

MELINDA A. LEMKE

3. (UN)MAKING THE NEOLIBERAL AGENDA IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

*A Critical Discourse Analysis of Texas High School Social
Studies Policy Processes*

INTRODUCTION

One defends democracy by leading it to the state Mannheim calls ‘militant democracy’—a democracy which does not fear the people, which suppresses privilege, which can plan without becoming rigid, which defends itself without hate, which is nourished by a critical spirit rather than irrationality. (Freire, 1973, p. 58)

A microcosm of our broader democracy, US public education is shaped by competing politics, agendas, and historical moments. A function of federal, state, and local policy, public schooling is viewed by some as a linchpin to democratic equality. Yet to others, the purpose of public education is to serve the US economy. Rather than a social equalizer and public good, in this vein education is held as a private commodity hinging on merit, choice, and privatization. If as Laswell (1958) posited, education is about who gets *what, when, and how*, then within this ideological divide educational policy clearly operates as a high-stakes game with great consequences for students and society.

Given the friction between the ideal of public schooling as the guarantor of progress and hastened economic disinvestment in public schools, there is a need to examine the structures and discourses that control educational policy. The present study uses critical discourse analysis to examine the ideological machinations of neoliberalism within Texas curriculum policy processes and resultant high school social studies standards. In the following section I outline key problems neoliberalism poses for public education and society, as well as how my study adds to educational research literature focused on issues of ideology, inequity, and standardization. My analysis reveals how Texas curriculum policy processes and implementation in the form of high school social studies standards serve as sites of ideological conflict. In doing so, I argue that neoliberal discourses privilege certain forms of erudition, ultimately buttressing “standardized” student knowledge construction supportive of a market driven status quo. I conclude my analysis by highlighting educational quandaries

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created by undemocratic policy processes, broad implications for student knowledge production, and hope for un(making) the neoliberal agenda in public education.

MAKING THE NEOLIBERAL AGENDA

Neoliberalism is a historical and socially constructed ideology that needs to be made visible, critically engaged, and shaken from the stranglehold of power it currently exercises over most of the commanding institutions of national and global life. (Giroux, 2008, p. 10)

Designed to attack twentieth century Keynesian economics and welfare programming, contemporary American thinking about neoliberalism can be traced to Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962). Premised on false claims about US constitutionalism, Friedman's neoliberalism or a revived classical liberalism, held decentralized governance and free market activity to be the best check against a paternalistic state. Yet, in moving to supplant democracy with market driven interests, by definition neoliberalism aims at privatization, weakened social welfare safety nets, and undermined federal authority to protect the public good (Giroux, 2008; Giroux & Giroux, 2006; Harvey, 2007). Neoliberal policy not only aims at denigrating public services as unneeded welfare programming, but seeks to remove public regulatory powers—not by proving that regulations fail society, but by showing that state regulations restrict economic growth (Duggan, 2003; Sloan, 2008). As a result, the neoliberal promise of economic and therefore political freedom is little more than hallow rhetoric.

Similar to England's Thatcherism, neoliberal policies under Nixon and Reagan involved an upward distribution of wealth and power. In the 1970s and 1980s these policies ushered in corporate reductions of highly skilled workers and the concomitant invention of a contingent workforce lacking liveable wages and benefits (Harvey, 2007; Krugman, 2005). This neoliberal economic shift occurred alongside business and military allegations that US schools failed to create a skilled workforce (Cuban, 2004). US corporate downsizing and outsourcing, skyrocketing poverty, and false claims about worker proficiencies in the technical professions have only increased in recent years contributing to what Shapiro and Purpel (2005) referred to as the "race to the bottom" (p. 368). Thus, in a short period of human history, neoliberal policy and messaging operated in tandem to foment a new Gilded Age for the wealthy with a permanent underclass (Katz, 1990; Krugman, 2005).

Referring not to political affiliations such as Republican or Democrat (Aronowitz, 2003), according to Harvey (2007) neoliberal discourses pervade US institutions in ways that are "commonsense" to how "we interpret, live in, and understand the world" (p. 23). Yet, neoliberalism does more than just promote the free market. Moving beyond nineteenth century factory-style efficiency models, the evolution of capitalism in its contemporary neoliberal form serves to colonize personal conduct, knowledge production, and our most intimate subjectivities—while simultaneously

marginalizing certain *Othered* groups for their nationality, sex, gender, social class, or racial status (Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2008).

Due to their role in societal knowledge production, schools have been central to the neoliberal project of a reconstructed democratic society (Aronowitz, 2003)—with the history of business-orientated influence over public schooling and curriculum well-documented in educational research literature (Callahan, 1962; Cuban 1993, 2004; Cuban & Tyack, 1995; Kliebard, 1995; Shapiro & Purpel, 2005; Tyack, 1974; Zilversmit, 1993). Contemporary neoliberal attacks on public and higher education promulgate learning environments focused on economic efficiency, predictability, and determinism instead of critical consciousness, civic engagement, and political empowerment (Giroux, 2002; Saltman, 2006). Broadly, neoliberal discourses are part of educational policies that cut school funding, promote charters and vouchers, corporatize teacher training, advocate standardized curriculum models within the K-16 pipeline, and leave schools vulnerable to corporate advertising (Apple, 2001; Cuban, 2004; Giroux, 2002; Sleeter, 2002, 2008; Sleeter & Stillman, 2008; Sloan, 2008). Through well-insulated sociopolitical discourses and resultant policies, the *McDonaldization* of school life has become the new normal for public education (Ritzer, 1993).

The Culture Wars: Critical versus Neoliberal “Drill and Kill” Education

The pedagogic device, the condition for the materializing of symbolic control, is the object of a struggle for domination, for the group who appropriates the device has access to a ruler and distributor of consciousness, identity, and desire. (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999, p. 268)

War on Poverty educational reforms were landmark in that for the first time in US history, social policy addressed the role public education played in transmitting, controlling, and recreating social and economic hierarchy beneficial to the upper class. Critical scholarship of the time highlighted connections between political economy, broad social arrangements, and educational experience (Carnoy, 1974; Bowles & Gintis, 1976), as well as how teacher pedagogy and curriculum supported the status quo (Apple, 1979/1990). Despite this momentum, the Reagan Administration’s *A Nation at Risk* (1983) ushered in a wave of neoliberal educational policy changes. Part of broader culture wars fixated on improving US workforce “efficiency,” managing “urban” crime, and scaling back “welfare” programming, individuals like Reagan’s Assistant Secretary of State Chester Finn championed back-to-basics and lecture-based education far removed from critical thinking. Former Secretary of Education William Bennett and scholars such as E. D. Hirsch and Mortimer Adler also pushed a narrowed, male-centric, “classics” version of history and literature (Kincheloe, 2001). Representative of a paradigm shift in educational politics, between the 1980s and 1990s educational rhetoric and resultant policy were dominated by neoliberalism and conservative modernism.

Notable local activism and critical scholarship pushed back against this bent and what came to be considered a *manufactured crisis* that from a critical view, failed to address basic economic, sex, gender, and racial inequities within urban school landscapes (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1984). Such critical scholarship and local engagement refused to accept a deficit policy model, which placed the onus for success on already disadvantaged students and was quick to label community schools as failing. Rather, contextual issues like entrenched racism, generational poverty, disappearing safety nets for women and children, high student mobility rates, increased community surveillance, and perennial staff turnover were highlighted (Lareau, 2003; Fine & Wise, 2000; Noguera, 2003).

Research also documented how standards-based policy actually weakens critical pedagogy, decreases rigor, and increases the achievement gap (Reardon, 2011). Apple (1990, 2000) examined for example, the ways US social studies curriculum and Channel One programming reproduces conservative ideology. Nichols and Berliner (2008) documented how the threat of sanctions leads to system gaming that inculcates “drill and kill” teaching and excludes low performing students from testing. Finally, Collin and Apple (2011) discussed how schools utilize bureaucratic and technologically-focused curricula to the demise of humanities-based critical thinking skills.

Texas-specific research also revealed an accountability system that diminishes rigor and further marginalizes already disadvantaged youth (Vasquez Heilig & Darling Hammond, 2008). While McNeil and Valenzuela (2001) found Texas to emphasize “the lowest level of information and skills, crowds out other forms of learning, and disengages students in many urban schools” (p. 138), Salinas (2006) found that even the most committed US history teachers acquiesced to high-stakes test preparation. Overall, it has been argued that state accountability systems focused on high-stakes testing and lacking in culturally rich curriculum act to ignore, isolate, stratify, and perpetuate violence against certain bodies in our public schools (Lugg, 2003; Shapiro & Purpel, 2005).

Integral to the maintenance of an ideological system premised on inequality is control of information, access to it, and the processes by which new knowledge is constructed. The Texas accountability system relies on curriculum standards mandated by the State Board of Education (SBOE), with control of that curriculum signifying control of knowledge production. Akin to the ideologically-driven elimination of Mexican American Studies in the Tucson, Arizona Unified School District (TUSD) (Davila, 2012) was the 2010 SBOE high school social studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) revision process.¹

Local, national, and international media outlets recognized the culture war status of the Texas revisions, critiquing board members for ideological changes that resulted in uncritical and narrowed curriculum standards (see: TEKS Watch for a comprehensive list). A content analysis by Vasquez Heilig, Brown, and Brown (2012) illustrated how SBOE revisions to the US history TEKS rendered “race

invisible” (p. 413) and addressed racism “without directly using the term and without acknowledging the White identity of those implicated in these actions” (p. 416).

Yet, a study that goes beyond an analysis of the US history TEKS and includes a critique of the policy processes responsible for the TEKS revisions does not exist. My study fills this research gap by examining the ideological machinations of neoliberalism within high school world history, US history, government, and economics TEKS, as well as relevant curriculum policy processes. While it does not offer a macro-level analysis of neoliberalism (see for example, Duggan 2003; Giroux, 2008; Ritzer, 1993), my study offers a micro-level critique of neoliberal discourses found within a specific Texas state agency and resultant high school social studies curriculum standards.

In the following section I outline my research methodology, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Using critical discourse analysis, my study answers the following question: How is neoliberal ideology expressed in the 2010 high school world history, US history, government, and economics TEKS and related SBOE policy processes? As a form of critical bricolage (McLaren, 2001) my study challenges the so-called “open” SBOE policy process and “facts” contained in the revised TEKS. My study reveals how neoliberal discourses are silent on historically difficult sociopolitical and economic issues to the detriment of what Freire (1973) called *problem-posing education*, which fosters critical knowledge construction and respective student identity creation.

METHODOLOGY

Given this study aimed to understand the ways neoliberal discourses exist in the 2010 high school social studies TEKS and related SBOE policy processes, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was an apt methodological approach. While various forms of CDA exist, common to most approaches is a focus on social problems, hegemony, ideology, taken-for-granted realities, and the reproduction of dominance through forms of talk and text (Cheek, 2004). CDA is concerned with the role context plays in generating and maintaining discursive noise and/or silence around sociopolitical and economic issues. It also uses interdisciplinarity and interpretation with the aim of social action around the problem addressed (van Dijk, 1993).

Following the CDA tradition of taking an “explicit sociopolitical stance” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252), it is important to note here that my research proceeded from the assumption that educational policy creation and implementation does not occur in a vacuum, as various value laden exigencies shape the policy process. As a white feminist researcher who has been influenced by the critical, feminist, and queer theoretical traditions, it also proceeded with the understanding that policy processes and respective documents are not value neutral. Rather, I understand policy silences and explicit constructions of nationality, social class, sex, gender, and race as imbued with values and ideological beliefs that can work to the disadvantage those already disempowered by power relationships.

Finally, my personal experience as a former Texas high school social studies teacher and district curriculum writer prompted me to view the 2010 TEKS revisions as falling within longstanding political efforts to constrain and script what students learn. I was raised by an educator and union laborer, schooled under the New York State Honors Regents System, and studied secondary social studies education, history, and law as an undergrad. New York's system is not without blemish nor will I naively assert that I am free from the totalizing effects of neoliberalism. Yet, I know that I benefited from a system that challenged students to be organic creators of knowledge—something that individual Texas teachers might aim at, but is missing from the system's core.

Cognizant that my positionality impacted the selection of research topic, questions, theoretical approach, and analysis, to increase research trustworthiness and challenge my privilege as a researcher, I utilized an audit trail or what Cheek (2004) called a "decision trail" (p. 1147). My audit trail included "detail about which texts were analyzed, why they were chosen, and how they were generated" and aimed at "congruence between the theoretical constructs underpinning the approach taken to discourse analysis and the analysis conducted" (Cheek, 2004, p. 1147). Thus, I documented how my positionality and epistemology related to the selected texts and research process, as well as linkages between theoretical leanings, methodological selection, and overall interpretation. My audit trail also included all collected documents, as well as 200 pages constituting note-taking, reflection, and analytic memos. This audit trail was reviewed four times by a researcher with expertise in qualitative methodology.

Data Collection

The social studies TEKS include world geography, world history, US history, government, economics, psychology, sociology, and special topics or approved electives in social studies (Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2013d). Data collection included selection of the world history, US history, government, and economics TEKS, which encompassed over 50 pages of text. As a former world history, US history, and government teacher and curriculum writer for all four TEKS areas, I purposefully selected these subjects. This decision was based on first-hand experience teaching these subjects prior to the 2010 revisions and gleaning knowledge from working with the subjects as a curriculum writer after the revisions were made.

In order to contextually situate my analysis, I also collected 83 SBOE policy, meeting minutes, social studies reviewers, and textbook resolutions documents from 2009-2012. Meeting minutes specifically included documents from the Committee of the Full Board, Board of Education (non-full board), and Committee on Instruction. Although the social studies revisions took place between 2009 and 2010, I collected and analyzed 2011 and 2012 meeting minutes for any follow-up discussion on the hearings, public controversy, or revision implementation. I also collected and read reviewer committee comments to understand committee composition and how

the SBOE received public feedback. Finally, I collected and analyzed textbook resolutions to learn of linkages between the TEKS and textbook purchases, which not only impact 4.8 million Texas students, but smaller textbook markets in other states.

Data Analysis

My critical discourse analysis of the SBOE and TEKS documents involved iterative data gathering, reading, and written analysis. Contained within an audit trail, document collection allowed me to attend to the sociopolitical context within which the TEKS revisions were made. After completing data collection, to add structure to my critical discourse analysis I created templates (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for the non-TEKS documents and for each TEKS subject. Although I already had a working knowledge of the TEKS, these templates allowed for the careful identification of policy processes driving the revisions, as well as permitted a side-by-side comparison of curricular changes between the 1997 and 2010 TEKS. According to Cheek (2004):

Discourse analysis involves more than analysing the content of texts for the ways in which they have been structured in terms of syntax, semantics, and so forth. Rather, discourse analysis is concerned with the ways in which texts themselves have been constructed in terms of their social and historical 'situatedness'. (p. 1144)

Thus, while my study does not offer a TEK for TEK analysis, my findings highlight broad machinations of contextually driven neoliberal ideology within SBOE policy, practice, and high school social studies standards.

Key to guiding this template analysis was the development of clear definitions for neoliberalism and ideology. In addition to the literature previously discussed, I drew heavily on Giroux's (2008) articulation of neoliberalism, as well as philosophical writing on ideology and critical consciousness (Eagleton, 2007; Freire, 1973; Marx & Engels, 1846). In addition to advocating free market and venture forms of capitalism, neoliberalism also manifests itself within highly classist, sexist, and racialized tones. Neoliberalism holds individuals rather than society responsible for failure, plus supports military and religious fundamentalism culminating in a uniquely American hegemony (Giroux, 2008). Thus, I specifically looked for discourses, either within SBOE policy processes or specific TEKS curriculum standards, which structured silence on historic conflict or whitewashed difficult sociopolitical and economic issues. I also looked for language demonstrating bias towards corporatization, American-Euro-centrism, certain religious beliefs, white, male heterosexuality, and US militarism.

My definition of ideology included those ideas, values, and beliefs that legitimate a dominant political power through discourse-based false consciousness. As originally understood by Engel's, false consciousness involves the ways people consciously and unconsciously participate in their own disempowerment. Moreover,

it implies that the promotion and legitimation of ideology not only emanates from the dominant group, but the material structure of the whole system (Eagleton, 2007). In *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels (1846) held that by interfering in the consciousness of others, ideology seeks to rationalize, homogenize, naturalize, and eternalize specific forms of hegemony. Thus, education that utilizes “dialogue and communication” to support individual empowerment is viewed by the ideologue as a threat to their own false reality (Freire, 1973, p. 150). Working in tandem, ideology and false consciousness help to ensure cyclical reification of power and concomitant subordination of the *Other*.

Finally, since the aim of my study was to critique neoliberal discourse, I drew from the Frankfurt School’s critical tradition, here critical theory as understood in Horkheimer’s (1974) writings on immanent criticism and negation. Concerned with breaches between ideas and reality, negation works to identify how sociopolitical institutions, discourses, and life purport to stand for one thing, but actually stand for an opposite. In line with Horkheimer (1974) I aimed my analysis at “salvage[ing] relative truths from the wreckage of false ultimates” (p. 183).

Given neoliberal ideology is most effective when rendered invisible through common-sense discourses about the ways things are, in applying my templates to the SBOE and TEKS documents I carefully looked for discourses indicating that the SBOE sought to reify power of the dominant group. This meant looking for ways that SBOE demonstrated political bias and/or limited public dialogue during the TEKS revision process. This also meant determining whether or not the revised 2010 TEKS provided a critical and culturally relevant view of world and US peoples, cultures, politics, and economics—or retracted from cultural relevance.

To do so, after each template reading of the SBOE policy and TEKS documents, I stepped back from the research process several times (McMullen, 2011). Multiple readings allowed me to return to the documents with new questions, with each reading resulting in several reflective and analytic memos. These memos served as the basis for my findings on SBOE policy, as well as the selection of three themes that were consistent across the four TEKS subjects. Together, my study involved a year of data collection, note-taking, analysis, and compiling information into an audit trail. In line with CDA, I targeted my overall analysis at offering “an interpretation” of the data with the goal of encouraging critical dialogue around my findings.

THE SBOE AND TEKS AS SITES OF IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

Since the 1960s, critical, feminist, queer, and multicultural educators have advocated for eliminating false knowledge, silence on difficult social issues, student isolation, and disadvantage through non-ideological justice-orientated curriculum, pedagogies, and schooling (Apple, 1990, 2000; Banks, 1996; Gay, 2002; Gibson, 1976; Nieto, 2000; Johnson & Lugg, 2011; Pinar, 1998; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). My critical discourse analysis of SBOE and TEKS documents revealed that the politics and policy processes of the SBOE do nothing to improve upon critical pedagogists’

concerns about public education—now spanning fifty years. Rather, the SBOE and TEKS serve as sites of ideological conflict that support “standardized” and market driven student knowledge construction and identity creation. In the first section of the findings, I discuss how SBOE policy processes and documents reveal neoliberal discourses aimed at narrowing critical dialogue about social studies education. Through the themes of, “Western-centrism,” “White, Male Individualism” and “Free Enterprise as a Social Good,” I discuss how the revised 2010 TEKS are imbued with neoliberal ideology to the detriment of student democratic engagement.

Narrowing Curriculum through State Board of Education Policy Processes

Authorized by the Texas Education Code, the State Board of Education (SBOE) consists of fifteen elected, non-salaried² members serving 15 Texas regions. Between 2009-2011 the SBOE partisan divide was ten Republicans and five Democrats and as of the 2012 November election,³ that divide remains the same (Texas Freedom Network, 2013). Governor Rick Perry (R) appoints one of the elected members to a two-year term as chair (TEA, 2013c). The role played by the Governorship in structuring the SBOE and the longstanding Board political divide both highlight political thinking and leverage over SBOE policy processes.

Regular and committee meetings must occur at least quarterly and be open to the public, which includes live broadcast and Internet publication of meeting minutes. Proposed rules, amendments, and repeals also must appear on the SBOE meeting agenda for discussion and an action known as a First Reading. Once the mandatory thirty-day public comment period ends, a Second Reading occurs at two subsequent board meetings. Unless otherwise specified by state or federal law, a rule cannot take effect until the beginning of the school year, at least 90 days after the rule adoption date. Aside from the commissioner’s authority to file rule corrections with the Secretary of State, no oversight of SBOE proceedings exists as all SBOE rules are approved by the SBOE (TEA, 2013c). Since 2000, a Republican governor has appointed the SBOE chair, who holds sway over meeting agendas and public hearing tenor. Given a Republican governor appoints the SBOE chair and a conservative leaning Board approves its own policy processes, SBOE policy checks and balances are all but eliminated.

The organizational functions of the SBOE are to guide, monitor, and regulate Texas education policy, execute and moderate textbook and instructional materials contracts, regulate Texas Education Agency programs, and oversee the Permanent School Fund. Policy is designed by the Instruction, School Finance, and School Initiatives standing committees, and ruled on by the Committee of the Full Board. In addition to the Committee of the Full Board, members are required to serve on one five-member committee. Aside from work and ad hoc meetings, written or public testimony can be given at any SBOE meeting, but the chair may limit testimony considered repetitious or excessive (TEA, 2013c).

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The Committee on Instruction is tasked with the establishment and implementation of curriculum and graduation requirements, textbook oversight, and student assessment. The Committee on School Finance monitors state and federal funding issues including textbook finance and community education funding. The Committee on School Initiatives regulates educational statutes, technology, communication, open-enrolment charters, special districts, and training of SBOE members (TEA, 2013b). Finally, the Committee of the Full Board revises the TEKS every ten years, adopts textbooks, hears public testimony to this effect, and despite viewing itself as a *corporate* entity, mandates so-called *well-balanced* curriculum free of ideological bias (TEA, 2013a, emphasis mine).

In 2009, SBOE solicited curriculum advice from high school social studies review committees comprised of educators and citizens (TEA, 2011c). It also sought the assistance of six “expert” reviewers who were not required to have a degree in the subject area consulted. The reviewers included: David Barton (WallBuilders); Jesus Francisco de la Teja, (Professor and Chair, History, Texas State University); Daniel Dreisbach (Professor, American University); Lybeth Hodges (Professor, History, Texas Woman’s University); Jim Kracht (Associate Dean and Professor, Education, Texas A&M University); and Peter Marshall (President, Peter Marshall Ministries) (TEA, 2009a).

Much of the reviewer testimony had a neoliberal bent. Barton (2009b) for example, commented that the 1997 TEKS overemphasized pedagogy and methodology and did not contain enough facts about a Christian creator or bible. He also was concerned that the TEKS overemphasized socialism and did not properly describe a “competitive,” “profit-orientated,” “free-market,” “exceptional,” and “republican” United States. Dreisbach (2009c) supported revising the 1997 TEKS to include emphasis on Christianity in world and US history, as well as to increase a discussion of white male leaders in US government. Finally, similar to Barton’s concerns over the 1997 TEKS, Marshall’s (2009d) testimony was worth quoting at length:

Fulfilling these educational mandates in the State of Texas will require the students to learn why America is the greatest country in the world... (p. 2)

Reading through the TEKS as they are currently constituted could give the impression that history just ‘happens,’... That is, of course, the false teaching of Marxism. (p. 3)

The discovery, settling, and founding of the colonies happened because of the Biblical worldviews of those involved. (p. 4)

Anne Hutchinson does not belong in the company of these eminent gentlemen [William Penn, John Smith, and Roger Williams]. She was certainly not a significant colonial leader, and didn’t accomplish anything except getting herself exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for making trouble. (p. 8)

Having received an outpouring of criticism about reviewer comments, in 2010 the SBOE heard public testimony⁴ from educators and stakeholder groups including

for example, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), American GI Forum, League of Women Voters, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Palestinians for Peace and Democracy, Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), and the Texas Indigenous Council (TEA, 2011a-b). In total, the TEKS revision process was on the SBOE Committee of the Full Board agenda seven times in 2009 and 11 times with public testimony in 2010. Despite participation by various stakeholder groups, the SBOE chair limited the length of testimony several times throughout the hearings. Moreover, the Committee on Instruction, which is charged with curriculum standards and textbook oversight, did not discuss or hold hearings regarding the social studies revisions. Aside from mention of continued changes to the Economics TEKS, the social studies TEKS fell off the SBOE's policy agenda in 2011 (TEA, 2013b)—meaning that the SBOE paid little attention to media and educator criticism of the 2010 revisions.

In addition to TEKS revisions, the SBOE also reviews and adopts instructional materials. To this effect the SBOE issues resolutions that express opinions and concerns about Texas textbooks. While not binding, these resolutions are important because they demonstrate SBOE member thinking on policy and other decision-making processes. As of 2010, SBOE instructional materials resolutions included the following: theory should be distinguishable from fact; patriotism, respect for authority, and the benefits of the free enterprise system should be promoted; US history should be presented positively; social movements generate no clear consensus; depiction of traditional female-male roles is valued; and discussion of life-style choices deviating from mainstream values is discouraged (TEA, 2013c). These textbook resolutions are significant as they serve as ideological signposts of Board thinking that shaped the 2010 TEKS revision process.

At the height of the 2010 TEKS revisions, in addition to limiting testimony length, movements to extend public hearings also typically failed. Yet, while the Board did not grant extra time to hear public concern about the revisions, the SBOE did have time for extensive discussion on the “documented gross pro-Islamic/anti-Christian distortions in Social Studies texts” (TEA, Sept. 24, 2010, p. 3). At that same meeting it passed a textbook resolution stating, “Whereas more such discriminatory treatment of religion may occur as Middle Easterners buy into the US public school textbook oligopoly, as they are now doing” (p. 5). Arising from its concern that Islam dominates US public education, a month later the SBOE also approved a new social studies elective—*Bible's Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and new Testament and Their Impact on the History and Literature of Western Civilization* (TEA, Nov. 19, 2010).

The TEKS as a Mechanism to Regulate, Deskill, and Disempower Texas Students

My critical discourse analysis of SBOE documents reveals a state agency engaged in the exact opposite of providing Texas students with a *well-balanced* curriculum. Like the controversial 2009 science TEKS revisions that permitted increased influence over standards by “intelligent” design creationists, the high school social studies

TEKS underwent neoliberal ideological revisions. My critical discourse analysis of the 2010 world history, US history, government, and economics TEKS highlights curriculum standards that regulate and narrow student critical thinking in the short term. Akin to Apple's discussion of *official knowledge* (2001), through an officially sanctioned ideological view of history, governance, and the world, this analysis also shows that the politics of the TEKS have the secondary purpose of deskilling and disempowering students over the long term.

To begin, the 1997 TEKS used the terms *including* and *such as* to emphasize or limit curricular content. *Including* means the given TEK will be tested, while *such as* means the TEK is optional. Both terms remained in all four 2010 TEKS subjects. Yet, it is important to note here that in response to pushback against 81st Texas Legislature's House Bill 3 (2010), which increased social studies testing to include world geography, world history, and US history, TEA further narrowed tested material by labeling the 2010 TEKS as either *readiness* or *supporting* standards (TEA, 2011d). In doing so, TEA signalled to Texas educators that *readiness* standards would appear more frequently on tests than *supporting* standards—at a ratio of about six to four. It also was true that *supporting* standards outnumbered *readiness* standards by the same ratio—leading to a significant narrowing of curriculum (TEA, 2011d). Under the current testing regime, US history is the only tested high school social studies subject, with world geography and world history made optional subjects for graduation (83rd Texas Legislature, 2013).

In addition to the narrowing language of *including*, *such as*, *readiness*, and *supporting*, of the subjects analyzed, the 2010 US history TEKS had the most significant downgrade in student thinking requirements. In numerous places students were asked to “identify,” “understand,” and “explain,” instead of complete higher order skills like “analyze,” “evaluate,” and “defend a point of view” (TEA, 2013d). Considering US history currently is the only subject tested for graduation, the SBOE and TEA established an unequivocal proviso on student learning—reduced critical thinking.

Specific content of the 2010 TEKS also was problematic, embodying multiple forms of neoliberal ideology. My critical discourse analysis of the 2010 TEKS led me to interpret three primary themes that support my argument that the SBOE and TEKS serve as a site of ideological conflict aiming to legitimate a neoliberal view across the social studies. These themes included: Western-centrism; White, Male Individualism; and Free Enterprise System as a Social Good.

Western-centrism. In its textbook resolutions, the SBOE made no illusions about its preference for presenting the “positive” aspects of US history and culture. Similarly, my analysis of the TEKS revealed an ideologically driven narrative aimed at erasure of historic conflict. It also found a glorification of western culture, Christianity, and war time events. Simultaneously, discussion of complex sociocultural, political, and economic issues involved in transnational interactions is missing.

In world and US history, the terms “colonialism” and “imperialism” were replaced with terms like “Columbian Exchange” and “expansion,” which in the new phrasing

of the TEKS fails to require that students unpack imperial hegemony. Premised on faulty and conservative leaning historical memory, the 2010 US history TEKS also supported a narrative of American exceptionalism (TEA, 2013d). This included for example, that students learn the findings of the House Un-American Activities Committee “were confirmed by the Venona Papers” and focus on “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” (TEA, 2013d). Following from the SBOE goal of offering a *well-balanced* curriculum, individuals like Angela Davis and Harvey Milk, as well as groups like Amnesty International and Green Peace were not required or suggested TEKS learning.

Across all 2010 TEKS subjects, the socially constructed and complex relations between groups, cultures, and religions either were rendered natural and placed within a dominant western, Christian narrative, or removed all together (e.g., Required learning on Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian, Ottoman, and sub-Saharan African civilizations was removed from world history and a section discussing the “problems of immigrants” was removed from US history (TEA, 2013d). The history and scope of polytheism and non-religion was absent from the revised world history TEKS, which universally adopted the markers “BC” (Before Christ) and “AD” (After Death) instead of “BCE” (Before Common Era) and “CE” (Common Era) (TEA, 2013d).

Increased emphasis on and bias favoring Judeo-Christianity was found in the revised 2010 government TEKS, which replaced the language “Natural law and natural rights” with “laws of nature and nature’s God” (TEA, 2013d). In emphasizing the role of “biblical law,” the revised government TEKS also mislead students about the role Christianity played in the establishment of US democracy. Students for example are required to identify, “major intellectual, philosophical, political, and religious traditions that informed the American founding, including Judeo-Christian (especially biblical law),” and “individuals whose principles of laws and government institutions informed the American founding documents, including those of Moses” (TEA, 2013d). The influence of secularism in the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment, as well as complexity found in colonial American religious and political beliefs, which included deism, is completely ignored. Moreover in covering the Enlightenment, only white male philosophers were listed as required learning in the revised 2010 world history and government TEKS. Few female philosophers were included, and intellectual renaissances outside western culture were not included.

In addition to this emphasis, Christian imperialism is not included in the TEKS. Topics such as Pope Leo II’s initiation of the Crusades and sacking of Constantinople, the Spanish Inquisition’s use of torture, and forced Christianization of indigenous peoples was not in the revised world history TEKS. Some language actually exceeded a preference for Christianity, inscribing ethnic hatred and misunderstanding through the following, “explain how Arab rejection of the State

of Israel has led to ongoing conflict” and “summarize the development and impact of radical Islamic fundamentalism on events in the second half of the 20th century, including Palestinian terrorism and the growth of al Qaeda” (TEA, 2013d).

In the revised world and US history TEKS, numerous war time dates and events were required learning. Yet, why war happens was not. Further, the consequences of war, such as death toll, human rights violations, wartime rape, consequences of the atom bomb, the proliferation of weapons, military spending, and post-traumatic stress disorder, were not required or suggested TEKS learning. Similar to textbooks of the early twentieth century, war was discussed only in terms of dates, military battles, and the successes of white male leadership. In world history for example, students were required to learn about “Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Hideki Tojo, Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill” and in US history the list expanded to “Omar Bradley, Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, Chester A. Nimitz, George Marshall, and George Patton” (TEA, 2013d). None of the 2010 TEKS subjects required students learn about the history of discriminatory US military policy towards women, people of color, and queer individuals, or that numerous social groups participated in or were exploited through various US war efforts (e.g., Bracero Program).

White, male individualism. In addition to the previously described military exploit, patriarchy manifested itself within the 2010 TEKS both in the overt placement of white, middle class, heterosexual men throughout the curriculum standards, as well as the consistent absence of discussions focused on female and queer issues. The kind of curriculum supported by critical, multicultural, feminist, and queer scholars is nonexistent in the state-sanctioned Texas social studies curriculum. Across the revised TEKS, men were portrayed in traditional roles and were celebrated for their white, heterosexual masculinity. Moreover, any tangible discussion of sociopolitical movements “of the people,” which might have included recognition of women and queer activism were non-existent.

The revised 2010 US history TEKS were structured through a chronological date and individual, or great person, approach to teaching history. Moreover, the *readiness* and *supporting* standards severely restricted who and what is taught. Only seven individuals for example including, Henry Cabot Lodge, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Theodore Roosevelt, Sanford B. Dole, Woodrow Wilson, John F. Kennedy, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, were included in the US history *readiness* standards. Further, the latter three individuals received the *including* label rather than the passive *such as*, meaning that out of 67 names in the revised US history TEKS, only three white males were required learning. If teaching history through the lens of individuals were appropriate, which it is not, then this list excluded TEKS covering for example, Upton Sinclair, Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells, W. E. B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Rosa Parks, Hector P. Garcia, and Betty Friedan (TEA, 2013d).

The 2010 US history TEKS also followed the historical trope of the white male presidential narrative. While students were required to learn that President Obama

is the first Black president in US history, the history of race relations and racism was glossed over. Across all four revised TEKS subjects, the white male narrative passively included non-whites (e.g., indigenous peoples only discussed through US “Indian policy” in US history or minority issues only addressed in Supreme Court cases in government). Ethnic and racial groups that were included also were discussed monolithically, lacking within group heterogeneity and depth as people or historic empires. In the revised 2010 world and US history TEKS for example, Japanese history was referred to only through Japanese “imperialism,” “dictatorship,” or internment through Executive Order 9066 (TEA, 2013d).

Since the United States has not elected a female president, women are all but excluded from this type of history, economics, and government-telling. Despite the involvement of women on the world and foreign government stage, major contributions of women were marginalized in the 2010 world history, government, and economics TEKS. Most of the required learning about women in world and US history was passive, assuming that women did not participate in early government, religion, and labor movements. The women who were selected possessed strong conservative or neoliberal ideological leanings, in world history including for example, Mother Teresa, Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, and Golda Meir. Moreover, women and people of color were lumped together as monolithic, stereotypical window-dressing—often “added-on” as fighting for suffrage, assistance on the war time home front, or fighting for civil rights (TEA, 2013d).

Despite the reality that the western narrative involves patriarchal stratification, military aggression, colonization, genocide, rape, and domestic violence, the role men played in this narrative was muted. Instead, the revised 2010 world history TEKS asked students to, “identify examples of genocide, including the Holocaust and genocide in the Balkans, Rwanda, and Darfur” (TEA, 2013d) as if the United States had not committed abuses of its own. Moreover, when resistance to oppression did occur, it was done by individuals rather than groups, and framed in exceptionalist discourses of how “American ideals have advanced human rights and democratic ideas throughout the world” (TEA, 2013d). Difficult discussions of historic and contemporary classism, sexism, homophobia, racism, ageism, and disability simply were not present in the revised TEKS. Although often found in advanced placement world history texts (Bentley & Ziegler, 2006), the historic worldwide existence of patriarchy, poverty, human trafficking, child labor, and US militarism were not required or suggested TEKS learning.

Free Enterprise as a Social Good. Not only was scripted reading of the US Constitution written across the revised 2010 TEKS through “Constitution Week,” but the TEKS mislead students on debates concerning US constitutional history. Across the revised TEKS for example, the language “democratic society” was supplanted by “constitutional republic” (TEA, 2013d). The 2010 government TEKS also overemphasized the acclaim Alexis de Tocqueville afforded US democracy without comparable discussion he gave to the disease-ridden living conditions of

nineteenth century industrial America. Moreover, *readiness* standards across the 2010 TEKS included positive reference to business and military events. Events that were not tied to military or free enterprise system benefits were referred to passively. Compare the specificity of language in the first 2010 US history TEK with that of the second US history TEK:

Describe the dynamic relationship between US international trade policies and the US free enterprise system such as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo, the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—*versus*—

Explain how the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, gender, and religious groups shape American culture. (TEA, 2013d)

Overall, the free enterprise system unequivocally was viewed in the 2010 TEKS as a positive contribution to the world. As requested in Barton’s (2009) reviewer comments, language like competition, entrepreneurship, innovation, choice, private ownership, profit, and freedom from regulation, was written across the revised TEKS to describe the US economic system. In US history, concern for the environment shifted from “trace the development of the conservation of natural resources” to “identify the roles of governmental entities and private citizens in managing the environment” (TEA, 2013d). In world history students were asked to “formulate generalizations on how economic freedom improved the human condition.” In all four revised subjects they also were required to “identify the role of the US free enterprise system within the parameters of this course and understand that this system may also be referred to as capitalism or the free market system” (TEA, 2013d). Such language eliminates discussion of historic critiques of capitalism—framing that only one “expert” reviewer, de la Teja, viewed as ideological (TEA, 2009a).

Across all four revised TEKS subjects there was a general oversimplification of highly complex economic issues. The 2010 economics TEKS for example, adopted a simplistic one-size fits all model for the US economy, adding an entirely new curriculum strand on “personal financial responsibility” that focused on investment and capital formation (TEA, 2013d). Communism was removed from a list of terms denoting economic systems that have “worldwide political and economic effects.” The revised economics TEKS also required that students learn about neoliberals such as European economist Friedrich Hayek and US economist Milton Friedman, while removing Vladimir Lenin from world history, Robert LaFollette and Eugene Debs from US history, and Karl Marx from economics (TEA, 2013d). Finally, in clear support for neoliberal policy, the 2010 government TEKS required that students, “understand how government taxation and regulation can serve as restrictions to private enterprise” (TEA, 2013d).

Social class as a category of analysis was missing across all 2010 TEKS subjects. The revised US history TEKS distinguished between “legal” and “illegal” immigrants without required learning about the political complexity of these terms.

TEKS covering labor history, working conditions, the continuation of unequal pay, and urbanized hyper-segregation was non-existent (TEA, 2013d). Social Security and Medicare also were framed in terms of “solvency” within the revised US history TEKS (TEA, 2013d). Moreover, in the 2010 world history, US history, and economics TEKS, global economic recession and depression were listed only in terms of causes and governmental responses, rather than impacts on various groups. The economics TEKS also removed the requirement that students learn the “level of economic development of selected nations,” silencing any focus on international poverty (TEA, 2013d). A discussion of why poverty exists was not included in the 2010 TEKS, rendering economic stratification as natural or a common-sense reality.

The revised 2010 world history TEKS required learning about technology only in terms of military advancements and development of the modern global economy. In US history technology was linked to military advancements like “machine guns, airplanes, tanks, poison gas, and trench warfare” while in the economics TEKS technology was connected to market growth (TEA, 2013d). Yet, a discussion of global diseases like cholera, malaria, and HIV/AIDS was missing from all four revised TEKS subjects. Although found in advanced placement texts (Bentley & Ziegler, 2006), broad-based problems associated with technological advancement, micro-lending, Internet bullying, globalization, proliferation of biological weapons, labor servitude, environmental degradation, and global warming were not required or suggested TEKS learning.

While the 2010 US history TEKS required that students “evaluate efforts by global organizations to undermine US sovereignty through the use of treaties,” controversial policies of organizations like the World Bank, World Trade Organization, and International Monetary Fund within the developing world were not included in any TEKS subject (TEA, 2013d). The revised TEKS denied that economic problems like US economic stratification, poverty, and global exploitation exist. Rather this framing was muted, only showing up in the 2010 economics TEKS as, “explain why scarcity and choice are basic economic problems faced by every society”—while simultaneously removing the requirement that students analyze “economic rights,” “consequences of business decisions,” and business “ethics” (TEA, 2013d).

In summary, the themes Western-centrism, White, Male Individualism, and Free Enterprise System as a Social Good, confirm claims that public schools are under attack by a neoliberal agenda now more than ever. In addition to narrowing curriculum content, SBOE policy processes implemented through the TEKS serve as a long term mechanism for the regulation, deskilling, and disempowerment of Texas students. Texas high school social studies standards currently exist as little more than narrowly proscribed “facts” that support one view of history, society, governance, and economics.

As demonstrated, the TEKS content focuses on the dominance of western culture and Christian religion, to the demise of pluralism. It re-inscribes white, male, heterosexuality, implying that social groups do not play a role in history, governance, or economics. Finally, by supporting the free enterprise system as a social good,

among other concerns the revised TEKS fail to ask hard questions about US poverty, capitalism, and economic inequality between social groups and the Global North and South. Best capturing SBOE neoliberal positionality within US ideological culture wars is a 2010 government TEK asking students to, “evaluate *whether and/or when* the obligation of citizenship requires that personal desires and interests be subordinated to the public good” (TEA, 2010d, emphasis mine).

CONCLUSION

Schools do not only control people; they also help control meaning. Since they preserve and distribute what is perceived to be ‘legitimate knowledge’—the knowledge that ‘we all must have,’ schools confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups. (Apple, 1990, pp. 63–64)

Balanced policy environments are difficult to establish. Competition over scarce resources prompts differential and often prejudicial policy treatments of class, sex, gender, and race (Fusarelli, 2011). Thus, when examining local context and the role policy actors have in shaping policy, it is critical to consider whether policy fails because of policy short-comings or actual implementation (Loeb & McEwan, 2006; McLaughlin, 1987).

In a similar vein, my findings demonstrate how ideologically driven policy not only can have *negative*, but also the *intended* effects desired by the policy writers—here the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE). Although my findings are limited by the specific context and discourses analyzed, they reveal a statewide policy failure resultant from an ideological power imbalance. Moreover, my findings demonstrate how the lack of adjudicatory oversight into the policy machinations of the SBOE, permits an ideologically driven entity to steamroll policy without concern for the public welfare of 4.8 million Texas students.

Feminist constitutional scholar VanBurkleo (2001) observed that the Latin *educere* means “to lead out” or “away” from ignorance and oppression. The ideological curriculum reform processes of the SBOE and resultant high school social studies TEKS do little to lead Texas students “away” from ignorance, but rather maintain an ideologically narrow view of history, governance, economics, and the world. Such ideological machinations of a *public* institution like the SBOE operate to legitimate a narrowed rather than critical view of society, which contributes to the systemic cultural reproduction of unequal social relations. According to Apple (2004), “No matter how radical some of these proposed reforms are and no matter how weak the empirical basis of their support, they have now redefined the terrain of debate of all things educational” (p. 19). This statement aptly describes the ideologically driven “expert” panel and prejudicial policy proceedings that occurred during the social studies TEKS revision process. Rather than reconstruct social studies education to include social relevance, missing voices, and correct factual error (Loewen, 1995; Zinn, 2003), the SBOE did just the opposite.

Since teachers may temper knowledge presented to students out of a fear they might learn of the injustices that institutionally target certain US populations (McNeil, 1988), the revised TEKS spell disaster for student knowledge construction and identity creation. The ideologically selective addition and omission of ideas not only limits how students might engage and view themselves, but increases the likelihood that they will more easily subscribe to a specific ideological bent—that of neoliberalism. Ideally, these changes will prompt Texas educators to pushback, considering for example, how immigrant and refugee students might learn to interpret US foreign policy from the TEKS; how the TEKS rendering of Christianity imposes upon atheist, agnostic, and non-Christian students; and what it means for poor, female, and queer youth to be pedagogically non-existent in Texas social studies curriculum standards?

As understood by Nieto (1995), US social studies curriculum often glosses over the undemocratic, dark side of history, failing to foster democratic consciousness among students. Setting aside the ideologically driven revision process, the TEKS now operate to restrict the critical scope of Texas social studies education and diminish the larger democratic project of public education. Thus, a major concern of Texas educators should be the ways in which they participate in or resist the false consciousness perpetuated by the Texas State Board of Education. Are they cognizant of and resistant to SBOE curricular manipulation? As Freire (1973) asked, do they engage students in the construction of shared knowledge? Moreover, what can be done through policy to prevent further ideological decay of Texas pedagogy and praxis?

(Un)Making the Neoliberal Agenda

There is no other country [United States] in the world where there is such a large gap between the sophisticated understanding of some professional historians and the basic education given by teachers. (Ferro, 1981, p. 225)

Despite research spanning five decades demonstrating that critical pedagogy and non-sexist multicultural education increase student engagement, achievement, and empowerment (Apple, 1990; Banks, 1996; Gibson, 1976; Kincheloe, 2001; Nieto, 2000), ideologically narrow high school social studies standards were implemented in Texas. Given the likelihood that teachers will temper knowledge presented to students (McNeil, 1988) and reduce rigor because of accountability pressures (Salinas, 2006), the purposeful dumbing-down of high school social studies content by the SBOE should not be taken lightly. Far from a progressive standpoint, in 2010 the SBOE presented itself to the nation and world as an anachronism. Rather than embrace broad-based criticality on economic, sociopolitical, and cultural issues focused on the *long term* of education (Freire, 2005), the SBOE handicapped Texas students who when graduating from high school will be underprepared for basic dialogue about history, culture, and political economy. Yet if Texas students fail,

the SBOE has the neoliberal mantra to defend itself—Those who succeed are more capable, while those who do not have themselves to blame.

This mantra is unacceptable. Curriculum and pedagogical praxis must challenge the notion that wealth, individualism, and US military might are the only ideas celebrated within the US and abroad. A failure to do so limits the social imagination of students to the detriment of global society. We must educate our youth to be critical, reflective, and involved citizens who do not shy away from public deliberation. Moreover, curriculum must incorporate “experiences and perspectives of ethnically diverse [and gender non-conforming] students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” and for instilling high expectations (Gay, 2002, p. 106).

Teaching is political—period. As *cultural workers* (Friere, 2005) and public servants, we have a responsibility to teach the difficult, but relevant issues of the day—as the fate of the United States is inseparable from other nations and world events. The promise of US democracy necessitates that community stakeholders examine the lack of social justice for the historical *Other*. While currently missing from the high school social studies TEKS, critical pedagogy directly challenges hegemonic structures that historically rationalized the failure of students from disadvantaged backgrounds as the result of either inherent personal deficiencies or problems within family environments. As a form of social justice-minded resistance to the false consciousness imbued in the TEKS, Texas curriculum and pedagogy must be redirected by educators and rights groups to support the development of students who are politically active agents of social change.

I do not presuppose that the 1997 TEKS were superior in their critical stance. Rather, they were preferable to the revised 2010 TEKS. Although the TEKS will not be re-reviewed until 2019, redirection can begin locally within individual classrooms. Texas educators also should participate in SBOE election politics and seek ways to amend Board procedural processes. Without changes to SBOE procedure and political make-up, Texas students receive factually inaccurate and ideologically biased curriculum not only through the TEKS, but through the adoption of social studies textbooks. This role cannot be stressed enough since despite an outpouring of public criticism over textbook content and approval processes, all well documented by Texas and national news outlets, the SBOE conservative majority recently approved factually inaccurate and politically slanted middle school and high school social studies books (see: Texas Freedom Network (2014) for textbook content specific reports).

Although operating in a non-union state, teachers and curriculum specialists can quietly subvert the TEKS via the creation of critically-orientated lesson plans and curriculum resources. Since Texas school districts are not required by law to use the SBOE approved textbooks, district leaders can seek curricular alternatives and supplements. Rights groups can assist this process by making alternative resources available to educators, while also petitioning textbook companies to resist ideological and inaccurate content changes to textbooks. Free online educational materials from the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN),

National Association for Multicultural Education, Rethinking Schools, and Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance are just a few places educators can look to build inclusive curriculum for students. Finally, educators outside Texas can petition their state government for legislation restricting Texas curriculum standards from having an undue influence on their state curriculum, as well as be mindful of using textbooks that were changed to align with the Texas standards.

In contemplating the linkages between public education, ideology, and social action Apple (1990) asked educators a simple question, “For whom do schools work?” (p. 81). By examining the neoliberal discourses within the SBOE policy and TEKS curriculum standards documents, my research suggests that in its current form, the Texas high school social studies TEKS restrict social imagination, demote teachers from intellectual status, and benefit a power elite whose every aim is to manipulate the system to work for them. If other educators reach the same conclusion, then I ask that they think long and hard about how they can help (un)make the neoliberal agenda and its regimes of truth currently suffocating Texas public education and its students.

NOTES

- ¹ The political documentaries *Precious Knowledge* (2011), directed by Ari Palos, documents the banning of Mexican American Studies in TUSD; *The Revisionaries* (2012), directed by Scott Thurman, covers the SBOE 2009-2010 science and social studies TEKS revision processes.
- ² While SBOE members are not entitled to salaried compensation, most work-related expenses including travel are reimbursed.
- ³ 2009 SBOE Members: Don McLeroy (R, District 9; Chair for the first part of 2009), Gail Lowe (R, District 14; Chair for the second part of 2009), Rick Agosto (D, District 3), Lawrence A. Allen, Jr. (D, District 4), Mary Helen Berlanga (D, District 2), David Bradley (R, District 7), Barbara Cargill (R, District 8), Bob Craig (R, District 15), Cynthia Dunbar (R, District 10), Pat Hardy (R, District 11), Mavis B. Knight (D, 13), Terri Leo (R, District 6), Ken Mercer (R, District 5), Geraldine Miller (R, District 12), and Rene Nunez (D, District 1)
2010 SBOE Members: Gail Lowe (R, District 14), Lawrence A. Allen, Jr. (D, District 4), Mary Helen Berlanga (D, District 2), David Bradley (R, District 7), Barbara Cargill (R, District 8), George Clayton (R, District 12), Bob Craig (R, District 15), Marsha Farney (R, District 10), Carlos “Charlie” Garza (R, District 1), Pat Hardy (R, District 11), Mavis B. Knight (D, 13), Terri Leo (R, District 6), Don McLeroy (R, District 9), Ken Mercer (R, District 5), Thomas Ratliff (R, District 9), Michael Soto (D, District 3)
2011 SBOE Members: Gail Lowe (R, District 14; Chair), Lawrence A. Allen, Jr. (D, District 4), Mary Helen Berlanga (D, District 2), David Bradley (R, District 7), Barbara Cargill (R, District 8), George Clayton (R, District 12), Bob Craig (R, District 15), Marsha Farney (R, District 10), Charlie Garza (R.), Pat Hardy (R, District 11), Mavis B. Knight (D, 13), Terri Leo (R, District 6), Don McLeroy (R, District 9), Ken Mercer (R, District 5), Thomas Ratliff (R, District 9), Michael Soto (D, District 3)
2012 SBOE Members: Barbara Cargill (R, District 8; Chair), Lawrence A. Allen, Jr. (D, District 4), Ruben Cortez (D, District 2), Donna Bohorich (R, District 6), David Bradley (R, District 7), Marty Rowley (R, District 15), Martha M. Dominguez (D, District 1) Pat Hardy (R, District 11), Mavis B. Knight (D, 13), Tom Maynard (R, District 10), Sue Melton (R, District 14), Ken Mercer (R, District 5), Geraldine Miller (R, District 12), Marisa Perez (D, District 3), Thomas Ratliff (R, District 9)

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- ⁴ Testimony was heard from far right and corporate entities including for example, the Liberty Institute, PF&E Oil and Gas Co., Texas Pastors Council, Texas Tea Party, Texans for Life, Texas Eagle Forum, and WallBuilders.

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