

## A Content Analysis of Immigration in Traditional, New, and Non-Gateway State Standards for U.S. History and Civics

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### **Abstract:**

In this content analysis of state U.S. History and Civics standards, we compared the treatment of immigration across three types of states with differing immigration demographics. Analyzing standards from 18 states from a critical race methodology perspective, our findings indicated three sets of tensions: a unified American story versus local specificity, immigration as a historical versus civic issue, and favorable versus unfavorable tenor of the standards. Through this project, we were able to draw some initial conclusions about the relationship between states' immigration demographics and social studies standards. Thus, this study builds on the small but growing new gateway state literature and on the content analysis literature related to immigration and the formal social studies curriculum.

**Keywords:** Social Studies | United States Government (Course) | State Standards | Immigrants | Critical Race Theory

### **Article:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

# A Content Analysis of Immigration in Traditional, New, and Non-Gateway State Standards for U.S. History and Civics

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Immigration has been both an essential and unavoidable facet of American society throughout our nation's history, and it has also been a contentious political issue throughout much of that time. Today, immigration into the United States remains controversial; it has been arguably the most contentious issue debated during the 2016 Republican primary campaign season. Given that the purpose of social studies is to promote civic competence by improving students' understanding of contemporary and historical culture (which includes knowledge of time, continuity, and change; people, places, and environments; individuals, groups, and institutions; and global connections) and contemporary civic ideals and practices (National Council for the Social Studies, 2015), inclusion of immigration within the formal social studies curriculum is essential to meeting these instructional imperatives.

In this content analysis of state U.S. History and Civics standards, we build largely upon Journell's (2009b) analysis of nine states' U.S. History standards on immigration in which he found that the standards were outdated, inconsistent, and projected a

unified American narrative that discounted newcomer diversity. His findings also suggested that these standards were stranded in a narrative that framed immigration as primarily a historical process that implicitly ceased at Ellis Island. Although these findings provide valuable information about how immigration is portrayed broadly within U.S. History standards in the United States, they are limited for two reasons: (a) the study design did not attempt to differentiate between the representation of immigration in state standards and the demographics of the respective states in which those standards were created and (b) the study focused only on the historical representation of immigration, which stands in contrast to other studies that position immigration as a contemporary political issue (e.g., Camicia, 2007).

In this study, then, we compared the treatment of the topic of immigration in both U.S. History and Civics standards across three types of states with differing demographic histories relevant to immigration – traditional gateways, new gateways, and non-gateways. Traditional gateway states (NY, CA, TX, IL, FL, and NJ) have historically been the preferred settlement locales for newcomers. They have received, and continue to receive, the largest number of immigrants to the United States. New gateway states (e.g., NC, GA, NE) have historically had low rates of immigration, but since around 1990 have tripled or quadrupled their immigrant populations (Rong & Preissle, 2009). The growth rate of the newcomer population in new gateway states is faster than the growth rate in the fastest growing traditional gateway state, Texas (Passel & Suro, 2005)<sup>1</sup>. We also analyzed states with perpetually lower rates of immigration (e.g., WV, WY, ND) and states with smaller immigration rate increases (e.g., OH), which we collectively call non-gateway states<sup>2</sup>.

Although there is a growing recognition of the relationship between states' new gateway status and the K-12 education in those states (e.g., Rong & Preissle, 2009), there is a dearth of literature that explains the relationship between state curriculum standards and states' gateway status. While some scholars (Foster, 1999; Franquiz & Salinas, 2011; Hilburn & Fitchett, 2012; Salinas, 2006) have analyzed immigration via history standards, textbooks, and teaching practices, and others (e.g., Camicia, 2007) have analyzed immigration as a deliberative political issue, few, if any, scholars have examined immigration standards from both historical and political perspectives, despite this recommendation in the literature (Journell, 2009b; Mathews, 2013). Therefore, the following research question guided our study: *What is the relationship between states' immigration demographics (i.e., gateway status) and their respective U.S. History and Civics standards?*

## Literature Review

### *The Politics of State Standards*<sup>3</sup>

What students learn in schools is an issue that is often controversial and contested. The curriculum, which is often framed as objective knowledge, is inherently political and shaped by the ideologies of those in power (e.g., Anyon, 1981; Apple, 1979; Banks, 1993). As Apple (1996) noted, the process of curriculum development is

<sup>1</sup> These states have also been termed “new growth states” or “new destination states.”

<sup>2</sup> Passel and Suro (2005) refer to these states as “other states.” However, we use term “non-gateway states” for clarity and to contrast with traditional and new gateways. We recognize that immigration occurs in these states, just at slower rates of growth.

<sup>3</sup> We are choosing to focus on state standards as opposed to national curriculum standards such as the Common Core or the C3 Framework for the following reasons: (a) While a majority of states have adopted the Common Core, there remain a few that have not. Only a handful of states have adopted the C3 Framework. (b) Both the Common Core, at least with respect to social studies, and the C3 Framework focus primarily on skill development as opposed to mandating what is taught to students. In both cases, they defer the decision on what topics are covered within a given course to the states.

derived from “a politics that embodies conflict over what some regard as simply neutral descriptions of the world and what others regard as elite conceptions that empower some groups while disempowering others” (p. 23).

The curriculum that results from these ideological battles is significant because, once codified, it becomes an “object of collective identification” (Ahonen, 2001, p. 179) that is reinforced by teachers, textbooks, and assessments of academic knowledge. Whether certain groups are included within the curriculum and, if so, how they are represented raise inherent questions of value and civic identity for individuals who identify with a particular group (Ahonen, 2001; Al-Haj, 2005; Hofman, 2007; Stanton, 2014). For those who identify with groups that are either omitted from the curriculum or portrayed in a way that is seen as disempowering, the curriculum becomes a source of conflict (Ogbu, 1992). As Gordon (2005) noted, “if two ethnic narratives truly contradict each other, then it is impossible for a person who upholds one of the narratives to see the other narrative as legitimate” (p. 371).

Although perhaps not as publicized as curriculum debates in other nations, contention over the social studies curriculum in the United States has intensified in recent years. Within the U.S., the curriculum enacted in schools was historically developed and monitored by individual states and is often politically motivated. One ideology, that of those in power at the time, often monopolizes the development process and those with contrasting perspectives are often refused a seat at the table (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Fore, 1998; Subedi, 2008). A recent example can be found in the well-publicized adoption of U.S. History standards in Texas, which indirectly affects the textbooks and curriculum standards used in other states (Apple, 1992). According to the *New York Times* (McKinley, 2010), the vote for the new U.S. History standards was along party lines. For example, the standards called for questioning the Founders’ commitment to a secular government and portrayed conservative political philosophies in a positive light while simultaneously omitting or marginalizing liberal philosophies and potentially negative aspects of America’s past, such as slavery or the displacement of Native Americans.

Given the demographics of the majority of those in power within the American political system, most textbooks, state curriculum standards, and other instructional resources tend to present a Eurocentric, White male dominant narrative of history and civic participation. Multiple studies suggest, for example, that American textbooks (e.g., Alridge, 2006; Brown & Brown, 2010; Hilburn & Fitchett, 2012; LaSpina, 2003; Loewen, 1995; Schocker & Woysner, 2013; Stanton, 2014) and state curriculum standards (e.g., Anderson, 2013; Anderson & Metzger, 2011; Barbour, Evans, & Ritter, 2007; Heilig-Valesquez, Brown, & Brown, 2012; Journell 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005) either lack cultural diversity or only include diversity to the extent that it contributes to the traditional canon.

### *Immigration Standards*

The politics of standards writing certainly extends to the topics of immigration, immigration policy, and the representation of immigrants. As Camicia (2007) argued, “nowhere are a nation’s values and ideologies regarding migration, citizenship, identity, and multicultural understanding more transparent than in the deliberation of immigration policies” (p. 96). Given the politicized nature of this topic, the politics of standards adoption has likely influenced the degree to which immigration is included and represented in states’ curriculum standards.

Although research on the depiction of immigrants in curriculum standards is sparse, research on the portrayal of immigration in textbooks offers some context. Research

has found that immigrants have been included more thoroughly into history textbooks in recent years, but the inclusion has often been inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading (Hilburn & Fitchett, 2012). Furthermore, immigrants have been included via additive or contributions approaches (e.g., Banks, 1999) rather than more robust and meaningful transformative or social justice oriented approaches. As Zimmerman (2002) stated, “racial and ethnic groups successfully inserted colorful new characters into American History textbooks, but at the same time they blocked a more critical, sophisticated analysis of the nation’s narrative” (p. 31) and this inclusion did not “dilute America’s majestic national narrative. Instead, these fresh voices were folded into the old story” (p. 6). In short, these groups were only included within the dominant narrative so long as they did not disrupt the traditional story of immigrants coming to the U.S., overcoming obstacles through hard work, and becoming assimilated into American culture due to the economic contributions generated by their labor (McLaren, 2000; Suh, An, & Forest, 2015; VanSledright, 2010). The increased diversity created by immigration was marginalized, as were the cultural, intellectual, and political contributions of newcomers (Hilburn, 2014).

As Mathews (2013) argued, “the ‘telling’ of U.S. history is often influenced by the content stressed in state standards” (p. 162). That is, social studies standards serve to reify national tropes, and immigration can be positioned within these tropes in complex ways. For example, the “freedom quest” trope (VanSledright, 2010), whereby the United States continuously moves closer to the democratic ideals described in the founding documents, incorporates immigrants by continuously moving from more discrimination against newcomers to less discrimination. In another example, Journell (2009b) identified the past-oriented trope, by which immigration is presented as a historical rather than contemporary phenomenon. Other studies have identified specific teaching practices related to immigration that reify this past-oriented narrative, especially when teachers are unaware of their own biases (Rong, 1998).

This marginalization of immigrants and immigration is especially problematic when situated within research that suggests many immigrants struggle academically because their experiences do not align with the dominant narrative in K-12 schooling (e.g., Abu El-Haj, 2007). Conversely, however, research has also shown that when immigrant students are allowed to study and discuss issues that are of cultural interest to them, they become more engaged with the social studies curriculum (Journell & Castro, 2011; Taylor, 2013). Since newcomers seek to develop positionality within the curriculum (Salinas, 2006), standards set forth by the state may help to determine what (if any) roles immigrant youth hold in U.S. History and Civics curricula. Unfortunately, however, content analyses of U.S. History standards have shown that standards consistently fall short in terms of including stories that deviate from the dominant national narrative (Journell, 2009b).

#### *Relationship between Standards and Classroom Instruction*

The implementation of standards for K-12 education in the United States is not new, and since the beginning of the previous century, a handful of high-profile cases of ideological conflict over what should be included within the K-12 curriculum have generated national attention (Evans, 2004; Olasky & Perry, 2005). However, the pairing of standards with high-stakes assessments over the past two decades has led to a renewed focus on standards among scholars, educators, and American society at large. A common refrain among educators is that high stakes assessments force teachers to strictly adhere to a facts-based approach to teaching standardized material (Vogler & Virtue, 2007), which ultimately marginalizes narratives that do not make it into the formal curriculum.

In reality, the relationship between standards and classroom instruction, even within the context of high-stakes accountability, is likely more complex. Grant (2001) has likened high-stakes testing to an “uncertain lever” (p. 398) that influences teachers’ instructional practices to varying degrees depending on teachers’ pedagogical beliefs. While it may be unclear the extent to which standards and high-stakes testing influence *the way* teachers go about their craft, testing does appear to influence *what* is taught (Grant, 2005). There is considerable research within the social studies literature to suggest that when standards are coupled with high-stakes tests, information contained in the standards is given priority within teachers’ classroom instruction, and teachers may marginalize or dismiss content not mentioned explicitly (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Gerwin & Visone, 2006; Journell, 2010;; van Hover, 2006).

The way in which standards are written may also influence how teachers present content. Sleeter and Stillman (2005) argued that standards fall along a continuum of being “strongly” or “weakly” framed. Strongly framed standards provide teachers with plenty of detail in terms of what they should teach and often dictate exactly which facts teachers should use to illustrate the concepts outlined in the standards. Weakly framed standards, on the other hand, provide teachers more autonomy. Standards that fall into this category might only provide a brief description of a topic or concept and rely on teachers to provide relevant details during instruction.

Although scholars have called for teachers to include content related to immigration regardless of how it is presented in the formal curriculum (e.g., Hilburn, 2014; Salinas, 2006), the research on standards and high-stakes testing suggests that whether immigration is included within teachers’ classroom instruction and, if so, how it is depicted, is directly related to how it is portrayed within state curriculum standards. Therefore, a better understanding of how states choose to include immigration in their formal curriculum is needed. Although previous research has looked broadly at the portrayal of immigration in state curriculum standards (e.g., Journell, 2009b), this study expands upon that prior work by examining the relationship between states’ formal curricula and their demographics with respect to immigration.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In response to the limited portrayal of immigrants in curriculum described above, we adopted Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002) critical race methodology (CRM), which is grounded in the work of critical race theory and specifically, counter-story methods. Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002) CRM uses counter-stories to debunk dominant or “majoritarian” (p. 28) narratives and resist the influences of privilege on whose stories are told. As confronting dominant ideologies is central to CRM (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), this framework is well-suited for examining the standards in these states, particularly the tenor and tone of standards specific to immigration and the marginalized experiences of newcomers.

The CRM framework contains five elements which we drew upon to inform both the research design and data analysis in this study. First, CRM acknowledges the “intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25). From this perspective, it is not possible to disentangle race from other forms of oppression such as class or gender. Likewise, in our study, we recognize that immigration cannot be extracted from other factors such as class, race, immigration policy, language, accents, and other forms of discrimination. In short, newcomers are subjected to subordination through multiple and complex means.

Second, CRM overtly challenges dominant ideologies such as objectivity and color-blindness. Likewise, we challenge the notion that U.S. History and Civics standards

are neutral or apolitical. Third, scholars who ascribe to CRM have a commitment to social justice. As Bickmore (2008) argued, a task for social studies educators working towards social justice is “not simply to build procedural and substantive knowledge, but to facilitate constructive questioning (deconstruction) of the sources, shape, and drivers of that knowledge” (p. 157). Working toward this social justice task, we question the sources of historical and civic knowledge via standards related to immigration and seek to identify whose perspectives are missing.

Fourth, CRM recognizes the centrality of experiential knowledge and the strength of this knowledge. In keeping with this element, we sought to identify standards that reflected a search for multiple perspectives to counter the dominant narrative. Finally, CRM takes a transdisciplinary perspective to analyzing topics associated with race and racism including “placing them in both historical and contemporary contexts” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26–27). As such, we sought to study both history and civics standards to compare the historical representation of immigration with the framing of immigration as a contemporary civic issue.

### Methods

We employed Krippendorff’s (2004) content analysis methodology in order to understand what these standards “mean to people, what they enable or prevent and what the information conveyed by them does” (p. xviii). Our sample included secondary standards in 18 states for both U.S. History and Civics<sup>4</sup>. We selected all six traditional gateway states, and randomly selected six of the new gateway states (6 of 22) and non-gateway states (6 of 22). We also accounted for geographic diversity in our random sample by selecting two states each from the Southeast, Midwest, and Mountain/West regions of the United States. See Table 1 for a list of states chosen for the study.

We determined each respective state’s gateway status based on the criteria outlined in Passel and Suro’s (2005) study. We used data from the 2000 census (rather than 2010) to determine gateway state status, since many states’ most recent standards adoption process had occurred before 2010. In other words, we were working with the assumption that states with rapidly growing immigrant populations from 1990–2000 may have altered their standards and that those revised standards would be in place at the time of our data collection.

Table 1: *Sample*

Type of state	Sample
Traditional	NJ, NY, CA, IL, TX, FL
New gateway	Mountain West & West – UT, NV
	Midwest - IA, IN
	Southeast - GA, NC
Non-gateway	Mountain West & West – MT, SD
	Midwest - OH, MO
	Southeast - LA, WV

### *Analytic Process*

We conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data. Quantitative data analysis included frequency counts of all topics related to immigration and which

<sup>4</sup> We use the term “Civics” for consistency, but note that this course went by several different names across the different states including Civics, Government, U.S. Government, American Government, and Politics.

we then compared across the 18 states to create data displays. Qualitative analysis included first analyzing the verbiage of the standards and the underlying meaning behind each standard and then comparing these meanings across states (Krippendorff, 2004).

In the first stage of our analytic process we collected data. Our coding rules (Krippendorff, 2004) were as follows: (a) include only topics related to individuals who were first generation immigrants, (b) Supreme Court cases or policies related to immigration, and (c) other topics that related to voluntary immigration. In each instance, we included the entire standard (not just a portion) to provide context and to determine if each set of standards were strongly or weakly framed (Sleeter & Stillman, 2005).

Our second stage of analysis was to code the standards. Each author first line-by-line open coded (Krippendorff, 2004) two sets of standards (NC and LA), and then we met to confirm our coding parameters. In cases of disagreement, we discussed individual standards until a consensus was reached. Following our research meeting, we developed a codebook which consisted of 16 codes. We then independently coded six states each. Then, we analyzed the coded data collectively; again discussing any cases of disagreement until we reached consensus. We then developed themes that emerged across the standards. Finally, we compared these themes against the extant literature and theoretical framework.

### *Limitations*

There are several limitations to this study. First, we cannot make a direct causal link between state demographics and state standards. The standards adoption process—complicated, multileveled, bureaucratic, and inherently political—interrupts this link. Thus we can only make limited arguments about the relationship between state demographics and state standards. Second, we did not analyze local district curriculum guidelines for the 18 states in which we studied. In some cases, local guidelines play an equal or greater role in teachers' instructional decisions than state standards (Shear et al., 2015). Third, we used census data from 2000, rather than 2010, to determine each state's gateway status. Given the lag in developing new state standards and our goal of trying to understand the relationship between demographics and standards related to immigration, we believe this was an appropriate decision. However, this decision also resulted in classifying states in ways that may no longer be appropriate, such as if a state's gateway status changed between 2000 and 2010.

### **Findings**

Data analysis and interpretation revealed differences between the states by gateway status, although not in the ways we predicted. These differences are detailed in the remainder of this section, which we have organized as three sets of tensions.

#### *Unified American Story vs. Local Specificity*

Traditional gateway states included more references to immigration in both U.S. History and Civics standards, as we suspected. This finding lent credence to our speculation that a state's demographics and unique history relevant to immigration can be reflected in that state's standards. However, new gateway states did not include any more references to immigration than non-gateway states despite the fact that the rate of immigration in new gateways is growing even faster than the rate of growth in traditional gateways (Passel & Suro, 2005). Therefore, it appeared that standards writers in new gateway states did not yet acknowledge shifting demographics and revise the standards to reflect this change. See Table 2 for the number of references to immigration in each state's U.S. History and Civics standards.



Table 2: Number of references to immigration in U.S. History and Civics Standards by gateway status

State	Category	Number of references: U.S. History	Number of references: Civics
New York	Traditional	6	6
Texas	Traditional	10	1
Florida	Traditional	7	1
California	Traditional	9	2
Illinois	Traditional	2	0
New Jersey	Traditional	13	1
<i>Reference average</i>		7.8	1.8
North Carolina	New	9	3
Georgia	New	5	0
Indiana	New	3	1
Iowa	New	0	0
Utah	New	2	0
Nevada	New	6	0
<i>Reference average</i>		4.2	0.67
West Virginia	Non	4	2
Louisiana	Non	5	2
Missouri	Non	4	0
Ohio	Non	7	2
Montana	Non	0	0
South Dakota	Non	2	0
<i>Reference average</i>		3.6	1

These data extend Journell's (2009b) finding that local interests play a part in standards development related to immigration. To illustrate, Journell found that although California and Texas both have large Mexican-American populations, California included modern Mexican American immigration (including other contributions such as participation as troops in WWII), while Texas did not include modern Mexican immigration in its standards. Thus, "it seems plausible that these standards are the product of political negotiation and lobbying, and the inclusion or exclusion of certain topics may indicate the successes or failures of particular interest groups" (Journell, 2009b, p. 164).

Here we potentially see a relationship between political power of immigrant communities and how this power comes to bear on standards development. The fact that traditional gateway states included immigration more predominantly than both new and non-gateway states, as well as the fact that new gateways did not include immigration more than non-gateways suggests that the political influence wielded by groups in these states could be a potentially more powerful contributor to standards than state demographics. Immigrants in traditional gateway states, after all, have longer established and more powerful political bases from which to lobby relative to new gateway states (Rong & Preissle, 2009).

Similarly, the economic contextual factors related to immigration in new gateway states have long term consequences for political influence. Research from the Pew Hispanic Center (Passel, 2005), for instance, stated that the new gateway states market themselves to businesses as low-wage, industry-friendly locales which leads

to a trend in immigration whereby new arrivals tend to be less likely to graduate from high school, work in lower paying jobs, not speak English very well or at all, and are more likely to be undocumented than immigrants in traditional gateway states. It is possible that individuals who are undocumented, in precarious economic situations, or not yet proficient in English are likely to be less empowered to advocate for the educational needs of their children than immigrant or native-born parents with different funds of social and economic capital (Hilburn, 2014).

Despite the differences in the quantity of immigration standards between traditional gateways and new and non-gateways, there were not substantial differences in how the standards related to the national narrative of immigration. That is, traditional, new, and non-gateway state standards overwhelmingly told a national *story* rather than local immigration *stories*. This national story fits into the tropes described previously, such as immigrant-as-labor, a past-oriented perspective of immigration, and the tethering of immigrants to American industrialization. There were, however, a few outliers. For instance, Indiana USH 2.7 “Describe and assess the contribution of Indiana’s only president, Benjamin Harrison, to national policies on environmental protection, business regulation, immigration, and civil rights” (Indiana Department of Education, 2008) and Florida’s standard 3 subsection: “Identify key events and people in Florida history related to United States history, such as the railroad industry, the cattle industry, and the influence of immigrants” (Florida Department of Education, 2014) addressed local immigrant concerns. Overall, although there were local differences in the quantity of immigration standards, but these standards still told a unified American story with limited local specificity.

#### *Historical Issue vs. Civic Issue*

In our comparison of U.S. History standards and Civics standards we found that regardless of a state’s gateway status, immigration was presented more often as a historical issue rather than as a civic or political issue. The majority of states’ Civics’ standards mentioned immigration once or not at all, with half of the states not including immigration at all. Moreover, most standards continued the “past-oriented” trope identified in the literature (e.g., Journell, 2009b). One example is the Indiana standard, “Students examine the political economic, social and cultural development of the US during the period 1897–1920; Explain the impact of ‘New’ immigration and the Great Migration on industrialization and urbanization and in promoting economic growth” (Indiana Department of Education, 2008) classifies immigration from 1900 as new immigration. Considering the extensive attention that immigration receives in contemporary American political discourse, this finding is somewhat surprising. However, it is possible that either weak framing or the controversial nature of the immigration debate in the U.S. may have prevented the inclusion of contemporary immigration in some states’ standards.

That said, traditional gateway states were more likely (5 of 6) than new gateways (2 of 6) or non-gateways (3 of 6) to include immigration as a civic issue. This finding suggests that long histories with immigration may have led standard writers in these states to acknowledge immigration as a topic worthy of consideration as a civic issue. Moreover, the debate over immigration policy in these states likely has waged long enough that, while still controversial, it has become an accepted topic of political discourse. It is possible that new gateway states’ shorter histories with immigration prevented the inclusion of immigration as a civic issue within these states’ Civics standards. That non-gateway states were actually slightly more likely to include immigration as a civic issue than new gateway states is curious, but the disparity is not great enough to warrant speculations on why this was the case.

In keeping with the CRM element of identifying the value of lived experiences and multiple voices, we also sought to identify standards that treated immigration as an issue to be analyzed via multiple sources. We identified only three standards that met that criterion. One of those instances was a historical analysis, and the other two times immigration was presented as a contemporary political issue. However, in all but one of those cases, immigration was mentioned only as an example of a type of political or social issue that could be discussed in classrooms. The only standard that implicitly presented immigration as a specific issue that students should be required to deliberate was included in the West Virginia Civics standards, although the actual wording was “assimilation” and not “immigration.” The exact text is as follows: “SS.12.G.2 Conduct research using demographic data to interpret, debate, and evaluate the geopolitical implications of a variety of global issues: cultural diversity and assimilation” (West Virginia Department of Education, 2014).

Overall, the framing of states’ Civic standards did not explicitly encourage the teaching of immigration as a deliberative political issue. Furthermore, we do not believe that this framing aligns with CRM because students and teachers are not tasked with drawing upon multiple immigration stories. Instead, immigration is largely treated as a non-deliberative issue, and if teachers want to frame it otherwise, they would have to do so on their own. Finally, there was no apparent connection between states’ demographic orientation to immigration and the framing of immigration as a deliberative issue. Two of the states were non-gateways, one was a traditional gateway, and one was a new gateway.

#### *Tenor of Immigration Standards: Favorable vs. Unfavorable*

In light of Bickmore’s (2008) work, and the CRM element related to interrogating the neutrality of curriculum, we attempted to deconstruct the standards, particularly in regards to how immigrants and immigration trends are positioned in the standards as favorable or unfavorable. To this end, we found a marked difference in the tenor of the standards across the states in our study. Immigration standards tended to be more overtly favorable in traditional gateway states than in new or non-gateways. Of the nine overtly favorable standards identified, seven were from traditional gateway states (NY, TX, NJ). Examples of favorable standards included, “Analyze the effectiveness of governmental policies and of actions by groups and individuals to address discrimination against new immigrants, Native Americans, and African Americans” (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014) and “Analyze the characteristics of cultural contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics and all immigrants (e.g., Germans, Italians, Irish, etc.) to the new nation” (West Virginia Department of Education, 2014).

An analysis of the favorable standards revealed two patterns related to newcomer contributions: contributions to the *economy* and *diversity* of the United States. Standards identified as economic contributions most often focused on immigrant labor in driving American industrialization and agriculture. Examples include agricultural laborers and the United Farm Workers Movement (e.g., Georgia Department of Education, 2012), economic growth through industrialization and urbanization (Indiana Department of Education, 2008), supplying laborers for the workforce (Ohio Department of Education, 2013), other economic developments like subsidies, injunctions, and other economic policies (New York State Education Department, 2015). Still other states identified the role of immigration law in facilitating immigrants’ roles in economic development (Ohio Department of Education, 2013). Here again we see the conflation of immigration and labor that has previously been critiqued in the literature (McLaren, 2000). Standards about immigrant diversity were generally

related to United States demographic and cultural variety. Here is an example from the Texas U.S. History standards: “13.B: The student understands the causes and effects of migration and immigration on American society. The student is expected to analyze the causes and effects of changing demographic patterns resulting from legal and illegal immigration to the United States” (Texas Education Agency, 2011).

The analysis also revealed that multiple standards with a favorable tone were written as vague statements of newcomer contributions. These standards focused on broad generalizations rather than specific contributions. For example, Nevada standards (Nevada Department of Education, 2008) include assessing the contributions of immigrants (all groups) to the United States. While the tenor here is favorable (i.e., immigrants have made positive contributions to the nation), this type of wording clusters all groups that have migrated to the United States across time and space with no distinction among the various groups and contributions. While this suggests some progress in relation to Solórzano and Yosso (2002) framework, the favorable standards still did not push students and teachers to seek or analyze immigrants’ stories, a central component of CRM. West Virginia presented a counter-example when it mentioned specific groups: “cultural contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics and all immigrants (e.g., Germans, Italians, Irish, etc.) to the new nation” (West Virginia Department of Education, 2014).

In contrast to the favorable standards identified in the coding and analysis, unfavorable standards were identified in 11 of the 18 states. Examples of unfavorable standards include:

“Relate social intolerance, xenophobia, and fear of anarchists to government policies restricting immigration, advocacy, and labor organizations” (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014) and “Examine social tensions in the post-World War I era, i.e., radical politics, immigration restrictions, internal migration, religious fundamentalism, and racism” (Nevada Department of Education, 2008).

The most recurring theme among the unfavorable codes was “immigration as a cause of cultural conflict.” Among the number of unfavorable standards citing cultural conflict was New Jersey’s standard: “Explain how immigration intensified ethnic and cultural conflicts and complicated the forging of a national identity” (State of New Jersey Department of Education, 2014). As written, these types of standards position immigration as a catalyst for both ethnic and cultural conflict while simultaneously clouding what it means to be American. Equally concerning was the recurring theme of “immigration as a problem.” Language such as “describe the challenges associated with immigration” (Louisiana Department of Education, 2011), and “define nativism and explain the social and political responses to immigration into the U.S.” (Nevada Department of Education, 2008) illustrate this type of problematic language. Finally, other states appeared to address assimilation as a response to immigration laws (e.g., Chinese Exclusion Act) or national movements such as the Americanization movement (e.g., North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2011) rather than a response to the treatment of immigrants in the United States.

## **Discussion**

Although others have analyzed the portrayal of immigration in state curriculum standards, this study builds upon that work by analyzing state standards on the topic of immigration by differentiating between traditional, new, and non-gateway states. Through our findings, we were able to draw some initial conclusions about the relationship between states’ immigration demographics and their social studies standards. We found that traditional gateway state standards include immigration

more often, are generally framed more favorably, and are more likely to treat immigration as a civic as well as a historical issue. Yet, regardless of a state's gateway status, the standards we studied told a unified American story about immigration with little local specificity, and by and large, immigration was presented as a historical rather than a civic issue.

It may, at first glance, seem commonsensical that states with larger immigrant populations would include more references to immigration and portray immigrants in a more favorable light in their standards than states with fewer immigrant groups. Such a conclusion, however, is too simplistic. Our findings show a need for states to balance national perspectives with local specificity in the composition of their social studies standards. Given the ways in which American society has been influenced by immigration, we argue that there should be a considerable focus on immigration in social studies standards, regardless of a state's gateway status. Moreover, we believe that the immigration narrative articulated in states' standards should move beyond a nineteenth century, paternalistic portrayal of immigration. In this sense, our recommendations align with conclusions reached in previous studies (e.g., Journell, 2009b).

Of particular concern is the lack of attention given to contemporary immigration policy as a controversial political issue. Even in traditional and new gateway states, there were scant references to immigration from a political perspective. Given the current calls for immigration reform in the United States, this seems to be a serious omission from the social studies curriculum, regardless of a state's gateway status. We agree with Mathews (2013), who stated "contemporary issues need to be united with historical events, students need access to multiple perspectives, and individuals need the skills necessary to disrupt the dominant discourse" (p. 163). What we found in this study, however, is that the contemporary issue of immigration is not united with the historical representation of immigration, and teachers are not required, vis-à-vis the state standards, to provide students with multiple perspectives on contemporary immigration. Thus, this study complicates calls for teaching immigration policy as a controversial political issue (Camicia, 2007; Hess, 2009), and makes us question whether students in these states will be equipped with the skills necessary to disrupt the dominant discourse about immigration to the United States. While there is evidence to suggest that students can effectively question dominant narratives (e.g., Applebaum, 2004; Epstein, 2009), this is less likely to happen unless, as Trofanenko (2008) stated, processes are in place to help students "recast their ideas of what it means to understand an event" (p. 598) or phenomenon. As currently constructed, immigration standards do not promote such processes.

In short, there is a certain baseline level of coverage of immigration, as both a historical and civic issue, needed in social studies standards, regardless of a state's demographics. In an era of unprecedented mobility, it is likely that many students will ultimately leave the states in which they were raised once they graduate high school. Therefore, they will need to be equipped with a curriculum that prepares them to enter an increasingly diverse American society.

At the same time, however, we believe that local specificity within standards is needed when discussing immigration. One could argue that all of the standards analyzed in this study are nested within U.S. History and Civics courses and therefore, should reflect national trends. Our counter-argument is that the social phenomena of immigration has manifested so differently in different parts of the nation that it is more accurate to include local specificity within a larger national context than to tell

a single, unified American story. By way of comparison, it is appropriate for U.S. History teachers to emphasize different aspects of the African American Civil Rights Movement based on local interests. For instance, in North Carolina it would be appropriate for teachers to dig deeply into the Greensboro sit-ins and equally appropriate for teachers in Alabama to focus more intensely on the Selma-to-Montgomery marches.

Immigration can, and perhaps should, be taught similarly. To illustrate, in new gateway states like South Carolina and Iowa, it may be more appropriate to focus class inquiries on fourth wave immigration (post-1965) than on second wave immigration since these states' histories, economies, civic life, and cultures were more impacted by the fourth wave (Rong & Preissle, 2009). Moreover, such an approach may provide a better understanding about historical immigration and more accurate representations of contemporary immigration as a political issue. This would allow teachers to address national historical and contemporary issues while framing the discussion within a context that is familiar and culturally relevant. Finally, focusing standards on local specificity could empower teachers to create local history experiences - such as field trips, museum visits, guest speakers, and community inquires - that could deepen students' understanding of immigration and draw on the experiential knowledge of students and communities, a component of CRM (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

### **Implications**

Our findings, then, offer several implications for curricular agents tasked with depicting immigration in state standards, for teachers who use those standards to frame their instruction, and for teacher educators charged with preparing future social studies teachers. First, the unfavorable nature of the standards identified in this study and in previous research (e.g., Journell, 2009b) must be addressed. One way to improve the tenor of how immigration is portrayed in many states' standards would be to decouple the topic of immigration from the description of social ills (e.g., overcrowding, cultural conflict) that are used to characterize American urban life. Likewise, immigration standards that overtly connect newcomers to problems can be eliminated or replaced with a more balanced view.

This conflation between immigrants and social ills is an example of what Solorzano & Yosso (2002) refer to as the “intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination” (p. 25). Immigrants' ethnicities, races, accents, and social classes become intertwined with society's problems via this representation. Moreover, these negative representations of immigrants as problems are influenced by historical misinformation (Chomsky, 2007). As Shear and colleagues (2015) have argued, “The power of historical narratives must become *the* central concern for social studies educators at all levels” (p. 92). In taking up this call, we challenge curricular agents to rectify the historical narrative and historical misinformation of linking social ills with immigration.

We posit that another way to help students create a more nuanced understanding of both historical and contemporary immigration would be to make immigration a more central component of states' Civics standards. Adopting a transdisciplinary approach of studying immigration from historical and civic perspectives also aligns with CRM (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) approaches to teaching. Doing so may contribute to students and teachers viewing immigration as a contemporary phenomenon and not something that “ended” at Ellis Island. Moreover, if immigration policy is framed as a controversial political issue, then more teachers would be encouraged to engage their students in discussions in which both sides of the immigration debate could receive a fair hearing. Critically discussing, studying, and analyzing immigration as an

ongoing, complex, and evolving phenomenon connected to macro- and micro-level contextual factors also addresses the CRM component of challenging dominant ideologies (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002), such as the immigrant-as-labor paradigm or the Horatio Alger myth that hard work is the only factor related to upward social mobility.

A second recommendation is that standards should not paint with “too broad a brush” with respect to immigrants. The standards in this analysis tended to cluster immigrants together despite the differences between immigrant groups. Similar to the way in which U.S. history textbook authors and standard writers cluster Indigenous Peoples despite the vast differences among tribes (Stanton, 2014), the overgeneralization of immigrant groups may lead students and teachers to view this complex historical and civic phenomenon monolithically. Immigration, like most macro-level social phenomena, impacts different regions at different times and in different ways with different acculturation processes and outcomes for immigrants and native-born Americans. As such, in addition to focusing on *when* immigration occurred in local contexts, distinctions can be made about *who* migrated from where and for what reasons. The current “clustered, unified” approach creates a false binary of monolithic native-born Americans on the one hand and monolithic new Americans on the other. Curricular agents working against this approach may also prevent an essentialized nationalism in which immigrants’ differences are exchanged for access to the canon. Instead, differences and diversity are treated as both acceptable and welcomed.

It is also important to remember Sleeter and Stillman’s (2005) concept of strongly and weakly framed standards as it relates to immigration. Some states with weakly framed standards may have omitted immigration in the same way they eliminated other content as well—curriculum writers wanted content decisions to be left to teachers’ volition. On the other hand, states with strongly framed standards may be more likely to explicitly mention immigration since these standards lay out all aspects of requisite content. Strongly framed standards, however, also constrain teacher creativity and narrow the potential scope of teacher and student inquiries.

For example, research has shown that many teachers are apprehensive about broaching discussions of controversial political issues in their classrooms (Hess, 2004), thus weakly framed Civics standards would do little to encourage hesitant teachers to engage in discussions about contemporary immigration with their students. On the other end of the spectrum, strongly framed standards that depict immigration through a single viewpoint are difficult to challenge. Journell (2009b) argued for a compromise between these approaches when he stated, “a middle ground between strongly and weakly framed standards seems an appropriate compromise to ensure that teachers are presenting balanced depictions of diversity in their classrooms while maintaining autonomy over the instructional process” (p. 165). We agree with that sentiment, especially with respect to the depiction of immigration in both U.S. History and Civics standards.

Regardless of how immigration is presented in a state’s curriculum standards, teachers are ultimately curricular gatekeepers (Thornton, 2005). Standards obviously provide a guide for teachers and a baseline set of knowledge that students are expected to know upon completion of a given course. As curricular gatekeepers, however, teachers make the final decision in terms of what is taught and how it is presented to students, regardless of what is included within the standards.

As such, teachers should be mindful that even the most strongly framed standards only represent the minimum amount of information that they are expected to cover. Therefore, if coverage of immigration in a state’s curriculum standards lacks complexity, it is the responsibility of teachers to fill in the gaps for their students. Teachers need

to be aware of the immigration demographics of their states and be prepared to include relevant local specificity, even if it is not included in the standards. Similarly, teachers should be aware of immigration counter-narratives and, especially if they are in traditional or new gateway states, be willing to let their students contribute to the development of the curriculum via their experiential knowledge (Hilburn, 2015). Likewise, drawing on local immigration stories may foster more critical approaches to teaching immigration rooted in counter-stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) that counter-balance overgeneralization.

Teacher educators also have a role to play in this process by facilitating a critical analysis of state standards with their students. In particular, teacher educators can demonstrate the difference between strongly and weakly framed standards and the implications of these standards for teaching practices. Weakly framed standards can be presented as opportunities to not only incorporate the topic of immigration into U.S. History, but also to conceptualize immigration as a macro-topic that can tie together the entire year or semester of study. Weakly framed Civics standards can also be framed as opportunities to move beyond knowledge acquisition, such as studying court cases related to immigration, and towards teaching immigration as a relevant, complex, contemporary political issue worthy of thorough investigation.

Strongly framed standards provide a different opportunity. In these cases, teacher educators can have their students critically analyze the gaps in the standards and have students identify ways to address these gaps. Students can also conduct their own critical content analyses of macro-level topics like immigration (as well as other socio-cultural issues) to determine how these topics are (mis)represented in the standards.

Finally, teacher educators can model local-to-national or local-to-global connections between concepts in the standards. For instance, a methods instructor could model linking local examples of immigration to national perspectives, or compare immigration to the United States with immigration to other nations. These connections and comparisons both provide more nuance and depth to this complex topic and allow for contemporary analysis.

### **Conclusion**

Through analyzing U.S. History and Civics standards across 18 states with differing immigrant demographic orientations, we identified three major tensions related to the treatment of immigrants and immigration: (a) standards implied a unified national story with little local specificity, (b) immigration was presented as a historical rather than a civic issue, and (c) there was an imbalance of the tenor in which the standards were written. Understanding the relationship between standards and instructional practices, we contend that the standards should be changed. However, absent curricular reform, teachers should thoughtfully extend or challenge existing standards with more complexity, accuracy, and local specificity. This work can be aided by having teacher educators develop critical strategies that enable preservice teachers to address any gaps and misrepresentations that may exist within their respective states' curriculum standards prior to entering the classroom.

More work, however, is needed in this area. Future research studies could examine the relationship between state demographics and particular social phenomena in state standards. Other studies could examine immigration standards based on dimensions beyond demographics, such as geography. Another recommendation is to study the relationship between state standards and specific teaching practices about immigration, such as exploring the ways teachers are reifying or challenging the tropes



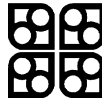
identified in the standards. As the demographics of American classrooms continue to change, it is essential that states continue to refine their curricula accordingly.

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