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Practicing what we teach: The politics behind creating a state social studies curriculum

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PRACTICING WHAT WE TEACH: THE POLITICS BEHIND CREATING A STATE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

By

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Abstract

Societal importance of the social studies fields is the key to what makes the development of social studies curriculum political. State standardized curricula adopted in the 1990s gave freedom to individual states to create their own standards on what information they were requiring their students to learn. The standards we require students to know inherently molds their political philosophy throughout schooling. By focusing attention on two separate cases, Texas and Michigan, inherent differences in the creation process of these standards are highlighted to show how the differences in the creation process have an effect on the standards document. This thesis explores factors such as how the choice of board members, effect of interest groups and the type of revision process all effect how politicized state social studies standards can be.

Introduction

With the introduction of the state standardized curriculum, states now create their own curriculum in which the students of their state are tested on and expected to know. Each student in that particular state is supposed to be able to achieve the learning goals provided in the state curriculum. However the variety of learning goals from state to state differs drastically. The state's power to create their own curricula gives them the ability to mandate that students know what they deem as important.

The implementation of national standards in the past couple of decades has not had a large impact on the states' ability or authority to choose the makeup of their curriculum. These national standards are very broad and leave some interpretation up to state discretion. As the power is given to the states to design a curriculum that will best enhance the knowledge and abilities of its students, it is often used as a tool to persuade growing minds into a particular ideology. Social studies curriculum is no exception to persuasion and bias as it serves to teach students about society and their role as a citizen within the United States.

Societal importance is the key to what makes the development of social studies curriculum political. In a study conducted by Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne on educating students for a democracy and civil responsibilities, they concluded, "the ways that educators advance [these] visions may privilege some political perspectives regarding the way problems are framed and responded to" [1]. Westheimer and Kahne's findings can be viewed within state social studies curriculums. The process in which the curricula are created allows for bias and political perspective to be present in these

[1] Westheimer, Joel and Kahne, Joseph. *"What Kind of Citizen?*.

curriculum documents. The wording within the curriculum and ways educators advance certain ideals within the document affects and structures student thoughts and responses to society around them.

Certain states are shaping their curriculum to promote a political agenda and instill beliefs in their students about their relationship and role within society. These differences in ideals of citizenship and politics result in raising a generation of like-minded young adults to continue on the ideals of their curriculum creators and promote their political agenda. As these curricula are produced by the Board of Education of the individual states there is no outside entity capable of monitoring their power and authority over the content within state curriculum.

The Board's have the utmost authority to create a curriculum of their liking and this power is not checked by any other entity. Without some body to keep the states in line it is more likely that the power can be abused. With this in mind, exploring the political biases and problems within social studies curriculum and looking to the process in which these curriculum documents were created can offer insight into how political bias is able to be written in to curriculum documents.

It is important to first identify the problems regarding political bias within state standards documents. Through identification of key issues and differences between states curriculum creation process, evidence is provided to prove that the differences from state to state still allow for political bias to make its way on to curriculum documents all across the country. In order to further investigate these political motivations and biases, use of the Michigan High School Content Expectations for Social Studies and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Subchapter C: High School serves as

the main sources of difference throughout the study. Upon identifying major political issues within Michigan and Texas' high school social studies curriculum it is imperative to look at how these documents were created and how the creation process has ultimately affected the final product of each state's curriculum.

Civic Education

Public education allows schools to indoctrinate students with ideals in which they see as being valuable to the population. As an extreme example, in the 1930's the Third Reich of Germany used public schools to promote Nazi ideals throughout their country and to gain support for the Hitler Youth through the school systems. Through teaching students their role in society Germany was able to socialize their students into believing what their role in society was and what they must do within Germany to be civic citizens. Conditioning students to believe certain ideals like the example in German history shows how seemingly civilized societies end up doing such things like war and genocide.

Using education as a means to infiltrate the young population with concepts also happened in the United States during the 1950s with the segregation period of the South. Many teachers were unreceptive to desegregation and were teaching their students to disapprove desegregation movements[2]. Southern whites were being taught by public schooling to discourage movements within the school system and trained to believe racial superiority during this time period.

The effect that public education has on the shaping of young minds' views about society is present in both of these cases, the Hitler Youth and segregation in the South. While these may be extreme examples they visualize how a powerful role on what

[2] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. A Staff Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights: School Desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas. June 1977.

students are taught have a large role in their socialization. The kids weren't born that way; schooling and familial life shaped that. With the institution of state standardized curriculum states are now mandating what their students must know in order to graduate from high school, ultimately, shaping their views and roles in society.

William B. Stanley, a doctor of Curriculum and Instructions/Foundations of Education at Monmouth University, argues schools are pivotal in the socialization process[3]. Historically schools have been used as institutions to build public support for culture and social structures[4]. By instilling in students certain concepts about history and society through mandated curriculum, we are molding their views of society and their roles within it. The problem is that some states are instilling these ideas in their students but not to the level needed for them to be able to analyze and make their own opinions about the information. Students need to develop critical attitudes towards history and society when studying social studies so that they are empowered to interrogate the social construction of the worlds around them and develop their own attitudes and opinions about the information that is being taught to them[5]. If students aren't enabled to think for themselves each generation will continue to believe everything that's taught to them in school without developing the questioning skills necessary to actively question the validity and truth to historical perspectives. The ability to identify bias in your education and to analyze the biased point of view takes a higher cognitive level that many students never reach before moving on to higher education.

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[3] Stanley, William B.. *Curriculum for Utopia social reconstructionism and critical pedagogy in the postmodern era*: 71.
[4] Ibid., 65.
[5] Porfilio, Brad J., and Watz, Michael. " Critically examining the past and the "Society of the Spectacle": social studies education as a site of critique, resistance, and transformation.", 116.

States are choosing to include and exclude certain pieces of knowledge in order to scaffold student's prior knowledge and viewpoints on social construction, ultimately effecting their political beliefs. The choice to include certain historical figures and exclude other equally important figures shape the students views on what is deemed as important within our society. Is time being equally divided on historical events or are states putting more emphasis on conservative or liberal concepts? All of these concepts look back to our state-based curriculum and what each state deems as important for their students to know and master.

Social studies subjects such as history and government emphasize the roles that humans play within society, essentially your role as a citizen. As seen through historical examples above, it is apparent that compulsory education is providing young adults with this knowledge. Derek Heater, the Dean of the Faculty of Social and Cultural studies at the then Brighton Polytechnic, wrote " the very heart of citizenship education is to provide young citizens with [the] 'capacity to think for themselves'"[6]. State standards should provide just that, the capacity to think for themselves, not what to think. Certain state social studies standards are created to instill bias in students. Rather the focus should be on creating the standards to develop critical thinking skills that allow students to develop and assess what they believe about society. What is mandated of our students doesn't always require that they reach higher-order thinking about their society or history, rather they must remember and understand the facts.

Benjamin S. Bloom, a famed educational psychologist, is known for his classification of thinking behaviors; known as Bloom's Taxonomy. The taxonomy is

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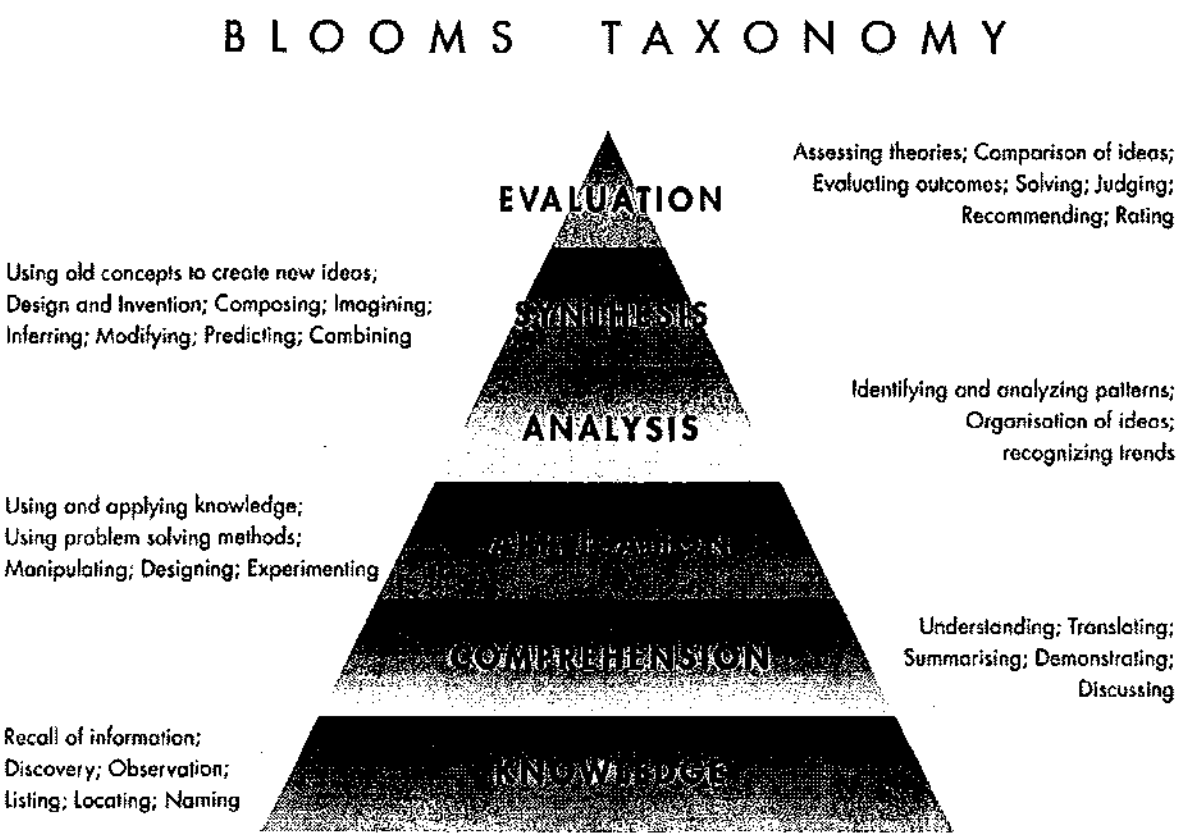
[6] Heater, Derek Benjamin. *Citizenship: the civic ideal in world history, politics, and education.* 347.

developed around three domains: the cognitive, affective and psychomotor. The classification system is based around cognitive levels of complexity[7]. The simplest cognitive functions reside on the base of the taxonomy, as they are the most basic and are required in conjunction with any other classification level. Easiest visualized by a pyramid (Table 1), Bloom's Taxonomy encourages students and educators to reach a higher level of critical thought, such as the synthesis and evaluation tiers of the taxonomy. In order to reach this level of critical thinking one must use the lower tiers of knowledge, comprehension, application and analysis, in order to have the capacity to think cognitively at such a high level. Once someone has mastered the material at the knowledge level they can then move on to the comprehension level. Similarly, one cannot obtain thinking at a comprehension level if they have not mastered the general knowledge.

[7] Forehand, Mary . "*Bloom's Taxonomy - Emerging Perspectives on Learning, Teaching and Technology.*"

Table 1.[8]



With the help of Bloom's Taxonomy as a visual aid to levels of cognitive scaffolding, it is imperative to look at this in terms of state standards. Are we requiring our students to obtain higher cognitive levels of the knowledge in our curriculum? Heater's quote on creating citizens by providing them with the "capacity to think for themselves" can be looked at simultaneously with Bloom's Taxonomy. In order to create effective citizens they must be able to analyze, synthesize and evaluate what is being taught to them within their social studies classes. We cannot continue to teach students information and fail to reach these levels of cognitive thought, as this is a disservice to students and their ability to be an effective member in society.

[8] "My Bright Box - Blooms Taxonomy." My Bright Box - A virtual resource for teachers & parents of gifted children.

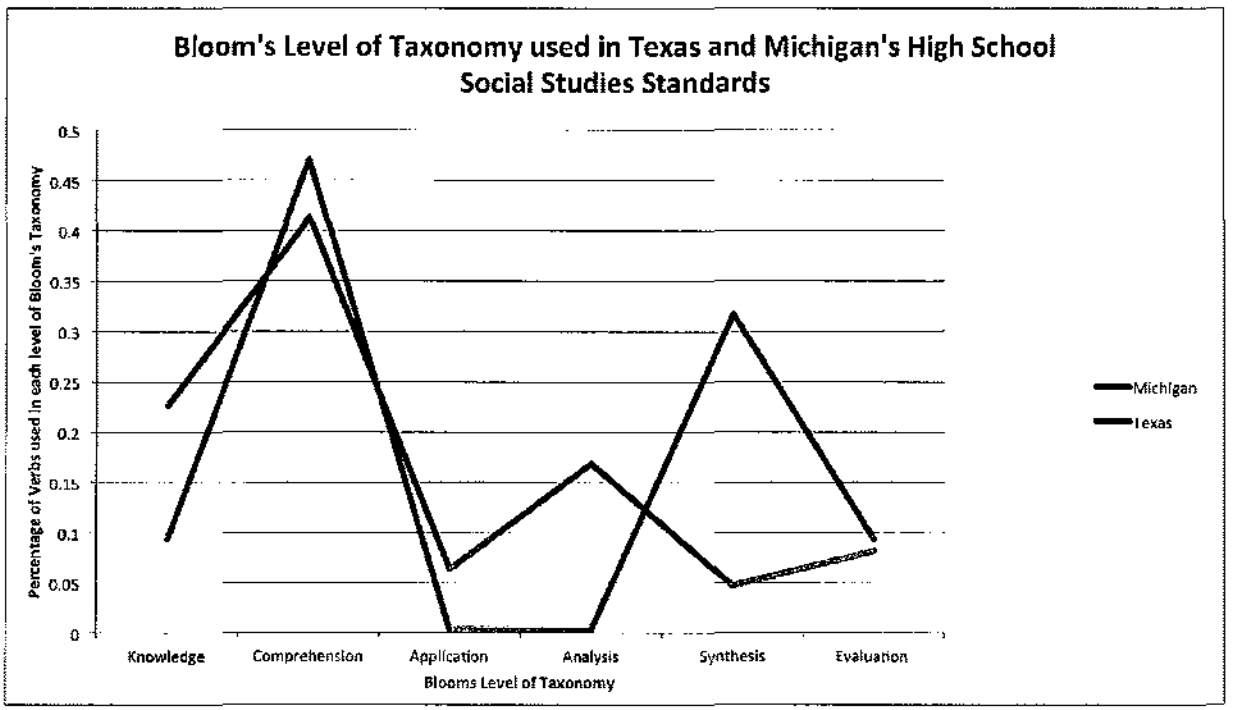
One of the main goals of social studies is to instill civic ideals into our students. However, critical analysis of our society is mandatory in order to achieve such a civic status. This is where the curriculum set up by the state must teach the students how to analyze and synthesize past and present roles in society. The problem is there are plenty of states not requiring their students to master the information at a higher level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Let's compare Texas and Michigan's state secondary social studies curriculum, more specifically their requirement for their students' cognitive range on Blooms Levels of Taxonomy. Below, Table 2 compares the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy used throughout Texas and Michigan's high school social studies standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies Subchapter C. High School and the Michigan Department of Education High School Content Expectations: Social Studies, respectfully. To produce the table verbs used in both states curricula standards were first identified, counted and then classified in terms of which level of Bloom's Taxonomy was demanded when using that verb. For instance, standard 7 (C) in TEKS U.S. History standards states "analyze the function of the U.S. Office of War Information" the stem verb in the standard is "analyze" and calls upon the students to use analysis to achieve the standard, thus the verb for that standard would fall under the analysis level of Bloom's Taxonomy[9]. Other examples include if the standard had the stem verb "identify" it was categorized as a knowledge based level or if the verb was "describe" it was classified as a comprehension level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Once all of the standards' verbs were

[9] Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II. Chapter 113. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Subchapter C. High School, 4.

identified and categorized the percentage of standards devoted to each level of Bloom's Taxonomy for each state was then calculated and charted. As you can see by the table, Michigan requires their students to think more critically by demanding that they use higher levels of Blooms Taxonomy such as synthesis and evaluation, while Texas requires their students to use more of the lower cognitive skills such as knowledge and comprehension based skills (Table 2). Table 2 shows a trend that Michigan standards require higher cognitive skills in the areas of synthesis and evaluation than Texas. Where as Texas requires much more lower level cognitive thinking because most of their standards reside in the knowledge and comprehension levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Although both states standards reside mainly in knowledge and comprehension levels, it is important to note that there is an increase in Michigan's higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy that Texas does not catch up to. The results of the table prove that Michigan is demanding a higher level of cognitive thinking in their social studies curriculum than Texas and ultimately teaching the students to think at a higher cognitive level about society in general. How are we expecting young citizens that are able to think critically for themselves if we're not teaching them how to do so in school? Synthesis and evaluation skills are mandatory for people to develop personal opinions and to question authority. When less higher-order cognitive thinking is emphasized and demanded in curricula students are not being taught to use their personal freedom to make choices because the state is not demanding that they learn at that level.

Table 2.



When it comes to Texas' state social studies curriculum one can argue that the process by which this curriculum was created can ultimately shape the type of cognitive demand placed upon students. The professions and backgrounds of those creating the curriculum show their expertise in the field. If a state were to create a brand new social studies curriculum it would be safe to assume that they would want to rely on experts in the field of history, economics, political science and education. This way you have experts in the substantive field of study and experts in education who are familiar with teaching such information to the students. This assumption is not always the case, as seen in Texas. In Texas there are select individuals such as a dentist and pastor[10]. These people are not experts in the field of social studies or education, both of which are fundamental to the creation of the curriculum itself. Educators understand the concept of Bloom's

[10] Shorto, Russell. "How Christian Were the Founders?"

Taxonomy and the different levels of cognitive demand while dentists and other non-education professions presumably were not taught that throughout their career or schooling. Meanwhile experienced educators understand the concepts of cognitive taxonomy and the importance of higher cognitive demand. The result of using amateurs in the curriculum process is the lower cognitive demand placed upon the students. For instance in the case of Texas' social studies curriculum in 2010 the amateurs involved in the curriculum development were known to give very subjective reasoning for inclusion of standards. "I like", "I don't like" and "my favorite things…" were used as rationales for inclusion of standards rather than educational or historical support for the importance of the standards[11]. The key to overcoming this amateur mistake is to have a majority of educators who are able to outvote these individuals.

However, there may be an ulterior motive to Texas' use of low cognitive demand within their social studies curriculum. Some might argue the curriculum is driven by a desire for the schools to reinforce what the kids are learning at home rather than challenging authority. There has been a common understanding within Texas that they do not want their students to challenge the authority of their parents or the republican ideals ever-present throughout the state. Their goal is to protect the kids from "liberal" ideas that will question what is being taught to the students at home, in fact the GOP has publicly said this. More recently the Texas GOP Republican Party Platform has officially come out and declared their position against critical thinking skills within their public schools by saying the following:

[11] Collins, Gail. "Textbook Wars". 113.

"Knowledge-Based Education – We oppose the teaching of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (values clarification), critical thinking skills and similar programs that are simply a relabeling of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) (mastery learning) which focus on behavior modification and have the purpose of challenging the student's fixed beliefs and undermining parental authority," [12]. Although this statement wasn't officially released until 2012 the concept has been practiced within Texas for years. If Texas is trying to protect familial and republican ideals, having a lower level of cognitive thinking demanded in their social studies curriculum helps to foster their goal of preventing the challenge to fixed beliefs. If students are not taught to question or challenge the fixed beliefs of society around them they have not reached the analysis level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Purposely not teaching critical thinking skills limits the students' ability to question authority in later years of their life, creating generations that will continue to follow tradition. Higher-level cognitive demand has a greater risk of challenging fixed views and authority; thus helping Texas to orient their social studies curriculum to instill a political conservative philosophy within their students.

Problems

Problems began to arise soon after the United States started having each state create their own standardized curricula. There was a demand to put the students of each state on a similar curriculum so the students could be assessed across districts throughout the state and learning of the material could be comparable from school to school. Each state has the liberty to choose what to mandate their students to know. This creates

[12] 2012 Republican Party of Texas: Report of Platform Committee, 12.

problems across a national level because there is no check on the states authority on what to include in their curriculum.

Curricula in most cases are not laws and therefore are not able to be checked by judicial courts. Rather curricula are policy decisions agreed upon by agencies. For example the Michigan Board of Education is in fact an agency that created the High School Content Expectations for social studies. No legal body passed laws within the legislative branch on the standards within a curriculum, rather they are an agreed upon policy created by agencies devoted to education. Texas Education Agency (TEA) is an agency within Texas that seeks to meet the educational needs for students. This agency is independent of any government entity, although it does take guidance from the State Board of Education in Texas[13]. Also in both Michigan and Texas the standards are passed by the State Board of Education, a department for the state but once again not a lawmaking body.

Since a judicial body does not pass the curriculum, these agencies pass standards in the form of educational policy. Policy is often defined as a procedure that "outlines what a government agency hopes to achieve and the methods and principles it will use to achieve them."[14]. Since these agencies and state level board of education standards are used to create educational goals they are not laws but rather policy goals. Thus there is no overarching body that can check what is being published in these policy documents and consequently no institution is checking the bias of the content within the standards. These agencies are given powers to create a curriculum that shapes the education of every student within the state and yet they are allowed to do whatever they see fit.

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[13] "About TEA." *Texas Education Agency.*
[14] "The Policy and law making process." *Education and Training Unit (ETU).*

Without a monitoring system on these agencies their power seems to be unlimited in the ability to include or forbid whatever standards they see fit. From this arose a standards controversy within the science field over evolution versus creationism. With the states having the authority to include what they see is best for the students there has been inclusion of standards that are highly controversial. The argument then begins with does the choice to mandate that students know about creationism over evolution advance a certain religion? Most followers of the Christian faith are in favor of teaching creationist ideals to students in today's schools because it aligns with their biblical ideology[15]. Even though there has been scientific evidence to support evolution certain curriculum developers are seeking to expand these religious ideals to the students of the state.

In the 1987 Supreme Court case *Edwards v. Aguillard* the Supreme Court ruled that any law requiring creationism to be taught alongside evolution was unconstitutional because it sought to advance a particular religion, which violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. In this case Louisiana had a Creationism Act that forbid the teaching of the theory of evolution in public elementary and secondary schools unless accompanied by instruction in the theory of "creation science" [16]. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals held that "forbidding the teaching of evolution when creation science is not also taught undermines the provision of a comprehensive scientific education"[17]. The Court is implying that in order to receive a "comprehensive" education the students do not need to have both of these theories taught in tandem or at

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[15] Gibson , M. Troy. "Culture Wars in State Education Policy: A Look at the Relative Treatment of Evolutionary Theory in State Science Standards." 1135.
[16] Edwards v. Aguillard, 22 Ill.482 U.S. 578, 107 S. Ct. 2573, 96 L. Ed. 2d 510
[17] Ibid.

all. Although this issue revolved around the attempt to establish religion using curriculum it is important to note that curriculum developers have and continue to try to promote their ideals through compulsory public education.

However the big differences between this case and the current speculation of social studies curriculum has to do with the fact that there are no laws against this issue and thus judicial review established in Marbury v. Madison cannot apply. The courts are unable to step into and limit these agencies' powers over social studies curriculum even though these particular key players are trying to establish their own views within the curriculum.

For instance, Texas chose to include a particular standard specifically on religious freedoms outlined in the constitution in their U.S. Government standards which states: (7)(G) 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 to the phrase, "separation of church and state."[18]. The mere fact that the state of Texas chose to include a specific standard about religious freedoms outlined by the Constitution draws attention to the emphasis the curriculum developers want the students to know. A conservative and Christian ideology is interwoven throughout the social studies curriculum in Texas. These principles allow the curriculum to shape what the students are being taught and what concepts are being emphasized. Many other states don't include a particular standard solely on the separation of church

[18] Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II. Chapter 113. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Subchapter C. High School, 28.

and state, such as Michigan. In the Civics HSCE's one of the standards reads "explain how the Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Bill of Rights reflected political principles of popular sovereignty, rule of law, checks and balances, separation of powers, social compact, natural rights, individual rights, separation of church and state, republicanism and federalism."[19]. Both states require their students to know and understand the concept of separation of church and state but the wording in which the standards are written can significantly affect what exactly the students must know.

The same standard nearly started with "The Founding Fathers protected religious freedom in America by barring the government from promoting or disfavoring any particular religion above all other."[20]. The Board defeated this sentence from being included in the (7)(G) standard by a party-line vote[21]. Many of the proponents of the sentence argue the notion of separation of church and state is not found within the Constitution. One board member, republican David Bradley, even offered one thousand dollars to a charity of choice if one could point the notion out in the constitution[22].

Different interpretations of history and documents effect what is included in the curriculum. The personal opinions of the creators and their fixed beliefs about their study of expertise effect what is included in the curriculum. In some instances, the influence of personal opinion overruling fact serves to demonstrate a continual problem with state curriculums.

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[19] Michigan Department of Education. High School Social Studies Content Expectations. 54.
[20] Pierard, Richard V. . "Reappropriating History for God and Country ." 6.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

The inclusion of such standards like the one about separation of church and state, located in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), exemplifies the possible political, religious or social connotation behind curriculum standards. The diction behind each state's curriculum standards affects the overall political stance of the document or where it stands on a religious level. Texas is known to have a conservative undertone throughout their social studies curriculum due to the fact that the political and religious culture is very conservative throughout the state. On the other hand, there are many other states that are less political in nature, such as Michigan, where political bias and connotation can still find its way into their social studies curriculum. It all comes down to the creation process of the document, who is making the curriculum, what kind of outside interest groups have influence over the curriculum, and what kind of approval or revision process is in place before publication.

Curriculum Creation Process

Upon identification of problems between Texas and Michigan's state social studies curriculum, like identification of historical figures, cognitive demand and states political platforms one must look to the source of these problems, the creation process. The driving force between these two sets of curriculum is very different from state to state. How these documents were created has a significant impact on the outcome. Individuals are deciding what the students need to know and what information should be disregarded. In some instances these individuals are not experts in the field of education or subjects like history or economics. So what makes them qualified to be writing your students' standards?

Aside from the people involved in the creation process there are often interest groups lobbying to these curriculum boards to have their objectives present in these long lasting documents. These documents will help instill their objectives to students for years and shape how they view their role in society. If these groups are successful at lobbying during the creation process their ideals will be influential in creating the norm for future versions of state standards.

After drafts of the state standards have been generated the review process becomes instrumental in how the final document turns out. The rounds of edits and countless language changes affect the way standards are read and ultimately taught to our students. Who can view the documents before publication allows for more opinions to sway what is written or alter the intent of the writers themselves. Those involved in the review process have the ability to drastically change the document and in some instances without the writers knowledge.

Board members, interest groups and reviewers all have their own agenda when it comes to what they want the students to know and for the curriculum to include so it becomes a little complicated with so many agendas for one document. The influence each group has affects a different part of the creation process and ultimately greatly shapes the outcomes of the state social studies curriculums.

Board Member Choice

Who is creating state social studies curricula is the driving question. The answer helps us pinpoint the problems and issues with the curriculum that have been encountered. Once the background of the members involved in creating the curriculum are discovered it is easier to pinpoint the political bias in the document. Each state differs

on whom they have chosen to help them create their social studies curriculum. With this differentiation there have been many approaches on comprising a team that the state feels can best put together a solid curriculum.

When comprising a team to create a curriculum it is a logical assumption that each member would be highly educated in the content of the curriculum, what one might call an expert in that particular field. On top of being experts in their field a board should have experts in education, people who know not only the content, but also how it best should be taught to the students. The combination of content experts and education experts produce well-organized and effective results. However, some states assemble boards of members who are not highly qualified in the content nor education.

If these board members are not experts in the content field or education, how are the qualified to make such crucial decisions about student's education? The answer to that question is left up to state discretion. Some states hand chose who is on their curriculum boards while others put their trust into educational agencies. As a comparison, the state of Michigan chose to enlist the power of the secondary social studies curriculum committee choice in a single historical and educational expert, Robert Bain, in 2005[23]. Texas took an alternative route and had the Board of Education Members nominate whom they'd like to serve on the curriculum creation board[24]. State discretion allows individualized plans of action for each state's curriculum, allowing them to determine what will work best for their education system.

The problem with state discretion on committee member choice is that some states are choosing to include unqualified members into their creation process. The

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[23] Bain , Bob . Personal interview. 8 Nov. 2011.
[24] "TEA Mission and Responsibilities." *Texas Education Agency* .

Bradley Commission on History in Schools argues that curriculum building without the involvement of experienced educators is in fact "counter-productive"[25]. Even though placement of these members would seem "counter-productive" to a novice, these members are often placed on these boards to carry out their own political agenda or an agenda of a group or party that got them placement on the board. If they do not have their expertise in content or education to offer to the curriculum, what else do they have to offer other than their leadership and ability to carry out the political goals and agendas of their party?

The Bradley Commission on History in Schools is a national committee that aims to look at history curricula across the nation. The Bradley Commission has been working since 1987 to find flaws in history education and work to educate educators to fix these weaknesses to provide a well-balanced and effective history education[26]. The Commission publicized recommendations to American schools, one of which stood out to be overlooked by many states; "That history can be understood when the roles of all constituent parts of society are included; therefore the history of women, racial and ethnic minorities, and men and women of all classes and conditions should be integrated into historical instruction."[27]. With states permitting novices to help achieve political agendas, there are individual board members who argue to discredit or include the role of all constituent parties in the state curriculum. If the curriculum fails to mandate that the students know minority or female perspectives on some issues or discredit historical events for one side of the argument they are helping to shape the students political

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[25] The Bradley Commission on History in Schools . "Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools," 28.
[26] Ibid. 7.
[27] Ibid. 13.

stances on history. Giving students one side of the argument and not requiring that they think at a high enough level to refute or look into bias of the argument allows board members to mold the political beliefs of the students. Some curriculum board members are placed on the board strategically to persuade the board into steering students away from these perspectives.

Texas

Texas chose to invest their curriculum creation process in an agency known as the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The TEA aims to "provide leadership, guidance, and resources to help schools meet the educational needs of all students and prepare them for success in the global economy"[28]. Both the TEA and State Board of Education (SBOE) work together to guide and monitor public education in Texas. One of TEA's responsibilities is to provide support to the SBOE in the development of the statewide curriculum [29]. TIIE SBOE has authority to adopt the state curriculum, known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) from each subject of the required curriculum[30].

In 2008 the TEA began this endeavor with Texas' social studies state curriculum. The first step in the creation process was the choice of who would work to create such a curriculum. In this case, member choice was given to the SBOE members to nominate educators, parents, business and industry representatives, and employers to serve on the review committees creating the social studies curriculum[31]. The SBOE members had the

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[28] [28] "TEA Mission and Responsibilities." *Texas Education Agency* .
[29] Ibid.
[30] Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II. Chapter 113. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Subchapter C. High School.
[31] Ibid.

opportunity to nominate people of their choice to serve on predetermined committees that corresponded with the curriculum, such as: World Geography, World History, U.S. History, U.S. Government, Economics, Psychology, Sociology and Special Topics/ Research[32]. All fifteen SBOE members were allowed to nominate members to the review committee yet only nine did nominate to the various review committees[33]. Six SBOE members did not nominate anyone, leaving their say and input into the creation of the social studies curriculum nearly non-existent without a committee member to carry out any of their wishes in the curriculum.

SBOE nominations to the social studies committees are highly uneven, ranging from some members nominating zero to the social studies review committees and others nominating eight people. The more nominations an SBOE member has the greater the likelihood that these members serve on a variety of committees and can help the SBOE member promote their academic and political ideals.

Curricula are most effective when created by experts in the field of education and social studies. With this in mind, how are parents and citizens "experts" in the fields of U.S. History and Special Topics/ Research? The SBOE member that nominated these two nominees must have thought they were qualified to serve on the committee, or were strategically placed to make sure specific ideals were present in the Texas social studies curriculum.

One of the non-education professional on the review committees is Bill Ames[34]. Ames was appointed by the SBOE Chairman at the time, Don McLeroy. Dr. McLeroy

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[32] State Board of Education. TEKS Review Committees: Social Studies, 9-12.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

and his nomination Mr. Ames are both highly controversial characters in the social studies curriculum development process. Bill Ames is listed as citizen under the committee member's positions. However, Ames is a pronounced education activist and political conservative turned author[35]. As a member of the U.S. History review committee Ames tried to instill his right wing ideologies into the curriculum. Ames has publicly declared that he thinks there is an overrepresentation of minorities within the social studies curriculum and later went on to add that leftist committee members are seeking to imbed communist goals into the U.S. History curriculum[36]. He listed communist goals as: #30: Discredit[ing] the American Founding Fathers, #26: Present homosexuality as a normal, natural and healthy lifestyle, #29:Discredit the American Constitution by calling it inadequate, old fashioned and out of step with modern needs, in his book *Texas Trounces the Left's War on History* (Ames).

Ames was one of nine on the U.S. History review committee and the only non-educator. Declaring himself the only conservative on the committee he was outvoted eight to one on nearly every issue[37]. His mere nomination is a prime display of how members are strategically nominated in order to carry out political agendas. McLeroy's nomination of Ames was McLeroy's chance at a more conservative U.S. History curriculum. Luckily, the committee breakdown helped to counter Ames extremist views. Most of the nominees to the review committees were educators, aligning more politically to the left, but Ames nomination would argue and provide a right wing opposition to the curriculum at hand.

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[35] Ames , Bill . "Happy Birthday, America...We hate you!." *Texas Insider.*
[36] Dan. "Why Letting Extremists Develop Curriculum Standards for Schools Is a Bad Idea" *TFN Insider.*
[37] Ames , Bill . "Happy Birthday, America...We hate you!." *Texas Insider.*

McLeroy, also known as a republican and devoutly Christian man nominated like-minded right-wing committee members to help instill his beliefs into the curriculum. Having nominated seven members to six of the eight committees, McLeroy tried to cover as many bases and place as many conservatives on the board as he could[38].

McLeroy himself is a very controversial figure in Texas Education. As the chairman of the State Board of Education from 2007 to 2009, McLeroy aimed to instill his Christian faith into every facet of education and curriculum he could. Ironically not an expert in education himself, rather a dentist, he climbed to the top of the Texas State Board of Education and had influence for a few influential years during the recreation of many state curriculums[39].

While at the top, McLeroy was highly disliked by many educators. Several testimonies were sent prior to the Texas Senate confirmation hearings in effort to remove Don McLeroy from office in 2009. Character flaws, one of which being a "master of deceit" among blatant disregard for children's education, rather "playing politics" with it are common disapprovals of McLeroy[40]. His denial of experts to speak on behalf of the science curriculum[41] and rejection of a math textbook without justification even lead him to break a couple laws[42]. Although these accounts did not stop McLeroy from promoting his religious views in Texas Education. His continual efforts to work around the rules to

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[38] State Board of Education. TEKS Review Committees: Social Studies, 9-12.
[39] "Gov. Perry Reappoints McLeroy Chair of Texas State Board of Education ." *Office of the Governor - Rick Perry.*
[40]Kingman, John. Senate Nominations Committee. Testimony of John Kingman. 22 April 2009.
[41] Wetherington, R.K. Testimony before Texas State Confirmation Hearings. 22 April 2009.
[42] Kingman, John. Senate Nominations Committee. Testimony of John Kingman. 22 April 2009.

instill religion within the schools of Texas are a perfect example of personal political bias being infused into the school systems.

Of course there are plenty of qualified and well-educated experts that were also apart of the social studies review committees, certainly way more than the unqualified. Yet it is the fact that these non-experts or activists were allowed to be nominated onto the review committees that poses the problem. Their admittance on the committees allows for an opportunity of personal bias to persuade the outcome of the curriculum even more so because they are not equipped with the factual evidence to back up their arguments.

Michigan

Michigan chose to take an alternative route when it came to choosing who would sit on the high school social studies curriculum board. Rather than State Board of Education members appointing members to an agency, Michigan handed over the power to choose whom to include on the board to one particular person. These two separate approaches affect the board member choice of who to include on the board and ultimately the members involved may bring political bias and different levels of expertise.

In 2005 Michigan's State Legislature decided the state needed a better social studies curriculum. Prior to 2005, the state only mandated high school students to take a half a semester of civics and the rest was under local control. Aside from the mandated civic education the social studies curriculum was left up to local school districts to decide, this caused a problem because the students of Michigan could not be accurately assessed for their learning across the state because they were all learning different things[43].

[43] Bain , Bob . Personal interview.

Increases in business expectations lead Michigan to need a more structured and advanced state curriculum[44]. Michigan businesses were feeling as though the secondary education system in the state was not producing enough employable students into the workforce, so they had to increase graduation requirements in order to meet the demands of Michigan businesses. In an effort to increase graduation requirements and make a more rigorous curriculum to provide Michigan students with the knowledge necessary to enter the workforce, Michigan changed their high school graduation requirements in November of 2006[45]. Michigan went from having just the half semester of civics to requiring that their students earn 3 social studies credits throughout high school to graduate. The Michigan Merit Curriculum in 2006 required high school students to receive a half credit in Civics, a half credit in Economics, one credit in U.S. History and Geography and one credit in World History and Geography. The Michigan Merit Curriculum also stated that the content expectations for all of these courses were under development and not available to the public[46].

During this development time in 2005 and 2006, the Michigan State Board of Education had created this new Michigan Merit Curriculum and needed to start creating content expectations for each course students needed to have for graduation requirements. This way rather than giving up content expectations to local school districts the state of Michigan was going to create a standardized curriculum for all high school graduation requirement courses. At this time, the State Board of Education chose who would be involved in different content committees, similar to Texas. So in 2005 the social studies

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Michigan Department of Education. Michigan Merit Curriculum: High School Graduation Requirements. November 2006.
[46] Ibid.

curriculum committees started meeting to devise the high school social studies content expectations[47].

After the committees had completed their social studies content expectations for Civics, Economics, U.S. History and Geography, and World History and Geography they were sent back to the State Board of Education. On June 14th of 2006 the State Board of Education approved everything but the social studies content expectations. In a personal interview with Bob Bain, the chair of the World History committee, he said, " due to the lack or clear organization and adequate content standards the Board of Education chose not to approve the social studies content expectations[48]. There was also criticism by the Board of Education that the content expectations were too biased politically and must be more straightforward with the facts and content and less focused on the way they were worded[49].

After the rejection of the social studies content expectations the Department of Education decided to scrap the first social studies draft and rethink their creation process. The chair of the World History and Geography committee, Bob Bain, shocked the Board of Education by providing insight and great ideas for the social studies curriculum. In their new efforts to start fresh with the curriculum the Department of Education gave all authority over to Bain to create an academic review committee who he thought would be fitting to create an effective social studies curriculum[50].

This board member choice differs from Texas because at this time Michigan decided to trust their curriculum with a single individual who was in no way affiliated

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[47] Bain , Bob . Personal interview.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

with the State Board of Education or Department of Education. Bain's expertise in history and curriculum equipped him with the knowledge necessary to choose other experts in the social studies field.

Bain ended up choosing 17 members for the academic curriculum committee. Of those 17 members an overwhelming majority were university faculty, while 23.5% were teachers. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the committees by occupation. 70.59% of the committee was university faculty, mostly professors with doctorates in their field. These committee members were not just experts in their field but also in teaching their field. On top of knowing the facts they knew how to best teach the facts to the students for a successful outcome. This evidence depicts Bain's focus on accurate content information while creating the curriculum due to the level of expertise in the various subcommittees.

Table 3. Breakdown of the Michigan Social Studies Academic Curriculum Committee by occupation.

Occupation	Number of Members from that occupation out of the total 17 members	Percentage of Members from that occupational field
Teacher	4	23.53%
Instructional Specialist	1	5.88%
University Faculty	12	70.59%

When asked how he chose the members of the Social Studies Academic Curriculum Committee, Dr. Bain said that he primarily chose colleagues he had come across at various instructional events such as different history associations and

professional development workshops[51]. Craig Benjamin, a member of the World History and Geography Subcommittee said that he received a direct invitation from Dr. Bain himself[52]. The two of them were colleagues that served on the World History Association together and had attended many similar conferences. Their work together showed Bain Mr. Benjamin's expertise in the field of World History and Bain invited him aboard to help create the content expectations for that field[53]. Similarly, Jessica Cotter, another member of the World History and Geography Subcommittee said that she met Bain at an Oakland Independent School District professional development event[54]. While at the professional development event, run by Bain himself, Mrs. Cotter asked some interesting questions that Bain thought were important in writing the content expectations. Impressed by Cotter's interest and knowledge about standards Bain pleaded with her to come work on the World History and Geography Subcommittee[55]. His individual ties and working relationship with the members he chose for the committee built a level of trust among the professionals on the committee. With Bain's ties to each individual and first-hand experience working with them he built a system of trust.

Bain mentioned that he wanted highly qualified individuals that were experts in the content along with teachers who knew the best instructional strategies to teaching that content. The sought out level of expertise seams to be slightly higher than that of Texas who had a very different make up for their Curriculum Committee as you can see in Table 4.

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[51] Ibid.
[52] Benjamin, Craig. Phone interview.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Cotter, Jessica. Personal interview.
[55] Ibid.

Table 4. Breakdown of the Texas Social Studies Academic Curriculum Committee by occupation.

Occupation	Number of Members from that occupation out of the total 49 members	Percentage of Members from that occupational field
Teacher	34	69.39%
Instructional Specialist	8	16.33%
University Faculty	3	6.12%
Administration	2	4.08%
Other	2	4.08%

As you can see Texas only has 6.12% of its Curriculum Committee as university faculty (professors or doctors), providing the committee with less in-depth content knowledge. However, their large percentage of teachers ensures that the content expectations will most likely easier to transfer to the classroom as their expertise is more focused on pedagogical approaches and less on the accuracy of the content.

When asked about political bias among them members of the curriculum committee, Craig Benjamin said, " The whole experience was very collegiate. Being objective politically, religiously and not giving emphasis to any region."[56]. Similarly Jessica Cotter of the World History Subcommittee said, "My group was very careful to be transparent to political beliefs. How specific to get with the standards, inclusion of

[56] Benjamin, Craig . Phone interview.

specific names or characters. It seemed like every person would have a connotation. We tried to steer away from using specific people. Rather, we all brought some expectations of what it [the curriculum] should look like and went from there," [57].

Michigan's trust to create an effective curriculum committee was handed over to a single person; one not directly affiliated with any education group or political party is inherently different to the route Texas chose. When making decisions, the decision maker is concerned with the impact of the decisions at hand and their ability to operate successfully after those decisions are made[58]. In this case, Bain had personal motivation or political interest in the standards; therefore his decisions were based off of the well being of the curriculum and rather personal gain. Bain was not eligible to gain anything from leading the creation process. Bain was not seeking advancement in the Board of Education and did not seek to gain anything by leading the creation process. Therefore his decisions were not based around how this would effect him in the future, rather how this would effect Michigan students in the future.

Impact of Interest Groups

When creating a curriculum, debate over content is inevitable. Personal interest and control over the document and its lasting effects entices interest groups to join the debate over control of the curriculum. Like board members influence on curriculum, some interest groups also like to try to gain power and have some influence over the creation process. Having a say in the content of the curriculum allows that interest groups ideals to not only be present in the state but also mandated, ensuring the longevity of the interest group itself.

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[57] Cotter, Jessica. Personal interview.
[58] Farnham, Barbara. "Political Cognition and Decision-Making."94.

A variety of interest groups want to stake their claim on state social studies curriculum. The nature of the subject encompasses the social order, various historical perspectives, diversity issues, political theory and political parties, debate over the duties of citizenship and macro and microeconomic views, among countless others which stir up conversation and debate over perspectives. Interest groups attempt to put their two cents in on these debates by trying to gain influence in the creation process. Subject matter, political, religious and personal rights interest groups are among the leading interest groups who tried to stake their position in the Texas and Michigan social studies curriculum.

The question then, is how successful were these interest group attempts to instill their beliefs in the social studies curriculum of each state?

Texas

During 2009-2010, when the board members chosen by the department of education were meeting to discuss the content of the curriculum outside interest groups had very little power to intervene within the meetings of the board members. The review committees were closed until open review was allowed by the Department of Education in May of 2010[59]. Before this time review and edits of the high school social studies curriculum were only allowed by the board members themselves, state board of education members, and nominated expert reviewers[60]. Interest groups themselves did not have access to the curriculum creation process in Texas. Their only chance to make headway and influence the curriculum was to make huge gains in the public testimony hearings.

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[59] Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II. Chapter 113. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Subchapter C. High School.
[60] Ibid.

One of the final steps before approving the TEKS is public hearing[61]. There is a 30 day official public comment period provided by the Texas Register that allows the public to sign up to give personal testimony to the Board of Education on the TEKS[62]. During this public testimony those that sign up to give testimony may speak their opinion on any part of the TEKS for Social Studies. While their concerns are heard the Texas Education Agency (TEA) documents the testimony. After two public hearings are held the TEA summarized the public comments and provides summaries to the State Board of Education for review of the testimonies[63]. However, the State Board of Education decides to use these public concerns and recommendations is left up to them. Thus it is imperative that these interest groups make a large impression and attempt to persuade the State Board of Education during their public testimony because it is the only chance that they have during the creation process to attempt to have their interests present in the curriculum.

During the Public Testimony Registration individuals are allowed to sign up to give public testimony on their opinion of the TEKS. The registration allows individuals to list their affiliation with any group and state whether or not they are a registered lobbyist[64]. On the first public hearing testimony registration list for March 10th, 2010, four of the fifty-four individuals registered to give testimony were registered lobbyists. The four registered lobbyists were there on the part of the following interest groups:

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[61] Texas Education Agency. January 2011
Process for Review and Revision of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).
[62] Brelsford, Julie. Phone interview.
[63] Texas Education Agency. January 2011
Process for Review and Revision of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).
[64] Texas State Board of Education. Public Testimony Registrations State Board of Education Committee of the Full Board. 10 March 2010.

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Texas American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the Liberty Institute. This selection of interest groups shows the variety of interests who want to influence the social studies curriculum to include their perspectives and ideals. The MALDEF and NAACP provide evidence that diverse groups all fought to have their historical perspectives and viewpoints within the curriculum. Also the AFT argues for "high quality public education", exhibiting the educational interest groups that argued for a quality curriculum for the students of Texas[65]. Lastly, the Liberty Institute is a legal organization dedicated to "defending and restoring religious liberty in America"[66]. Religious groups also want to stake their claim into the historical perspectives, especially how the curriculum frames the issue of church and state.

Those four interest groups were only the ones with registered lobbyists, however there were nineteen others registered for the public testimony that were not registered lobbyists themselves, rather there on behalf of their organization without registering as a lobbyist. These nineteen individuals still had the same goal as the registered lobbyists, to persuade the State Board of Education to include content that would benefit their interests. A majority of these nineteen individuals affiliated with groups were associated with diverse minority interest groups, fighting for their history and perspectives to be included in the social studies curriculum. For example, there were several individuals registered that were affiliated with the League of United Latin American Citizens

[65] "A Union of Professionals - About Page." AFT - American Federation of Teachers - A Union of Professionals. http://www.aft.org/about/

[66] "About Liberty Institute." Liberty Institute. http://www.libertyinstitute.org/about

(LULAC)[67]. LULAC's mission is to advance the Hispanic population of the United States through several venues such as economic conditions, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health and civil rights[68]. The LULAC group wanted to guarantee that Texas curriculum provided the growing Hispanic population with their history and culture.

After the first public hearing on March 10th, 2010 a second public hearing was held on May 19, 2010[69]. During this hearing 208 individuals registered to give public testimony, almost four times as many as the first public hearing. Although many of the individuals chose to not list an affiliation, 28% of the individuals registered did list an affiliation. The variety of interest groups listed was broader than the public testimony in March and nearly all of these interest groups listed their viewpoint as being against the Social Studies TEKS or listed their viewpoint as other. Only a handful of affiliations said they were for the Social Studies TEKS[70]. This public testimony was the last chance that interest groups had in their effort to sway the State Board of Education into infusing some of their ideals into the curriculum.

Different editions and drafts of the Social Studies TEKS were published throughout the process with edits highlighted and color coded to show the order and date in which they were edited[71]. The draft indicates that the State Board of Education did make quite a few edits after public testimony was heard.

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[67] Texas State Board of Education. Public Testimony Registrations State Board of Education Committee of the Full Board. 10 March 2010.
[68] "LULAC: Mission." *LULAC.*
[69] Texas State Board of Education. Public Testimony Registrations State Board of Education Committee of the Full Board. 19 May 2010.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Texas Education Agency. Proposed Revisions to 19 TAC Chapter 113.

Many of the additions or edits to the document were on the basis of religion. For example, United States Government standard 7 C was added after public testimony which reads: "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 to the phrase "separation of church and state."[72]. With this addition to discuss and debate more religious topics in the schools and emphasize the free exercise of religion is attempting to instill more religious beliefs into the curriculum, just as the religious interest groups had sought to do. Other gains in the areas of emphasizing a free enterprise system and its benefits and some addition of minority and female rights were also evident[73].

Although the interest groups' effect on the social studies TEKS can not be quantitatively studied its effects are evident within the revisions of the draft after the hearings. The public testimonies did serve some significance during the creation process as more standards were added and eliminated after the two rounds of public testimony. Texas' use of public hearings allowed for interest groups to advocate for their beliefs in a public domain but ultimately left the power up to the State Board of Education to decide whether or not to listen to these groups or disregard their wishes. Some interest groups proved to have a small influence on the final product of the Social Studies TEKS while others were not able to persuade the board members to include or alter the standards to their liking.

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[72] Ibid. 43.
[73] Ibid.

Michigan

Interest groups in Michigan chose an alternative strategy to try to influence the curriculum. These interest groups targeted the academic review teams themselves at the beginning of the creation process. As the review teams were personally chosen by chair Bob Bain, the teams and meetings were less publicized than those in Texas. A few key interest groups targeted Bain himself at the beginning of the curriculum creation process in 2006.

In a personal interview with Bain himself, Bain noted that quite a few interest groups wanted to take him out to dinner to discuss their goals and ideals for the social studies HSCE's. In his first and only outing with an interest group, Bain met with the Personal Finance interest group. Throughout the meeting the Personal Finance group argued that the economics curriculum should mainly be centered on personal finance and not macro and micro economic theory. After discussing with them why he did not feel that personal finance was the best choice for Michigan students the Personal Finance group was clearly displeased. After Bain's experience with meeting with them and hearing out their concerns he made sure that he would no longer meet with any interest group. Wining and dining to Bain felt morally wrong and he knew would be unfair and exhausting[74].

With interest groups unable to wine and dine the chair of the review committees they had to look for an alternative venue to get their point to the committees. A particular interest group, the Michigan Geographical Alliance chose to lobby for their cause

[74] Bain , Bob. Personal interview.

through written letters to the Board of Education[75]. The Michigan Geographical Alliance is an organization aimed at "supporting geographic education"[76]. Their main argument was that they wanted history and geography to be two separate curriculums in the Social Studies HSCE's. So instead of having a World History and Geography course as a single class and credit they wanted a World History class and a World Geography class as its own course and credit, the same was true for United States History and Geography. The group was angered that these two separate realms were being combined into one course and felt that with this single course a comprehensive geographic education would be sacrificed to meet historical standards. In a personal interview with Craig Benjamin, a member of the World History academic review team, Benjamin noted that the persistence of the Michigan Geographical Alliance prompted their review team to include more geographic terms and standards to the documents to please the interest group and attempt to make a well balanced education for Michigan students in both history and geography[77]. This compromise also prompted the review team to send a copy of their standards directly to the group itself and asked that their experts and other geography professors review their standards and respond back with comments that they could take into consideration.

Other interest groups chose to communicate their concerns by phone call to the State Board of Education. Benjamin also spoke of some Christian communities that continued to call the State Board of Education throughout the creation process. There were several Christian communities that said that they didn't want the Middle East

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[75] Benjamin, Craig. Phone interview

[76] "About Us - Network of Alliances for Geographic Education - National Geographic." *Network of Alliances for Geographic Education - National Geographic.*

[77] Benjamin, Craig. Interview by author. Phone interview

portrayed as an exclusively Islamic zone. Through countless phone calls they asked that some language be included in the curriculum document that suggested that there were still Christians residing within that region. Benjamin said that in order to compromise with the Christian interest in the Islamic Zone they added "but with the continuance of other religious traditions" into the Islamic Zone standard[78].

With the interest groups mainly having to communicate through the State Board of Education in order to get their requests and opinions heard persistence and persuasion were key. The groups discussed above made countless forms of communication to get their voice heard. Similar to that of Texas there was a thirty to ninety day web review process where individuals could voice their opinions. However, in Michigan there was not a public hearing where individuals could register their affiliation, whether they were a registered lobbyist and their viewpoint. Rather a draft of the document was published online and open to anyone in the public to review and make comments.

Amy Bloom, a Social Studies Coordinator at Oakland Schools in Michigan, played a pivotal role in reviewing the curriculum throughout the creation process. Bain trusted Bloom's opinion and wanted the perspective of a coordinator who knew how best to implement the curriculum within the schools. Bloom confided that there was a major error with the online public review. Anyone could go on and leave their opinion without documenting their name, affiliation or credentials. So as the public comments were rolling in to the Board of Education they were highly unorganized and it was not identifiable whether the source of these comments had any knowledge in the subjects or

[78] Ibid.

with education. Consequently, the Board of Education couldn't really trust or use most of the public opinions left on the web review[79].

This differs from Texas, where interest groups' main outlet was through public testimony. In Michigan's case, due to the web review glitch, most of the interest groups had to make headway through communication during the curriculum creation process. In both states many of the interest groups were listened to and the review committees attempted to compromise when they saw fit by slightly altering the wording in a few of the standards to accommodate the concerns of the interest group and create a more balanced curriculum.

Review Process

Any last efforts at altering the state curriculum happen during the review process. After each state has developed a draft of the curriculum they allow the draft to be reviewed by the public and expert reviewers. This review process opens up the document and allows anyone to put their two cents in on the composition of the curriculum. Each state has specific protocol on who will review the curriculum at hand and then be passed on to another authority. Once the document has left the hands of a particular group they no longer have the power to alter the document, ultimately the final steps of the review process are pivotal. Any last efforts at infusing political bias into the document must be made during the review process.

Texas

After the Texas Education Agency (TEA) completes their first draft of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for high school social studies they then had to

[79] Bloom, Amy. Personal interview.

send the draft to six expert reviewers. These expert reviewers were nominated by State Board of Education members and had to meet three specific criteria to be qualified for the position. The first criteria was that the reviewer must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. The second required that the reviewer has demonstrated his or her expertise in the subject area in which he or she is being appointed. In this case, the expert reviewers would need to have demonstrated their expertise in the field of social studies. And lastly, the reviewer has either taught or worked in such field. After meeting these criteria, an expert must be nominated by two or more board members to be placed on the expert review panel In attempt to control the make up of the panel a State Board of Education member may not nominate more than one expert[80]. The expert reviewers are to review all of the Social Studies TEKS from elementary through secondary.

Four of the six social studies expert reviewers were professors at accredited Texas universities, while the remaining two were presidents of religiously affiliated groups[81]. David Barton, President of Wallbuilders, and Peter Marshal, President of Peter Marshall Ministries, were both nominated as expert reviewers. David Barton is the founder and president of Wallbuilders, an organization aimed to present American History with an emphasis on "moral, religious and constitutional heritage"[82]. Although Barton is an expert in historical and constitutional issues and has helped developed standards for other states such as California, this does not undermine the fact that Barton's personal opinions on the religious aspects of American history are his focus.

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[80] Texas Education Agency. Process for Review and Revision of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). January 2011.
[81] "Social Studies Experts." Texas Education Agency .
[82] "David Barton Bio." WallBuilders.

In Barton's review of the 2009 Social Studies TEKS much of his focus was on the Constitution and Founding Fathers, as is the field of his expertise. In his review Barton argued, "The importance of a written constitution cannot be understood unless one understands why written documents were originally introduced into American government."[83]. Barton pushed to include that students must know the background of written documents by saying "they were the norm for every colony founded by Bible-minded Christians" and in order to fully understand the importance of the American Constitution students must know that "The Bible gave a healthy spur to the belief in a written constitution"[84].

Similarly, in a biography of Peter Marshal, another expert reviewer, he was said to have "educate [d] countless Americans about God's role in the unfolding of our nation's destiny"[85]. Marshal was concerned with the future of America and wanted to "return the nation to the original vision of the Founding Fathers"[86]. Throughout Marshal's review of the 2009 Social Studies TEKS he pushed for the standards to reflect the Biblical influences on American government. For example, in Marshal's review to the curriculum division he emphasizes biblical influences on America's past such as sin, consent of he governed, covenant and influence of the Spirit of God in the development of early American history. Marshal argued " In light of the overwhelming historical evidence of the influence of the Christian faith in the founding of America it is simply not up to acceptable academic standards that throughout the social studies TEKS I could find

[83] Barton, David. 2009 TEKS Review. 20.
[84] Ibid.
[85] "About | Peter Marshall Ministries." Peter Marshall Ministries.
[86] Ibid.

only one reference to the role of religion in the America's past"[87]. Upon examining Marshal's review of the Social Studies TEKS, nearly half of his opinion dealt with his disapproval over Texas' not including as much Christian influence in the standards as he would have liked. The basis for this main argument is found among his review when Marshal said that the students should know the Biblical worldviews of those involved in colonizing America; "And, if the cause and effect relationship between people's worldview and their actions is made an integral element of the teaching of history, then the study of American history, can become inspirational for our students in regard to the formation of their own lives, rather than simply informational"[88].

Marshal's attempt to inspire Texas students through biblical influence was not followed by any of the other expert reviewers. Among the reviews done by the remaining experts there was only reference to the Bible in one other review. In Daniel L. Dreisbach's (American University Professor) review he mentions the Bible once while discussing the High School Social Studies TEKS. In his opinion on the United States Government standard(c) (2) (A) Dreisbach wanted the Bible to be added to the list of influences that have shaped U.S. Political policy[89]. His expert review wanted the students to be required to give examples of how the Bible has affected American public policy.

Similar to the bias in member choice, the opinions and personal views of education and what one believes the students should know can only go so far, due to checks on power. Ultimately the opinions of these expert reviews are then sent back to

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[87]Marshall, Peter. "Feedback on the current k-12 Social Studies TEKS."
[88] Ibid.
[89] Dreisbach, Daniel. "A Report to the Texas Education Agency on K-12 Social Studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills". 22-23.

the TEA to review the recommendations made by the experts and make any alterations they see fit. After the TEA makes their alterations the updated draft of the curriculum is then posted online for informal feedback[90].

After informal feedback is encouraged on the internet, the six expert reviewers are asked to review the document again and provide another set of recommendations. During the time in which informal feedback by the public was collected experts and one representative from each TEKS review committee provide invited testimony at a State Board of Education meeting to inform the Board of their recommendations and feedback on the document. After meeting with thee State Board of Education the TEA staff compiles the informal feedback and expert recommendations and then sends them to the State Board of Education Members[91].

At this point in the revision process nearly all of the power is then handed back to the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education discusses the feedback received from the public and expert reviewers and then directs the TEA staff to prepare a draft of the document to include requested revisions by the State Board of Education. At this point the TEA makes all of the adjustments demanded by the State Board of Education and then holds a public hearing. As previously discussed, members of the public may sign up with an affiliation to a group or by themselves to share their opinions with the State Board of Education. After two public hearings are held, the TEA summarizes the public comments and provides those summaries to the State Board of Education who review the comments and then work on the proposed amendments

[90] Texas Education Agency. Process for Review and Revision of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). January 2011.
[91] Ibid.

themselves[92]. With the State Board of Education working on the document in the final stages of its publication process they ultimately have the authority to alter or doctor the curriculum document however they see fit. There is no check on the power of the State Board of Education to stick with requested revisions or listen to overwhelming public opinion. The only pressure the State Board of Education has to remain true to these revisions and the entire review process is that if it chose to significantly alter the document there would be communal backlash and media coverage publicizing those decisions.

In the case of the 2009 High School Social Studies TEKS the State Board of Education chose not to adopt some of the recommendations by the expert reviewers. The Board chose not to adopt the particular views previously discussed by Barton, Marshal and Dreisbach, yet they did listen to some of their other recommendations and the recommendations of the expert reviewers.

The final step in the publication and review process of the TEKS is the State Board of Education discusses and completes a final reading and adoption of the documents and set an implementation date[93]. On May 21, 2010 the State Board of Education approved the social studies TEKS for final adoption, wrapping up the three year long curriculum creation process.

Michigan

Upon the completion of Michigan's work groups creating an initial draft of the Michigan High School Content Expectations (HSCE's) for social studies it was sent to the Michigan State Board of Education for review. During this initial review by the State

[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

Board of Education in May of 2006 the Department of Education attempted to ban the use of "America" and "American" in the social studies HSCE's; which sparked immediate backlash.

In an attempt at political correctness, K. Tataroff, the Social Studies Coordinator for the Department of Education, attempted to remove the word "America and "American" from the HSCE's. Her pivotal mistake was a rash email sent to Michigan teachers advising them to stop using "America" in their classrooms[94]. This email ended up going viral and was sent to Oakland Country Judge Michael Warren who published an article in the Detroit News on the issue[95]. In "Keep 'America' in Michigan schools" Warren patronizes this word choice and Michigan's attempt at trying to be "internationally friendly"[96]. With the removal of "America" and insertion of "United States" the social studies HSCE's was now full of historical errors and improper grammar, ultimately pushing back the review process.

More criticisms seemed to flood in over the social studies standards. On June 14th, 2006 the Board of Education approved all other subject areas except social studies. This rejection led the Department of Education to scrap all of it's previous work on the framework and start from scratch by appointing Bob Bain, to chair and run the social studies work group[97]. With Bain running the show this time around the curriculum creation process started all over again.

Once the committee members created a draft of the social studies HSCE's it was sent to the State Board of Education for review. Similar to Texas, during this time it was

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[94] Bain, Bob. Personal interview.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Warren, Michael. "Keep 'America' in Michigan Schools."
[97] Bain, Bob. Personal interview.

also published online for web review by the public. However in a personal interview with Amy Bloom, Social Studies Coordinator at Oakland Schools, she confessed that there were many errors with the web review. For instance, the public comments didn't have a place for the reviewers to leave their name or contact information. The State Board of Education who was collecting all of these comments could not contact who left the comments and ask about their expertise or knowledge that led them to that conclusion or even communicate with them at all. This led to a large unorganized pile of public reviews, most of which could not be properly used to advance the document due to their lack of knowledge on who was requesting that the changes be made[98]. Even with the lack of organization and fatal error with the public review Michigan chose not to hold another web review. Allowing for another web review meant that the State Board of Education would have had to admit to its flaws, something it was not willing to do.

The State Board of Education compiled the adequate public reviews and then made recommendations to the work group to change parts of the HSCE's. The work group reconvened and worked on a second draft. This second draft was then sent out for national review. In a personal interview with Bain, Bain said that he wanted to send the HSCE's out to experts he knew would provide critical feedback that the work group could work with. He sent the document out to other states, influential experts in the field, professors, and prior critics of the document like Jude Warren, who had written the 'America' article[99]. When asked, Bain said that he had intentionally sent the curriculum to people he knew were on both sides of the political spectrum[100]. His goal of the social

[98] Bloom, Amy. Personal interview.
[99] Bain, Bob. Personal interview.
[100] Ibid.

studies HSCE's was purely academic, to provide a well-balanced and rounded education for Michigan students. By openly inviting review from both sides of the political spectrum Bain could gage the political views of the document and do his best to accommodate both sides.

After feedback was sent back by the national review, the work groups were asked to reconvene to make final edits to the social studies HSCE's. After these edits were complete the final draft was sent to the State Board of Education for approval. This time the State Board was much more impressed with the work done the second time around. Warren published another article rejoicing his delight over the final product on October 5, 2007. In "State gets it right with new social studies curriculum" Warren declared the curriculum "provide[s] the rigor, specificity content, and guidance that our educators, students, and parents need and deserve"[101].

The difference between Texas and Michigan lies with whom has the power during the review process. In Texas the final important stages of the review process were all left to the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education had final approval in both states but in Texas the Board could make significant changes and were the ones making the edits after the public hearings. In Michigan the State Board of Education could make final edits as well, but the work group had their hands on the document up until its last days of approval. The length of time that the document was in with the experts in content and curriculum, compared to the State Board of Education is important to note because these were the experts chosen by the Board whom they were to trust with creating a well-balanced curriculum. The State Board of Education holds the ultimate power over the

[101] Warren, Michael. "State gets it right with new social studies curriculum."

creation of the document but they are not experts in the field of social studies so their edits and additions are left up to questioning. The longer the document is in the hands of the State Board of Education the more possibilities non-experts have at altering the curriculum document.

Conclusion

After identifying three main problems, which allow for the curriculum document to be altered, such as member choice, interest groups and the review process, one can see that there are several opportunities that political bias has to make its way into the curriculum. Through the comparison of Texas and Michigan's social studies curriculum-creation process one can conclude there are alternative processes that may used from state to state. Neither process is inherently superior over another; they are just different ways of going through the creation process. However, even with these two different processes the key points that allow for political bias to enter the curriculum are the same.

The choice of members involved in drawing out the curriculum document and editing the first few drafts are pivotal. In some instances members are appointed or picked to be a member in order to seek out a personal or political agenda; it is the leader's role to make sure that every member is behaving in a academic manner and creating a curriculum that is best for the students of their state.

Interest groups lobby for their cause to be put into the curriculum due to the document's long-lasting and powerful effects. All students in that particular state are required to know and meet the standards the curriculum outlines. If the interest groups are successful in having an impact on the creation process and adding or altering a few of the standards this helps ensure the longevity and success of the interest group. Interest

groups in the case of Texas and Michigan tried to win over the board members themselves but had more success through voicing their opinions during the public review.

Lastly, the review process procedure for each individual state allows for review by several institutions. Those that review the document, such as experts, the Board of Education and the public all have the opportunity to try to alter the curriculum during these final stages. Any last efforts to infuse political bias into the document have to be made during the review process before final review and passing of the curriculum document itself.

Looking back to Westheimer and Kahne's theory on political perspectives in education, which said, "the ways that educators advance [these] visions may privilege some political perspectives regarding the way problems are framed and responded to". Social studies curricula shape the civic education of today's students. It is the state's duty to strive for a curriculum that is as minimally biased as possible so that the students are allowed to respond to questions and problems of society and frame a better future for themselves and society around them. The states are able to do this by actively paying attention to the creation of their state curriculum in three critical points in the process, board member choice, interest groups and the review process. By limiting the amount of political bias in the curriculum at these specific points, states will be able to create a curriculum that limits political bias and allows for students to engage and learn about different perspectives of the world around them.

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