Constitution and the impact that amending the Constitution can have on our society. Unfortunately, the objectives that support the standard never move above the level of comprehension of Bloom’s Taxonomy list of verbs (appendix). The first objective expects students to “summarize the purposes for and process of amending the U.S. Constitution” and the second objective requires students to “describe the impact of 19th-century amendments, including the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, on life in the United States.” Although summarizing is a necessary skill for students to master through their education, it does not necessarily lead to understanding the concept brought forth in the first objective, it simply means that the students have a basic comprehension of what they have been asked to read. The second objective is a reasonable objective to include in the standards, as it asks for students to describe how these changes actually impacted Americans after their addition to the Constitution. What I question here is, why these 3, especially considering that the eighth grade social studies course
covers the United States from the early colonial period through reconstruction. Needless to say, these had a major impact on the lives of former slaves, but why not include a study of all amendments added during this time frame and their impact on Americans? Once again, it appears that the authors have randomly selected information for students to memorize. There has been no structure implemented that supports the development of understanding for the amendments, nor have all of the amendments been specifically included in the standards, just select ones. If only a chosen few amendments are set up for further study, this could lead to an incomplete understanding of the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights.

The third standard for the eighth grade government strand continues to include the U.S. Constitution, but it moves toward understanding the different powers provided to the federal and state governments. It is at this point in the standards where students are required to think critically about the U.S. system of government and how it was created. The first objective requires that students “analyze the arguments of the Federalists and Anti-Federalists, including those of Alexander Hamilton, Patrick Henry, James Madison, and George Mason.” As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the focus has been directed towards the Federalists with, to use the authors’ term, “selected” pieces from the Anti-Federalists. Finally in this standard and objective, the authors require a study of the Anti-Federalists. If students are to understand the U.S. Constitution then understanding the philosophical viewpoints of these two groups is necessary.
Although analysis is the lowest end of critical thinking on Bloom's taxonomy, it is a step forward in the right direction for student understanding. With this step forward comes a step back. The second objective for standard 3 returns to lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy because it requires students to “explain constitutional issues arising over the issues of states’ rights, including the Nullification Crisis and the Civil War.” The issue of states’ rights has been an important issue in the history of the United States, so it is not unreasonable to include an objective in regards to this. The inclusion of the Nullification Crisis and the Civil War as requirements of study are also quite logical as the Nullification Crisis helped lead to the Civil War. What is lacking for the objective is that it only requires students to explain the constitutional arising from these events rather than going into a greater depth of understanding. The students should be able to explain those issues, but the authors could have required more from the students such as examining those issues in greater detail and analyzing how one event lead to the other. A task like this is more difficult to assess, but would show a greater depth and breadth of knowledge concerning the U.S. Constitution.

The final standard, standard 4, in the eighth grade government strand requires students to demonstrate an understanding of some aspects of the United States Supreme Court. While it is not a complete coverage of the court and its history, it does provide a foundation upon which to build in high school. Standard 4 requires that “The student understands the impact of landmark Supreme Court cases.” As far as the standards go this one is relatively straight
forward in its approach. It is clearly written and leaves no room to interpretation of its intent. The only stated focus of the standard though is the impact of the Court’s decisions, with no reference to the powers of the court or how it works in connection with the 3 branches of government in the United States. Instead of jumping into the required cases for study in the eighth grade, the authors begin the first objective by requiring coverage of judicial review. The objective states that students must “identify the origins of judicial review and analyze examples of congressional and presidential responses.” The beginning of this objective is lacking in terms of student understanding in that they are only expected to identify how judicial review originated. In fact, there is no mention of students having to explain the process of judicial review or its purposes; students simply need to know where it came from. The second part of the objective does require some critical thought when the students are expected to review both presidential and congressional responses to judicial review, but no specific cases are mentioned. Is this an area for academic freedom for teachers or are they expected to cover the cases noted in the following objectives? Perhaps it is both, but because of the amount of material that must be covered during the academic year, it will be difficult for teachers to include many cases that were not chosen for selection. Objective 2 provides a list of specific cases that teachers must cover for this standard, and these cases are not examples but required. Objective 2 continues the process of low level thinking skills as it only requires students to “summarize the issues, and significance of landmark court cases
including Marbury v. Madison, McCulloch v. Maryland, and Gibbons v. Ogden.” This objective simply requires that students summarize the courts and does not delve into how these cases change the United States. All it requires is a basic level of comprehension from the students on why the cases were important and what the issues were in the case. Moving into the third objective though requires the highest level of thought and skill from the students in the government strand. Objective 3 mandates that students must “evaluate the impact of selected landmark Supreme Court decisions, including Dred Scott v. Sanford, on life in the United States.” Evaluation falls at the highest level of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix), and requires that students take the information they have learned and make judgments about that knowledge. In order for students to accomplish this they must understand the information they have learned and make it their own. Although the objective only requires an evaluation on how the decisions affected life in the United States, it does require a great deal of understanding and skill on the students’ part. The objective only includes one actual case, but using this objective in conjunction with the previous can help students create a better understanding of all the cases presented in standard 4.

As with the previous strands in the middle school standards there is an emphasis upon rote knowledge and regurgitation of information rather than critical thought. The percentages for the verbs from Bloom’s taxonomy (appendix) support this finding. Upon leaving the eighth grade, students’
knowledge of government will mostly include factual knowledge that can easily be assessed through standardized measures.

5.7 The Citizenship Strand

The citizenship strand continues to follow the same patterns established in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills document as all of the previous strands from kindergarten forward. This strand also uses the format created for the elementary school standards, at each grade level the objectives for this strand begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective. As with all of the preceding standards the authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. The middle school citizenship strand also begins each task with 1 of 9 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): define, describe, identify, explain, summarize, analyze, compare, express and evaluate. For the citizenship strand the authors continue to rely upon a use of the verb “identify.” As in the previous strands and grade levels the majority of the verbs used from Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list for middle school continue to fall below the level of critical thinking.

The citizenship strand for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Middle School is made up of 9 standards with a total of 26 objectives. Of these 26 objectives, 80.7% fall into the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) while 19.2% fall in the area of critical thinking. Of the 26 objectives, 46.1% fall at Bloom’s lowest level, knowledge, and 3.8% fall at Bloom’s highest level,
evaluation. The trend continues to refute the authors’ explanation of the importance of including higher order thinking skills presented in the introductory section of the standards document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Citizenship Strand
*the verb describe appears at the knowledge and comprehension levels and the verb compare appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.

During grade six students study the contemporary world and part of this study includes the citizenship strand. Because students are studying contemporary societies in the world, it would be logical to assume that of the three grade levels in the middle school standards that it would contain the largest amount of information; however, this would be an incorrect assumption. In fact, the sixth grade citizenship strand contains the least amount of information or requirements for this strand in the middle school standards. For the sixth grade, the authors have included only 2 standards comprised of a total of 5 objectives. Although this is a study of the contemporary world, the authors have included the United States in this particular strand. The United States is most certainly a contemporary country, however, it should be kept in mind that the students have covered the United States in great depth from elementary school through the sixth grade, and will spend another 2 academic years covering the United States
in grade 8 as well as in high school and one might argue 3 years if the
government course required of high school students is included. This helps to
reinforce the idea that the study of the world is less important to the authors than
the study of the United States.

Standard 1 of the sixth grade citizenship strand is a basic standard. The
goal of this standard is that “The student understands that the nature of
citizenship varies among societies.” The standard itself presents little information
that students must master, only that the practice of citizenship is different from
country to country. The first objective simply requires that students describe the
various responsibilities expected of citizens throughout the world. This objective
is where the United States is brought into the standards. The first objective
requires that students “describe roles and responsibilities of citizens in various
contemporary societies, including the United States.” What is important here is
that the United States must be included, as demonstrated by the authors’ use of
the term “including.” Beyond the United States, no other country is specifically
named. This means that teachers can include any countries they like, but as far
as the standard is written, the most important is the United States. As I explained
above, this particular requirement of including the United States is unnecessary
because of the ample amount of academic time students must spend studying
the United States. This first objective is taken a step further in objective 3 where
students must “compare the role of citizens in the United States with the role of
citizens from various contemporary societies with representative and
Making this type of comparison can assist students in developing a better understanding of the role citizenship plays in different types of government. By including the third objective, the standard gains strength because it supports the government strand as well as the citizenship strand. Looking at the standard as a whole along with keeping in mind how much time students have already spent on the United States, it was unnecessary to include the first objective.

Moving onto standard 2 for the sixth grade citizenship strand presents an interesting dynamic. Returning to the third objective of standard 1, the use of both representative as well as nonrepresentative governments really helped to broaden the students’ understanding of the role of citizenship in different types of government, but standard 2 has been limited to only representative governments and there is no third standard to present the role citizenship plays in nonrepresentative governments. Standard 2 mandates that “The student understands the relationship among individual rights, responsibilities, duties, and freedoms in societies with representative governments.” Overall, the objectives written in support of mastering this standard cover what is essential in understanding the role of citizenship in a representative government, but as is the case so often in these standards most of the information is expected to be memorized with little thinking taking part. For example, objective 1 requires that students “identify and explain the duty of civic participation in societies with representative governments.” By reviewing the previous citizenship strands, it is
simple to discover what roles students need to identify and explain. These roles include voting, writing letters to representatives and educating one’s self on the issues just to name a few. Even though the standard has been written for contemporary world studies, the objectives are nothing more than iterations of objectives covered in previous grade levels.

As students move into the seventh and eighth grade they return to a study of Texas followed by the United States. The citizenship strand for seventh graders is made up of 3 standards supported by 7 objectives, while the eighth grade strand is made up of 4 standards supported by 14 objectives. This is obviously more information than required in the sixth grade contemporary world studies, although the seventh grade is only marginally larger, the eighth grade strand doubles the sixth grade strand in regards to standards. This helps demonstrate that the authors value the study of Texas and the United States over different countries in the world. Furthermore, as with the study of the United States, Texas receives an ample amount of attention during elementary school, which supports the notion of Texas’ and the United States’ importance when compared to the rest of the world. Upon review of the seventh grade strand, one finds that, although the course focuses on Texas, the citizenship strand is much broader than just the State. There is definite mention of Texas in the standards, but by simply removing the state, these standards can and are used in the eighth grade citizenship strand. The three standards included in the seventh grade revolve around rights and responsibilities, freedom of expression and leadership.
In fact, these three topics for the Texas citizenship standards appear as 3 out of the 4 standards in the eighth grade citizenship strand, although, the seventh grade standards contain fewer objectives than the eighth grade standards. The fourth strand for the eighth grade deals with a citizen voluntarily participating in the “democratic process.”

Standard one covers the responsibilities of Texans citizens for the seventh grade and the responsibilities of United States citizens in the “democratic process.” In seventh grade the standard is comprised of only 2 objectives and in the eighth grade this balloons to a total of 6 objectives. Even though the eighth grade standard contains 3 times as many objectives, they all require very little thinking and instead rely heavily upon student memorization and recitation of the information presented in each objective. For example, the first objective of the seventh grade standard is simply to “identify rights of Texas citizens.” Although this objective clearly includes the rights of Texas citizens, this is not actually a standard that completely reflects Texas, because the states cannot deny the rights laid out in the United States Constitution. This is represented in the first objective for standard 1 in the eighth grade which expects students to “define and give examples of unalienable rights.” The first objective in grade 8 is further supported by the second objective which requires that students “summarize rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.” These 3 objectives clearly demonstrate that students need only memorize these rights and then in eighth grade they are
expected to do a little more by explaining these rights along with summarizing them. Very little thinking is required to accomplish these tasks.

The second objective for the seventh grade standard asks that students “explain and analyze civic responsibilities of Texas citizens and the importance of civic participation.” What is occurring here is what began in the elementary standards for the citizenship strand. There is an attempt to define what makes a good citizen, and the authors demonstrate that a good citizen takes an active role in his or her community. The eighth grade continues this trend with objectives 3 and 4 of the first standard. Objective 3 requires that students “explain the importance of personal responsibilities, including accepting responsibility for one’s behavior and supporting one’s family.” This is a heavily loaded objective and provides insight into the authors’ beliefs about a good citizen. This objective deals with personal belief systems, and while many people would agree with the sentiment in the objective there exists a pathway to bias. This might raise questions about individuals who are unable to support their families for various reasons and could lead to the stereotype that all individuals and families who are suffering from a poor economic situation are bad citizens, or that those who require government assistance are bad individuals. When looked at in this way, if the purpose of this objective was to support the idea that forms of government assistance are bad, then there exists a political bias in this objective. This is not directly stated in the objective, but there have been instances that I have pointed out where political bias or preference appears in the standards, and this presents
another example of the authors’ personal and political belief systems. The fourth objective is far more direct in defining what a good citizen is when it mandates that students “identify examples of responsible citizenship, including obeying rules and laws, staying informed on public issues, voting, and serving on juries.” By using the term “including” the authors have presented their beliefs on what a good citizen is and for them it is an individual who follows laws and rules while keeping themselves educated on issues of public interest and completing jury duty. Between the third and fourth objectives there is a shift from indirect to the direct, but studying history students could easily provide examples of good citizens who did not follow the rules and even broke them, for example, the Founding Fathers. Had they failed in their attempts to create a new country, Britain would have tried them for treason, because that is what they did which was against the law, and continues to be in the United States. The point here is that what equates to being a good citizen is not so cut and dry as these objectives make it out to be. We have a history of civil disobedience as a country, and for many Americans this is also an example of good citizenship. Fortunately, the authors do include an objective which covers civil disobedience the eighth grade standard; however, it is somewhat limited in terms of American history.

The final 2 objectives for standard 1 in the eighth grade are fairly straightforward in their focus. Objective 5 requires that students “summarize the criteria and explain the process for becoming a naturalized citizen of the United States.” Considering the current focus on immigration in the United States it is not
surprising that an objective requiring student understanding of this process has been included. Since the strand deals with citizenship it also an appropriate objective to include. Unfortunately, students are only expected to memorize the information with does not necessarily mean that they will understand it, but it is easily assessable written in this form. The sixth and final objective asks that students “explain how the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens reflect our national identity.” The objective’s requirements are straight forward, but it does require some interpretation on what our national identity is. Reviewing the structure of the objective it is clear that the authors believe we have a national identity, but nowhere in these standards have they provided that. Asking the students to develop an argument on what our national identity is would have been a much stronger objective, but it also would have allowed for different points of view on this specific topic.

In the seventh grade standards for the citizenship strand the intent is to study freedom of expression and this is iterated in the eighth grade standard as well but it appears as the third standard instead of the second. The two standards are nearly identical except for one change in the eighth grade version, and this change reflects the political beliefs of the authors. Standard 2 in the seventh grade states “The student understands the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society.” In the eighth grade this remains nearly identical except for the part about a democratic society. Instead, the authors have chosen to replace it with “constitutional republic.” The United
States is a Constitutional republic, but it is also a democratic society. During the introductory section of these standards, the authors include a definition of the United States as a constitutional republic, and this fits with the direction set forth from the authors. What is interesting is the juxtaposition of describing Texas as a democratic society and the United States as a constitutional republic. Using democratic society to describe the United States would have been correct, because the democratic process is a part of our society, but by choosing to eliminate this it may lead to students believing that the United States does not take part in the democratic process while Texas does. The first 2 objectives of each standard are also nearly identical except for the change from “democratic society” in the Texas objectives to “constitutional republic” in the United States standards. What this demonstrates is that the change that first appears in the 2 standards was not accidental but intentional, because it remains consistent with the objectives. As for the objectives themselves, they are representative of the goal of the objective. The first objective requires that students “identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important Texas issues, past and present” which changes to “important historical and contemporary issues” in the eighth grade. This reflects the concept of freedom expression, but one might ask why this is in the citizenship strand when it appears to fit better in the government strand. Regardless of its placement is continues to reflect an emphasis on accumulation of factual knowledge rather than critical thinking. The second objective moves directly to the first amendment and it states that
students “describe the importance of free speech and press in a democratic
society” which is changed to “a constitutional republic” in grade 8. Could this
objective have been placed in the government strand, absolutely, but it does
reflect some of our freedoms as U.S. citizens. As in the first objective, there is
little emphasis on critical thinking and there is much more focus on easily
assessed factual information. The final objectives for the 2 standards are
somewhat similar but do vary to a degree. In the seventh grade students must
“express and defend a point of view on an issue of historical or contemporary
interest in Texas” and in the eighth grade students must “summarize a historical
event in which compromise resulted in a peaceful solution” in the eighth grade.
Both objectives require the use of pint of view, but the connection to the
importance of freedom of expression is tenuous, especially in regards to
citizenship. This is not to say that these objectives are inappropriate, but they
could have been placed elsewhere in the standards, such as the government
strand or the history strand. What is good to see is that there is an attempt to
include some form of synthesis of the information covered in this standard for the
students in the seventh grade, but that disappears in the eighth grade when the
students are simply expected to summarize an event rather than analyze or
evaluate it.

The third standard in the seventh grade appears as the fourth standard in
the eighth grade. The purpose of this standard is to study “the importance of
effective leadership.” The 2 standards are also identical except for a change at
the end. In seventh grade the standard reads’ “The students understands the importance of effective leadership in a democratic society” which is then changed to “The students understands the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic.” Here again we see the substitution of “constitutional republic” for “democratic republic.” Once again it appears that the authors are attempting to delineate a difference between Texas and the United States. Even though Texas is no longer a Republic, the authors could have termed it a constitutional democracy as the state does have its own constitution which expresses how the state and local governments function, or the authors could have used this phrase to describe the United States and Texas, but instead they purposely chose to include a conspicuous change. Beyond this part of the standard exists the authors’ attempts to define what effective leadership is. By including this standard, the authors must include examples of who was an effective leader or who was not, which illuminates their own biases and beliefs on this issue. Both standards include 2 objectives, and these objectives include lists of individuals who represent good leadership. Objective 1 in the seventh grade directs students to “identify the leadership qualities of elected and appointed leaders of Texas, past and present, including Texans who have been president of the United States” and in the eighth grade students must “analyze the leadership qualities of elected and appointed leaders of the United states such as George Washington, John Marshall, and Abraham Lincoln.” To begin, the authors have not included a list of qualities that must be identified through
example or mandate, only that these qualities exist in elected and appointed officials, and more importantly in presidents. By the eighth grade the authors indicate that these qualities exist in specific American presidents specifically George Washington, John Marshall and Abraham Lincoln. This is not to deny that these men were effective leaders, but simply identifying their individual traits does not necessarily demonstrate effective leadership. Leadership is a far more abstract quality than the authors have attempted to present here, and the eighth grade this is evident by requiring that students analyze versus the simple identification required in the seventh grade.

The second and final objective of this standard looks at the contributions of individuals from Texas and the United States who contributed something to the state or nation. What contributions the authors are referring to is unknown, and as the standard reflects effective leadership, one must assume that they mean contributions in this area. The seventh grade students need only “identify contributions” while the eighth grade students must “describe the contributions” of the selected individuals. Although each objective begins with a different verb, both verbs fall in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix), which means that memorization rather than critical thinking is the focus. Interestingly, in the seventh grade objective the authors provide a list of individuals who must be studied compared to the eighth grade objective which provides a list of examples of who might be studied. This is reflected in the authors’ use of the term “including” in the seventh grade objective and the use of the phrase “such as” in
the eighth grade objective. The reason for this might be as simple as the sheer number of individuals who could be selected for inclusion in the eighth grade objective when compared to the smaller number available for the seventh grade objective. The major issue with these standards and objectives is there vagueness as well as their inclusion in the citizenship strand. It is further disappointing to see that students are only required to memorize facts about these individuals instead of an analysis of what makes them important in historical terms, or what makes them examples of effective leaders.

In the eighth grade citizenship strand the authors have included one more standard than the seventh grade and this is standard 2 in the eighth grade. Standard 2 states that “The student understands the importance of voluntary individual participation in the democratic process.” This is the only standard in the eighth grade strand that references the “democratic process” in relation to the United States. The authors developed 3 objectives to support the mastery of this standard which includes a list of names and events, but students are expected to do more than just memorize these events, they must also analyze and evaluate them as well. The first objective provides a list of individuals as examples of men who contributed to the creation of self-government early in American history. Objective 1 requires that students “explain the role of significant individuals such as Thomas Hooker, Charles de Montesquieu, John Locke, William Blackstone, and William Penn in the development of self-government in colonial America.” By using these individuals as examples, the authors leave the decision to the
teacher of who to teach about. In this way the authors can deflect some of the criticism they received during the writing of these standards by explaining that the included names are intended only as examples and that more could and should be included. Regardless of this criticism, the objective’s focus is upon memorization rather than critical thought. However, moving into objective 2 the students must endeavor to accomplish more in order to achieve mastery. Objective 2 states that students must “evaluate the contributions of the Founding Fathers as models of civic virtue.” Evaluating “the Founding Fathers as models of civic virtue” prompts the students to use higher order thinking skills as this is the highest level of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix). What is missing though is the meaning of civic virtue. Do we assume that students are expected to create their own interpretation of what civic virtue means, or do the authors have a specific meaning in mind? As it is written, a teacher could allow students to create their own meaning which necessitates a full understanding of the Founding Fathers beyond mere leadership or historical facts. The final objective requires students to specifically analyze events that exemplify civil disobedience. Earlier I remarked that civil disobedience has been an important part of American history, and that many citizens have taken part in acts of disobedience. By including this, the authors do promote the idea of civil disobedience as part of being a citizen. The final objective states that the students must “analyze reasons for and the impact of selected examples of civil disobedience in U.S. history such as the Boston Tea Party and Henry David Thoreau’s refusal to pay a tax.” Here we can see an
example of requiring students to use their critical thinking skills instead of merely memorizing the details of the events. Moving on though the objective becomes problematic. The authors provide 2 examples of civil disobedience that can be used for study, but they are not required as demonstrated in the use of the phrase “such as.” What is problematic about this is that the authors also use the phrase “selected examples” which means that the authors have specific events in mind for study, and by including specific examples it follows that these are the events that should be studied in the class. Both of the examples provided for civil disobedience are noteworthy for study, but it is interesting that both examples deal with taxation. Is this a slight against the implementation of taxes in the United States, or is it just a coincidence? That is difficult to judge, but considering the state of Texas does not have a state income tax perhaps it is a slight, but this is merely conjecture. Thoreau is an interesting inclusion for an example, and while the authors only include his refusal to pay a tax we must also remember that Thoreau was vocal about other U.S. policies. A teacher could include these in the classroom when covering Thoreau, but ultimately, the examples in the objective clearly center around the implementation of taxes.

The citizenship strand of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Middle School presents a preference towards citizenship in Texas and the United States versus contemporary countries in the world. By limiting the number of standards required to study in the sixth grade course and doubling them in the United States social studies course reveals the authors’ preference for study,
especially when one considers the absence of world history in the standards from elementary school through middle school. Not only do the standards demonstrate reliance upon rote memorization, but by the eighth grade it is difficult to ascertain why individual standards and objectives have been linked to a strand whose purpose is the study of citizenship. Finally, the authors continue to include their personal beliefs about what defines a good citizen by including specific examples within the objectives of what a good citizen does. As in the previous strands, the information contained in citizenship strand can easily be assessed through standardized measures because of the preponderance of factual information addressed in these standards.

5.8 The Culture Strand

The culture strand follows the same patterns established in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills document as all of the previous strands from kindergarten forward. This strand also uses the format created for the elementary school standards, at each grade level the objectives for this strand begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective. As with all of the preceding standards the authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. The middle school culture strand also begins each task with 1 of 9 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): define, describe, identify, explain, trace, relate, analyze, compare and evaluate. For the culture strand the authors continue to rely upon a heavy use of the verb “identify.”
As in the previous strands and grade levels the majority of the verbs used from Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list for middle school continue to fall below the level of critical thinking.

The culture strand for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Middle School is made up of 10 standards with a total of 37 objectives. Of these 37 objectives, 75.67% fall into the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) while 27.02% fall in the area of critical thinking. One of the verbs, “relate,” can be found listed in both the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy and the upper half of the Taxonomy (appendix). This verb is found in the application level, the highest on the low end, and in the analysis level, the lowest of the high end. Of the 37 objectives, over half, 56.75%, fall at Bloom’s lowest level, knowledge, and 5.4% fall at Bloom’s highest level, evaluation. The trend continues to refute the authors’ explanation of the importance of including higher order thinking skills presented in the introductory section of the standards document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>21*</td>
<td>56.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>75.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27.02%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Culture Strand

*the verb describe appears at the knowledge and comprehension levels, the verb relate appears at the application and analysis levels and the verb compare appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.

When students begin their study of the contemporary world in the sixth grade, a great deal of emphasis has been placed upon culture. In fact, the sixth
grade culture strand includes the greatest number of standards with 5 and the
greatest number of objectives with 20 when compared to the seventh and eighth
grade versions of this strand. Considering there has been an absence of world
studies in the standards documents until the sixth grade, it is not surprising to
see the number of standards and objectives attached to the culture strand.
Further complicating matters for this strand is that students lack the historical
background to fully appreciate how the cultures covered in the sixth grade have
developed and evolved throughout history. What students cover is simply a
snapshot of a culture and in no way provides them with the richness and
complexity that embodies a culture.

Beginning with standard 1 in grade 6, students begin to study the various
similarities and differences inherent in all cultures. The objectives which support
this particular standard begins very simply by requiring that students “define
culture and the common traits that unify a culture region” followed by the
expectation that students “identify and describe common traits that define
culture” in objective 2. These 2 objectives rely upon the use of memory and
include little higher order thinking skills, and for the most part, because of the
lack of specific world cultures defined in the standard, the students should be
able to accomplish this using their prior knowledge about culture from elementary
school. The third objective presents students with an interesting task that deals
with multiculturalism. In this objective, students must “define a multicultural
society and consider both the positive and negative qualities of multiculturalism.”
Beginning with the task of providing a definition is relatively simple, but what is interesting here is that the authors want the students to consider positive and negative aspects of multiculturalism. What types of positives and negatives do the authors expect teachers to cover? Often times the authors have provided examples to guide teachers in preparing lessons, but they have left this objective completely open. Looking at the remaining objectives reveals little for teachers to make a determination of what the authors intend here. The fourth objective expects students to “analyze and evaluate the contributions of diverse groups to multicultural societies” and the final objective provides some additional guidance, but both objectives lack examples of what the authors expect. The final objective states that students must “identify and explain examples of conflict and cooperation between and among cultures.” The fourth objectives require the inclusion of contributions while the final objective looks at cooperation and conflict, but other than this nothing else is provided in terms of the negatives and positives of diverse cultures. What types of contributions do the authors mean here and are we to assume that the negatives create conflict. One of the purposes of multiculturalism is to help students understand that there are differences between people of differing backgrounds and by studying these different cultures we can reduce or solve conflicts before they begin. Furthermore, requiring students to judge the contributions of different cultures can promote ethnocentricity, which is not the purpose of including multiculturalism, but perhaps this is the underlying intent of the authors.
Continuing to look at the culture strand in the middle school standards reveals an absence of depth and focus on the superficial aspects of a culture like food, which follows with the design of the elementary culture strand. Finally, with no background of world history, students will be unable to fully grasp the origins of different cultures and the conflicts that may have developed between them. Limited knowledge does not help to breed understanding or respect.

Standard 2 in grade 6 moves students into the study of the various institutions that arise in different societies and the commonalities that cultures share in this respect. The second standard states that “The student understands that all societies have basic institutions in common even though the characteristics of these institutions may differ.” The institutions are those that have become mainstays among all countries and include religion, government, education and economic. The first objective requires that students can actually identify these institutions and the second objective asks students to compare these institutions as they appear in societies throughout the world. The continued effort of requiring students to memorize information seems to be the focus, but the final objective does require a little more effort from students. It states that students must “analyze the efforts and activities institutions use to sustain themselves over time such as the development of an informed citizenry through education and the use of monumental architecture by religious institutions.” This final objective does require critical thinking on the part of students about the various institutions relegated to this standard, but there are no specific societies
named, only that they exist in contemporary countries. Overall, this is fairly
general standard that could contain a great deal of information dependent upon
the societies teachers select for inclusion.

The third standard of the sixth grade culture strand works to develop
students’ understanding of the relationships that exist between different cultures.
It specifically states that “The student understands relationships that exist among
world cultures.” This is another example of a fairly straight forward standard, and
although the first objective only requires students to memorize these traits, it is
the cultural traits that are curious. Objective one requires that students “identify
and describe how culture traits such as trade, travel, and war spread.” Are these
topics actually cultural traits or is it the way a society takes part in them cultural.
None of these traits are specific to a particular culture but to the entire human
species. How a society travels such as the methods used, or how a culture fights
or trains to fight is far more cultural than the act itself. Just a brief perusal of the
types of martial arts available to study demonstrates that not all countries viewing
fighting or war in the same way. After this students are required to study the
many factors that cause a culture to change and evolve. The authors list as
possible factors for change “improved communication, transportation, and
economic development.” In order to support this objective a third objective
expands upon the second by requiring students to “evaluate the impact of
improved communication technology among cultures.” These objectives reflect
things that can influence change, but without the historical background necessary
to identify change, how can students actually evaluate these factors. Once again, it is important to note that students are lacking in world history, and to master this standard, students need to know and understand more than just contemporary societies. As far as this standard is concerned, the only society or country that students could actually evaluate in terms of cultural evolution is the United States. The standard finishes with the concept of cultural diffusion and its effects, both positive and negative. As with the previous standards in this thread there is a complete lack of examples to guide teachers, which normally leads to academic freedom, but in a course that covers such a great deal of information some guidance would be useful.

The fourth standard in the sixth grade culture strand works toward developing student understanding of how culture is embedded within art. This standard does not simply look at art as a singular entity, but it includes architecture, music as well as literature. The second objective returns to the problem created by a lack of world history studies in these courses. Objective 2 expects students to “relate ways in which contemporary expressions of culture have been influenced by the past.” How can students accomplish this objective without having been provided the necessary information? If the students are simply asked to do this for the United States, they may have a much better opportunity at success, but in regards to the rest of the world, this will be extremely difficult unless teachers provide a background history before they attempt to implement this standard. By doing this, it will become even more
difficult to actually cover all of the standards and objective currently required in the sixth grade standards. To finish the standard, students study art and how contemporary issues actually influence it and finally they must “identify examples of art, music, and literature that have transcended the boundaries of societies and convey universal themes such as religion, justice, and the passage of time.” This final objective could be so much stronger if the authors had only required students to do more than just provide examples, but once again the reliance upon memorization returns. Aside from the issues of prior knowledge and the heavy influence of memorization, this standard does a solid job of promoting cross curricular studies. By including art and literature, students learn that the subject matter presented in schools is not easily compartmentalized into separate blocks of information, but can and do build off of one another.

The final standard of the culture strand for the sixth grade takes on the task of religion. However, it is not simply religion but how religion, philosophy and culture work together. It should be noted here that this is the shortest standard of the 5 written for this strand. Considering the importance of religion in culture and that this is a course geared towards contemporary world countries, it would be logical to assume that more attention would be given to this, but the authors have chosen not to do this. What the standard boils down to is that students “explain the relationship among religious ideas, philosophical ideas, and culture” followed by a second objective that equates to a list of important religious holidays around the world, which is simply a list of examples with nothing actually
required. It is noteworthy to include a standard about religion, especially considering how contentious this topic can be when presented in American schools. The problem is the same that I have noted throughout the sixth grade standards, and that is the absence of world history in the students' education background. Even though the students may know the names of various religions throughout the world, that does not mean they will understand how religion is a part of religion much less philosophy. This standard could do a great deal to help alleviate some of these issues, but the second objective narrows religion down to a list of important holidays where students only need to explain why these holidays and observances are important. The authors demonstrate that this course lacks importance, and that the role of religion is even less in understanding a culture by simply requiring students to learn about religious holidays in an objective which could be achieved by defining a holiday. Just simply explaining why a holiday is important does not translate to a student gaining true insight and understanding about a different religion. As with all of the strands and standards so far, the sixth grade culture strand has been written in a way that makes it easily assessable, which seems to be an underlying intent throughout the courses.

As students enter the seventh grade, the social studies course returns to a yearlong study of Texas. The seventh grade culture strand is the shortest of the middle school culture strands with only a single standard supported by 5 objectives. During elementary school students are required to spend a year
studying Texas, so this may explain the brevity of this strand in the seventh grade. The way the standard has been written is interesting; it states “The student understands the concept of diversity within unity in Texas.” The focus here appears to be the idea that, as a whole, Texas is unified, but that diversity does exist within the unity of its many cultures. However, returning to chapter 1, one of the criticisms of these standards was that the authors chose to exclude certain individuals and movements that did not necessarily represent the beliefs of those writing the standards, which demonstrates a lack of unity. As in grade 6, the culture strand reflects a shallow view of what culture is and how it is represented in Texas. The first objective only requires that students “explain how the diversity of Texas is reflected in a variety of cultural activities, celebrations, and performances.” There is no attempt to analyze how these concepts demonstrate culture or what they mean in a culture, only how they reflect diversity in the state. No real knowledge of culture is achieved here. Objective 2 follows in the superficial nature begun in objective 1. Here students must “describe how people from various racial, ethnic, and religious groups attempt to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to the larger Texas culture.” This objective requires little more than explaining that people celebrate holidays or attend church services or even speak their native language to help maintain their heritage. What would have been more effective is to help students understand why people from various cultures feel the need to do this instead of how they do this. The third objective remains firmly entrenched in rote memorization where
students are expected to “identify examples of Spanish influence and the influence of other cultures on Texas such as names, vocabulary, religion, architecture, food, and the arts.” All this activity asks is if students can provide examples from different cultures. Notably, the authors have only named Spanish directly as a culture to influence Texas and then the authors relegate the rest to other cultures. Mexican influence is conspicuous in its absence here. Of course it falls under the guise of other cultures, but the authors have chosen to keep it unnamed even though Mexican culture has had a tremendous impact on Texas. The culture standard is completed by a list of individuals who have contributed to the arts in Texas in some form which students simply need to identify. As with the sixth grade, the culture strand in the seventh grade is one that is easily assessed and lacks any true depth of knowledge or understanding about the many cultures found in Texas.

As students enter the eighth grade in Texas, the state board of education requires another year of study for the United States. There has been an overwhelming focus on studying the United States and it continues on through middle school. The culture strand from the eighth grade social studies course is made up of 4 standards supported by a total of 13 objectives. The first standard actually presents a specific time frame which must be covered in the class, and that is the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Standard one states that “The student understands the relationship between and among people from various groups, including racial, ethnic, and religious groups, during the 17th, 18th, and 19th
centuries.” This standard includes the greatest number of objectives with 5, but 4 of these objectives operate in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) compared to 1 found in the upper half of the Taxonomy. The first objective requires that students be able to “identify selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups that settled in the United States and explain their reasons for immigration.” The objective can be accomplished through memorization as is the case with the majority of the objectives in standard 1, but the problem is the authors do not provide which groups. If students are required to identify “select groups” then there needs to be an addition made to this standard. The students have used the term “select” before and as in the previous uses no specifics followed. By using the term “select” that demonstrates that there are specifics groups the writer’s had in mind so they need to include these groups if students are going to be required to know them. Objective 2 brings back the concept of conflict introduced in grade six in relation to culture. However, instead of just culture being the root cause of conflict the authors chose to include urbanization as related to the cause of conflicts. The authors further include “the differences in religion, social class, and political beliefs” as causes for conflict. To support students development in the idea of conflict connected to culture the third standard asks that students “identify ways conflicts between people from various racial, ethnic, and religious groups were resolved.” These two objectives attempt to help students understand how differences in culture can lead to misunderstanding, but there is no actual knowledge about how the different
aspects of a culture come into play because students have not been provided with the depth of knowledge necessary to fully understand this. By relying upon factual knowledge throughout the standards, students will not be able to apply memorized facts to accomplish mastery. A student may know the names of the different religions and racial and ethnic groups found in the United States, and why they have come here, but that is it. The study of religion has been shown to be a focus on religious holidays, and the study of other facets of a culture has been relegated to celebrations and food.

To complete the first standard, the authors include a study of various contributions made to the United States by people of different cultures and how these contributions have helped to create a national identity. The authors have provided no specific contributions that must be studied, only that teachers need to cover this material. The final objective is an interesting one considering this is the culture strand. The fifth objective asks students to “identify the political, social, and economic contributions of women to American society.” To deny that women have made contributions to American society would be a lie, but to claim women are a different culture is wrong too. This objective belongs in the history strand and not the culture strand. Had the authors provided a specific cultural group of women, then that would have made more sense. This appears to be an attempt to make sure that the study of women has been included in the eighth grade, but this demonstrates the authors’ lack of knowledge in the field of social
studies. They have created a huge list of facts and information that students must memorize, with little regard to how this information is connected.

Standard 2 of the eighth grade culture strand is a strand that has been misplaced much like the final objective in standard 1. Standard 2 requires that “The student understands the major reform movements of the 19th century.” This is clearly a standard that is better suited for the history strand, and the objectives written in support of the standard reveal this as well. The first objective is simple in terms of what is expected; it states that students must “describe the historical development of the abolitionist movement.” The authors clearly state that this deals with history, not culture. This is further confirmed in the second objective which requires students to “evaluate the impact of reform movements, including educational reform, temperance, the women’s rights movement, prison reform, abolition, the labor reform movement, and care of the disabled.” All of these are important historical movements in the United States, but these objectives do not necessarily belong in the strand devoted to culture. The standard is not a bad one, and would be appropriate if placed in the history strand because that is what these objectives are dealing with. It feels as if the authors realized this information was lacking from the standards and because of the overwhelming size of the eighth grade history stand that they needed to add it elsewhere.

Like standard 2, standard 3 appears to be misplaced. However, because the standard deals with religion, the authors might have felt it was more appropriate to include it in the culture strand rather than the government or
history strands. Standard 3 expects that “The student understands the impact of religion on the American way of life.” If the objectives of this standard followed the parameters set forth by the authors then the culture strand would have been the correct placement for such a standard, but the objectives do not follow suit. The first objective requires students to “trace the development of religious freedoms in the United States.” Religious freedom is guaranteed in the first amendment of the Bill of Rights, so this should be placed with the government strand. The second objective requires that students “describe religious motivation for immigration and influence on social movements, including the impact of the first and second Great Awakenings.” The first part of this objective is clearly a historical objective, and as far as influencing social movements this could also be considered a historical objective. These do not necessarily represent culture in the United States, but events that have made up the history of the United States and why as a country we believe in the freedom of religion, and not how culture is embedded in religion. Finally, the third objective returns to the first amendment when it asks that students “analyze the impact of the First Amendment guarantees of religious freedom on the American way of life.” This objective is better suited for the government strand. This has little to do with culture and by adding how these concepts affect life in the U.S. does not make them cultural objectives. Requiring students to understand the different religions found in the U.S. would have been far more suited for this standard than studying the First Amendment which reflects the authors’ inability to understand what culture is.
The fourth and final standard for the culture strand is very similar to the fourth standard presented in the sixth grade. In this standard students return to a study of the arts which is completely appropriate for inclusion in the culture strand. As with the sixth grade standard, students are expected to make connections between art and life and the time period in which the artwork was created. The first objective, as is often the case in these standards, provides a list of artists and specific pieces of work which includes music, literature and the visual arts that represent American culture. Students are required to describe their development, which does not utilize higher order thinking skills, but it does fit within the culture strand. Students are also expected to “identify examples of American art, music, and literature that reflect society in different eras.” This provides another example of requiring rote knowledge rather than critical thinking. The final objective finally requires students to think critically about art as a representation American culture. Standard 3 expects students to “analyze the relationship between fine arts and continuity and change in the American way of life.” Here we can see that the students are expected to demonstrate the ability to analyze how art changes through history and how these changes reflect American culture at that time. As with the sixth grade version of this standard, there is a definite attempt to promote cross curricular studies for its students. An opportunity like this reinforces the knowledge students acquire in other classes and helps to solidify the idea that the courses connect to one another.
The middle school culture strand generally focuses on the shallow aspects of culture and fails to promote or provide opportunities to understand cultures beside their own. Besides remaining at a factual level for a majority of the standards, the sixth grade course which focuses on contemporary world studies does little to promote an understanding of various world cultures because of the absence of world history in the primary grades. In the eighth grade the authors included a standard and objectives that were clearly misplaced in the culture strand, which demonstrates the authors’ lack of knowledge in the field of social studies. However, there is an excellent opportunity in the sixth and eighth grade to promote cross curricular studies amongst students when dealing with the art of various cultures. By writing these standards and objectives at the factual level, the authors have ensured a set of standards that are easily assessed through standardized measures.

5.9 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand

The science, technology, and society strand follows the same patterns established in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills document as all of the previous strands from kindergarten forward. This strand also uses the format created for the elementary school standards, at each grade level the objectives for this strand begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective. As with all of the preceding standards the authors complete the objective by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. The middle school science, technology, and society
strand also begins each task with 1 of 7 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): identify, explain, give examples, predict, analyze, compare and evaluate. For the science, technology, and society strand the authors rely upon a use of the verb “analyze.” Unlike the previous strands and grade levels the majority of the verbs used from Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list for middle school do not fall below the level of critical thinking.

The science, technology, and society strand for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Middle School is made up of 4 standards with a total of 14 objectives. Of these 14 objectives, 50% fall into the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and 57.1% fall in the area of critical thinking. One of the verbs, “predict,” can be found listed in both the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy and the upper half of the Taxonomy (appendix). This verb is found in the application level, the highest on the low end, and in the evaluation level, the highest of the high end. Of the 14 objectives, only 14.28%, fall at Bloom’s lowest level, knowledge, and an identical 14.28% fall at Bloom’s highest level, evaluation. For this middle school strand the trend of relying upon rote memorization has been broken.
The science, technology, and society strand is the smallest strand in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skill, Middle school standards document. The sixth grade version of this strand is also the smallest when compared to the seventh and eighth grade. This strand includes only 1 standard with 3 objectives for grade 6. Since this is students first requirement of studying contemporary world countries, it is surprising that more has not been included for students to learn, but keeping in mind the great deal of information students have to cover in their sixth grade Social Studies course might explain the brevity of this standard. The standard for the sixth grade is relatively broad, probably to allow for easier coverage of the many contemporary societies in the modern world. The standard states that “The student understands the influences of science and technology on contemporary societies.” Obviously, science and technology has had a major impact on contemporary society, so the broad construction of this standard will allow for teachers to include different information that reflects the societies studied in the class. The first objective requires that students merely provide examples of scientists and their discoveries that have affected multiple societies.

### Bloom’s Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>6*</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*the verb predict appears at the application and evaluation levels and the verb compares appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.

Table 15 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Science, Technology, and Society Strand
as well as the roles scientists play within society as a whole. The first objective requires the use of rote memorization with little critical thinking necessary. The second objective shifts to a study of economics, politics, resources and belief systems in connection with technology. Objective 2 requires that students “explain how resources, belief systems, economic factors, and political decisions have affected the use of technology.” Although the objective operates in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix), it does attempt to include information students learn in previous strands, such as culture and economics and government to an extent. This works to strengthen the objective and standard by requiring students to make connections with other areas of the social studies course. Finally, the students are pushed to think critically in the final objective where they are expected to “make predictions about future social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental impacts that may result from future scientific discoveries and technological innovations.” In order to make predictions students must take the information they have learned and then use logic skills to decide how the future may turn out based on how technology and scientific discoveries have affected people in the past as well as the present. Besides just connecting multiple social studies strands in this standard, the authors have also provided an opportunity to include cross curricular studies with the students’ science class. By doing this, the knowledge gained from both classes helps reinforce the importance of both fields of study. Therefore, the
science, technology, and society strand is one of the strongest in the middle school standards document.

As with all of the seventh grade strands and their standards, the science, technology, and society strand’s focal point is Texas. This is the second course of study over Texas, as the first appears in elementary school, and perhaps that explains why the authors felt it necessary to keep this particular strand shorter than the other social studies strands in grade 7. Compared to the sixth grade course, this strand is longer by 2 objectives. Even though the students have never covered world studies prior to the sixth grade and the students have studied Texas previously, the authors still found it necessary to include more requirements for this strand in the seventh grade which reflects the importance of Texas when compared to the world in the middle school standards.

The standard for the seventh grade science, technology, and society strand is similar to its counterpart in the sixth grade, with just some changes in the wording and, of course, the location. The standard requires that “The student understands the impact of scientific discoveries and technological innovations on the political, economic, and social development of Texas.” Instead of just providing a broad spectrum of possibilities on what to study as the authors did in the sixth grade standard, the seventh grade standard’s locus is firmly placed upon the development of politics, economics and society in Texas. The first objective requires students to “compare types and uses of technology, past and present.” This objective sets the stage for the types of technology used in Texas
history and without it students would be unable to explain how these technologies and scientific discoveries influenced the development of the state’s economic, political and social development. This particular objective helps support the history strand while tying it to the standard’s overall objective which includes the government and economics strand beyond just the science, technology, and society strand. Although the authors have created a strand that goes beyond mere memorization, they do include a list of important individuals to Texas in the fields of science and technology which students must identify. The list, however, only includes examples of who should be included and not individuals who must be studied. Aside from this return to identification the remaining 3 objectives all operate in the critical thinking portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix). The third objective asks that students “analyze the effects of various scientific discoveries and technological innovations on the development of Texas such as advancements in the agricultural, energy, medical, computer, and aerospace industries.” The industries presented in the objective are all important in some way to Texas and this helps connect this strand to the history strand which strengthens the goal of this standard. The fourth objective includes a study of natural resources and how scientific discoveries and technology affect them. This objective requires a great deal of critical thinking because students must evaluate the effects of science and technology on the use of these natural resources. The authors provide examples of the natural resources which include fossil fuels, land and water, but these are
only examples, so the list could go on to include renewable resources such as solar and wind. Including these resources for study with technology provides teachers the opportunity to connect this strand with students’ science classes. The cross curricular nature of this objective further strengthens the standard. The final objective returns to the idea of Texas and the United States being separate entities that has come up in these standards at various points beginning in the elementary school standards. The fifth objects states that students must “analyze how scientific discoveries and technological innovations have resulted in interdependence among Texas, the United States, and the world.” The goal of the objective asks that students think critically about science and technology in relation to the United States, Texas and the world, but the underlying concept that Texas is separate from the United States is quite telling about how Texas is viewed in these standards. Texas is a part of the whole, so there is naturally interdependence among the states and the country, but the authors here are attempting to present reasons for this interdependence which can come across as negative. Excluding the underlying idea of the final objective, the standard demonstrates a strong strand that requires a great deal of effort to achieve mastery.

The final year of middle school returns students to a study of the United States and the science, technology, and society strand reinforces this goal. Of the three grade level strands, the eighth grade strand is the longest which is made up of 2 standards and a total of 6 objectives. This is twice as long as the
contemporary world countries course in the sixth grade which reinforces the idea that the authors have a preference towards the United States and Texas versus the rest of the world. As the strand has progressed through the sixth and seventh grades, the one standard in each of those grades became less broad and more focused in its goals. This narrowing of the standard’s goal continues into the eighth grade. Standard 1 expects that “The student understands the impact of science and technology on the economic development of the United States. In sixth grade the standard included the influences of science and technology on contemporary society, which the authors then narrowed to “the impact of scientific discoveries and technological innovations on the political, economic, and social development of Texas.” The authors hone the standard from the broad view of influence on society as a whole, to social, political and economic development in Texas to science and technology’s influence on the United States' economic development. The sharpening of focus in this standard keeps it connected to the economics strand but loosens its connections to the other stands. However, the objectives written in support of this standard do bring in connections with other strands such as history. For example, objective 1 of standard 1 in the eighth grade science, technology, and society strand requires students to “explain the effects of technological and scientific innovations such as the steamboat, the cotton gin, and interchangeable parts.” In order for students to master this objective, they will need to know about these inventions and their place in history in order to compare them. Furthermore, these specific examples
of discoveries and inventions lead to an impact in the economics of the United States as well as to the Industrial Revolution which connects it to the economic strand. As in grades six and seven, objectives like this help to strengthen this specific standard as well as other strands connected to it.

The remaining 3 objectives tied to standard 1 of the strand include advances in transportation, communication, and manufacturing in the United States as they influenced the economics of the United States. Objectives 2 and 3 require students to think critically by analyzing the impact that transportation, communication and manufacturing had on the economy. Objective 2 requires that students “analyze the impact of transportation and communication systems on the growth, development, and urbanization of the United States” while objective 3 asks students to “analyze how technological innovations changed the way goods were manufactured and marketed, nationally and internationally.” Both of these objectives require that students have a solid historical background of United States economic history as well as U.S. history. The issue here is that even though the students have had a plethora of historical information presented to them in the past, most of it has been factually based and it will be difficult to assess whether or not the students will possess the critical thinking skills necessary to master these objectives. None-the-less, the objectives do require increased higher order thinking skills and the connection to different strands will assist students in gaining a more complete understanding of the influence that science and technology has had on the United States. The final objective
supports the overall goal of the previous objectives but only requires that students “explain how technological innovations brought about economic growth such as how the factory system contributed to rapid industrialization and the Transcontinental Railroad led to the opening of the west.” The purpose of this objective appears to be a way for the previous objectives to be assessed. This type of objective can be mastered through memorization which has been used sparingly in this strand when compared to the previous strands in the elementary and middle school standards.

The second standard for the eighth grade science, technology, and society strand shifts to how science and technology affects life in the United States. Standard 2 requires that “The student understands the impact of scientific discoveries and technological innovations on daily life in the United States.” The 2 objectives written in support of this standard also create a connection to the history strand. Objective 1 expects students to “compare the effects of scientific discoveries and technological innovations that have influenced daily life in different periods in U.S. history.” Here students must possess knowledge of life in the United States at different points. Unlike other objectives and standards, the authors have not provided specific time periods so it is up to the teacher to select which time periods to include for students to compare. Finally, students are expected to “identify examples of how industrialization changed life in the United States” in the second and final objective of standard 2. Whereas the rest of the science, technology, and society strand has been quite strong, this final objective
slips back into the weakness of rote memorization. After reviewing the standards and objectives in the sixth and seventh grade documents, it feels like standard 2 was an afterthought for the eighth grade. Viewed in its entirety, the strand accomplishes the authors’ objective of incorporating critical thinking into the standards.

The science, technology, and society strand, up until this point, is the strongest strand in terms of requiring more from students than the simple memorization of facts. It has been developed to connect different strands to each other as well as different courses. In the introductory section of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Middle School, the authors delineate the importance of critical thinking in a social studies course, and as far as this strand is concerned the authors have achieved this goal.

5.10 The Social Studies Skills Strand

The social studies skills strand follows a similar pattern to the one established in previous strands of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards document. This strand follows the format created for the elementary school standards, at each grade level the standards for other strands begins with the phrase “the student understands…” and is then followed by the overarching objective, but in the social studies skills strand the standards begin differently depending upon the specific skills included in each standard. For example, the first standard for all 3 grade levels in the middle school standards begins with “The student applies critical-thinking-skills…” Even though the terminology used
to begin the standard has changed the authors continue to complete these standards by including specified tasks that students must master for that grade level. The middle school social studies skills strand also begins each task with 1 of 11 verbs that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (Appendix): identify, transfer, use, analyze, differentiate, create, express, incorporate, organize, evaluate and support. There is 1 more verb used, pose, which does not appear on the action verb list. For the social studies skills strand the authors rely upon a heavy use of the verb “use.” It is important to keep in mind that the verb “use” is found at the application level of Bloom’s Taxonomy which is one step below critical thinking. This means that students are required to do more than simple recall and requires the application of skills. As in previous strands and grade levels the majority of the verbs used from Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) verb list for middle school fall below the level of critical thinking, but for this strand it is not an overwhelming majority. This demonstrates a positive movement towards higher level thinking skills in the standards.

The social studies skills strand for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Middle School is made up of 9 standards with a total of 44 objectives. Of these 42 objectives just over half, 52.38%, fall into the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and 45.2% fall in the area of critical thinking. Of the 14 objectives, only 14.28%, fall at Bloom’s lowest level, knowledge, and 9.5% fall at Bloom’s highest level, evaluation. For this strand there is a diminished focus on memorization and an increased emphasis upon developing student skills.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>52.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16 Bloom’s Taxonomy Middle School Social Studies Skills Strand
Note: Of the 12 total verbs used the verb pose does not appear in the taxonomy list of action verbs.

Unlike the previous strands in the middle school social studies standards, because of the different course material covered each year, this strand maintains very similar standards and objectives, with a few changes in the objectives. Since this is a skills based strand, it is reasonable that more is expected from students each year, and that the standards and objectives go from fewer in number through greater in number as students move from the sixth grade through eighth grade. Beginning in sixth grade, and continued all throughout middle school, standard 1 requires an emphasis upon research skills. There is absolutely no change in the wording of this standard at all in middle school. Standard 1 requires that “The student applies critical-thinking-skills to organize and use information acquired through research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology.” This follows directly from the elementary school standards for social studies skills where students were first introduced to research. What can be seen here is a direct link to building upon previously learned skills. The changes for this standard come in the objectives written in support of this standard. For example, the first objective for the sixth
grade standard states that students must “differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software; interviews; biographies; oral, print, and visual material; and artifacts to acquire information about various world cultures.” In the seventh and eighth grade the changes that occur to this objective reflect the content of the course. So, in the seventh grade the objective is changed from “world cultures” to “Texas” and finally in the eighth grade this is changed to “the United States.” The objective is only changed to reflect the change in course material, and it continues to reinforce the use of primary and secondary sources learned in elementary school. The next change in the first standard does not occur until the fourth objective and fifth objectives from the sixth grade. In the fourth objective students are expected to “identify different points of view about an issue or current topic” and the fifth objective asks students to “identify the elements of frame of reference that influenced participants in an event.” These 2 objectives are then modified in the seventh and eighth grade to a single objective which requires students to “identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.” Although these objectives do not require the use of higher order thinking skills, they do ask that students develop an understanding for different points of view which then develops into a study of context in the seventh and eighth grade. The students begin by simply identifying various points of view separately from the “elements of frame of reference” but then they must combine the two to learn how the context of a situation or event
impacts and influences point of view. More is expected of the student which reflects an attempt at scaffolding the development of this particular skill. Furthermore, by studying the multiple elements separately in the sixth grade and then by repeating the second objective verbatim in the seventh and eighth grade reveals that mastery of this objective requires more time for students to achieve and demonstrate than can be accomplished in a single school year.

The final objective of sixth grade standard 1 provides a return of mathematics to the social studies skills strand. This was a strength of the elementary strand and its return and continued use in the middle school standards is a definite positive for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills documents. The objective requires students to “use appropriate mathematical skills to interpret social studies information such as maps and graphs.” Even though the objective does not clearly delineate which mathematical skills should be used to interpret information, its presence throughout the sixth, seventh and eighth grade reinforces the importance cross curricular studies to help students achieve mastery in all of their academics. Furthermore, it helps the students develop their higher order thinking skills by asking them to decide when other academic skills will help them to achieve mastery of these standards. This is the final objective for grade 6; the remaining changes to standard 1 appear in the seventh and eighth grade objectives.

In the seventh grade, the mastery of point of view is expanded upon by requiring that students “support a point of view on a social studies issue or
event.” This objective may appear simple, but the skills needed to accomplish this require more than just knowledge of the facts of a topic. Students must understand the topic to a depth in order to defend it when confronted with different points of view from others. This also strengthens the research skills of students because they will need to conduct research on a topic in order to gain a thorough understanding of it. The next 2 objectives shared between the seventh and eighth grade continue to reinforce the development of students’ research skills. Objective 6 expects students to “identify bias in written, oral, and visual material” and objective 7 expands upon 6 by requiring that students “evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author.” In order to master these objectives, students will have to use their critical thinking skills. Instead of just using a source for information, students will have to actually judge the quality of a source, which can be difficult for students to understand. This probably explains why these objectives remain identical in grades 7 and 8. These objectives are also important skills to develop in regards to the use of technological resources in the standard. Students need to learn how to decide if a web site is a credible source for information and if the information found on the Internet is correct. Mastery of a skill like this will take more than a single academic year, and by including it often demonstrates the authors’ understanding of this.

During the eighth grade students are expected to work on mastering 2 more objectives that do not appear in standard 1 of the sixth and seventh grades,
although the skills reflected in these objectives first appeared in the elementary school standards and objectives for the social studies skills strand. First, students are required to “create thematic maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases representing various aspects of the United States” in objective 9 and lastly students must “pose and answer questions about geographic distributions and patterns shown on maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases” in objective 10. Both of these objectives reflect the importance of reading and understanding visual representations in the social studies. Through the act of creation, students will reinforce their understanding of these visual representations of data and information as well asking questions and providing answers to others’ questions about the information.

The second standard of the social studies skills strand is identical throughout middle school just as the first standard was. Interestingly, the sixth grade version of standard 2 includes more objectives than the seventh and eighth grade includes. Upon closer review of the objectives, one will notice that, although shorter in the seventh and eighth grade in number, 2 of the objectives have been combined into a single objective. The purpose of standard 2 is student communication and it expects that “The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.” This covers a broad array of skills, and reviewing the actual objectives demonstrates that this standard reinforces skills learned in the students’ language arts classes. For example, objectives 5 and 6 require students to “use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and
punctuation” and to “use proper citations to avoid plagiarism.” Both of these objectives reinforce the importance of these skills across the middle school curriculum, and by including them in a social studies class can only help students achieve mastery sooner. Finally, these 2 objectives are the ones that have been combined into a single objective in grades 7 and 8. It is difficult to explain why the authors chose to combine the 2 objectives or why these objectives were not simply combined in the sixth grade, but the objectives remain throughout the middle school standards which help to strengthen the standard as well as the strand.

In the sixth grade, one of the objectives reinforces the students’ development of main idea in information, but this objective is not used in grades 7 and 8, nor is it built upon; it is simply removed. Objective 2 of standard 2 asks that students “incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communication based on research.” Research is an important skill in the social studies and has been referenced numerous times throughout the middle school social studies strand. Furthermore, determining the main idea and supporting idea in information is an important skill as well that crosses over into many academic fields. By removing this objective from standard 2 in grades 7 and 8 only serve to weaken the standard. This is a skill that students will need to continue to develop throughout middle school and into high school. Part of the issue here is that as students move into the higher grades, the information and sources they will encounter should be more difficult, and therefore require further
honing of this skill, so keeping it as an objective or changing it to reflect the evolving nature of this skill would have been realistic.

During the sixth grade, there is an emphasis upon research in the standard 2 objectives. In the previous paragraph objective 2 is directly linked to research. This continues in Objectives 3 and 4. Objective 3 is straight forward and direct in its approach to research as it states that students must “express ideas orally based on research and experiences.” Here the task specifies the use of oral communication. It does not explicitly say what types of activities teachers should use for students to demonstrate the objective, so the activities could take a number of forms. For example, oral communication could include standing in front of the class and presenting research findings, answer questions during a discussion or even meeting privately with a teacher to answer questions. By writing the objective to encompass many possible tasks, it is actually easier for teachers to include this in the class, because many teachers rely upon oral communication as part of the classroom experience. Objective 4 of standard 2 presents teachers with specific tasks and products that students must produce in the sixth grade that support research skills. Objective 4 specifically requires that students “create written and visual materials such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies based on research.” Where objective 3 focused on oral sills, objective 4 focuses upon written skills and further strengthens other skills important to the social studies class such as outlining as well as strengthening these skills for the students other classes.
Moving into the seventh and eighth grade though, standard 2 no longer specifically includes research as one of its components. Looking closely at these objectives reveals that research is still there, but not as explicitly as in the seventh grade. For example, the third objective requires students to “transfer information from one medium to another, including written to visual and statistical to written or visual, using computing software as appropriate.” The objective does not state where this information comes from, but by building off of the sixth grade strand, teacher can utilize research here. What the objective is doing is helping students develop their interpretive skills when in relation to data. This objective crosses into other curriculum as well, such math and the sciences, which tend to use this type of information. Finally, the last objective in standard 2 for the seventh and eighth grade returns to student products. In fact, this objective is a modification of objective 4 in grade 6. In this objective students are expected to “create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.” Instead of providing the specific products as the authors did in the sixth grade, this objective is directly related to the presentation of learned information. This objective also helps to support the third objective as it provides the mediums by which students can demonstrate their mastery of those skills reflected in that objective. Standard 2 is the final standard for the social studies skills strand in the sixth grade, but there is one more standard for the seventh and eighth grades.

Grades 6, 7 and 8 include a third standard with 2 objectives that are completely identical. Standard 3 requires that “The student uses problem-solving
and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings.” This standard and its objectives also appeared in all grades of the elementary school social studies skills strand, and continues to remain identical at each grade level. This standard includes collaborative learning as one of its students while emphasizing the development of critical thinking among students. The first objective reinforces students’ research skills by mandating that students “use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.” In order to accomplish this objective, students will need to conduct research. The students will have to use different sources as well depending on the chosen problem. Finally, by incorporating this into different settings along with the use of collaboration, helps students continue to develop the concept of team work. The second and final objective supports students’ mastery of the first. Objective 2 requires that students “use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision.” This moves the students beyond researching information for a problem and into actual implementation of a solution to the problem. This presents a possible real world connection for students, but through the safety of a classroom environment. Furthermore, by including this standard throughout grade k-8, the type of problem and required solution will become more difficult as students mature. Finally, by including both
independent and collaborative work in this standard, students will have plenty of
opportunity to develop both skills before they move on into high school.

As in the social studies skills strand for the elementary school standards,
this strand is also a solid strand in terms of developing student skills. Rather than
merely focusing on the accumulation of knowledge, students must develop skills
that are important across the curriculum and not just within a social studies
classroom. The inclusion of math, science and language arts skills reinforce the
importance of skills developed and learned in all classrooms, and by holding
students accountable for these skills in more than just one class aides in the
overall mastery of these skills.

5.11 Concluding Remarks

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for the middle school social
studies courses continues to reinforce the emphasis upon the memorization of
information versus the importance of critical thinking. Furthermore, the overall
focus of Texas and United States history in these standards with a general
absence of world history reveals bias towards world history. Studying the United
States and Texas is an important part for Texas students and should be included,
but students will lack a more complete understanding of the United States and
Texas because of the exclusion of a world history course. It will also be difficult
for students to fully understand the contemporary societies of the world without
any prior knowledge of world history.
As I noted in the elementary standards there is a push towards the concept of American and Texas exceptionalism. This push becomes more apparent in the middle school standards because 2 of the 3 school years are devoted to the study of United States history and Texas history. The authors continue to use the terms “benefit” and “influence” when referring to information that has had an effect on other countries or cultures. What is most notable is the absence of historical information that presents the country’s or the state’s past abuses. The purpose of this information would not be used to disparage the United States or Texas, but to reveal that we have an imperfect history like the rest of the world. Unfortunately the authors fail to see that including such information actually supports the greatness of the United States because of our willingness to confront these abuses as a means to right the wrongs and prevent them from happening again. This concept of exceptionalism makes its way into the economic strand as well.

Within the elementary school standards, the economics strand has a subtle approach towards capitalism and specifically consumerism. Early on, Texas students learn the importance of buying in the United States and this continues on into middle school. However, in middle school there is a major push to discredit different economic systems when compared to capitalism. I use the term capitalism, but the authors never use the term and instead rely upon the phrases “free enterprise system” or “free market system.” The bias comes in the form of requiring that students only study the benefits of capitalism while studying
the drawbacks of other “non-free-market systems.” In order to remove bias from the economics strand, students should be required to study the benefits and drawbacks of all the economic systems presented in the standards. It is not the job of education to indoctrinate students into any ideologies, but to provide them with the knowledge and information to think critically and then to make their own judgments.

During the middle school standards the authors introduce some religious preference. Students are required to study human rights violations in the world, but the only example provided by the authors refers to the Sudanese treatment of Christians in their country. Allowing for the fact that this was included as only an example, we must question why the only example provided by the authors referred specifically towards Christians with an absence of other religions and cultures. Had the authors included multiple examples from various religions and cultures it would be difficult to point towards any bias, but only one example was provided, which leads me to conclude that the authors do have a religious preference in these standards, albeit a subtle one. This returns to the continued issue of the culture strand and its lack of depth. The focus still remains upon the outward appearance of a culture versus a full understanding of a culture. However, because of the emphasis upon factual knowledge, an in-depth study of culture might be difficult for a teacher to include if he or she wants to ensure complete coverage of these standards.
Finally, as in the elementary standards, the strongest part of the middle school standards is the social studies skill strand. This strand maintains an emphasis upon student skills rather than student knowledge. By including skills learned in mathematics, science and English students learn the importance of cross curricular knowledge and that the skills learned in all their classes can aid in the mastery of all these standards. By also including independent and collaborative learning objectives in these standards, students will acquire the skills necessary to function in the 21st century. Unfortunately, even with the strength of the social studies skills strand, the remaining strands fail to live up to the authors’ explanation of the importance of critical thinking in the standards. A majority of the middle school objectives rely upon rote memorization and not critical thinking.

As with the elementary school standards, the previous version of the middle school standards demonstrates numerous changes when compared to the rewritten standards. The previous standards included names, dates and places as do the newly adopted standards; however, what is most noticeable in the rewritten standards is the increase of this information when compared to the previous standards. Many of the rewritten objectives are simply lists of names and other information that students must be able to identify. It appears there is a continued emphasis placed on memorizing historical information when compared to the previous standards. Finally, in the previous standards the use of free enterprise was prevalent as it is in the rewritten standards. However, in the
previous standards the focus was placed upon the function of free enterprise in
the United States rather than the benefits of the system which tends to be the
focus of the rewritten standards. Similar to the elementary school standards, it
should also be noted that the previous standards shied away from the term
capitalism as it is in the rewritten standards.
CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS: TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, HIGH SCHOOL STANDARDS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present my findings and analysis of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for the high school social studies standards. In the previous chapters covering the elementary standards and the middle school standards I approached the findings and analysis of the 8 strands for each document by looking at how the standards evolved through each school year. Therefore, for the elementary standards I analyzed the strands as a whole and compared them to each other for all of elementary school rather than as separate entities for each school year. I approached my findings and analysis of the middle school standards in much the same way, but I did adjust as necessary because the middle school standards began to differentiate according to the course much like the high school standards do. For the high school standards, I have to look at each course as separate from the other courses because they have not been designed to build upon each other from school year to school year. Therefore, this chapter is broken into 4 separate courses: United States History Studies Since 1877; World History Studies; World Geography Studies; and United States Government. These are only 4 of the courses covered in the high school standards document, but there are others such as psychology that I do not cover because they do not deal directly with history courses.
On its web site, the Texas Education Agency provides information regarding high school graduation. These requirements are broken into 3 different categories: Minimum high school program, recommended high school program and advanced high school program. Students who follow the minimum requirements program for graduation must earn a total of 22 credits, and of those 22 credits only 2 ½ are required in social studies, and the only required social studied course are United States History Since Reconstruction and United States Government with a half credit from World History Studies or World Geography Studies. The recommended high school program requires students to earn a total of 26 credits for graduation with 3 ½ credits for social studies that must include World History Studies, World Geography Studies, United States History Since reconstruction and a half credit of United States Government. For the advanced program, students must earn a total of 26 credits for graduation with the same social studies course requirements as in the recommended high school program (http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us). If students choose to follow the minimum high school program then they could essentially avoid any study in world history.

Unfortunately, the rest of the U.S. demonstrates similar requirements in regards to the requirement of studying world history. According to Martin et. Al. (2011) “Graduation requirements regarding world history indicate that it does not receive attention equivalent to that given U.S history in states’ curricula. Twenty-two states and the District of Columbia required graduates in 2010 to have taken a world history course—a figure that stands in contrast to the thirty-nine states and
the District of Columbia that require those same graduates to have taken a U.S. history course” (33).

6.2 Introductory Section of the High school Standards

As with the elementary and middle school standards, each of the standards documents for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies for high school is broken into an introductory section and a knowledge and skills section. The introductory section provides a description of the course along with an explanation of the requirements for that grade level or course level. The introduction continues to be an important part of the standards documents because it provides educators with specific instructions and definitions that must be implemented in the grade level or course level curriculum. The introduction includes 8 parts in the high school standards document with 1 exception: World History Studies. World History Studies deviates from this structure and instead is broken into 10 parts. In World History Studies what was part 2 in previous courses appears as part 3 in this course only. After this course the pattern of 8 returns. As with the elementary and middle school introductions each part begins with a specific description for the purposes and goals for that particular year of instruction.

Part 1 of the high school introductory section presents the same parameters found in the elementary and middle school introductions. As the students continue to progress further in the standards at each grade level, the standards demonstrate movement away from the home and local community;
however, the social studies classes in the high school grades complete the transition into course specific social studies classes rather than a broad overview found in the elementary grades. Finally, the students are provided with a course in world history which has been absent in the primary and middle school grades.

At the high school level, introductory part 2, part 3 for World History Studies, continues to demonstrate some minor changes for each academic course. However, as previously noted, the standards for the high school classes do not include an assigned grade level, only that students can earn a credit or a half credit in a particular social studies course. The recommended source material for the high school courses reflects the content specific to each course. Materials are recommended based upon the needs of the individual courses.

Part 3 of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies remains exactly the same for each of the social studies courses from kindergarten through World Geography Studies with one exception, World History Studies. For World History Studies part 3 is actually separated into 2 different parts that are numbered as 4 and 5 respectively. World History Studies presents some changes at this point. Beginning with part 4 there are no changes from that of part 3 in the other course and grade levels. The beginning of part 5 continues with the exact wording of part 3 in the other courses and grade levels, but does change as it moves to the end of the first sentence. Instead of referencing the various disciplines within social studies, the authors have shifted to “analyzing connections between and among historical periods and events.”
Here we see an attempt to promote critical thinking in the standards by looking at multiple periods of history. After this the authors have included the statement that “The list of events and people in this course curriculum should not be considered exhaustive. Additional examples can and should be incorporated.” This appears to demonstrate that the authors of these standards understand that a course in world history includes a great deal of information and that it would be difficult to include all aspects of a world history course in the curriculum and standards. This is also the first time that the authors refer to curriculum in terms of the standards. This might demonstrate the authors’ belief that these standards are the actual curriculum for the course, rather than what the state school board believes should be mastered within the curriculum. Part 5 concludes in an identical manner as in part 3 for all other courses and grade levels. It defines the use of the terms “including” and “such as” and their role in the standards document. It is unclear why part 3 was divided into 2 parts for the World History Studies course, but this may demonstrate the use of different committees for each course or grade level articulation during the writing process.

The remaining parts for all of the high school courses are identical to those found in the elementary and middle school introductory sections. The only change that appears in the high school introduction comes in the form of numbering for the World History Studies course which has been explained in previous paragraphs. It should be noted that part 8 presents an issue in regards to the use of the founding documents of the United States. Specifically, students
must "identify and discuss how the actions of U.S. citizens and the local, state, and federal governments have either met or failed to meet the ideas espoused in the founding documents." This directive needs to be looked at in relation to the curriculum of the particular grade level or course level. The majority of the standards focus on the United States and the state of Texas. There are only 2 courses that do not cover the U.S., and they are *World History Studies* and *World Geography Studies*. Instead of changing part 8 for the aforementioned courses, the authors have chosen to keep the directive intact. The authors have demonstrated an inability to understand the curriculum parameters of the various grade levels and course levels, specifically at the high school level. While this directive works well for courses whose focus remains on the United States or even Texas, it does not fit well with a geography course or a world history course. Because this is presented in the introduction of these 2 courses, it is expected that teachers include this in their course curriculum in some way; the question is how teachers will make this meaningful to their students if they intend to implement all aspects of the standards into their curriculum.

Just as I have described in the elementary school and middle school standards, the introductory section of the high school standards underwent noticeable changes during the rewriting process. Previously, the introductory section of the Texas essential Knowledge and Skills High School only contained 4 parts instead of the 8 included in the rewrite of the standards and 10 in the world history standards. As far as the descriptions for each course is concerned
there were some noticeable changes. In the *United States History Studies since 1877* course the majority of the description is identical to the previous standards except that in the rewritten standards the authors have included a statement that the content of the course will be based upon the founding documents of the United States. In the *World History Studies* course much of the description remains identical to the previous version of the standards with some changes. The first change is a simple explanation regarding the fact that students only have a school year to cover the content of this course and that it will cover what is essential. The other change is quite notable, though, because the authors chose to change the term “democratic-republican” governments to “constitutional republics.” The use of this term is important because of the addition made to the introduction of the rewritten standards. There appears to be a purposeful movement away from the word democracy in regards to our government. In the rewritten standards the authors have also added another part that works with the course description where they break the course into specific periods of study, which I cover within my analysis of the standards. The course for world geography presents no changes in its course description. Finally the government course does present a noticeable change similar to the world history course. In the previous description the term democracy was used, but that term has been replaced with the term “constitutional republic.” What appears as new in the introductory section, as we saw in the elementary and middle school standards, is the inclusion of parts that specifically identify free enterprise and its definition;
the inclusion of constitutional republic and its definition; the inclusion of the statement about state and federally mandated testing along with Celebrate Freedom Week; and finally part 8 which requires students to discuss the failures or accomplishments of citizens in regards to the United States’ founding documents.

6.3 United States History Studies Since 1877

The first course presented in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, High School is United States History. This course is a continuation, or a completion, of the United States History course required of students in the eighth grade. During grade 8, students cover the early American colonial period through 1877, so this course completes the study of U.S. history from 1877 until the current era. As I presented in both the elementary school standards and middle school standards, the format for the high school standards is identical. The course is broken up into 8 separate strands: History; Geography; Economics; Government; Citizenship; Culture; Science, technology, and society; and Social studies skills. Each of the 8 strands is then broken into specific standards that are then supported by specific objectives. Each of the objectives begins with an action verb that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of verbs (appendix). Each of the standards in the first 7 strands begins with the directive “The student understands” which is then completed with the knowledge or information required to be understood; however, in the eighth strand, Social studies skills, the standards begin with “The student communicates” or “The
student uses" which are then completed with how the student must communicate and what the student must use to achieve the standard. This demonstrates that the eighth strand is definitely focused on specific skills as the strand name suggests while the preceding 7 strands focus upon the accumulation of knowledge and information.

For the United States History Since 1877 course, the authors have included a total of 32 standards supported by 130 objectives. The largest strand found in this course is the history strand, which is comprised of 11 standards supported by 57 objectives. This accounts for approximately 1/3 of all the standards for the course. However, this is logical when we consider that this course's focus is history. Of the 130 objectives provided for the standards a total of 131 verbs were used. 34.35% begin with a verb or verbs that can be found in the upper half of Bloom's Taxonomy (appendix) while 65.64% of these objectives begin with a verb or verbs found in the lower half of the Taxonomy. Breaking these percentages down even further reveals that 12.97% of the verbs are found at the highest level of the Taxonomy, evaluation and 35.87% fall at the lowest end of the Taxonomy, knowledge. As I demonstrated at the elementary and middle school levels, the majority of these standards are geared towards rote memorization and recall of information rather than on critical thinking.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>47*</td>
<td>35.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>60*</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>26*</td>
<td>19.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>4*</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>65.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>34.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17 Bloom’s Taxonomy High School United States History Since 1877
*the verb describe appears at the knowledge and application levels and the verb compare appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.

6.3.1 The History Strand

During the introductory portion of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies documents there is an emphasis placed upon Celebrate Freedom Week. Each year, students are required to partake in this program of study, regardless of where the class is in the curriculum or even if the curriculum deals with United States history. To reinforce the importance of this statewide celebration, the authors have included Celebrate Freedom Week as an actual standard, and it is the first standard presented in the history strand as well as the entire U.S. history course standards. This is not to say that studying the United States Constitution is unimportant or that studying the principles this country was founded upon and its founding fathers are unimportant, but at this point, students have been studying this information since kindergarten in some way, shape or form. Furthermore, the objectives designed to support this do not even fit within the curriculum for this course. This course is designed to cover U.S. history since 1877, which is well past the time period of the Deceleration of Independence and the creation of the United States Constitution, regardless of this fact though, the
objectives written in support of this standard focus upon this time period rather than the period stated in the course title. In order to fit the curriculum, students could be required to study constitutional amendments such as the 19th amendment that provided women the right to vote or even the 18th and 21st amendments that allowed for prohibition and then the repeal of prohibition. These amendments directly relate to freedom and would fit perfectly within the parameters of the curriculum. Unfortunately, the authors are strictly focused on memorizing passages from the Declaration of Independence and some of the men involved in its creation and the U.S. Constitution rather than topics that support Celebrate Freedom Week and support the appropriate time period designated in the standards.

Moving beyond the first standard one will find a great deal of information that students are expected to memorize. For example, standard 2 requires that “The student understands traditional historical points of reference in U.S. history from 1877 to the present.” This standard is then followed by 4 objectives that deal directly with historical periods, such as requiring that students “identify the major characteristics that define an historical era” as well as “identifying the major eras in U.S. history from 1877 to the present and describe their defining characteristics.” Here we can see that students simply need to memorize information to achieve these objectives which does not guarantee that students will actually understand what “historical points of reference” actually are. To ensure that students know specific historical points, the authors have included
a list of historical points where students must explain their significance. The list includes the Spanish-American War, World War 1, the Great Depression, etc. Included with these points is the specific time period designated by years and the students must explain how these periods were turning points in United States history. Here again, students are not required to think critically about these events or periods as turning points only that they are turning points and the student must explain why. To achieve this objective, teachers need only present a lecture on their importance and that they are indeed important historical points of reference.

Standard 3 requires that students study a specific period of political, social and economic history; it states “The student understands the political, economic, and social changes in the United States from 1877 to 1898.” Included in the objectives for this standard are references to Indian policies of that period, industrialization, labor unions and social issues that affected minorities, women and children. What is interesting in this particular standard is not the actual period of study required here, but the inclusion of information that has been previously presented in other strands such as the economic, culture and government strands. What is specifically interesting comes from the economic references presented in objective 2. Objective 2 states that the students must “analyze economic issues such as industrialization, the growth of railroads, the growth of labor unions, farm issues, the cattle industry boom, the rise of entrepreneurship, free enterprise, and the pros and cons of big business.”
First, as I have pointed out in my analysis of the introduction of these standards as well as in the economic strand of both the elementary and middle school standards, is the use of the phrase free enterprise. The authors have once again had the opportunity to use the term capitalism as they suggest will be used during the introduction, but they have avoided it. This pattern of choosing not to use the term demonstrates that this is not accidental but purposeful. This choice continues in the economics strand as I will demonstrate later in the chapter. On a positive note, the authors have included an analysis of the pros and cons of big business. This is the first time in these standards at any grade level, that students are expected to analyze the negative side of business in a capitalist system. Previously, the focus had been solely upon the benefits of free enterprise and no negatives. However, it is important to keep in mind that the authors have included these specific economic issues as examples only which is demonstrated by the authors’ use of the phrase “such as” in the objective; therefore, it is not required for teachers to actually include an analysis of “the pros and cons of big business.” Although, considering the inclusion of labor unions and their rise, it would be difficult to not include some study of the negative aspects of big business.

Standard 4 progresses to the growth of the United States as a world power and it states, “The student understands the emergence of the United States as a world power between 1898 and 1920.” The objectives with this standard include the Spanish-American war as well as different events that
occurred during this time period. World War I is introduced as well as important historical individuals such as General John J. Pershing, Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, etc. This standard also includes the U.S. acquisitions of “Guam, Hawaii, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico.” There are a couple of issues with this objective. The first in simply referencing that the U.S. acquired the Philippines is noteworthy because of the brutality that took place in the “acquisition” of the Philippines. The standard lacks any mention of the number of lives lost when the United States invaded the archipelago. This lack of critical and important information further promotes the concept of American exceptionalism demonstrated throughout these standards since elementary school. By avoiding the negative aspects and simply referring to the Philippines as an “acquisition” softens the actual history of the event and might even go as far as promoting a the idea of benevolence on the part of the United States. What also stands out about this standard arises in the first objective. In the first objective the authors have included a reference to religion as a factor in the United States’ rise to a world power, albeit a subtle reference. Objective 1 states that students “explain why significant events, policies, and individuals such as the Spanish-American War, U.S. expansionism, Henry Cabot Lodge, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Theodore Roosevelt, Sanford B. Dole, and missionaries moved the United States into the position of a world power.” The authors chose to include missionaries as those who helped build the United States into a world power, but there is no explanation of how. The individuals listed within the objective
impacted United States foreign policy in numerous ways, but why would one include missionaries in this objective? Missionaries were doing much work within the world to help spread their religious beliefs, specifically Christianity, but this did not help the U.S. develop into a world power. It appears that authors are attempting to include the importance of religion in the growth of the U.S. as a world power without any reference as to how these people were involved in this. Fortunately, this is only included as an example and is not required for study, but this is a clear attempt by the authors to include the importance of religion in the United States in an inappropriate place.

The fifth standard is an interesting one to review as it pertains to the third party or reform party political movement in the United States specifically during the Progressive Era and it states, “The student understands the effects of reform and third-party movements in the early 20th century.” When contrasted with the 10 other standards in the history strand, strand 5 is actually one of the strongest in regards to critical thinking. While this standard only includes 3 objectives, each one requires students to operate at Bloom’s highest level of the Taxonomy (appendix), evaluation. Each objective begins with the requirement that students “evaluate the impact of” followed by specific events, people and groups of the Progressive Era. The critical thinking required of students in these objectives is important because it includes an evaluation of the amendments passed during that period, specifically amendments 16, 17, 18 and 19. The tasks presented in these objectives require more than simply memorizing
events and individuals, but developing a deeper understanding of the role these people and events played in shaping the United States then and now.

Moving on to standard 6 presents another opportunity for students to develop their critical thinking skills, but it is not as strong as standard 5. The sixth standard expects that “The student understands significant events, social issues, and individuals of the 1920’s.” This standard is followed by 2 objectives in which students are required to “analyze causes and effects” and “analyze the impact of” recommended issues and individuals of the time period. Included for analysis is a list of examples for each objective. The events and individuals include immigration, Social Darwinism, race relations, eugenics, Henry Ford, Marcus Garvey, etc. Although the objectives do require a level of critical thought, this standard seems to be less important than the others because it is the shortest of the standards found in the history strand and the events and individuals are only recommended as inclusion for study rather than required as demonstrated by the authors’ use of the phrase “such as.” Certainly, there are a number of events and individuals that could be included here, but none were chosen as required which takes on a higher level of importance in these standards. Social issues were important to include in these standards, but not enough to require specific concepts or individuals. This standard comes across as one that the authors might have included after there was a public outcry about what had been excluded in these standards.
Standards 7 through 11 of the history strand for the United States history course include the greatest number of objectives for each standard. Standard 7 centers on the United States' participation in World War II; it states "The student understands the domestic and international impact of U.S. participation in World War II." The objectives written in support of the standard include the major events and individuals of the World War II era. These events include the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Holocaust, United States internment camps, the development of the atomic bomb, Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton, etc. All of the important names and dates for the war are included in these objectives. However, there is an error that demonstrates the authors’ lack of knowledge in world history, and the authors' have also included a contextual definition of patriotism as well. First, in objective 1, students are expected to “identify reasons for U.S. involvement in World War II, including Italian, German, and Japanese dictatorships and their aggression, especially the attack on Pearl Harbor.” The error in this objective is the authors’ choice to describe Japan as a dictatorship. At this time in Japan’s history they still maintained a monarchy along with a prime minister. The military played a heavy role in the government’s decisions, but they were never a true dictatorship. This mistake may seem minor, but these are state standards which students are required to master in the classroom. Further complicating this issue is the fact that students must simply “identify” that Japan was a dictatorship, and not actually examine if Japan was actually a dictatorship. How can the Texas State Board of Education expect
mastery of standards, when they are not completely correct? This problem can only be compounded by the fact that students have not had a world history course which means that they will lack the knowledge to identify this error. The second problem in these objectives appears in the objective 7. Objective 7 requires that students,

explain the home front and how American patriotism inspired exceptional actions by citizens and military personnel, including high levels of military enlistment; volunteerism; the purchase of war bonds; Victory Gardens; the bravery and contributions of the Tuskegee Airmen, the Flying Tigers, and the Navajo Code Talkers; and opportunities and obstacles for women and ethnic minorities. (35)

This objective presents another opportunity to view the authors’ beliefs surrounding patriotism as well as exceptionalism. This is not to say that the acts and individuals included in this list did not demonstrate patriotism or exceptionalism, but there is more to these traits than what has been included and not all of these acts were always inspired by patriotism and exceptionalism. Some of these acts came out of need. The United States was slowly coming out of the Great Depression and the military offered men the chance of employment. The Victory Gardens helped to feed people in a time of supply shortage. We can deem many of these acts as patriotic and even exceptional, but we must remember that many of these acts came from need or from requirement.
Standard 8 of the history strand moves on from World War II and focuses on the Cold War era; it requires that “The student understands the impact of significant national and international decisions and conflicts in the Cold War on the United States.” For the most part, the objectives included to support the mastery of this standard are heavily factual based and only require memorization of information. The information includes important events, individuals and ideas that came about in this historical period. The information presented in these objectives includes the Truman Doctrine, McCarthyism, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Domino Theory, the 26th Amendment, the anti-war movement during the Vietnam War, etc. Once again, the authors have embedded a subtle bias towards their own beliefs in regards to McCarthyism. Objective 2 of this standard requires students to “describe how Cold War tensions were intensified by the arms race, the space race, McCarthyism, and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the findings of which were confirmed by the Venona Papers.” The way this particular objective has been designed leads an individual to understand that McCarthyism and HUAC were correct in their ideas and what was done to defeat the Soviet Union at that time. The inclusion of the Venona Papers is somewhat questionable because of the controversy that has surrounded them, and the objective fails to include any mention of their controversial nature. While the Venona Papers may have confirmed the finding of McCarthy’s hearings, the controversial nature of these papers should not be included as a legitimate source or as sufficient evidence to
support McCarthyism in the history classroom. However, the issue at hand is not necessarily the inclusion of the Venona Papers in the objective; it is the statement that the authors include about these papers. During the period of McCarthyism, many Americans were basically put on trial for being communists. Whether or not these individuals were communist is unimportant because the United States is a free country and a person can define himself or herself in any way they choose. This objective appears to reinforce the idea that the behavior displayed by the government at this time was appropriate, and that the Venona Papers validate this, which is incorrect.

During the creation of these standards, one of the criticisms presented in the media was the exclusion of the American civil rights movement. Standard 9 encompasses the American civil rights movement and expects that “The student understands the impact of the American civil rights movement.” It is also the largest of all the standards in the history strand with a total of 9 objectives. Unfortunately, 7 of the 9 objectives operate in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) which means there is a heavy emphasis placed upon students’ ability to memorize and recall information rather than thinking critically about the civil rights movement. The objectives include all of the prominent historical individuals involved in the movement such as Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez, etc. The objectives also include a study of the development of this movement through history as well as a study of Amendments 13, 14, 15 and 19 of the United States Constitution. The 2 objectives which
require students to think critically are somewhat limited in their scope. Objective 4 requires students to “compare and contrast the approach taken by some civil rights groups such as the Black Panthers with the nonviolent approach of Martin Luther King Jr.” In this objective the focus is solely placed on various groups’ approaches and the only group presented in the example deals directly with African Americans. In fact, of the information presented in these objectives, the majority deals with African Americans, even though the second objective clearly states the inclusion of various organizations from “African American, Chicano, American Indian, women’s, and other civil rights movements.” Objective 8 is the other objective that requires students to think critically about the civil rights movement, and it expects students to “evaluate changes and events in the United States that have resulted from the civil rights movement, including increased participation of minorities in the political process.” This objective requires students to make judgments about the impact of the civil rights movement, which certainly requires students to understand the civil rights movement beyond simple names, dates and events, which is a positive. However, why have the authors only included minorities’ participation in the political process? There is no hint of any bias towards their participation in the political process either positively or negatively, but there must be a reason as to why this particular change has been mandated for inclusion in the course, as noted by the authors’ use of the term “including” in the objective. The civil rights movement affected change in more than just the political process in the United
States; it has promoted change in many aspects of American life. To complete the ninth standard, the authors have included a list of important legal cases that have had an impact on civil rights in the United States such as Brown v. Board of Education among others in objective 9. This last objective only requires that students describe how these cases have “play[ed] a role in protecting the rights of the minority during the civil rights movement” (36). The wording for this is interesting in that it assumes these rights were only protected at that time, when in fact these cases still play a major role in the United States to this day. Once again, the students are not expected to think critically about these cases, they need only describe how they protected people’s rights and not why they were necessary and continue to be needed. It is noteworthy to bring in Lakoff’s (2002) explanation of the liberal view of these events because as he argued, these are seen as advancements for U.S. society, but he also pointed out, conservatives see these events and changes as attacks on their values. Perhaps this explains the authors’ decision to refrain from presenting these standards as benefits and instead presents them in a neutral fashion.

As the standards move forward so do the historical periods covered in those standards. In standard 10 of the history strand for the United States history course, the students are expected to study the historical period from 1970 through 1990; it states, “The student understands the impact of political, economic, and social factors in the U.S. role in the world from the 1970s through 1990.” Specifically, in standard 10, students are expected to attain
mastery concerning "the impact of political, economic, and social factors in the U.S. role in the world." The 6 objectives deal with major events and occurrences of this period such as Nixon’s relationship with China, the Iran-Contra Affair, and the Iran Hostage Crisis among others. Again, these examples are all very important for inclusion in the course and are solid examples by the authors, but what is most significant for this time period is not what is provided but what has been excluded. For example, the first objective deals specifically with President Richard Nixon, and it requires that students “describe Richard Nixon’s leadership in the normalization of relations with China and the policy of détente” which ends there. Students should know this information beyond just the ability to describe Nixon’s role in this process, but the authors have left out a significant historical event surrounding President Nixon, Watergate. Both events were extremely important in U.S. history, but one shines a positive light on President Nixon and the other a negative. This helps to demonstrate a possible political bias on the part of the authors. Continuing with a close look at these objectives reveals no mention of President Carter. In a standards document that includes a preponderance of lists of names and dates, it is surprising to see no direct mention of the 39th president of the United States. The authors actually skip him and President Gerald Ford and move directly to President Ronald Reagan in the second objective. Objective 2 requires that students “describe Ronald Reagan’s leadership in domestic and international policies, including Reaganomics and Peace through Strength.” To begin, the objective operates in the lower half of
Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix); the students need only describe President Reagan’s leadership in regards to foreign and domestic policy, and this must be done in terms of the ideas of Reaganomics and Peace Through Strength. These concepts are certainly suitable for the U.S. history course and there is even a cross over with the economics strand which works to develop knowledge and understanding when combined. The issue is not that these concepts have been included here, but earlier in the history strand in standards 5 and 6, when the objectives covered the Great Depression, there is absolutely no mention of the New Deal during the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a liberal president. Both ideas had a major impact on the U.S. economy at that time and have had major implications on the U.S. economy since their inception. The major difference is that one came from a conservative president, Reaganomics, and the other came from a liberal president, the New Deal. Finally, the emphasis upon conservatism in this standard can best be seen in objective 5. The fifth objective expects students to “describe the causes and key organizations and individuals of the conservative resurgence of the 1980s and 1990s, including Phyllis Schlafly, the Contract with America, the Heritage Foundation, the Moral Majority, and the National Rifle Association.” By using the term “including” the authors have designated that these names and organizations must be covered in the class as these are not merely examples recommended for inclusion. What is interesting here is the inclusion of Phyllis Schlafly, who publicly threw her support towards these standards. This particular objective only focuses on those events,
people and organizations that supported conservatism in that time period, but it
does not require students to look at organizations and individuals who argued
against these people and organizations, nor does it even attempt to clarify what
is meant by the “conservative resurgence.” Looking at the standard as a whole
reveals an attempt by the authors to shed a positive light upon conservatives by
excluding information that portrays conservatives in a negative light. It is also
surprising that the authors have chosen to ignore the fact that the Democratic
Party ran the first presidential ticket with a woman as its nominee for Vice
President of the United States in 1984, Geraldine Ferraro. Although the
Democrats’ bid for the White House failed, this was a significant historical event
for the United States especially when we consider that no woman has yet to
serve in the executive branch of our government. Perhaps the authors chose to
keep her name from the list of important historical figures because the
Republican Party would not select a woman for the Vice Presidency for nearly
another quarter of a century; however, even when the standards reach the 2008
presidential election, Sarah Palin’s name fails to appear as well. Had the authors
included information that presented a complete historical picture, this standard
would be fine, but as it stands it does lean towards a biased presentation of this
historical period.

To complete the history strand the eleventh standard covers the historical
period of 1990 through the present and requires that “The student understands
the emerging political, economic, and social issues of the United States
from the 1990s into the 21st century.” The first 2 objectives provide information that students must be able to describe and identify, such as the Persian Gulf War, 9/11 and political advocacy organizations, just to name a few. The continued emphasis on rote knowledge continues. The students should know these events and organizations, but they also need to understand how they came about and what the root causes were that led to the wars or the creation of these organizations. When critical thought is introduced, it is limited to broad concepts. For instance, objective 4 asks that students “analyze the impact of third parties on presidential elections.” Even though analysis is at the low end of critical thought on Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) it does require students to move beyond simple identification or description. During this time period there is solid examples of the third party movement, but there is no inclusion of who the actual third parties are, or who the individuals were that ran at that time. I return to the structure of these standards and the heavy focus upon lists of names, dates and events. By excluding examples for this objective, the authors’ place little importance upon it. Objective 3 requires the highest level of critical thought in standard 11, but it is also a very questionable objective. The third objective requires that students “evaluate efforts by global organizations to undermine U.S. sovereignty through the use of treaties.” What is good about this is that students do need to use their critical thinking skills to achieve this objective, but what is questionable is that it clearly assumes that global organizations are trying to undermine the sovereignty of the United States. This clearly demonstrates a bias
on the part of the authors because of this assumption. To remove the bias
students should be asked to evaluate the treaties that the United States has
signed. Instead of assuming if this is actually happening, allow the students to
make that judgment instead of preordaining that this is in fact happening. With
the objective written in the way it is in the standards, teachers are teaching that
this is a fact and not an opinion. For the most part, the standard remains
relatively neutral in political leaning; however, it would be dangerous to ignore the
third objective. The remaining objectives ask students to discuss the “historical
significance of the 2008 presidential election,” and to “discuss the solvency of
long-term entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare.” Covering
the 2008 presidential election is important especially in terms of United States
history, but why are students asked to study the long term solvency of
entitlement programs? The authors’ choice of words here is also important. The
authors have elected to use the term “entitlement programs” which has become a
hot button term for conservatives to use when referring to programs such as
social security and Medicare. They could have chosen to use terms like “rights"
or “social safety net” to eliminate their bias against such programs, or even
included all the terms as an opportunity for students to learn about how
conservatives and liberals view these programs, but by choosing a loaded term,
the authors demonstrate their own personal beliefs and biases. Finally, that last
objective would be better suited in the economic strand of these standards. The
placement of the final objective reveals the exclusion of academics in the process of creating these standards.

The history strand for the United States History Since 1877 course is mostly a collection of names and dates that student must be able to memorize and recite the importance of. However, there is a subtle attempt, which has been shown in the elementary and middle school standards, to promote a politically conservative view of United States history. For the most part the emphasis has been subtle, with nothing too over the top when initially read. However, careful attention to the wording of those objectives reveals the beliefs and opinions of the authors. Their political leaning also appears in the information that has been excluded in the objectives as well, such as the inclusion of Reaganomics versus the exclusion of the New Deal. The exclusion of significant historical events such as Walter Mondale’s choice of running mate in the 1984 presidential election of Geraldine Ferraro reveals more about the authors’ political beliefs. In order to achieve the political neutrality the authors espoused in the media, students must be exposed to all of history, and that has not been accomplished in this particular strand. Finally, the history strand is geared towards the concept of American exceptionalism as well as benevolence. Historical events or information that presents the country in a negative light such as the U.S. acquisition of the Philippines has been watered down through using a term like acquiring while excluding the fact that lives were lost in what history shows to be a very violent event. Ignoring our country’s mistakes or watering them down is dangerous
because our students will not have learned from our past mistakes which is just 1 reason why we study history.

6.3.2 The Geography Strand

The geography strand for the United States History Since 1877 course is short when compared to the history strand which preceded it. This strand is made up of a total of 3 standards which are then supported by a total of 7 objectives. Considering the fact that the authors have placed an emphasis upon the accumulation of information for United States history since elementary school, it is not surprising to see that the geography strand is short. The standards and objectives chosen for inclusion in this strand prove to be developmentally appropriate for students in high school, and attempt to create more understanding of all that geography encompasses. Of the 7 objectives selected for inclusion, 4 of them operate within the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix), with the remaining 3 operating in the upper half. As in the elementary and middle school standards, the standards for the geography strand all begin with the statement “The student understands” which is then completed with the specific concepts the student is expected to master. The pattern of beginning each objective for the 3 standards of beginning with a verb that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of verbs (appendix) continues as well. As a whole, the standards and objectives are straight forward with only one objective that might be difficult to achieve.
Standard 2 of the geography strand centers around “the effects of migration and immigration on American society.” The first objective is clear in its intents and requires that students study the changing demographic patterns in U.S. history because of western expansion, the movement of people from rural areas to urban ones, and the movement of individuals from the Rust Belt to the Sun Belt. The objective is completely appropriate and geared towards helping students understand the reasons behind changes in U.S. demographics. The second objective is where there could be an issue. Objective 2 requires that students “analyze the causes and effects of changing demographic patterns resulting from legal and illegal immigration to the United States.” Analyzing the demographics of legal immigration to the U.S. is certainly a task that students can accomplish. There is plenty of data available for analyzing this specific information. On the flip side though, it might prove difficult for students to analyze demographic information in regards to illegal immigration. The main factor causing this issue is that these immigrants are undocumented, so it is impossible to know exact information regarding these immigrants. Instructors can provide students the estimates that are available, but there is no way to be sure how accurate this information actually is, which can make an actual analysis difficult. However, as this is an important issue the task can prove helpful if students are guided to look at the pros and cons as well as looking at the reasons why undocumented immigrants choose to enter the United States. Since the authors failed to provide specific information regarding immigrants that must be studied,
teachers will ultimately make the choice as to how they should approach this objective. The remaining objectives for this standard are appropriate for students to master.

Because of the heavy focus on United States history in the previous grades, the geography strand for this U.S. history course provides students with the final information that they have not received in the previous courses. At this point, the objectives reflect that students are able to grasp and understand information that deals with people and regions beyond just maps and students are expected to be able to decipher this information and analyze it.

6.3.3 The Economics Strand

In the United States History Since 1877 course, the economics strand ties with the social studies skills strand as the second largest. This strand includes a total of 4 standards which are then supported by 17 objectives. The authors also continue to rely on beginning each standard with the phrase “The student understands” followed by the specific concepts the student must master, and each objective begins with a verb found of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) list of verbs. Of the 17 objectives, 15 begin with verbs found in the lower portion of Bloom’s taxonomy (appendix) and only 2 begin with verbs found in the upper portion of the taxonomy. This particular strand returns to the task of requiring students to memorize information rather than developing critical thinking skills when dealing with economics. The strand is set up similarly to the history strand. The 4 standards are broken into different historical periods: 1870s through 1920;
the time between World War I and World War II; World War II through the Cold War; the 21st century. The objectives written in support of each standard reflects specific information in regards to the United States economy during the specific time period stated in the standard. The majority of these objectives reinforce the idea of memorizing information rather than thinking critically about it. Issues brought forth during my analysis of the elementary and middle school standards document continue to appear here as well.

One of the major issues I have discussed throughout these standards concerning the economics strand is the authors’ exclusion of the term capitalism; even though they directly state that it will appear during the introductory section of the standards. Once again, the phrases “free market system” or “free enterprise system” are substituted in place of capitalism. At this point it is clear that the authors’ exclusion of the term from any of the economic standards and objectives is purposeful. According to Allison Linn, a writer for MSNBC.com, many Americans view the phrase “free enterprise” much more favorably than the term “capitalism.” Citing a Gallup poll from February of 2010, reveals that this trend is no coincidence, she stated that the poll “found that 86 percent of Americans had a positive image of free enterprise, while 61 percent had a positive image of capitalism” (Linn, 2010). What is even more revealing is that Linn (2010) also references the removal of the term from the Texas standards. According to Linn (2010), Texas school board member “Terri Leo, explained that capitalism had a bad connotation, like ‘capitalist pig’.” By selectively choosing to
use a phrase that is viewed more positively by Americans, the board members demonstrate that they are attempting to influence what the students believe rather than allowing them to make an educated judgment on their own. This is not promoting balance in the standards, as the Texas state board claimed they wanted to accomplish.

During my analysis of the history strand for the United States History Since 1877 course, I point out that the students are required to study Reaganomics but there is no mention of the New Deal. This is important because each has had an impact on the American economy. The second standard of the economy strand, which requires that “The student understands significant economic developments between World War I and World War II,” includes 2 objectives that deal directly with the New Deal. Objective 4 requires that students “compare the New Deal policies and its opponents’ approaches to resolving the economic effects of the Great Depression” and objective 5 expects students to “describe how various New Deal agencies and programs, including the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Social Security Administration, continue to affect the lives of U.S. citizens.” Both of these objectives are legitimate tasks for students to complete. This will help them better understand the concepts and ideas behind the New Deal as well as how the New Deal will impact their own lives. The problem here is not the objectives concerning the New Deal; it is the exclusion of the same type of objectives for Reaganomics in the economics strand. The authors thought
Reaganomics was worthy enough for inclusion in the history strand, and since it is an economic concept it should be subject to the same type of scrutiny as the New Deal. This is another example of the subtle political and economic bias the authors possess and present in these standards. The purpose of state standards is to ensure that important aspects of a curriculum are covered in the classroom so that students can make their own judgments; standards should not be used to indoctrinate students into the political beliefs of those who created them.

Finally, the economic strand includes one more issue that creates a concern. In the final standard, which requires that “The student understands the economic effects of increased worldwide interdependence as the United States enters the 21st century,” the first objective provides a contextual definition of the American dream. Objective 1 of standard 4 states that students “discuss the role of American entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates, Sam Walton, Estee Lauder, Robert Johnson, Lionel Sosa, and millions of small business entrepreneurs who achieved the American dream.” The problem with this objective is the authors’ choice of examples for individuals who have achieved the American dream. By including people like Bill Gates and Sam Walton, the authors allude to the idea that the American dream is attaining great wealth. This is actually the warped version of the American dream, and what it has come to mean in recent decades. According to the American Heritage Dictionary the American dream is
A phrase connoting hope for prosperity and happiness, symbolized particularly by having a house of one’s own. Possibly applied at first to the hopes of immigrants, the phrase now applies to all except the very rich and suggests a confident hope that one’s children’s economic and social condition will be better than one’s own.

While these individuals have achieved great prosperity in their own lives, it would be incorrect to use them as exemplars of the American dream. The inclusion of small business owners should demonstrate this, but they are overshadowed by the names provided on the list. Finally, it also demonstrates the authors’ personal beliefs about how to achieve the American dream, through business. Even though these are examples not required for inclusion in the course, it is enough to reveal the beliefs and attitudes of those who created these standards.

The economics strand is another demonstration of the authors’ desire to enforce the memorization of information rather than critical thought and understanding. The authors also continue to embed their personal beliefs and opinions about economics and business in this strand. They refuse to use the term capitalism because of the negative connotation it currently carries. They have also allowed their own political beliefs to sway how economic concepts such as the New Deal and Reaganomics are presented in the classroom. Finally, through their suggested examples of individuals who have achieved the American dream, the authors provide a glimpse of how they define the American dream and how it can be achieved. The issues that I have brought forth in the
economics strand do not simply jump out at a reader, because they are surrounded by a plethora of facts and information that can at times be overwhelming and tedious. The inclusion of these beliefs and opinions are subtle, but they do appear in this strand, as well as previous economics strands at all levels of the Texas essential Knowledge and Skills standards document for social studies.

6.3.4 The Government Strand

The government strand for the United States History Since 1877 course includes a total of 3 standards which are supported by a total of 10 objectives. Of the 10 objectives, 4 of begin with verbs found in the upper half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and 6 are found in the lower half of the Taxonomy. The four objectives that operate in the upper half of the Taxonomy all begin with the verb “evaluate” which is the highest level. Thus, the students are being asked to think critically about certain concepts and make judgments which require a deep understanding of the material. As with the previous strands, the government standards all begin with the phrase “The student understands” followed by the concepts that the students must master. The government strand centers around 3 concepts instead of the time periods presented in the history strand. These concepts are: the changing role of government; the changing relationships of the 3 branches; and constitutional issues in society.

The objectives included in each standard all represent the concepts presented in each of the 3 standards. Overall, these objectives adhere to the
concepts presented in the standards. What is notable in the first objective in standard 1, which expects that “The student understands changes over time in the role of government,” is that the authors have returned to an issue I discussed in the economics strand and the history strand. Objective 1 requires students to “evaluate the impact of New Deal legislation on the historical roles of state and federal government.” Here again, there is nothing wrong with the objective; it is a legitimate task for students to complete to better understand the changing role of government in the United States. What is at issue here is that the New Deal is the only economic concept that receives this much attention and expected scrutiny. There is no other major economic reform or concept subjected to the same depth of study. If the authors are going to do this for the New Deal, then it is logical to assume that Reaganomics, which they require as part of the course in the history strand, should also undergo the same level of scrutiny as well.

Finally, within the third standard of the government strand, which states “The student understands the impact of constitutional issues on American society,” the authors have included an objective regarding constitutional change. Objective 3 requires that students “evaluate constitutional change in terms of strict construction versus judicial interpretation.” At this point in the standards, there has been little in regards to interpreting the United States Constitution; however, in the coming standards and courses for high school, students will be expected to begin analyzing particular amendments in regards to American
society. This objective may not seem noteworthy at this point, but it is part of the authors’ foundation to question the meaning of the Constitution. I will discuss this in more depth later when specific amendments are brought into question by the authors.

All in all, the government strand for the United States History Since 1877 course demonstrates little in terms of bias, but there is evidence that the authors are preparing to introduce information that might be biased in future courses. The authors have implemented a number of objectives related to questioning the New Deal, while not providing the same scrutiny for other economic concepts. By only questioning one concept, even though others have been written into the standards, the authors are presenting their bias towards the New Deal. While it is correct to study the New Deal and question its effectiveness, the same should occur for Reaganomics, if the authors are truly attempting to achieve balance in these standards.

6.3.5 The Citizenship Strand

The citizenship strand for the United States History Since 1877 course is made up of a total of 3 standards supported by a total of 8 objectives. Of the 8 objectives, 6 begin with verbs from Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix) found in the lower half and only 2 are found in the upper half. What this means is that the information presented in the objectives for these 3 standards are mainly meant to be memorized, and only a minimal amount of critical thinking is expected from students. What is interesting about this strand is
that it slowly moving away from concepts of individual citizenship, and appears to be more centered around promoting nationalism rather than what citizenship means.

Standard 1 centers on the idea of American superiority. In this standard the student is expected to “understand the concept of American exceptionalism.” It appears that this standard is more focused on promoting student pride in the United States. The objectives do include information that the student must learn, but the idea of nationalism makes its way in as the objectives progress. The first objective requires that students “discuss Alex de Tocqueville’s five values crucial to America’s success as a constitutional republic: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire.” The first issue with this objective is that it requires little in terms of critical thought. The students are given the information that they must discuss which is assumed to be correct. A better objective would have required that students evaluate de Tocqueville’s five values rather than just discuss them. By only requiring that students discuss them, the authors demonstrate that they agree with de Tocqueville and that questioning them is unnecessary. Secondly, the authors have quietly pushed the value of laissez-faire in these standards. During the previous strands, the authors have correctly included this concept as a point of study. However, because of the manner in which this objective has been written, with the assumption that de Tocqueville is correct, they are promoting laissez-faire. Combine this with the authors’ continued use of “free enterprise” or “free market system” instead of the
term “capitalism,” because these phrases are seen more positively, and it becomes easier to understand that the authors have a preference in an economic system and are attempting to persuade students of this preference. Here again we also see the exclusion of the positives the United States has achieved through collective efforts, such as public education, social security, and the creation of public roads and highways. These programs and investments have provided great economic benefits for all citizens as I discussed earlier in my analysis of the middle school standards. Furthermore, the authors fail to include the negative aspects of laissez faire and that without some governmental regulation it has hurt our economy especially those who find themselves at the bottom. It is not the job of the state school board to support ideas over others, and by allowing these preferences into the standards the board has failed in its attempt to create balance.

In objective 2 of the first standard, the authors have gone a step further in attempting to reinforce the first objective. Objective requires that students “describe how the American values identified by Alex de Tocqueville are different and unique from those of other nations.” This objective supports the authors’ belief that de Tocqueville’s description is correct, by now stating that these are American values. Students are not required to assess whether or not these values are American; it is assumed they are and the students need only describe what makes them different from other nations. Furthermore, this objective does not require students to think critically about this information; they need only
memorize it and basically recite it. Requiring the students to judge if these values still describe America, if they ever did, would be much more balanced because it asks the students to evaluate their knowledge of de Tocqueville and United States history. Finally, this objective may be difficult for students to accomplish even though it operates in the lower half of Bloom’s taxonomy (appendix) because the students have only take a contemporary world studies course and have not had world history. Students knowledge of the values held by various nations will certainly be limited because of this.

Throughout these standards from elementary through high school, the authors have defined the United States as a constitutional republic and not as a democracy. This continues in the citizenship strand, yet they do refer to the democratic process that we take part in as citizens yet they fail to differentiate for students the difference between a constitutional republic and a democracy within these particular standards. In fact, at this point it appears that the two are used synonymously in this strand. The second standard requires that “The student understands efforts to expand the democratic process.” The objectives that follow provide examples of what these efforts can be and include examples like litigation, lobbying, amending the Constitution, and non-violent protesting. The first two objectives are straight forward and contain no bias or preference, but the third objective does provide a contextual definition of patriotism. I have presented this issue in the elementary and middle school standards, and it has arisen here. Objective 3 expects students to “explain how participation in the democratic
process reflects our national ethos, patriotism, and civic responsibility as well as our progress to build a ‘more perfect union’.” Here the authors explain that a patriot takes part in the democratic process, but this is not necessarily true. Many patriots choose not to take part because they disagree with something and believe that refraining from participation is voicing their disagreement. There are also individuals who take part in the democratic process who do not consider themselves patriotic. Although this is a minor issue in these standards, it does reveal to readers the authors’ beliefs about what it means to be patriotic and that patriotism can be taught. It is almost akin to stating if a person does this they are this, and if a person does not do this then they are not this.

The final standard returns to one that appears in the elementary and middle school citizenship strand standards and that is on leadership. Standard 3 states that “The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic.” The first objective only requires that students “describe qualities of effective leadership” without any reference to what those qualities actually are. Perhaps the authors believe that those qualities have been learned in the earlier grades where the objectives for effective leadership were much more direct. Regardless, the authors do provide a second objective which includes a list of individuals who have had a significant political or social contribution. The list includes individuals of current historical importance, such as Hillary Clinton, Sandra Day O’Connor, Thurgood Marshall, Billy Graham, etc. The list includes important politically conservative and liberal examples who have
contributed to the United States in some way and it is merely a list of examples which are not required for inclusion in the class as denoted by the use of the phrase “such as.” The job of the students is to evaluate the contributions of political and social leaders, so students must think critically about the contributions made by the individuals selected for inclusion in the class. In the past students were merely expected to identify the leadership qualities, but here they are finally expected to make a judgment about the individuals they study. This is an improvement from the elementary and middle school standards.

In the citizenship strand, the authors appear to continue with their attempt to define patriotism as well as focus on leadership qualities. As far as leadership is concerned, students are finally expected to think critically about the leaders in the United States and what have contributed to society. Unfortunately, there does appear to be a subtle push of nationalism in this strand by expressing what the authors believe to be the values of America. Students are not challenged to question if de Tocqueville’s values are correct, only to compare these values to the values of other undefined nations.

6.3.6 The Culture Strand

The culture strand for the United States History Since 1877 course is one of the smaller strands. It is made up of a total of 2 standards which are supported by a total of 10 objectives. Like its predecessors in the elementary and middle school standards, it operates heavily in the lower portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix). Of the 10 objectives, 9 begin with verbs found in the lower half of the
Taxonomy and only 1 begins with a verb found in the upper half of the Taxonomy. It is also apparent that the culture strand has evolved very little between the 3 sets of standards. The culture strand continues to look at culture from the perspective of popular culture and when there is inclusion of the deeper aspects of a culture, such as religion, the objectives are superficial at best.

The first standard is a continuation of those found at the previous grade levels of looking at art as a portion of culture. Standard 1 of the culture strand expects that “The student understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created.” This standard is also found in the middle school and elementary school culture strands. The major difference here is the specific time period presented in the United States history course. The objectives which support this standard do not really look at developing an understanding of culture in the U.S. only different segments of that culture. What is intriguing about the first standard is objectives 3 and 4. The purpose of these 2 objectives is for students to pick out parts of American culture and then analyze their spread throughout the world. These 2 objectives work together in that objective 3 asks that students “identify the impact of American culture on the rest of the world over time.” Once students have identified the impacts made by American culture, the students must “analyze the global diffusion of American culture through the entertainment industry via various media” in objective 4. Since the students have not received a thorough study of culture in the United States, only a superficial one, it is not surprising to see that these objectives boil
down to entertainment. When looking at all of the standards from kindergarten through U.S. History Since 1877, the students have not received instruction in world history, which could include a great deal of cultural information. The students do spend a year on contemporary world countries, but that is it, so they have no historical backing for world cultures. This lack of knowledge is demonstrated in these 2 objectives with the objective 4’s analysis on cultural diffusion through entertainment. There is nothing wrong with including popular culture in the standards, but to do so at the exclusion of the deeper aspects of a culture demonstrates the author’s desire to focus on facts rather than understanding.

Standard 2 for the culture strand attempts to include contributions of various people in the United States. The goal of the second standard is that, “The student understands how people from various groups contribute to our national identity.” The 6 objectives written in support of this standard become a list of information that would be better suited in other strands rather than the culture strand. For example, the first objective expects students to “explain actions taken by people to expand economic opportunities and political rights, including those for racial, ethnic, and religious minorities as well as women, in American society.” This objective provides another opportunity to view the authors’ biases once again in the form of exclusion. They have included gender as important in terms of women, but they have chosen to exclude sexual minorities, specifically lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens, who
continue to fight for these rights as well. Aside from this obvious omission the objective is actually very suitable for inclusion in the standards but not necessarily within the culture strand. Simply including women and minority groups does not automatically mean that this has anything to do with culture. In fact, since the attempt here is to have students study economics, this objective is better suited for the economics strand or even the history strand. What it looks like is happening here, is an attempt to connect the culture strand to the economics strand, but it does not. Do economics have an impact on American culture? Many people would argue that they do, but this objective does not attempt to clarify that. The attempt is laudable, but not well executed. Objectives 2 and 3 do return to the task at hand in the culture strand, but unfortunately the objectives are superficial. For instance, in objective 2 the students are required to “discuss the Americanization movement to assimilate immigrants and American Indians into American culture.” Here the students are only required to talk about the Americanization movement rather than the effects of this movement. This is a lost opportunity for critical thinking in these standards. By discussing this the authors acknowledge the existence of the movement, but had they included an objective to evaluate the movement’s effects, both negative and positive, they could have prompted a much deeper understanding of the many cultures present in the United States and their relationships with one another. The third objective simply requires that students explain the contributions of minorities and religious
groups in the United States. Unfortunately, little depth of knowledge is needed to complete this task.

Finally, standard 2 of the culture strand concludes with 3 objectives that do not really fit with this strand. Objective 4 requires students to "identify the political, social, and economic contributions of women such as Frances Willard, Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt, Dolores Huerta, Sonia Sotomayor, and Oprah Winfrey to American society." Simply because the objective is aimed at studying women does not mean that this belongs in the culture strand even if it is a list of examples from all numerous ethnicities. These women are important and should be included in these standards, but by subjugating them to the culture strand their achievements are mitigated to the realm of culture and not where they contributed. These women should be included in the history strand, the economics strand, the government strand and not just the culture strand.

Objective 5 continues this break from culture and instead returns to history. The fifth objective expects students to "discuss the meaning and historical significance of the mottos 'E Pluribus Unum' and 'In God We Trust.'" The objective does little to explain how these 2 mottos are related to culture, and in fact students need only talk about these 2 mottos in terms of history. It might be argued that this objective does not really support the standard. These mottoes have little to do with how groups have contributed to "our national identity." However, one might also argue that these mottoes do reflect the United States’ national identity, but the objective is not written in that way. It is questionable
whether this objective reflects the goals of the standard. Finally, objective 6 is similar in construction to that of objective 4 in that it includes a list of individuals of different ethnic backgrounds. The sixth objective requires that students “discuss the importance of congressional Medal of Honor recipients, including individuals of all races and genders such as Vernon J. Baker, Alvin York, and Roy Benavidez.” Understanding who these men are would be better accomplished if placed in context of when they received the Medal of Honor. This is the highest military award given to service men and women, and not something that has to do with culture. Studying about Medal of Honor winners is something that can be highly interesting to students when studying history, but it does not fit within the culture strand. Bravery is a trait that transcends a person’s religious or ethnic background, and is not a trait found in only one country. The acts that earned these individuals the award are historically significant and had little to do with their cultural background.

The U.S. history culture strand is mostly focused on the superficial aspects of culture rather than the values and beliefs that make different cultures unique. For this class, many of the objectives do not belong in this strand, but in other strands. If there was an attempt to connect the culture strand to the other strands it was not accomplished. What is most glaring about the objectives included here is that some of them appear to have been written to make sure that the positive achievements of women and individuals of different ethnic and religious backgrounds have been included. Rather than including those selected
for these standards in the appropriate strands, it feels like these individuals were placed in the culture strand as an afterthought in order to appease the early critics of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies.

6.3.7 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand

The science, technology, and society strand for the United States History Since 1877 course is by far the smallest of all the strands. This strand is made up of 2 standards supported by a total of 6 objectives. Like many of the strands in this document, the majority of the objectives, 5 out of 6, begin with a verb found in the lower half of Bloom’s taxonomy (appendix) with only 1 found in the upper half. As with the previous strands, the standards begin with the phrase “The student understands” and this is then followed by the concepts that students are required to master. In the previous strands for this course, there has been an attempt to integrate information from different strands to create a connection between the strands. At times this has worked, and other times it has not. The science, technology, and society strand appears to have designed to support the information contained in the economics strand, and the integration of these 2 strands is successful. However, one of the effects of this integration is the promotion of the free enterprise system because the objectives lean towards the positives of the system.

The first standard and its objectives rely heavily upon rote knowledge rather than critical thinking. If a student is only required to explain information does that translate into understanding? The first standard requires that “The
student understands the impact of science, technology, and the free enterprise system on the economic development of the United States.”

Immediately, we can see here that the authors have included information that does not fit within the strand. There is no need to include the free market system in science, technology and society. This standard would fit much better within the economics strand. Although the standard is written in such a way that allows for a balanced study of the concept contained within, the objectives which follow do little to broaden students’ understanding of the concept. For example, objective 1 expects students to “explain the effects of scientific discoveries and technological innovations such as electric power, telephone and satellite communications, petroleum-based products, steel production, and computers on the economic development of the United States.” Students need little instruction to point out the importance of these industries in the United States’ economy, especially if students are only required to look at the effects. Do students understand the consequences of these effects? Are students able to evaluate these industries and even predict the future outcomes of these effects? Students who can do more than recite information demonstrate understanding, so this brings into question the authors’ intent regarding the purpose of these objectives. It appears that they do not want students questioning the free enterprise system and really thinking about it and making their own judgment. The intent of this is not to disparage capitalism, or the free enterprise system, but to point out that these standards do not reflect the balance the state board of Texas argued existed in
these new standards. By excluding the negatives of a system, any system, the authors display their own personal preferences, and that is what has happened in many of these standards.

The second standard is similar to the first in its direction. Standard 2 states that "The student understands the influence of scientific discoveries, technological innovations, and the free enterprise system on the standard of living in the United States." The first objective for this standard actually requires students to think critically about these concepts. Objective 1 expects students to “analyze how scientific discoveries, technological innovations, and the application of these by the free enterprise system, including those in transportation and communication, improve the standard of living in the United States.” Initially this objective appears unbiased because it is asking students to analyze how the concepts have improved the standard of living. However, this is exactly where preference appears. The authors assume that these concepts have improved the standard of living on the U.S. Not everyone would agree with this statement. Communities such as the Amish might argue that these things have not improved Americans’ standard of living. The authors assume that all are in agreement, but that is untrue. The objective requires students to only analyze the free enterprise system here in ways that have improved life and not the negative effects that have come along with these advancements and discoveries. To maintain balance, the objective need only require students to analyze the impact of these on the standard of living in the U.S. instead of improve. By doing
this, students would be required to look at the good and bad and then each
student could judge if these discoveries and advancements have improved our
standard of living.

The science, technology, and society strand is a solid example of
integrating 2 strands in order to achieve a better understanding of the information
contained in both strands. Unfortunately, the objectives for the standards operate
at a low level, mainly requiring students to memorize information rather than
thinking critically about. The continued presence of the authors’ preference for
the free enterprise system also demonstrates their failed attempt to create
balance in these standards.

6.3.8 The Social Studies Skills Strand

The social studies skills strand for the United States History Since 1877
course is one of the larger strands in terms of standards and objectives. This
strand is made up of 4 standards and with a total of 15 objectives. The
framework for this strand is similar to the framework found in the elementary and
middle school versions of the strand. Instead of beginning each standard with the
phrase “The student understands” the authors have chosen to provide more
concrete directives for each standard. The 4 standards begin with 3 different
phrases: “The student applies,” “The student communicates,” and “The student
uses.” These phrases are then followed by the specific skills students are
expected to apply, use or communicate. In the elementary and middle school
standards, the social studies skills strand required that students think critically
more so than the other strands. This is not the case for the high school U.S.
history course. Of the 15 objectives for these 4 standards, only 4 can be found in
the upper half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix), with 10 in the lower half, and 1
that does not appear in the list. However, even if a lack of critical thinking exists
in the strand when compared to previous grade levels, the emphasis for this
strand still centers upon student skills rather than the accumulation of
information.

As with the previous directives in the social studies skills strand, the U.S.
history version of this strand places an emphasis on cross curricular skills, such
as writing and interpreting statistical data. This can clearly be seen in standard 2
where it states, “The student communicates in written, oral, and visual
forms.” For example in standard 2 objective 1, students are expected to “create
written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.” Here the
emphasis of the standard is placed upon communication, and it is expected that
students write in this course. This connects the history course to the English
class which helps to reinforce the importance of both classes. However, it is
important to note that specific objectives about grammar and conventions found
in the middle school version of this strand have been eliminated in the U.S.
history course. Rather than just memorizing information to be recited at a later
date, students are working to learn and improve their skills. This is a definite
strength for these standards as it was at the elementary and middle school
levels.
Overall, there is little change in these standards and objectives from the middle school, and in fact, the fourth standard has been repeated verbatim. The fourth standard states, “The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings.” The continued use and repetition of this standard and its 2 objectives reflects the authors’ belief in the importance of these particular skills. However, when integrated with the 7 previous strands and the vast amount of information included in them, may make it difficult for teachers to include these skills as they attempt to include all of that information during the year-long course. Further complicating the inclusion of these skills is that the information required for inclusion in the previous strands is mostly factual with little opportunity to have students think critically about the information.

6.3.9 Concluding Thoughts for United States History Since 1877

As a history course, a great amount of attention was placed on the history strand, which is logical. Other than this, the same issues keep arising in the standards. The history strand is heavily geared towards the accumulation and memorization of information at the expense of critical thinking. The majority of the standards begin with “The student understands” but it is difficult to assess if the students will actually understand the information because the focus is primarily on memorization, and this is demonstrated by the authors’ reliance upon verbs from the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix). The authors also continue to embed their political and economic preferences within
the standards through word choice. Their desire to create balance in the United States history standards for high school is not fully achieved. The concept of American exceptionalism is promoted even further in the standards for this course which is demonstrated through word choice that paints a positive image of historical events or by outright ignoring negative events that have impacted the United States. This promotion of exceptionalism can also be seen through the authors' push of promoting their ideas of patriotism in the standards as well as the idea of the American Dream. However, the strength of these standards continues to lie in the social studies skills strand. The strand continues to reinforce skills learned outside the social studies class, but not to the extent that was expected in the middle school standards.

6.4 World History Studies

The second course presented in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, High School document is World History Studies. This is the first course devoted to world history at any grade level. Students who are following the minimum high school requirements for graduation actually have the option of excluding this course from their program of study, they have the choice of this class or world geography, but those following the recommended or advanced programs are required to take this course. It should also be noted that individual school districts in Texas have the ability to require more courses for graduation than those required by the state. ("19 TAC Chapter 74, Subchapter F," 2010) This creates a huge issue for teachers of world history because
students will have had no, or a limited, background of other countries’ histories. By reserving a course in world history for only high school the students will be unable to acquire a depth of knowledge and understanding had they been provided with world history throughout their schooling. Further complicating this issue is that teachers will have only one school year to teach centuries worth of material. Many of the world history teachers I have spoken to who teach in states that include world history at all grade levels have explained that even they have trouble covering all of the information they need to in a single school year in high school, and would like to see a second full school year devoted to world history. The state board of Texas has created a major problem by excluding world history in the lower grades and students will leave school with a very limited knowledge of the history of the world.

The World History Studies course is described as “a survey of the history of humankind” in the introductory section of the standards’ document. Keeping in mind that this is the first course dedicated to the study of world history, one would expect that this would be the largest document within these standards; however, that assumption would be wrong. The World History Studies course is made up of a total of 31 standards between the 8 strands which are supported by a total of 123 objectives. As far as the standards are concerned this course falls 1 short when compared to the 32 included in the United States History Since 1877 course. When comparing objectives, the U.S. history course has a total of 130 objectives, which means the world history course is shorter by 7 objectives.
These numbers may seem insignificant, but we must remember that the United States history class is actually broken into 2 separate classes, the colonial period through 1877 which students take in the eighth grade and then U.S. history from 1877 to the present taken in high school. By adding the number of standards from the eighth grade class to the high school class, the number of standards for United States history leaps to 63 and the objectives jump to 240. These numbers for United States history grow even larger if I were to include the standards and objectives for the fifth grade course which is another course dedicated to the history of the United States. Furthermore, these 2 classes cover a few hundred years for U.S. history, while the world history course covers thousands of years for multiple countries. It is apparent that the Texas state school board places little importance on students' knowledge and understanding of world history.

As previously noted, the World History Studies course is made up of a total of 31 standards supported by a total of 123 objectives. These objectives include a total of 124 verbs used in their construction. Of the 124 verbs, 87.9% of the objectives include a verb or verbs found in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and a mere 13.7% of the objectives include a verb or verbs found in the upper half of the Taxonomy. Breaking these numbers down even further reveals that 36.29% of the verbs used fall at the lowest level of Bloom’s Taxonomy, knowledge, and only 3.22% fall at Bloom's highest level, evaluation. What this means is that these objectives are geared towards students memorizing information rather than learning to think critically about the
information presented in the course. This pattern continues to refute the board’s declaration about the importance of critical thinking found in the introductory section of these standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>45*</td>
<td>36.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>67*</td>
<td>54.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>6.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>5.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18 Bloom’s Taxonomy High School World History Studies

*the verb describe appears at the knowledge and comprehension levels, the verb assess appears at the application and evaluation levels, the verb construct appears at the application and synthesis levels and the verb compare appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.

Aside from the format of 8 strands under which each standard falls, the World History Studies course is set up chronologically much like the courses for United States History. The dates chosen for inclusion are important in this because it may present the personal beliefs of the authors. The World History Studies course is broken into 6 different periods or eras: 8000 BC through 500 BC; 500 BC through 600 AD; 600 through 1450 AD; 1450 through 1750 AD; 1750 through 1914 AD; and 1914 through the present. Looking at these dates reveals that teachers are expected to cover 10,000 years of world history in a single academic year. Shifting attention away from the years that have been included in the course and instead looking at what has been excluded is where the authors’ personal beliefs may arise. The authors have chosen to exclude prehistory in the course. Including only these selected years for the standards fits with the belief held by fundamentalist Christians that the Earth is less than
10,000 years old. Some of the authors of these standards did include individuals from the Christian community as I discussed in chapter 1, and they did influence the direction of these standards; however, I was unable to find any information regarding the historical starting point of the class, so this is conjecture. The reason may also be that there was too much information to include in a single world history course and some information needed to be excluded. If this is true then the state board should have made an adjustment in these standards to include a course in world history at an earlier point in students' schooling.

6.4.1 History Strand

The history strand for the World History Studies course is formatted identically to all the history strands preceding it. The standard begins with the now familiar phrase “The student understands” and is then completed with the concepts meant to be mastered. The objectives also follow the usual pattern of beginning with a verb from Bloom’s taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix) which are meant to support the mastery of the standard. The history strand is the largest of all the strands with a total of 14 standards supported by 59 objectives. This accounts for nearly half of the standards and the objectives included for this course. Since this is a history course though, it is not at all surprising that the history strand is the largest, especially considering that this is the first world history course students take in Texas. Reviewing each of the 59 objectives revealed that 54 actually begin with a verb found in the lower portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) with only 5 found in the upper half. This supports my
hypothesis that the authors expect students to memorize the information included in this strand which does not necessarily mean that students actually understand the material.

Unlike the previous history strands, the World History Studies course is relatively free of author preferences and bias in the information chosen for inclusion. The major issue for the history strand is the exclusion of pre-history from the standards. However, there are some issues that stand out with the included material. For instance, the Enlightenment is rarely mentioned in the world history standards. The first appearance of the Enlightenment comes in standard 1 objective 5 and then returns in standard 9 objective 1. Standard 1 requires that “The student understands traditional historical points of reference in world history.” Objective 5 requires students to “identify major causes and describe the major effects of the following important turning points in world history from 1750 to 1914: the Scientific Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and its impact on the development of modern economic systems, European imperialism, and the Enlightenment’s impact on political revolutions.” The focus of this objective is merely recitation of learned information, and students are not expected to actually study the Enlightenment and the philosophies contained within it. Students need only be able to “identify” the impact that it played in political revolutions which means that it prompted numerous revolutions rather than requiring the students to study the Enlightenment and the beliefs that came forth from it and why it helped to ignite
revolutions. This objective does not lead students to understanding the Enlightenment. The next time the Enlightenment appears comes in the ninth standard. This standard is very similar to the fifth objective in standard 1.

Standard 9 mandates that “The student understands the causes and effects of major political revolutions between 1750 and 1914.” Looking at this standard might lead an individual to believe that this is where students will be expected to gain a deeper understanding of the Enlightenment, but they do not. The first objective includes the Enlightenment as a cause and then no further mention of the Enlightenment appears in the history strand. In fact, there is another issue that arises in this objective and it has to do with the validity of the information. The first objective of standard 9 asks students to “compare the causes, characteristics, and consequences of the American and French revolutions, emphasizing the role of the Enlightenment, the Glorious Revolution, and religion.” Regarding the Enlightenment, teachers are expected to emphasize the role of the Enlightenment, but that does not equate to teaching about the Enlightenment, only that it was important in the American and French revolutions. The second issue here is the inclusion of religion in regards to the revolutions. Neither revolution arose because of religious issues, so the inclusion of religion does not belong here. Had the standard simply been about the Glorious Revolution then the inclusion of religion would have been appropriate, but the objective is clear in that the Glorious Revolution played a role in the American
and French revolutions. It is inaccurate to equate religion’s role in the Glorious Revolution to the American and French revolutions.

Continuing with the theme of religion brings me to the other issue that exists in these standards. For the most part, the authors include as many modern world religions as possible in these standards. However, the information regarding the religions is limited as is much of the historical information included within the history strand. There is, understandably, only so much that can be covered in a single academic year. The issue comes in the final standard, number 14, and its treatment of Islam. The standard is very clear in what must be covered as is the word choice. Standard 14 requires that “The student understands the development of radical Islamic fundamentalism and the subsequent use of terrorism by some of its adherents.” The issue here is not the inclusion of this objective; it is important for students to understand this as it directly affects them in the present. What is at issue is the exclusion of terrorists groups from religious backgrounds that are not Islamic. Throughout the history strand there is no mention of any form of terrorism outside of Islam. The standards make no mention of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) which committed acts of terrorism throughout the 20th century and who many would argue initiated modern terrorism. Students need to understand that terrorists come from more than just Islam. Christian fundamentalism has also provided the world with terrorists and including this in the objectives would not be a slight towards Christians just as it is not a slight to include Islamic fundamentalism. By including
the many forms of terrorism found throughout the world this may better help students understand the current issues the world faces at a global level in terms of terrorism. Unfortunately, as it is currently written, this standard helps to reinforce the belief that Islam is a violent religion and helps to maintain this stereotype which is currently held by many. Had the authors included a comprehensive historical standard about all forms of terrorism found in the world, this issue would not arise, but they chose to focus on Islamic terrorists which reveals a bias towards Islam. The authors do include a requirement that students study the United States response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, but they fail to include any mention of the U.S. invasion of Iraq not long after and how this prompted further growth of terrorist groups in the Middle East. Finally, the standards fail to provide any information regarding the use of the term terrorism and how governments have expanded the use of this term in regards to groups that they may not agree with.

Overall, the history strand for the World History Studies course is an inclusion of names, dates and events that students must memorize in order to demonstrate understanding. There are some issues that do exist within the standards that reveal some preference or bias towards religion in the standards. Attempting to include religion as a role in the American and French revolutions is simply inaccurate, which reveals that the authors either do not know world history very well, or that they are attempting to aggrandize religion in the 2 countries, probably more so for the United States than France, which I will attempt to
illuminate in the United States government course later in this chapter. The other issue that stood out is the final standard that required students to study Islamic terrorism and the exclusion of other terrorism found in the world. By limiting the study of terrorism to Islam, the authors either intentionally or unintentionally reinforce the stereotype that Islam is a violent religion. The greatest problem with these standards is the exclusion of pre-history, especially when keeping in mind that the students have received no other world history studies throughout their schooling.

6.4.2 The Geography Strand

The geography strand for the World History Studies course is the smallest strand for this specific standards document. The strand is made up of only 2 standards which are supported by a total of 5 objectives. Unlike the history strand only one standard begins with the phrase “The student understands.” The other standard begins with the phrase “The student uses.” The inclusion of the phrase “The student uses” demonstrates a standard that is skill based rather information based. At points throughout all of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, the authors have deviated from the use of “The student understands” most notably in the social studies skills strand, but there are instances of this deviation in the geography strand in the previous grades. By using the phrase “The student uses” the authors provide a standard that is much more easily measured than “the student understands” because the teachers are actually able to see the students put the skills contained in the standards to use.
Of the 5 objectives included in this strand 4 begin with verbs found in the upper half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and only 1 is found in the lower half of the taxonomy. However, the one objective that begins with a verb in the lower half requires that students “locate places and regions of historical significance directly related to major eras and turning points in history.” This objective requires that students use a geography skill like map reading. Although, the objective simply demonstrates comprehension, it is an important skill that students need. The remaining objectives require the creation, interpretation and analysis of maps, graphs, charts and models. All of these are important skills for students to improve upon and do require high order thinking on their parts. The standards and objectives demonstrate no bias or preference on the part of the authors.

The only issue that an individual might point to is the lack of information included in the strand as a whole. After all, it is the shortest of all the strands with only 2 standards and 5 objectives. However, Texas students do have the opportunity to enroll in a World Geography Studies course, which can greatly enhance their knowledge of world geography. This must be tempered by the fact that students following the minimum program of study for high school graduation are not required to take this course, so they could graduate from high school with a very limited knowledge of world geography.
6.4.3 The Economics Strand

The economics strand for the World History Studies course is also a short strand. It contains a total of 2 standards supported by 9 objectives. Of the 9 objectives contained in the standards 8 begin with a verb or verbs found in the lower portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and only 1 objective begins with a verb found in the upper portion of the Taxonomy. What this means for students is a return to the accumulation of information with little emphasis placed on the importance of critical thinking. This strand refutes the authors’ statement of the importance of critical thinking in these standards. As is becoming more prevalent throughout the economics strands in these standards documents is the definite preference for capitalism or “free enterprise as the authors have chosen to use, and the information included about other economic systems remains minimal.

The first standard for the economic strand concerns itself with the Neolithic Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and globalization and its impact on human society, it states that “The student understands the impact of the Neolithic and Industrial revolutions and globalization on humanity.” The objectives written in support of this standard all operate within the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix). The first standard and its objectives contain no bias or preference on the part of the authors. Standard 2, however, provides another example of the authors’ preference for capitalism. Standard 2 requires that “The student understands the historical origins of contemporary economic systems and the benefits of free enterprise in world history.”
Besides the obvious preference for “free enterprise” contained within the standard, there is also an absence of in depth study for contemporary economic systems. Students are only required to study the origins of contemporary economic systems and not the systems as a whole. As has become normal in the economic strand, students are only required to study the benefits of “free enterprise” and none of the negatives. As long as these standards continue to reflect only the positives of capitalism, students will never truly understand this economic system completely. The first objective 2 requires students to “identify the historical origins and characteristics of the free enterprise system, including the contributions of Adam Smith, especially the influence of his ideas found in The Wealth of Nations.” Adam Smith was a major contributor to the development of capitalism so it is logical to include him in a study of this economic system. Unfortunately, students are only required to learn his contributions and the characteristics and origins of capitalism and not necessarily all that has occurred because of it. The same issue arises in relation to communism. The second objective of standard 2 expects students to “identify the historical origins and characteristics of communism, including the influences of Karl Marx.” Any understanding of communism begins with Karl Marx, but here again students need only identify its characteristics and origins which does not include the tenants of this system. Students need only recognize the characteristics of both systems, which does not necessarily translate into understanding the systems. Furthermore, the authors failed to include any mention of Marx’s The Communist
Manifesto or Das Kapital. If the standards are going to include the important literary work for capitalism, then it stands to reason that the authors should have included the important literary work for communism. This continues to demonstrate the blatant bias in favor of capitalism in these standards. The other economic systems presented in standard 2 are socialism and fascism, and students are only expected to identify their origins and traits. By only requiring students to identify the origins and characteristics of these economic systems, the authors have created objectives that can easily be assessed through a standardized test. This type of test would require little in fully understanding each system. The final objective for the economics strand standard 2 once again requires that students focus only on the positives of free enterprise with none of the negatives. Objective 6 expects students to “formulate generalizations on how economic freedom improved the human condition, based on students’ prior knowledge of the benefits of free enterprise in Europe’s Commercial Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and 20th century free market economies, compared to communist command communities.” The free market system has provided improved conditions for people, but it has also created negative conditions. By excluding the negatives of capitalism, students will acquire a skewed or unbalanced view of the economic system. The old adage of “those who fail to study history are doomed to repeat it” applies here. How is the next generation of leaders supposed to avoid the errors of the past if they are not required to study them? The answer is that they cannot. Without a balanced study of economic
history for all systems, tomorrow’s leaders are doomed to repeat those mistakes. This second standard in the economics strand clearly demonstrates a lack of balance in these standards, which refutes the school board’s statements that they wanted to bring balance to the standards.

6.4.4 The Government Strand

The government strand for the World History Studies course is another very short strand when we consider that this is part of a world history course. The strand includes 2 standards supported by 6 objectives. Each of the objectives begins with a verb found in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix). This means that the students are not expected to think critically about the various history of world governments, and that the goal of this strand is the further accumulation of information. The established precedent of beginning each standard with the phrase “The student understands” followed by selected concepts continues here. The government strand does present some issues regarding religion that appear in standard 2.

Standard 1 is a simple standard which focuses upon the many types of governments found throughout history around the world. Standard 1 states that, “The student understands the characteristics of major political systems throughout history.” Immediately, we can see that the focus of this standard centers on definition. In other words what attributes do political systems contain? The 2 objectives written in support of this standard are merely lists of political systems. The first objective requires that the students “identify the characteristics
of monarchies and theocracies as forms of governments in early civilizations” and the second objective provides a list of different systems and expects students to “identify the characteristics of the following political systems: theocracy, absolute monarchy, democracy, republic, oligarchy, limited monarchy, and totalitarianism.” These 2 objectives boil down to the simple memorization of definitions for each term. This does not mean that the student understands each system, only that they can differentiate each system by the characteristics of each. This objective is another example of one that can be easily assessed through standardized measures.

Standard 2 is where the religious issues occur, not in the wording of the standard, but in 2 of the objectives which support it. The goal of the second standard in the government strand is that “The student understands how contemporary political systems have developed from earlier systems of government.” This is a valuable standard for students to master when learning about different political systems. The issue appears in the first objective. Objective 1 requires that students “explain the development of democratic-republican government from its beginnings in the Judeo-Christian legal tradition and classical Greece and Rome through the English Civil War and the Enlightenment.” What is at question here is the inclusion of the Judeo-Christian legal tradition. What this appears to be is an attempt by the authors to question the concept of separation of church and state in the United States, which I will analyze in the section for the United States Government class later in this
chapter. Most historians attribute democracy to classic Greece with no reference to any religion as part of its evolution. The second objective also includes a religious reference, in this objective the student must “identify the impact of political and legal ideas contained in the following documents: Hammurabi’s Code, the Jewish Ten Commandments, Justinian’s Code of Laws, Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Declaration of the Rights of man and of the Citizen.” The Ten Commandments represent a Judeo-Christian moral code and not a set of political and legal ideas, although one could argue that these codes did influence to some level various laws found throughout the world. Including the Ten Commandments in the culture or history strand would be appropriate, but it is a little more tricky in the government strand because of the possible religious implications involved as its influence on government is not as prominent as the other presented documents.

6.4.5 The Citizenship Strand

The citizenship strand for the World History Studies course, like many of the strands in this course, is short. This strand is comprised of 2 standards supported by 9 objectives. Each standard follows the same pattern of beginning with “The student understands” which is then followed by the concepts students must learn. Each objective begins with a verb found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix). All of the objectives begin with a verb found in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy. However, there is 1 verb that appears in both halves
of the taxonomy, assess. Assess can be found at the application level and the evaluation level. How the verb is actually used is dependent upon the objective. Even if it is believed that this objective requires students to think critically, the remaining objectives continue to demonstrate that the goal of this strand is the continued accumulation of information instead of critical thought. This is yet another example that refutes the stated importance of critical thinking in the introductory section of these standards.

Standard 1 requires students to learn information regarding the political choices made by individuals throughout history. The first standard states that “The student understands the significance of political choices and decisions made by individuals, groups, and nations throughout history.” The objectives which follow are very broad which would allow teachers to include different historical individuals and groups throughout the world. The lack of specifics in the first 2 objectives is a positive in this case especially when considering the students have not had world history until this point in their schooling. The only issue that arises in this standard appears in objective 3. The third objective requires that students “identify examples of key persons who were successful in shifting political thought, including William Wilberforce.” The issue here is the inclusion of a single individual. According to the introductory section of these standards, any information preceded by the term “including” must be studied in the class. There is nothing wrong with requiring William Wilberforce as part of this specific standard as one of any number of individuals. However, the
authors have singled out Wilberforce and have chosen to exclude any other individuals. Wilberforce was an important individual in English history. He is attributed with playing an important role in the abolition of slavery in England. However, he was also an Evangelical Christian who was noted to be heavily conservative ("William Wilberforce | Christian History," 2008). This could be another attempt to include the authors’ preference towards Christianity in these standards. Had they chosen to require individuals along with Wilberforce from different cultural and religious backgrounds, then there would be no issues with the third objective, but as it stands it is difficult not to question the intent of the authors and this objective.

Standard 2 of the citizenship strand continues with an overview of citizenship in relation to world history, but there does appear to be a focus on the western world rather than including the entire world. Standard 2 requires that "The student understands the historical development of significant legal and political concepts related to the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." There are 2 objectives, the second and sixth, that really target the western world in this standard. Objective 2 returns to including the concept of Judeo-Christian legal traditions in history. Objective 2 requires students to "identify the influence of ideas regarding the right to a ‘trial by jury of your peers’ and the concepts of ‘innocent until proven guilty’ and ‘equality before the law’ that originated from the Judeo-Christian legal tradition and in Greece and Rome." The problem here is not the inclusion of this concept, but that the authors have once
again excluded the role of religion in legal traditions not from the west. By excluding other religions’ influence on citizenship, the authors demonstrate a religious preference here as well as a preference for western studies. In order to achieve balance in these standards, they need to include more than Judeo-Christian legal traditions. The sixth objective supports the idea that the authors have a preference for the western world in these standards. Objective 6 requires students to “assess the degree to which American ideals have advanced human rights and democratic ideas throughout the world.” It is correct that the United States has made an effort to support human rights and democracy throughout the world; however, the objective reads like the United States is the only country concerned with human rights and that its foreign policy has been one of benevolence. The advancement of human rights has been a major concept promoted by the United Nations throughout the world. Therefore, as it stands, this objective fails to include a fuller view of human rights and democracy in the world. A previous objective also provides some support of the authors’ attempt to shine a positive light on the United States by disregarding some of its past atrocities. Objective 4 expects students to “identify examples of genocide, including the Holocaust and genocide in the Balkans, Rwanda, and Darfur.” The inclusion of this objective is important, but why have the authors chosen to exclude the United States? There are historical examples of the United States practicing genocide with Native Americans, and it is an atrocity that should not be forgotten. Genocide has occurred in many nations and in order to stop it
worldwide, students need to know its full history and not just a few select places. The authors have been very selective in what they included in these objectives which reflects a preference to portray the United States positively or the United States’ exceptionalism to use the authors’ choice of language.

Having had no previous coursework in world history, students will come to this class with a very limited knowledge of citizenship throughout world history. The standards in the citizenship strand for the World history course do little to remove this inadequacy. The authors continue to include their religious preferences, specifically Christianity, in these standards by excluding the study of other religions’ influences in the world when appropriate. Furthermore, the authors are clearly attempting to promote American exceptionalism in these standards by only portraying the United States in a positive light by excluding the ugly side of American history. As I stated earlier in this chapter, “those who fail to study history are doomed to repeat it.” Students in Texas schools will receive an incomplete history of the United States and the world with the way these standards and objectives have been written.

6.4.6 The Culture Strand

The culture strand for the World History Studies course is the second longest strand in regards to the number of standards. This strand includes a total of 4 standards which are supported by 11 objectives. The standards follow the format of beginning each standard with the phrase “The student understands” which is then followed by the specific concepts that students must master. The
objectives written in support of each standard also follow the familiar pattern of
beginning with a verb found on Bloom's Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix).
Of the 11 objectives, 10 begin with a verb found in the lower half of Bloom’s
taxonomy and only 1 begins with a verb found in the upper half. This provides
another example that refutes the authors’ declaration of the importance of
including critical thinking in these standards. The apparent goal of this strand is
memorization rather than critical thinking. The world history culture strand is also
similar in its contents to that of the United States history course in that this is
where important historical women can be found. Rather than including women in
the history strand the authors have subjugated the role of women in history to
aspects of human culture.

Standard 1 in the culture strand contains the study of world religions.
Religion is an important part of understanding any culture in the world, and
including this information is important for students. The first standard states “The
student understands the history and relevance of major religious and
philosophical traditions.” The major concern with this standard is that it is only
supported by 2 objectives and these objectives operate in the lower half of
Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix). The first objective is basically a list of modern
world religions. In objective 1, students are expected to “describe the historical
origins, central ideas, and spread of major religious and philosophical traditions,
including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism,
Sikhism, and the development of monotheism.” The goal of this objective is quite
large even if it only expects students to describe the origins and central ideas of each of the religions included here. At best, with the amount of historical information included in these standards, students will receive the basic information for each religion. This hardly translates to understanding the religions as a whole. Furthermore, the authors have chosen to disregard the inclusion of agnosticism and atheism as belief systems that have had an impact on the development of the world. Just looking into our own past, many of the United States’ founding fathers considered themselves agnostics or deists, and it is quite obvious the impact these men had on our country as well as the world. This objective, as it is written, could be easily assessed through standardized measures. By only expecting students to point out the major ideas of each religion and where they originated, the authors have created an objective where student knowledge can be measured. The fact that students are not required to take a full year of world history is also problematic. Depending on how a teacher develops the class, students who opt for a half credit of world history may never even cover the religions portion of the class, and those who choose not to take the class will never receive any information regarding world religions.

In standard 2 the role of women in history is finally brought to the class. The second requires that “The student understands the roles of women, children, and families in different historical cultures.” To begin with, this standard subjugates the role of women and children to that of culture, but the standard has excluded the role of men in culture. Both women and men play an
important part in a society’s culture. By excluding men from this standard the authors place a greater importance on their role in history, and by limiting women in history the authors have diminished women’s importance in world history. The standard contains 2 objectives and the second objective presents the limited role women play in these standards. Objective 2 requires the student to “describe the major influences of women such as Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria, Mother Teresa, Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, and Golda Meir during major eras of world history.” First, the women included in this list are presented as examples only; they are not required to be studied in the class, as denoted by the authors’ use of the phrase “such as.” Secondly, these women provided more to history than influences in regards to culture. Limiting these women to their role in culture undermines the students’ knowledge of world history. Including this objective in the world history standards is important, but the authors’ choice of including this standard in the culture strand rather than the history strand must be questioned and reveals their beliefs about the roles of men and women throughout history.

There is 1 final issue that arises in the culture strand. During the history strand the authors chose to include objectives regarding radical Islam in the final standard. At that point I attempted to point out the danger of only studying Islam in regards to terrorism and that it helped perpetuate the stereotype that it is a violent religion. The culture strand does provide an opportunity for teachers to review Islam, but it is limited because of the necessity to cover numerous religions. In the government strand, the authors chose to include the influence of
Judeo-Christian legal traditions on the development of government in the world. The issue that I discussed at that point was the exclusion of the influence of other world religions on the development of government. In the third standard of the culture strand, objective 4 provides the opportunity for teachers to alleviate these issues. The fourth objective requires students to “explain how Islam influences law and government in the Muslim world.” Unfortunately, this objective operates in the lower portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and does not require students to think critically about this concept. In order for students to successfully understand how Islam actually influences governments in the Muslim world, students will need a greater depth of knowledge to truly understand this. Finally, why was this objective not listed in the government strand as this is the actual focus of the objective or why was the importance of Judeo-Christian traditions emphasized in the government strand? By selectively placing objectives about Islam in the culture strand, the authors may be attempting to present Islam’s role in government as less important than Judaism and Christianity.

The final standard returns to similar concepts found in previous culture strands at all grade levels and it states that “The student understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created.” The students learn about the role of art and culture. No specific world cultures are presented as examples and this allows teachers to decide which cultures to include. The inclusion of world religions in the culture strand is very important, but simply limiting the information about these religions to their origins
and central ideas diminishes their importance. The inclusion of historical women is also very important, but limiting their inclusion to the culture strand diminishes their importance to world history. What appears to have happened in this strand is that it has become a catch-all for information that was not included in the other strands as a way to mollify the public’s perception of these standards. By including this information in the culture strand, the state board can claim that diversity exists in these standards, even if the information does not adequately fit within the strand. Finally, it is important to remember that students following the minimum graduation guidelines are not required to take a world history course. They could essentially skip the course all together. This demonstrates the state boards’ bias towards the importance of world history, even if it is part of the recommended guidelines for graduation. If the course were truly important then a minimum of a year-long course would be mandatory for all students.

6.4.7 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand

The science, technology, and society strand for the World History Studies course is another short strand. This strand is made up of 2 standards supported by a total of 10 objectives. The authors continue the framework of beginning both standards with the phrase “The student understands” which is then followed by the concepts required for mastery. The objectives also follow the framework of beginning with a verb found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix). In this strand, all 10 of the objectives fall in the lower half of the Taxonomy which means that the overall goal for this strand is the memorization of information.
This strand is another example that refutes the authors’ stated belief of the importance of critical thinking in the standards.

Even though the standards and objectives fail to require critical thought from the students, they do include information of a cross curricular nature. Both standards include historical information regarding math and science. Standard 1 states that “The student understands how major scientific and mathematical discoveries and technological innovations affected societies prior to 1750” and the second states “The student understands how major scientific and mathematical discoveries and technological innovations have affected societies from 1750 to the present.” The inclusion of math and science in these standards supports the importance of other classes outside of history and demonstrates the connection academic courses can have with each other. However, there is a negative to these 2 standards. In this strand the authors have chosen to separate the information into 2 times periods. The entire course begins at 8,000 BCE and continues until the present. Therefore, this means that students will have 1 very large time period to study, 8,000 BCE through 1750 CE, and then a much smaller time period 150 CE through the present. It is also interesting to note that the 10 objectives are split evenly between the 2 time periods at a 5 apiece. What this translates to in the objectives is a listing of historical individuals and events that students must memorize. For example, in standard 1 objective 2, the students must “identify the major ideas in astronomy, mathematics, and architectural engineering that developed in the Maya, Inca,
and Aztec civilizations." The authors have included 3 major civilizations here along with 3 different fields of study. It is certainly important to include these 3 civilizations in the world history course as well as the fields of study, but a single objective is not enough appropriate here. Simply identifying the major ideas does little to promote understanding of their influence on science, technology and society. The remaining objectives are similar because they include lists of individuals, societies and events where students need to identify, explain, describe or summarize. These are hardly objectives to promote student understanding.

The science, technology, and society strand is a compilation of lists of people, events and societies that have had a major influence on math, science and technology. This strand provides another example of one that can be easily assessed through standardized measures. Unlike the other strands, though, there is no evidence of author bias or preference in these 2 standards and their 10 objectives. The strength of this strand is its connection to courses outside of a social studies course promoting cross curricular studies, but its major weakness is that it presents no opportunity for students to apply their critical thinking skills.

6.4.8 The Social Studies Skills Strand

The social studies skills strand for the World History Studies course follows the same format of all of the social studies skills strands from kindergarten through high school. Instead of beginning each standard with the phrase “The student understands” the authors have opted to use the phrases,
“The student applies,” “The student communicates,” and “The student uses.”

What this means is that these standards are skills based rather than information based. This strand is made up of 3 standards supported by 14 objectives. Of the 14 objectives used, 10 begin with a verb found in the lower portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) while 4 begin with a verb found in the upper portion of the Taxonomy. For this course, the 3 standards selected for inclusion are identical to standards 1, 2 and 4 of the United States History Since 1877 course. The only standard that is not repeated in the World History Studies course is standard 3 which required that “The student uses geographic tools to collect, analyze, and interpret data.” The objectives for standards 1 and 2 include differences between the 2 courses and the objectives for the final standard are completely identical which can be traced all the way back to kindergarten. This standard reflects the importance of individual and collaborative work, so it is not surprising to see it return at each grade level.

The social studies skills strand continues to be a strength in these standards because of its goal of improving student skills while including cross curricular tasks. As in the previous standards, this strand includes skills and concepts learned in English and mathematics courses. For instance, in standard 1 of the strand the seventh objective requires students to “construct a thesis on a social studies issue or event supported by evidence.” Students learn to create thesis statements in their English and language arts classes. By including this in the social studies standards demonstrates the importance of the skill
through multiple classes. The second standard continues to iterate the importance of writing in objective 2 where students are required to “use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.” These are all skills that are traditionally taught in English and language arts classrooms, but by including them here, both teachers and students are held accountable for these skills more than just the traditional English or language arts class. Students are expected to use their math skills in the eighth objective of standard 1. In this objective the students are expected to “use appropriate reading and mathematical skills to interpret social studies information such as maps and graphs.” While the math skills may not be as specific as the English skills, it is still a plus that the authors and the board have recognized the importance of math skills in a social studies class, and that cross curricular instruction helps to reinforce the development of these skills.

6.4.9 Concluding Thoughts for World History Studies

By analyzing the authors’ choice of words to begin each objective, it is apparent that the major focus of this course is for students to accumulate more information for the act of memorization rather than understanding. By requiring the memorization of facts, the state board of Texas can more easily evaluate if teachers are following the standards through the use of standardized assessments. Students either know the facts or they do not and this information can be used to evaluate social studies teachers, especially with the movement
towards the inclusion of test data in teacher evaluations. Unfortunately, this is not the only issue that is found within these standards.

The authors continue to demonstrate their preference for capitalism as an economic system while disregarding any of the negatives that can be found in a free market system. Further complicating these standards is the unbalanced view of the role of Christianity in the objectives. It is completely appropriate to include a study of Christianity in a world history course, but what makes it unbalanced is the amount of time spent on it when compared to other world religions. If there is truly to be balance in these standards then the role of other religions in world history must be given more attention.

Finally, the most disturbing issue about the World History Studies course is that it is not required for graduation. Students received very little information regarding world history in their previous social studies courses from kindergarten through high school. If students are to leave school with a complete education then they need to cover world history. One school year is not enough to cover the history of the world which has led to the exclusion of many aspects of world history in these standards.

### 6.5 World Geography Studies

The World Geography Studies course is the third course presented in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, High School standards document. Like the World History Studies course, this course is not necessarily required for graduation. Students following the state board’s minimum graduation
requirements can choose between the world geography course and the world history course. However, students following the recommended or advanced requirements for graduation must complete this course. ("19 TAC Chapter 74, Subchapter F," 2010) The World Geography Studies course follows the same pattern of all other social studies courses from kindergarten through high school. The course is broken into 8 separate strands which are each divided in standards that are supported by objectives. The world geography course is made up of a total of 23 standards that are supported by 67 objectives. This is actually the smallest course in terms of number of standards and objectives. When compared to the 2 preceding high school social studies courses, this course is far less information based. This course should be much easier for teachers to cover all of the standards and objectives within a 1 year time frame.

Besides being the shortest in regards to standards and objectives, it is also the only social studies course where more than 50% of the objectives operate in the upper half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix). This means that the students are expected to use their higher order thinking skills more often than in any of the other courses. As with the previous courses, the standards in the first 7 strands begins with the phrase “The student understands” which is then followed by the concepts the students are expected to master. The authors also continue to use a verb or verbs found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix). In the previous high school courses, there are a number of objectives that include the use of two action verbs. In the World Geography Studies course
many of the objectives include multiple action verbs to begin the objectives. Of the 67 objectives included in these standards a total of 58.2% include a verb or verbs found in the upper half of Bloom's Taxonomy and 56.71% include a verb or verbs found in the lower half of the Taxonomy. Three verbs, assess, construct and classify, are found in both halves of the taxonomy (appendix) and one verb, complete, does not appear on the list. Breaking this down even further, 25.37% of the verbs included in the objectives can be found in the lowest level of Bloom’s Taxonomy, knowledge, and 14.92% of the verbs used in the objectives can be found at Bloom’s highest level, evaluation. Unlike previous courses, this course supports the authors’ statement of the importance of critical thinking in these standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>25.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>26*</td>
<td>38.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>11.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>22*</td>
<td>32.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>15*</td>
<td>22.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>14.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>56.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>56.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19 Bloom’s Taxonomy High School World Geography Studies
*the verb describe appears at the knowledge and comprehension levels, the verb draw appears at the knowledge and application levels, the verb classify appears at the comprehension and analysis levels, the verb assess appears at the application and evaluation levels, the verb construct appears at the application and synthesis levels and the verb compare appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.

The contents of each strand in the world geography course are perhaps the cleanest in terms of the authors’ bias or preference for certain beliefs or concepts. The majority of the information focuses on world geography and requires students to improve upon their geography skills as well as their
knowledge of geography. However, these standards are not completely free of bias and there are some issues about some of the information included in the strands as to whether it applies to a world geography course or not.

6.5.1 The History Strand

The history strand for the World Geography Studies course is made up of 2 standards supported by a total of 4 objectives. In terms of critical thinking in the course, the history strand is by far one of the weakest. Of the 4 objectives, only one operates at the level of critical thinking while the remainder all focus on the memorization of information. The 2 standards for this strand are generally focused on historical geographic patterns in the world. However, it should be noted that an issue that arose in previous classes, the preference for American exceptionalism, has returned here and does not really fit with the standard.

The purpose of standard 1 is for students to study the concept of “diffusion” in world geography. Specifically, standard 1 requires that “the student understands how geography and processes of spatial exchange (diffusion) influenced events in the past and helped to shape the present.” The issue of American exceptionalism appears in the second objective. Objective 2 requires the student to “trace the spatial diffusion of phenomena such as the Columbian Exchange or the diffusion of American popular culture and describe the effects on regions of contact.” First, the 2 examples provided in this objective are not required for study as noted by the authors’ use of the phrase “such as.” Second, the Columbian Exchange is noted as an important influence on geographic
regions and cultures in world history ("Explorations: Columbus & the Columbian Exchange," n.d.). American popular culture has spread throughout the world, but why did the authors find it necessary to include popular culture as an example? It appears that the authors are attempting to demonstrate the influence that the United States has throughout the world, but that is not needed in a world geography course. The other issue that arises with this objective is that there is a possibility that students will have not taken the world history class, and will not have sufficient background knowledge to support the mastery of this task. Fortunately, because of the smaller number of standards and objectives required in this course, the teacher may be able to overcome this deficiency if necessary. If the students were guaranteed to receive a proper background in world history then this issue would never even appear.

Besides the issue of attempting to include American exceptionalism in the objectives, the objectives written in support of the standards help to achieve the goals of the strand. No other example of the authors' bias or preferences appears in the history strand.

6.5.2 The Geography Strand

The geography strand of the World Geography Studies course is the largest of all the strands, which is quite logical considering that this is a course in geography. This strand is made up of a total of 7 standards supported by 19 objectives. Of the 19 objectives included in this strand, 13 include a verb or verbs found in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy and 7 of the objectives include a
verb or verbs found in the upper half of the taxonomy (appendix). Although there is an emphasis on memorization in this strand, there are also solid expectations of improving students’ geography skills.

A close analysis of the 7 standards in the geography strand reveals no author bias or preferences. In fact many of the objectives for the standards demonstrate balance in this strand. For example, in the fifth standard for the geography strand it requires that “The student understands the growth, distribution, movement, and characteristics of world population.” The objectives which support this help lead to a holistic understanding of the standard. Students are required to create and use population charts to “predict future population trends” in the first objective and the fourth objective requires students to “examine the benefits and challenges of globalization, including connectivity, standard of living, pandemics, and loss of local culture.” Too often in the standards, the authors have taken the approach of requiring students to examine one side of a concept, but here we can see that the desire is for students to gain a broader picture of globalization. The authors go so far as including the concept of humans affecting the environment. In the sixth standard, students study “how people, places, and environments are connected and interdependent.” This standard is supported by the second objective where the students must “describe the interaction between humans and the physical environment and analyze the consequences of extreme weather and other natural disasters such as El Nino, floods, tsunamis, and volcanoes.” This
objective actually provides a cross curricular opportunity for students with a science course. Although this objective does not include the causes for extreme weather, the opportunity to for teachers to include this is available. Keeping this in mind, it would have been quite appropriate to include an objective about climate change and how it is viewed in the world. The authors would simply need to include wording that required students to analyze the arguments for and against climate change. This would include both sides of the aisle and demonstrate their desire for balance within the standards. This standard and objective demonstrates that there is a connection between humans and the environment and although it does not outright state that human action can affect the environment, it also does not state the opposite. By refraining from including a specific direction in terms of this concept, the authors have allowed for teachers to take an objective approach to teaching this concept in the classroom.

As far as the geography strand is concerned, the authors have created a balanced set of standards and objectives in this strand. Teachers have the opportunity to include multiple ideas on the issues presented in this strand and need not worry about being required to teach information that includes any bias or personal preferences that have made their way into other standards and classes.

6.5.3 The Economics Strand

The economics strand for the World Geography Studies course falls around the middle in terms of size. The strand is made up of 3 standards which
are supported by 9 objectives. As far as standards are concerned this strand ties as second largest, but it contains fewer objectives than the other 2 strands that include 3 standards. Of the 9 objectives included in this strand, only 3 begin with verbs found in lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and 6 begin with a verb found in the upper half of the Taxonomy. This means that students are expected to use their critical thinking skills more often than memorization. This is a change from previous economics strands found in these standards from kindergarten through high school. This strand supports the authors’ statement in the introduction of the importance of critical thinking in these standards.

As in all of the economics strands in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, the authors have refrained from using the term capitalism and instead continue to rely upon the phrase “free enterprise” in the World Geography Studies course. As I have stated in previous course standards, this demonstrates the authors’ desire to portray capitalism in a more positive light. While use of the term is technically correct, the choice to exclude the term capitalism does demonstrate the authors’ preference for this economic system. Besides the authors’ preferred choice of economic terminology in the economics strand, the only other issue that arises in these standards comes in the first standard. The first standard requires that “The student understands the distribution, characteristics, and interactions of the economic systems in the world.” The issue that appears can be found in the first objective for this standard, where it requires students to “describe the forces that determine the
distribution of goods and services in free enterprise, socialist, and communist systems." The problem is with the choice of words for the objective because they lack clarity. What forces are the authors referring to in this objective? Depending on the type of forces referenced in this standard affects the placement and even the inclusion of this objective in these specific standards. Do the authors mean geographic forces, such as climate? If they do, what does this have to do with the distribution of goods in any of the aforementioned economic systems? In order for this objective to contain meaning, the authors need to include the specific forces which they mean. The lack of clarity causes confusion and creates questions as to its relevance in these standards.

Outside of the first objective of standard 1 in the economics strand, the remaining objectives clearly reflect the goals and tasks of the strand in regards to a world geography course. Furthermore, the majority of these objectives require students to think critically about geography and economics which makes this strand a strength of the World Geography Studies course. Outside of the continued substitution of free enterprise for capitalism, this strand contains no further evidence of author preference or bias.

6.5.4 The Government Strand

The government strand of the World Geography Studies course is one of the smaller strands found in this course. The strand is made up of 2 standards which are supported by 5 objectives. Although the strand may be small, there is a complete emphasis upon the importance of critical thinking. Of the 5 objectives
written to support the 2 standards, each of them begins with a verb found in the upper portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix). This strand supports the authors’ statement in the introduction of the importance of critical thinking in the social studies standards.

Upon reviewing the government strand, there is no evidence of author preference or bias. Of the 2 standards included in the strand, the second standard does not necessarily fit with government in relation to world geography. The second standard requires that “The student understands the processes that influence political divisions, relationships, and policies.” As with the second objective of standard in the economics strand there exists an issue in word choice. The authors chose to use the term “processes” in the standard, but what processes are they referring to here? This issue clouds the clarity of the authors’ intent and also brings into question the placement of this standard. As the standard is written, it is more relevant to a class on government rather than world geography. The first objective provides some idea of the authors’ meaning, but it fails to provide clarity on the meaning of “processes.” Objective 1 expects students to “analyze current events to infer the physical and human processes that lead to the formation of boundaries and other political divisions.” This standard provides a firmer explanation of the types of “processes” the authors meant by attaching human to the word. While we now know that the authors want to include “human processes” in this standard, the question means as to which “human processes.” The selected word choice remains too vague to gain a solid
understanding of the purpose of this standard. Unfortunately, the second objective adds nothing to the authors meaning and its placement in the world geography course is also questionable. In the second objective, the students must “compare how democracy, dictatorship, monarchy, republic, theocracy, and totalitarian systems operate in specific countries.” Simply adding the phrase “in specific countries” does not immediately make this objective relevant to a world geography class. The operation of different political systems belongs in the government class, and not a geography class. Finally, this objective does nothing in clarifying the meaning of the second standard in the government strand.

Even though the objectives of the government strand require students to use their critical thinking skills, the standard is poorly written and lacks clarity. It is even questionable as to whether the second standard is appropriately placed in the World Geography Studies course. Moving beyond the inclusion of standard 2 in the class, the remaining objectives and standards work well within the context of the course. Lastly, there is no evidence of author bias or preference in the government strand.

6.5.5 The Citizenship Strand

The citizenship strand for the World Geographies Studies course is the smallest and shortest of the 8 strands. The strand is made up of a single standard supported by 2 objectives. Unlike the previous 2 strands which emphasized critical thinking in the objectives, this strand emphasizes memorization. Both objectives begin with a verb found in the lower half of
Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix). This strand refutes the authors’ statement in the introductory section of these standards about the importance of critical thinking. More importantly though, the standard and its objectives do not reflect geography material for a geography course.

For the citizenship strand, the standard that the authors wrote fails to reflect information regarding citizenship. The standard mandates that “The student understands how different points of view influence the development of public policies and decision-making processes on local, state, national, and international levels.” Simply including regions such as “local, state, national, and international” does not mean that this standard has anything to do with geography. Again, what we see here is a misplacement of the standard. The goal of this standard is far more appropriate for a government class than a geography class. The 2 objectives included with the standard also reflect the misplacement of the standard. The first objective is actually an iteration of the standard only with a specific task. Objective 1 requires that the student “identify and give examples of different points of view that influence the development of public policies and decision-making processes on local, state, national, and international levels.” Here the authors have simply removed the phrase “The student understands” and have replaced it with the tasks of “identify and give examples.” Although the task would be appropriate in a government class, it does nothing to improve student understanding in terms citizenship in a world geography course. The second objective is another example of misplaced
guidelines. Objective 2 requires that the students “explain how citizenship practices, public policies, and decision making may be influenced by cultural beliefs, including nationalism and patriotism.” There is nothing included in this objective that supports the understanding of geography. The objective is not bad, but it would be more appropriate to include this in a government class than a world geography class.

The citizenship strand appears to have been problematic for the authors. The standard and objectives are clear in their purpose, but the purpose is more geared towards understanding government than geography. The single standard states “The student understands how different points of view influence the development of public policies and decision-making processes on local, state, national, and international levels.” This problem could have been avoided if the authors had decided that the use of 8 strands in every course may have been unnecessary. The use of 8 strands at the elementary school level was logical because of how the social studies standards were designed for those classes, and the same is true of the middle school classes. However, the specificity of the course material for some of the high school classes does not lend itself to fitting the parameters of the 8 strands. Allowing for these differences in the standards could have provided the authors to create standards that were more relevant to the curriculum of a course rather than restricting them to a problematic outline. While this is a major problem for the course standards, there is no evidence of author bias or preference in the citizenship strand.
6.5.6 The Culture Strand

The culture strand of the World Geography Studies course is the second largest strand next to the geography strand. This strand is made up of a total of 3 standards supported by 12 objectives. Of the 12 objectives included in this strand 6 begin with a verb or verbs found in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and 7 include a verb or verbs found in the upper half of the taxonomy. There is a slightly stronger emphasis upon critical thinking versus memorization in this strand which supports the authors’ desire to include critical thinking in these standards. As in the citizenship strand, some of the information included for student mastery has been misplaced and does not reflect the content of a world geography course.

There are a number of examples which reflect the misplacement of information within the objectives of the 3 standards for the culture strand. The first example appears in standard 1 in which “The student understands how the components of culture affect the way people live and shape the characteristics of regions.” In this standard there is an attempt to help students understand that culture can affect a region, but the second objective does not fit with the standard. Objective 2 requires that the students “describe elements of culture, including language, religion, beliefs and customs, institutions and technologies.” This objective provides what has been missing in many of the culture strands throughout all of the classes, and that is a delineation of what make a culture; unfortunately, this has little to do with world geography or
standard 1. These are all important aspects of different cultures, but the objective is not written in a way that ties it to geography. In its current form, this objective would be an excellent addition to the culture strand in the World History Studies course, but it does little to inform students about world geography. The first standard contains 1 more objective that really does not fit with the standard. Objective 3 expects students to “explain ways various groups of people perceive the characteristics of their own and other cultures, places, and regions differently.” The outcome of this particular objective seems to include the concept of ethnocentricity, an important concept that students should learn. Simply including the terms places and regions in the objective does not make it suitable for a world geography course. This objective would work well in the world history course and many of the previous courses; however, this objective does not promote student mastery of world geography. The intention to include these objectives in the standards was a good one, as these are important for students to learn, but the placement of these objectives in the world geography course was inappropriate.

Like standard 1, standard 2 includes objectives that fail to reflect geographical information in accordance to culture. The second standard expects that “The student understands the distribution, patterns, and characteristics of different cultures.” This standard is written well in that it requires students to multiple geography skills such as map reading and distribution statistics. The authors start out strong with the first 2 objectives which require students to study
geographic distributions of world religions and cultures throughout the world. However, the final 2 objectives fall short in supporting this standard. Objective 3 expects students to “compare economic, political, or social opportunities in different cultures for women, ethnic and religious minorities, and other underrepresented populations.” This is another example of an objective with good intentions, but the authors have misplaced it. As it is written, this would be another excellent addition to the culture strand in the World History Studies course, but it does little to help students master geography concepts. The fourth objective is another example of misplacement, in this objective the authors require the students to “evaluate the experiences and contributions of diverse groups to multicultural societies.” In terms of critical thinking and purpose, the objective is written well, but it does not reflect world geography. This objective clearly belongs in the World History Studies course. The objectives included in standard 2 all promote important ideas and concepts, but not all of the concepts fit within the parameters of a world geography course.

Finally, standard 3 includes similar issues regarding its objectives as in the first 2 standards of the culture strand. The third standard requires that “The student understands the ways in which cultures change and maintain continuity.” The first issue with this standard is not in its objectives, but the standard itself. The standard demonstrates no connection to a course in world geography. This standard, as it is written, would fit in many of the history courses preceding this course, but not geography. While the standard may not reflect
geography, the authors did include objectives that reflect culture in geography, so by rewriting the standard to reflect geography and culture the first issue could be resolved. As far as the objectives are concerned, 2 out of the 4 have been misplaced. Objective 2 requires students to “assess the causes, effects, and perceptions of conflicts between groups of people, including modern genocides and terrorism.” This is another instance of a good objective placed in the wrong course. An objective like this would be quite suitable in a course about world history, but it has nothing to do with world geography. The third objective is the final example of a misplaced objective. In objective 3, the authors require that the students “identify examples of cultures that maintain traditional ways, including traditional economies.” This is one of the objectives that require little in terms of students thinking critically. It also lacks a connection to world geography. This objective is much better suited for a world history course and the inclusion of economics is questionable as well. The authors include the phrase “traditional economies” here, but they have not provided a definition for “traditional economies.” The only economies in the standards from kindergarten through high school have been capitalism (free enterprise), communism, socialism and fascism. Economics have played an important role in cultures throughout the world, but what does this have to do with world geography? The concepts included in standard 3 do not all fit within the parameters of a world geography course, but are better suited in other classes.
The culture strand for the World Geography Studies course appears to also have been problematic for the authors. Many of the concepts and information chosen for inclusion in the standards and objectives do not belong in a course devoted to the study of geography. This is not to state that the information contained in these objectives does not belong in any of the standards; many of them are much better suited for a course in world history. The authors’ commitment to including the same 8 strands in each of the social studies courses may have caused these issues to arise as it did in the citizenship strand. In order for the standards to be effective, they need to make sense in regard to the curriculum they have been written for. Forcing information and concepts into inappropriate places can only lead to confusion and frustration on the parts of teachers and students. Looking beyond the issues of misplacement, the remaining objectives included no evidence of author bias or preference.

6.5.7 The Science, Technology, and Society Strand

The science, technology, and society strand is another of the small strands for the World geography Studies course. This strand includes 2 standards supported by a total of 5 objectives. In terms of critical thinking skills, this strand is another example of a strength for this in these standards. Of the 5 objectives, 4 begin with a verb found in the upper portion of Bloom's Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix) with only 1 falling in the lower portion. This strand supports the authors’ stated intentions of including critical thinking in these standards.
Unlike the citizenship strand and the culture strand, the information and concepts included in the science, technology, and society strand have been appropriately placed and there are no issues about their connection to world geography. The standards reflect how science and technology have played and continue to play an important role in the world’s geography. For example, in standard 1 the authors expect that “The student understands the impact of technology and human modifications on the physical environment.” The objectives supporting the standard reflect how humans have used technology to modify our environment to enable habitability through examples such as transportation, air conditioning and desalinization. These technologies have affected world geography by allowing human to settle in areas of the world that were once deemed uninhabitable or harsh. This changes population demographics which is a part of world geography. The second standard follows the same pattern as the first, but this standard requires a study of changes in communication technology. Standard 2 requires that “The student understands how current technology affects human interaction.” This standard requires students to study contemporary geographic information and the included objectives reflect this task.

The strength of the science, technology and society strand rests not only in the emphasis placed upon critical thinking in the objectives, but the authors’ willingness to limit the size of this strand. The previous 2 strands included information that did not fit within a world geography course, but because of their
insistence to follow the framework of 8 strands for each social studies course, they created an issue where they forced themselves to include concepts and information in inappropriate places just to make sure they covered each strand. Although this strand is relatively short, the information and concepts help students achieve mastery in the World Geography Studies course. Finally, the information selected for inclusion demonstrates no evidence of author bias or preference.

6.5.8 The Social Studies Skills Strand

The social studies skills strand for the World geography Studies course is one of the larger strands in these standards. The strand includes a total of 3 standards supported by 11 objectives. As I noted in my introduction to this course, the authors shift away from beginning each standard with the common phrase “The student understands” and instead begin each standard with more concrete statements. The 3 standards each begin with a specific task: “The student applies”, “The student communicates” and “The student uses.” These are then followed by the specific skills that the student is expected to use. Of the 11 objectives included in the 3 standards, 9 begin with a verb or verbs found in the upper half of Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix) and 7 begin with a verb or verbs found in the lower half of the taxonomy. In this strand, 4 of the objectives begin with upwards of 3 verbs which explains why 9 have verbs in the upper realm of Bloom’s Taxonomy and 7 have verbs in the lower realm. As with the previous social studies skills strands from kindergarten through high school,
this strand focuses on student skills rather than the accumulation of information. Because of this, the strand remains a strength in these standards. This strand further supports the authors’ statement in the introduction of the importance of including critical thinking in these standards.

In this strand, the 3 standards are exactly the same as the social studies skills strand for World History Studies and 3 of the standards of the United States History Since 1877 course. Although the standards are identical, there are changes in the objectives selected for inclusion. The first standard requires that “The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology.” The objectives which follow completely enforce the importance of this skill and support its goals. For example, the third objective requires students to “create and interpret different types of maps to answer geographic questions, infer relationships, and analyze change.” This objective requires students to use their critical-thinking skills in multiple ways. Instead of just reading a map and finding the information, students are also expected to create their own maps while using the information on the maps to analyze geographic information. Students who can create correct maps will demonstrate their ability to use maps which reinforces the skill of map reading.

One of the major strengths in the Texas essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies is the requirement by the authors for students to skills learned in other classes, like mathematics and English. Standard 2 of the social studies
skills strand continues this inclusion of cross curricular skills. Standard 2 mandates that “The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.” The emphasis of the objectives for standard 2 is more focused on English skills instead of mathematics skills in this class. For instance, the fourth objective expects the students to “use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation” and the fifth objective requires students to “create original work using proper citations and understanding and avoiding plagiarism.” These two objectives include a set of skills that English teachers work on developing and improving throughout high school. By including them in the world geography class, the authors emphasize the importance of these skills in all classes and not just the English class. Students are held accountable for mastering these skills throughout the high school curriculum.

The third standard in the social studies skills strand has remained nearly identical through all of the course standards from kindergarten through high school. However, there is a noticeable change for the World Geography Studies course. The standard remains the same, where “The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings.” The change appears in the objectives. Prior to this class the standard was supported by 2 objectives, but in this class there are 3. The first objective has been changed and a new objective has been included. The final objective remains unchanged for the standard. The first objective now requires that students “plan, organize, and complete a research project that
involves asking geographic questions; acquiring, organizing, and analyzing information; answer questions; and communicating results.” For this objective the authors have provided a far more task specific objective than in its previous form. By requiring a research project, students will have to use all of the skills they have acquired in the social studies skills strand and this goes beyond simply demonstrating the memorization of information. The second objective is the addition to this standard and it requires students to “use case studies and GIS [Geographic Information Systems] to identify contemporary challenges and to answer real-world questions.” Although this objective does not require students to apply their critical-thinking skills, it does support the mastery of the first objective and provides students with possible topics for research as does the third objective.

The standards and objectives for the social studies skills strand in the World geography studies course remains to be one of the strongest strands in any of the social studies courses. The emphasis on skills rather than the accumulation of information requires students to improve their critical thinking skills, especially with the addition of a research project, a skill that will serve them well beyond the classroom. As with the previous iterations of this strand, there is no evidence of author preference or bias in the standards and objectives.

6.5.9 Concluding Thoughts for the World Geography Studies Course

In comparison to the previous high school courses covered in this analysis, the World Geography Studies course includes the fewest number of
examples of author bias or preference in the standards. There is the continued substitution of free enterprise for the term capitalism because of the negative connotation currently ascribed to capitalism, which demonstrates the authors attempt to portray the economic system in as positive a light as possible. However, the only major issue in these standards is not bias or preference, but the misplacement of information and concepts in the course standards. By restricting themselves to following the same 8 strands for each social studies course, they created a problem because not all courses lend themselves well to each strand. The citizenship strand proved to be the most problematic in this course and did little to support the learning of geography. This issue also appeared in the culture strand, unlike the citizenship strand, the authors included relevant information that supports the learning of culture in regards to geography, but they also included information that simply did not fit, and should have been placed in the world history course. The objectives were solidly written and the intentions were laudable, but they were sorely misplaced. Aside from these issues, the World Geography Studies standards were relevant and emphasized critical thinking more so than any of the previous courses.

Unfortunately, there remains one last negative about this course, and it is not about the content of the standards. It is unfortunate that students are not required to take this course if they are following Texas’ minimum graduation requirements. The study of world geography should be required and not provided
as a choice between this and world history. If students are to leave school with a complete education, then world geography should be a part of that education.

6.6 United States Government

The United States Government course is the fourth course presented in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, High school standards document. Unlike world history and world geography, students do not have a choice as to whether or not to take a different course; the United States Government class is mandatory for all students following the Texas’ minimum graduation requirements as well as the recommended and advanced graduation requirements ("19 TAC Chapter 74, Subchapter F," 2010). This class is not nearly as long as the world history and United States history courses when comparing standards. This course includes a total of 22 standards which are supported by a total of 80 objectives. However, this must be tempered by the fact that the class is worth only half a credit, which means students only spend a single semester in this course. Because the class is only a semester long, this actually makes the United States Government course one of the most intensive in terms of concepts and information.

The United States Government course follows the pattern of 8 strands with specific standards geared towards each strand which are then supported by objectives designed to help student mastery of each standard. As with the previous courses, the standards of the first 7 strands begin the phrase “The student understands” followed by the concepts that students must master. Also
identical to the previous courses the standards for strand 8, social studies skills, break from the pattern of “The student understands” and instead begin with 3 specific skills: “The student applies,” “The student communicates,” and “The student uses.” These skills are then followed by specific tasks and concepts for each skill. The authors have also continued to begin each objective with an action verb that can be found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix). Of the 80 objectives chosen for inclusion in the United States Government course, 53.75% begin with a verb found in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and 46.25% begin with verbs in the upper half of the taxonomy. Looking at this more closely reveals that 17.50% of the verbs fall at the lowest level of Bloom’s taxonomy, knowledge, and 7.50% fall at the highest level of the taxonomy, evaluation. This means that there is a slightly greater emphasis placed on the memorization of information versus critical thinking, but not as overwhelming as in United States History Since 1877 and World History Studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Taxonomy</th>
<th># of times verbs used in category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>14*</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>24*</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20 Bloom's Taxonomy High School United States Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>28*</th>
<th>35.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>53.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Level of Taxonomy</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*the verb describe appears at the knowledge and application levels and the verb compare appears at the analysis and synthesis levels.

The United States Government course contains a great deal of information for students to learn in the course of a single academic semester. However, because the students have had information regarding the United States government through the inclusion of the government strand in all of their social studies courses, especially the U.S. history course, the students should have the appropriate background knowledge to achieve mastery of the standards in this course. One of the issues with the students' background knowledge in terms of government is the inclusion of author bias and preference found in many of the preceding classes. This class includes examples of author preferences regarding the U.S. economic system as well as religion and political preference. As before, the preferences or biases appear to be subtle, and often times they appear because of the exclusion of information as well as in the accumulated emphasis of other information.

6.6.1 The History Strand

The history strand for the United States Government strand is not especially lengthy when compared to the other strands, nor is it the shortest of the strands. This strand is made up of a total of 2 standards supported by 8 objectives. Of the 8 objectives selected for inclusion, 6 begin with a verb found in
the lower portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and only 2 can be found in the upper portion of the taxonomy. This means that the authors’ apparent goal for this strand is the memorization of information rather than critical thinking. This refutes the authors’ claim of the importance of including critical thinking in these standards. Furthermore, the authors place an emphasis on religion in this strand as well as their own political preferences while excluding important historical information regarding the roots of the U.S. government in the first standard.

The purpose of standard 1 is to provide students with a historical background on the creation of the United States government as well as information regarding its continued development. In standard 1, the authors require that “The student understands how constitutional government, as developed in America and expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the U.S. Constitution, has been influenced by ideas, people, and historical documents.” Students who attend school in Texas from kindergarten through high school will have covered all of these documents a great deal and should have a good understanding of their importance, so background information poses no problems in this standard. The first 2 issue that appear in this standard have to do with religion, specifically Judeo-Christian beliefs, and the exclusion of important historical information. In the second objective students are expected to “identify major intellectual, philosophical, and religious traditions that informed the American founding,
including Judeo-Christian (especially biblical law), English common law and constitutionalism, Enlightenment, and republicanism, as they address issues of liberty, rights, and responsibilities of individuals.” Immediately there is an emphasis placed on Judeo-Christian biblical law by the authors’ inclusion of the parenthetical statement “especially biblical law.” This support for Judeo-Christian influences appears in the third objective as well, where the authors include Moses as an individual “whose principles of laws and government institutions informed the American founding documents.” While there are Judeo-Christian influences in the U.S. government, the authors have gone out of their way to focus on these influences while disregarding other important ones. This brings up the second issue in this standard and that is the exclusion of the Iroquois Confederation’s influence of the U.S. government. The Iroquois Confederation had a profound influence on the U.S. government because of its principals of democracy and provided the founding fathers with a “blueprint” for the government (Lienhard, n.d.). Throughout these standards dealing with U.S. government, there is no reference to this important fact, but there are a number of references to Judeo-Christian beliefs and individuals. By selectively excluding historical facts while including other smaller influences on the formation of the United States government, the authors are demonstrating their own personal beliefs.

The third issue that appears in the government strand has to do with political preference. Through most of the standards there has been an
overwhelming list of individuals that students must be able to identify. For the most part, the lists include individuals of all political persuasions. However, there does appear to be this subtle push of studying individuals with a more conservative bend than liberal. This often appears in the form of exclusion. Objective 6 of the first standard provides such an example. In the sixth objective the students are expected to “identify significant individuals in the field of government and politics, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Ronald Reagan.” Obviously a list like this could include a great many individuals, so there is going to be exclusion of some kind. However, the only modern or contemporary individual included here is President Reagan and no other contemporary president or individual has been included. Other notable contemporary presidents could have included President Truman, who ordered the dropping of the first atomic bombs on Japan or Presidents Kennedy and Johnson who passed the Civil Rights legislation. What these men are connected to in United States and world history is very important and studying them would provide students with a more complete understanding of what happens in the field of government and politics. The U.S. history course for the high school standards also included a study of President Reagan as a significant individual while excluding other modern presidents. In both instances, the standards require a study of his contributions, but there is never any reference to evaluating him as a president, only identifying his contributions. This is basically requiring
students to look at him from one side only rather than creating a full picture, and it also ignores the contributions of other modern presidents and individuals.

The remaining objectives provide no further evidence of bias or preference by the authors in the history strand. The majority of the objectives simply focus on memorization rather than thinking critically about the information chosen for inclusion. By excluding important information about the founding of the United States the authors demonstrate their own bias and personal beliefs, which have no place in an education standards document. The Texas state board of education stated that they were creating balance in these standards, but there are subtle examples in the history strand for U.S. government that refute this claim.

6.6.2 The Geography Strand

The geography strand of the United States Government course is a strand that is not the shortest of the strands, but neither is it very long. This strand is made up of 2 standards and 5 objectives. Of the 5 objectives, 3 begin with a verb found in the lower half of bloom’s taxonomy (appendix) and 2 begin with a verb found in the upper half. The geography strand does not contain objectives with lists as in other strands and courses, and has been crafted to reflect how geography plays a role in the U.S. Government. Unlike the world geography class, where the authors misplaced information regarding the content of the class in some of the strands in order to fulfill the 8 strand requirement, the authors have left the information in this strand to a minimum. Because of this, the
information contained is relevant to the class. Furthermore, after reviewing each standard and the objectives, there is no evidence of author bias or preference in the geography strand.

6.6.3 The Economics Strand

The economics strand of the United States Government course is another strand that is not relatively long. This strand is made up of 2 standards supported by 6 objectives. Of the 6 objectives selected for inclusion 4 begin with a verb found in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and only 2 can be found in the upper half of the taxonomy. This means that the authors’ goal for this strand was the continued memorization of information with a small nod towards critical thinking. This further refutes the authors’ claim that critical thinking is an important component of these standards. Unlike the geography strand, which provided no evidence of author bias or preference, the economics strand does. There is a continued promotion of capitalism or “free enterprise” in this strand which has appeared from kindergarten through high school.

The evidence of author preference for “free enterprise” appears in objective 4 of standard 1 where. In the first economics standard the authors require that “The student understands the roles played by local, state, and national governments in both the public and private sectors of U.S. free enterprise system.” The standard itself reveals no outward promotion of “free enterprise” except for the continued replacement of the term “free enterprise” for capitalism, which I have previously discussed in depth. The issue appears in the
fourth objective, but once again it is very subtle. Objective 4 requires that the students “understand how government taxation and regulation can serve as restrictions to private enterprise.” On the surface, this objective seems fairly reasonable, but the issue is the focus on restrictions in private enterprise. This objective would be fine if the authors also included an objective on the purposes of government taxation and regulation on free enterprise, but there is no mention of this. Instead, the objective presents only one side of the concepts included in the objective rather than multiple sides. This refutes the Texas state board’s claims that these standards provided balance. There can be no balance if the standards continually promote the positives of a free enterprise system without including the negatives.

There is one final issue with the economics strand that arises in the third objective of standard 1. In objective 3 the students must “compare the role of government in the U.S. free enterprise system and other economic systems.” The issue here is not of subjectivity in the objective, but lack of clarity. What other economic systems are the authors’ referring to since the United States operates under a capitalist economy? Do the authors want students to compare the U.S. government’s role in our economy with the role of other governments’ economies? If this is the goal it is misplaced as this is a course on United States government and not world governments. The objective creates some confusion and needs more information in order for teachers to ensure that students achieve this objective.
Other than these 2 issues in the first standard for the economics strand, no others appear and the remaining objectives in standard 1 and standard 2 are free of any bias or preference. At this point in the standards, the benefits of free enterprise have been drilled into students’ heads without including some of the drawbacks of the system. Through all of these courses the authors never use the term capitalism, which only demonstrates there attempt to promote it as an economic system. Students will leave the Texas school system with an incomplete understanding of capitalism as well as other economic systems. The standards for all the economics strands are heavily unbalanced.

6.6.4 The Government Strand

The government strand for the United States Government course is by far the largest of all the strands in this standards document. This is quite logical considering the content of the curriculum is the United States government. The strand is composed of 6 standards supported by a total of 28 objectives. Of the 28 objectives selected for inclusion, only 11 can be found in the lower half of Bloom's Taxonomy (appendix), while 17 can be found in the upper half. The authors’ goal for this strand requires an emphasis on critical thinking versus rote memorization. This strand supports the authors’ claim in the introductory section of the standards about the importance of critical thinking. A great deal of emphasis has been placed on students learning the role of government in the United States at the local, state and national levels as well as a look at the role of international policy to an extent. Although the students are required to study the
U.S. Constitution every year during Celebrate Freedom week there is only a small amount of analyzing and evaluating the U.S. Constitution throughout the 6 standards and their objectives. For a majority of the standards’ objectives, there is no evidence of author bias or preference. However, the role of religion does appear as an issue in the government strand and can be found in the selection of which amendments and concepts to evaluate and analyze while excluding others.

During the creation of these standards, the Texas board received a great deal of criticism about the role religion played in these standards, specifically the questioning of the separation of church and state. In standard 1 which states “The student understands the American beliefs and principles reflected in the U.S. Constitution and why these are significant,” objective 7 requires that students “examine the reasons the Founding Fathers protected religious freedom in America and guaranteed its free exercise by saying that ‘Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ and compare and contrast this phrase to “separation of church and state.” Analyzing and evaluating this concept is a valid task for students to complete to better understand the roots of the First Amendment and the idea of separation of church and state. The issue is not in the task; the issue is that this is the only amendment and idea that requires such scrutiny by the students. The authors only specifically include 1 other amendment for analysis in the U.S. government class and that is the 17th. Couple this objective with the previous
objectives throughout all of the standards that have promoted religious beliefs and preferences, and it becomes apparent that the authors are attempting to promote their own beliefs of religion in these standards. The separation of church and state is a topic that is hotly debated in the United States, and it deserves to be included in these standards, but there are other amendments that receive a great deal of focus as well but are not required for study and debate in this class. For instance, there is no reference to the Second Amendment in any of the U.S. Government standards. The issue of gun control continues to involve itself in American politics, so including this amendment would be appropriate as well. By selectively including only 1 issue, the authors demonstrate their bias towards the role of religion in the U.S. Had they included multiple objectives which required students to examine issues like this, then the bias would not exist.

Beyond the role of religion in U.S. government, no further issues appear. The issue of religion in U.S government has played a role throughout the government strand since elementary school. When one looks at each class independently, the issues that appear seem harmless and hardly worth noting. However, when looked at holistically, a pattern emerges that cannot be excused in these standards. The authors have included their own religious preferences and beliefs in these standards by including small issues, which are reinforced by the exclusion of ideas and beliefs that counter the ideas of these issues. This refutes the Texas state board’s belief that they have created balance in the social standards.
6.6.5 The Citizenship Strand

The citizenship strand is the second largest strand in the United States Government course standards. This strand includes 4 standards supported by 15 objectives. Of the 15 objectives, 9 begin with a verb found in the lower portion of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and 6 begin with verbs found in the upper portion of the taxonomy. This reveals that there is a slightly greater emphasis on memorization than critical thinking in this strand. The citizenship strand fails to reflect the authors’ claim of the importance of critical thinking in these standards.

Unlike previous versions of the citizenship strand, this one remains relatively free of any issues and the authors have done a solid job of including information regarding citizenship in the United States and its role in our government. Previously the focus has been on what makes a good citizen, or what makes a hero, or even the qualities of leadership. In this course the standards and objectives reflect citizens’ roles in political parties and other political organizations. However, there is one issue that pops up in standard 4 objective 2. The issue here is similar to the issue I presented in the government strand. In my analysis of the authors’ use of part of the First Amendment, I point to the exclusion of similar scrutiny placed on other amendments and I specifically discuss the Second Amendment. The remaining freedoms of the First Amendment and the inclusion of the Second Amendment appear here. Specifically, in standard 4 which states “The student understands the importance of the expression of different points of view in a constitutional
**republic,** objective 2 requires that students “analyze the importance of the First Amendment rights of petition, assembly, speech, and the press and the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms.” As this objective is written, it requires the students to apply their critical thinking skills, so that is a plus. Upon closer inspection though, the authors only require the students to analyze the importance of these 2 amendments. Students are not expected to evaluate the meaning of the Second Amendment or the First as they did with religion in the government strand. Here again, the authors have chosen their words well and not allowed for a questioning of these amendments and their possible meanings. Analyzing these amendments is a good task for students, but if they are being directed in the government strand to compare and contrast freedom of religion to separation of church and state, then students should be expected to do the same for any of the amendments in the U.S. Constitution.

The single issue found in the citizenship strand supports my hypothesis that the standards do not represent a balanced political view. Had the authors simply required more than analyzing the importance of the Second Amendment, then they would have been demonstrating balance. For instance, an excellent task that could have been required of students is evaluating the use of the term “bear” in the Second Amendment versus a term like “own.” The term own is very clear, but bear is not necessarily as clear, especially when we consider the evolution of meanings for words in the English language. The remaining objectives are balanced and require students to gain a solid understanding of the
role of citizenship in the U.S. government, but there is a subtle inclusion of their own preferences and beliefs which create an unbalance in the standards. These subtleties usually appear through selective word choice as well as exclusion of other ideas and concepts that might refute the beliefs of the authors of these standards.

6.6.6 The Culture Strand

The culture strand of the United States Government course is by far the shortest. It contains only 1 standard which is supported by 2 objectives. Of the 2 objectives included 1 is found in the upper half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and 1 is found in the lower half of the taxonomy. Because of its small size there is an equal emphasis placed on memorization and critical thinking. In previous courses, the culture strand has included superficial aspects of culture and often times contained information that was misplaced or was used as a strand to include information to appease the criticism of excluding women and minorities in the standards. However, the culture stand for this course has not been used that way. The information chosen for inclusion requires students to examine how government policy has influenced and affected culture in the United States. The objectives require students to study court cases that have been important towards the removal of racial inequality and the promotion of Civil Rights. Overall, the information in this strand has been well chosen.

Although the culture strand is short, the authors have not attempted to include inappropriate or misplaced information as they have in some of the
previous courses. Reviewing the standard and its objectives reveals no author bias or preference and is a positive addition to these standards.

6.6.7 The Science, Technology and Society Strand

The science, technology, and society strand for the United States Government course is not very long, but it is not the shortest. Like many of the strands in this course it includes a total of 2 standards and 4 objectives. Of the 4 objectives 3 begin with a verb that can be found in the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and only 1 begins with a verb found in the upper half of the taxonomy. Once again, the authors have created a strand which undermines their claim about the importance of critical thinking in the standards.

A close review of the science, technology, and society strand reveals no evidence of author bias or preference. The standards and objectives contain information that reflects how science and technology play a role in government as well as the government’s role in advancing science and technology. Although much of the information contained in these standards requires little critical thinking, the information has been properly placed in this strand. The objectives chosen for inclusion help support the learning of each standard. The authors have created a suitable strand for the United States Government course.

6.6.8 The Social Studies Skills Strand

The social studies skills thread for the United States Government course is one of the larger strands found in this course document. The course is made up of 3 standards supported by 12 objectives. The three standards included in
this strand are identical to the 3 standards found in this strand for previous social studies courses. Instead of relying upon the phrase “The student understands” to begin each standard the authors chose to use the more skills based phrases of “The student applies,” “The student communicates” and “the student uses.” Because these standards continue to reinforce building student skills rather than simply memorizing information, the strand remains one of the strongest strands in this document. Of the 12 objectives selected for inclusion in this strand, 6 begin with a verb found in the upper region of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix) and 6 begin with verbs in the lower region of Bloom’s Taxonomy. There is an equal emphasis on applying critical thinking skills as well as basic skills. This strand supports the authors claim that critical thinking is important in these standards.

As noted in my analysis of earlier social studies courses in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards document, one of the strongest aspects about this strand is the authors’ decision to include cross curricular skills in these standards. Standards 1 and 2 each includes objectives geared towards promoting mastery of cross curricular skills. For example, objective 6 in standard 1 requires that students “use appropriate mathematical skills to interpret social studies information such as maps and graphs” and objective 2 in standard 2 requires that students “use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.” Here we can see the inclusion of both mathematics and English skills. These objectives are similar to objectives found in the social studies skills strands found in many of the courses from kindergarten through high school. The
continued repetition of objectives like these in the standards reinforces the importance of skills that transfer from different courses. By including these skills in multiple courses, teachers outside of math and English become accountable for helping students achieve mastery and students understand that skills are not simply limited to one academic field.

The objectives found in the third and final standard are identical to the world history course and the U.S. history course. This particular standard and its objectives have only undergone one change which occurred in the world geography course. The standard reflects the importance of collaborative and individual work which will benefit students after leaving school. Keeping the standard and its objectives unchanged demonstrates that the skills contained in them require time to develop and that these skills can always be improved upon and developed.

The social studies skills strand in the United States government course contains no evidence of author bias or preference. The strand remains one of the strongest in all of the standards documents contained in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies. The authors have placed an emphasis on improving and developing student skills that apply directly to social studies as well as skills learned in math and English courses. The inclusion of cross curricular studies in this course creates a level of accountability for both teachers and students. Teachers outside of English and math are expected to reinforce
these skills and students learn that skills learned in one class often transfer to another.

6.6.9 Concluding Thoughts for the United States Government Course

The standards of the United States Government course include a great deal of information that students must master in a single semester, this is an issue that continues to surface throughout these standards. The emphasis in the standards for the course reflects the importance of memorizing information versus improving students’ critical thinking skills. Throughout the strands the authors’ have allowed their own biases and preferences to enter through emphasizing the importance of religion in the creation of the U.S. government or by excluding important historical information such as the Iroquois Confederation. The religious preferences do not overwhelm these standards and have been placed throughout the strands in a subtle manner.

Besides the inclusion of the authors’ religious preferences is the emphasis on the benefits of free enterprise. The authors have portrayed the role of government in these standards as limiting “free enterprise” with no inclusion of information as to why. This continues the unbalanced view of capitalism as an economic system. In this course though, the authors were not as overly focused on promoting the system as in other classes.

Finally, the social studies strand proves to be the strongest of all the strands because of its emphasis on skills connected with critical thinking. The strand as a whole will help students master skills beyond the social studies
classroom. By emphasizing skills rather than just information, the authors were able to create standards that contained no bias or preference and reinforced the learning of skills that are not necessarily taught in a social studies class but are important to mastering the social studies material.

6.7 Conclusion

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, High School standards document provides numerous examples of religious and economic preferences and biases. The Texas state board of education claimed that one of their goals was to bring balance to the standards that they believed did not exist in the previous state social studies standards. Although not all of the standards reflect an unbalance, there are enough objectives in these standards that refute this claim.

As far as religion is concerned there is evidence that demonstrates the authors’ preference for Judeo-Christian beliefs. The authors tend to overemphasize its role in the creation of the United States government while excluding the importance of other individuals and groups. The authors also require that students begin to question religions’ involvement in government by questioning separation of church and state. Had this requirement been included with an analysis of other ideas and concepts held in the United States there would be no issue, but this issue is the only one that receives such scrutiny. Not surprisingly, the standards require little more than memorizing information about other world religions except for Islam. The objectives relating to Islam tend to
support and promote the stereotype of Islam as a violent religion. Unfortunately, it must be kept in mind that some students may never receive any information about world religions because they have a choice to exclude world history from their course of studies if they are following the minimum graduation requirements.

The concept of American exceptionalism continues to appear in the high school standards, most notably within the U.S. history course. The authors’ use of language in regards to historical events regarding the United States is generally geared to promote the country in a positive light while refraining from revealing our past errors and mistakes. It is unfortunate that the authors’ created a set of standards that exclude our past atrocities because it presents a very limited view of the history of the United States. When compared to the other countries in the world history standards, the United States comes across as benevolent. The atrocities of other nations are provided as an important part of those standards, but the authors simply left the United States out of them. Choosing to ignore our own country’s atrocities does not make them go away, but it might create a citizenry ripe to repeat the mistakes of the past because they did not study these errors as students in the Texas schools.

Finally, the authors have not even tried to hide their preference for capitalism as an economic system. They continually substitute the phrase “free enterprise” for capitalism because of the current negative connotation attached to it. Furthermore, the standards and objectives reflect only the positives of
capitalism and none of the drawbacks. Because of this, the standards dealing with economics create an unbalanced view of the system and one might argue that these economic standards actually indoctrinate students into the system. The same issue arises here as with religion in that students may never even study other economic systems if they choose to follow the minimum graduation requirements.

Aside from these issues, the standards do contain strength. The socials studies skills strand included in these standards does an excellent job of emphasizing skills as well as critical thinking. Furthermore, the authors promote cross curricular studies throughout the grade levels by including science, math and English skills within each of the courses. This creates accountability for these skills among teachers and students. Teachers share in the responsibility of reinforcing skills learned outside of the social studies class and students learn that skills learned in one class transfer to their other classes.

As with the elementary and middle school standards, the previous version of the high school standards demonstrates numerous changes when compared to the rewritten standards. The previous standards included names, dates and places as do the newly adopted standards; however, what is still most noticeable in the rewritten standards is the increase of this information when compared to the previous standards. Many of the rewritten objectives are simply lists of names and other information that students must be able to identify. It appears there is a continued emphasis placed on memorizing historical information when compared
to the previous standards. Finally, in the previous standards the use of free enterprise was prevalent as it is in the rewritten standards. However, in the previous standards the focus was placed upon the function of free enterprise in the United States rather than the benefits of the system which tends to be the focus of the rewritten standards. Unlike the previous elementary and middle school standards, the previous high school standards do use the term capitalism, specifically when compared to other modern economic systems found in the world history standards.
CHAPTER 7
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate if the Texas State School Board implemented changes to their state standards that reflect a politically conservative ideology of history while promoting Judeo-Christian beliefs, a single sided view of capitalism as a positive economic system, a focus towards memorization of information versus critical thinking, the exclusion of world history and if the 2010 social studies standards actually reflect a balanced political representation of United States and early American history.

In order to assess if the standards demonstrated any sort of bias or preference in each of the above instances, I conducted a content analysis of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies at the elementary, middle and high school levels adopted in 2010 which will be implemented in the 2011-2012 school year. The analysis revealed that bias exists in these standards and the actually standards have been written in a way that refutes the authors’ statement of the importance of critical thinking in the social studies standards.

7.2 Discussion

Question 1 Do the 2010 Texas State Social Studies Standards reflect a politically conservative view of the United States?

Throughout the social studies from kindergarten through high schools the authors have included numerous lists of individuals and events that exemplify
multiple political points of view. However, there are instances where politically conservative ideas have been emphasized while politically liberal ideas have been excluded or marginalized. For instance, in the elementary standards, there is an emphasis on individual responsibilities in the citizenship strand. The information included in those strands had little to do with citizenship in a historical context and revealed the authors’ beliefs on the personal responsibilities of citizenships. The authors also chose to exclude objectives which included modern liberal presidents, such as John F. Kennedy or Bill Clinton, but chose to include multiple objectives about Ronald Reagan. This political bias is demonstrated through the study of Ronald Reagan and his Reaganomics when compared to Roosevelt’s New Deal. There is a large emphasis placed upon critiquing the New Deal and its effects on the United States, but Reaganomics receives no such focus. In fact, Reaganomics is presented in a positive light while a policy such as Social Security from the New Deal is presented with the loaded term entitlement.

Further bias is also reflected in the inclusion of the Civil Rights Movement. Here the authors chose to go with a very neutral presentation of them in the standards rather than presenting them as benefits. This reflects Lakoff’s (2002) explanation of the conservative belief that these social movements were and are attacks on their values, rather than as social advancements as liberals understand them. There is this recurring theme of concepts dealing with conservative values as good or beneficial while concepts dealing with liberal
values as neutral or harmful. Within the political preferences or biases we also find a push towards American exceptionalism as well as Texas exceptionalism. The majority of the history standards dealing with the United States and Texas reflect the 2 in a positive light and promotes the feeling of benevolence from the 2. Historical events present only the positives of American history while ignoring or watering mistakes, errors, or atrocities.

Finally, the authors also include objectives pertaining to the American Dream along with examples of Americans who exemplify achieving this dream. The individuals selected as example are people who have achieved great wealth. By selecting these people, the authors provide their definition of the American Dream which reflects the warped version of the Dream rather than its original meaning.

**Question 2** Do the 2010 Texas State Social Studies Standards demonstrate a preference for Judeo-Christian beliefs over other religious viewpoints?

Throughout the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies standards document, religion is brought in initially through the culture strand. The inclusion of religion is completely appropriate in this context as well as its historical role in the world. The authors go further though in that they demonstrate a preference for Judeo-Christian beliefs in these standards. Their preference is revealed through the over-emphasis of these beliefs in United
States government, but also through excluding a complete study of other religions and in one instant presenting a narrow view of Islam.

In the objectives for the United States Government class as well as the government strand in preceding courses, the authors include objectives with the influence of Judeo-Christian legal traditions in the development of the U.S. government and emphasize biblical law. One cannot deny that this has had some influence on our government; however, the authors have completely excluded the importance of the Iroquois Confederation in the creation of our government. Furthermore, they include an objective which requires students to evaluate the separation of church and state when compared to the First Amendment. This task would be fine if it were not for the fact that the authors require no such other evaluation and comparison of other amendments. The separation of church and state was a major issue brought out during the initial response to these standards, and it is important to remember who has had a major influence of including this in the Texas social studies standards. By including David Barton as an “expert” in the process of rewriting these standards, the Texas state board of education demonstrated to the public that they agreed with his beliefs. Barton has maintained a relatively high profile in his attempts to dismantle the separation of church and state in the United States, and has vehemently argued that the founding fathers did not intend a separation of church and state but the opposite. As far as he is concerned, Barton believes that Christian beliefs should play a prominent role in American government (Boston, 2009). The act of
singling out this 1concept reveals the authors’ desire to promote their own beliefs.

Finally, even though the authors include multiple world religions, the objectives are generally geared towards defining each religion rather than actually studying it. The only other religion which receives more in depth study is Islam. Outside of Islam’s role and influence in government in the Muslim world, there is a great deal of attention placed on radical Islam and its connection to terrorism. Instead of also including the role of religion in all of terrorism, such as Christianity with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the authors only include objectives dealing with Islamic terrorists. Without providing a holistic view of Islam as a religion, the authors chose to include the radicals and exclude objectives that were geared towards promoting understanding of the entire religion. This promotes the stereotyped view of Islam as a violent religion. Furthermore, the authors have excluded objectives dealing with the crusades which could provide students with an understanding of the tensions that exist between the Judeo-Christian community and the Islamic community.

Question 3 Do the 2010 Texas State Social Studies Standards promote a single-sided view of capitalism as an economic system?

In the previous 2 questions, the authors were very selective and subtle about the inclusion of political and religious preferences, the promotion of capitalism is apparent in the introductory section of the standards. The authors chose to substitute the term capitalism with the phrases “free enterprise” or “free
market system.” The introduction is written in a way that states that these 3 are interchangeable, and “free enterprise” and “free market system” are used interchangeably, but the term capitalism never appears in any of the standards. In an interview, one board member, Terri Leo, even noted that the term capitalism is not perceived very positively in the United States at the time these standards were written so they went with free enterprise and free market system instead (Lin, 2010). Throughout all the standards dealing with economic systems, the objectives are geared towards the positives of capitalism and not once were the negatives included. For example, students are required to understand how taxes affect the free market and potentially limit it. The authors did include other economic systems in the standards, but these objectives were limited to mere definitions with no emphasis on the philosophy behind these systems. Basically, a student simply needs to be able to identify the different systems. When other systems are mentioned or concepts that pertain to other systems the authors refrain from presenting the positive aspects of these systems. For example, when dealing with aspects of socialism, the authors refrain from including the benefits that a free public education provides to our country like an educated work force, or that socialist ideals helped to create the roads and highways businesses use every day to grow their operations. Because of this, American businesses have been able to prosper, but these ideas or pushed aside or ignored. Even when programs such as Social Security or Medicare are brought in to the standards, a negative term such as “entitlements” has been attached to them rather than
using less flammable terminology. Further bias appears when comparing economic programs throughout American history.

One of the most notable examples throughout these standards dealing with economics can be found in the inclusion of the New Deal versus the inclusion of Reaganomics. The New Deal is heavily scrutinized within these standards. Students are expected to really pick apart the programs created by its inception. Negative terminology also appears with the New Deal. Requiring students to deeply analyze the new Deal is a positive, but when juxtaposed to the requirements surrounding Reaganomics, it becomes apparent that the authors prefer the concepts contained in Reaganomics and despise those of the New Deal. Students are only required to study the benefits of Reaganomics and never look at the negatives. In fact, students are not even required to venture beyond a superficial understanding of Reaganomics. By requiring students to study only the benefits of capitalism or free enterprise, the authors demonstrate their preference for this economic system.

**Question 4** Do the 2010 Texas State Social Studies Standards focus more on United States History and Texas History while limiting the inclusion of world history?

Beginning in kindergarten, students study their community and then expand outward as they move through the grades. During elementary school the students spend a great deal of time studying Texas and the United States. Throughout the elementary standards, the closest students come to world history
is a few objectives geared towards England in relation to colonial America as well
some references to Canada and Latin America in the geography strands. Outside
of this, the standards include no reference to world history. Once students enter
middle school, the state board requires students to study contemporary world
countries, but there is no inclusion of actual world history. In fact, in middle
school the students spend an entire year on U.S. history and an entire year on
Texas history. The only reference to the world is through contemporary studies. It
is not until high school that students have the opportunity to take a course
dedicated to the study of world history. What is problematic about this is that
students following the minimum graduation requirements have the choice of
taking either world history or world geography, which means students have the
option of never taking a class in world history. Students who follow the
recommended graduation requirements or the advanced requirements must take
world history. Furthermore, individual school districts have the ability to require
more than the state requirements for graduation, but this does not ensure that all
students will receive a class in world history.

Unfortunately, the lack of including a course in world history is an issue
that expands beyond the state of Texas. As Martin et al. (2011) explained in their
report, many states do not require a study of world history until the later grades.
Unfortunately, the authors had an opportunity to demonstrate leadership to the
rest of the country by including world history earlier and more often, they chose
not follow this course. Instead, with a major emphasis placed United States
history and Texas history, the authors used this as an opportunity to promote the ideas of American exceptionalism and Texas exceptionalism. With a lack of world history studies this idea of exceptionalism is reinforced because students do not receive the opportunity to study about other countries and what they provide for the rest of the world.

It is clear that in these standards the authors focused solely on the histories of the United States and Texas and have done little to promote the study of world history. Even if individual school districts in Texas require more than just the minimum requirements, students will gain little knowledge in the history of the world. The standards include so much information in each grade level that teachers may find it difficult to add to the curriculum of each class to shore up this deficiency in the standards. The standards include so much information that the authors have created a document which basically supplants the curriculum, because teachers will have little time to cover anything outside of these standards.

Question 5 Within the introductory section of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies standards documents, the authors state that critical thinking is an important component in these adopted social studies standards. Do these standards reflect a commitment to critical thinking or is an emphasis placed on student memorization of information?

The standards and objectives chosen for inclusion in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies were written with verbs that can be
found on Bloom’s Taxonomy list of action verbs (appendix). Each verb is placed in 1 of 6 positions on the taxonomy from Knowledge, the lowest of the taxonomy, through evaluation, the highest of the taxonomy. Verbs listed in the first 3 levels represent information that operates in the realm of memorization and information found in the final 3 levels represent information that requires critical thinking. By highlighting each objective’s verb and determining where it fell on the taxonomy I was able to evaluate if the objectives promoted critical thinking skills or memorization skills. In the standards from kindergarten through high school an overwhelming majority of the objectives required memorization skills and not critical thinking skills. As a whole the majority of the classes all fell into the lower half of Bloom’s Taxonomy (appendix).

A major portion of the verbs used were terms such as “identify” or “describe” that were then followed by lists of names, dates and places. In fact, with the sheer volume of information students are required to identify, it seems like it would be very difficult for teachers to include more analysis of the information in their classrooms. Standards designed like this could easily be assessed through standardized measures which may be the intent on the part of the authors. If students are to be tested on this information it helps to ensure that teachers will cover it, especially when we consider that student scores will count for a portion of teachers’ yearly performance evaluations. Since a bias does exist within the standards towards more conservative beliefs, this helps to indoctrinate
students into the authors’ beliefs systems and values rather than allowing students to make their own judgments.

There are some instances where the focus was not completely placed upon memorization. The world geography course actually had a slightly greater emphasis on critical thinking skills versus memorization skills. As far as the individual strands go, the social studies skills strand continually remained one of the strongest strands in these standards and there were some individual examples of strands throughout these courses which supported critical thinking rather than simple memorization. The social studies skills strand included the use of cross curricular skills which helped to support the importance of skills learned in other classes such as mathematics and English. By requiring students to implement these skills in multiple disciplines the authors demonstrate that they do understand the importance of critical thinking as well as important skills in social studies courses. However, beyond the world geography course and the social studies skills strand, examples of critical thinking were few in number when compared to the majority which focused on memorization. Therefore, the actual standards and objectives refute the authors’ claim that critical thinking is an important part of the social studies standards.

Finally, it is important to note that the purpose of this question was not to negate the importance of memorizing certain historical facts and dates. I believe it is very important that students know important dates and facts throughout the history of our world and find it unfathomable that students do not know the years
of the American Civil War, or the capital city of the United States as well as the individual 50 states. The issue that arose in this study was that a vast amount of the standards solely focused upon memorization.

7.3 Implications

The Texas state school board has opened the door for other states to follow in reshaping state social standards that present content which includes personal religious and political bias. Not only have they allowed for the biases to appear in their social studies standards, but because of their ability to push through these changes, this presents them with the opportunity to attempt the same thing in other course standards when it comes time to readopt or update them in Texas. By opening the door to including political and religious biases and creating an overall conservative oriented set of standards, the state board has created a tense situation in Texas’ education system. On the next go around, if the board goes through a change in political orientation because of citizens’ voting, there exists a possibility of back lash to these standards, which could shift the bias and preference to the opposite end of the political spectrum.

In order to put an end to the political polarization of state education standards, current and future members of the Texas state board of education must ensure that they select individuals to write and reshape the standards who are agreed upon experts in their academic fields. Education should not be a battle field for political ideologues. If students are to gain an understanding of
their country and the rest of the world, they need to be presented with historically accurate and factual information free from bias and personal preference.

These adopted standards which begin in the 2011-2012 school year could have long lasting effects on students’ understanding of social studies because these will be in place for a period of 10 years. What these effects will be are hard to judge at this time. However, one thing that can be surmised from these standards is that students will have an extremely limited knowledge of world history. The students’ knowledge of United States history will also reflect conservative beliefs. Finally, students will have done little in terms of learning how historians think and operate. These standards are heavily information based which lends itself to standardized tests. These tests can be used to hold teachers accountable for the information contained in the standards, even if the information contains errors and biases. Only time will tell how much the Texas state board of education’s action will affect the rest of the United States, but they have set a disturbing precedent.

7.4 Limitations

This study was limited to an analysis of the Texas State Social Studies Standards. The study was further limited to only those standards which focused on United States History, early American History and World History. The Texas State Social Studies Standards also include course standards for the academic fields of Psychology, Sociology and Research Methods; however, these standards were not included in the analysis. Therefore, this study is not
generalizable to the other academic content standards approved by the Texas State Board of Education in 2010 which were implemented in the 2011-2012 school year, nor is it generalizable to the remaining 49 states of the United States of America, but it should be kept in mind that standards from Texas have had an influence in the past on the development of textbooks that could eventually influence the standards of other states.

7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on analyzing the Texas state social studies standards which were implemented for the 2011-2012 school year. Future research needs to be conducted on a number of aspects surrounding these standards. Research should be conducted on social studies teachers’ understanding of these standards as well as the training the state provided teachers in order to implement them. Furthermore, as Texas schools were entering their first year of implementation of these standards, at the time this is being written, research needs to be conducted on how teachers are actually presenting these standards in their social studies classrooms. For example, are teachers following the standards to the very letter or are they attempting to include information that questions the information contained in the standards? I would also recommend that research be conducted on students’ understanding of these standards as they move through the Texas school system. Research should be conducted on the textbooks adopted to support delivery of these standards in Texas, and if these adopted texts actually influence other states’ social studies curriculum.
Finally, in regards to teacher education, especially in the state of Texas, research needs to be conducted on how these standards are presented to pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programs throughout the state’s universities and colleges. This research should look at how Texas’ teacher educators present the inclusion of standards in their course curriculum in regards to social studies, as well as pre-service teachers’ understanding of the standards. It would also be useful to conduct research on teacher educators’ perceptions about Texas’ social studies standards outside of the state and how these academics are presenting them to their students, if at all.
# APPENDIX A

**BLOOM’S TAXONOMY VERBS**

Taken from [http://www.teachervision.com](http://www.teachervision.com)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Comprehend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define</td>
<td>Recall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Recite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw</td>
<td>Record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enumerate</td>
<td>Reproduce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find</td>
<td>Select</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify</td>
<td>Sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Label</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List</td>
<td>Tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match</td>
<td>View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quote</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Imitate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer</td>
<td>Implement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess</td>
<td>Include</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Inform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chart</td>
<td>Instruct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose</td>
<td>Paint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect</td>
<td>Participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compute</td>
<td>Predict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Prepare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute</td>
<td>Produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Provide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate</td>
<td>Relate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine</td>
<td>Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop</td>
<td>Select</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover</td>
<td>Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatize</td>
<td>Solve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw</td>
<td>Transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish</td>
<td>Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extend</td>
<td>Utilize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesize</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Intervene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipate</td>
<td>Invent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorize</td>
<td>Make up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combine</td>
<td>Modify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate</td>
<td>Negotiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Organize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compile</td>
<td>Perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compose</td>
<td>Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct</td>
<td>Pretend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create</td>
<td>Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Propose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop</td>
<td>Rearrange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devise</td>
<td>Reconstruct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express</td>
<td>Reinforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate</td>
<td>Reorganize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulate</td>
<td>Revise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate</td>
<td>Rewrite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate</td>
<td>Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualize</td>
<td>Substitute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate</td>
<td>Validate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraise</td>
<td>Interpret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
<td>Judge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess</td>
<td>Justify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose</td>
<td>Predict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare &amp; Contrast</td>
<td>Prioritize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclude</td>
<td>Prove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticize</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide</td>
<td>Reframe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defend</td>
<td>Select</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


EDUCATION CODE  CHAPTER 28. COURSES OF STUDY; ADVANCEMENT.  


Texas textbooks: What happened, what it means, and what we can do about it

