Standards-Based Portfolio Assessment: How To Unveil What Students Authentically Understand

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Standards – Based Portfolio Assessment:

How to Unveil What Students Authentically Understand

By

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A DISSERTATION

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Standards – Based Portfolio Assessment:
How to Unveil What Students Authentically Understand

ABSTRACT

Portfolio Assessment is a form of testing students’ knowledge, skills and understandings that is credited as an accurate measure for teachers to identify the nature and levels of student literacy. Such assessment helps teachers to have a heightened awareness of the level of students’ degree of learning. Teachers can better align their instructional strategies to best support the various students’ learning styles and natural differentiation of learning occurs within the classroom. An additional benefit is that Portfolio Assessment increases reflection opportunities for both students and teachers. There is an increase in learner agency in which students take a greater sense of ownership about their own learning. Student responsibility increases when they are held to a higher level of accountability. This study focused on the use of Portfolio Assessment by high school social studies teachers.

This study was inspired by the problem of misalignment of curriculum, instruction, and state testing and how that misalignment contributes to the persistence of the achievement gap. This study builds in part on the work of Polikoff, Porter, and Smithson (2011), who argued that 17% - 27% of the content on state assessments are not aligned to the content described by the state standards.

Archival data contained in a statewide pilot portfolio assessments were examined and teachers’ perceptions about the benefits and challenges of portfolio assessment were documented. The findings presented in this study indicate that the more complex and somewhat
unique methods of Portfolio Assessment are grounded in research about learning and assessment. Documentation of students’ and teachers’ experience using the portfolio assessment framework was triangulated through the collection of data. Portfolio assessments provide evidence of students’ conceptual understandings as documented in the feedback collected during the teacher interviews. The purposeful sample of teachers described Portfolio Assessments as a more comprehensive and more formative assessment model. The Portfolio Assessment structure requires comprehensive analysis of student learning and informs teachers whether and to what degree students can demonstrate and apply Social Studies concepts, providing them strategies to be active, informed citizens after leaving high school.
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Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

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Chapter One

Introduction

Portfolio Assessment is a form of testing the knowledge, skills, and understandings of a student who is receiving credit for a school course. This form of testing is an accurate measure for a teacher to identify the nature and level of student literacy and helps the teacher to have a heightened awareness of the level of student’s degree of learning. The teacher then can better align his or her instructional strategies to best support the various students’ learning styles and the natural differentiation of learning that occurs within the classroom. An additional benefit is that Portfolio Assessment increases learner agency in which students take a greater sense of ownership with regard to their own learning; student responsibility increases when they are held to a higher level of accountability. This study focuses on the use of Portfolio Assessment in order to determine whether it is a more effective form of assessment.

Archival data, such as a statewide pilot Portfolio Assessments that include portfolio products, frameworks, and teachers’ perceptions has been examined. This study was inspired by the problem of misalignment of curriculum, instruction, and state testing and how that misalignment contributes to the persistence of the achievement gap. This study was built on the work of Polikoff, Porter, and Smithson (2011), who argued that 17% - 27% of the content on state assessments is not aligned to the content described by the state standards.

The Social Studies curricular standards in North Carolina (NC) are conceptually written, rather than focused on a more traditional content-driven model. This is why a selected response approach, which reflects the summative assessment model of North Carolina, may not be the most effective approach in determining students’ conceptual understanding. Research suggests a
more effective form of gauging understanding is Portfolio Assessment, which is represented by the Analyzing Student Work (ASW) pilot for Social Studies instruction in North Carolina (Chappius and Stiggins, 2011). In Tennessee, a "Student Work Analysis Protocol" has been implemented with great success; it illustrated to teachers and students a more accurate measure of students’ understanding, critical thinking skills, and analysis of content (Rhode Island Department of Education and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc., 2012).

The challenge for educators becomes the aligning of classroom instruction and assessment to the North Carolina Essential State Standards. Therefore, the analysis of whether assessments are misaligned, involves a four-step approach. Step one is identifying the skills that are being assessed are parallel to the Standard’s Unpacking Documents. Step two is detecting the conceptual understanding being assessed match the same definition communicated in the Standard’s Unpacking Documents. Step three is identifying the knowledge being assessed is correlated to the Standard’s Unpacking Documents (The K-12 Social Studies Wiki, 2011). The fourth and final step is determining Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (the cognitive process and type of knowledge) is used to develop tasks aligned to the standard. The North Carolina Essential Standards for K-12 Social Studies were written intentionally to conceptual understanding, which corresponds to B2 on the Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (RBT) table (see Figure 1.1). Four aspects of understanding are exemplifying, summarizing, comparing, and explaining (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016.)
Figure 1: The graphic represents the structural change that is no longer a hierarchy

Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (RBT) Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Knowledge Dimension</th>
<th>The Cognitive Process Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Factual Knowledge</strong> - The basic elements students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in the discipline.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Conceptual Knowledge</strong> - The interrelationships among the basic elements within a larger structure that enable them to function together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. Procedural Knowledge</strong> - How to do something, methods of inquiry, and criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques, and methods.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D. Meta-Cognitive Knowledge</strong> - Knowledge of cognition in general as well as awareness and knowledge of one’s own cognition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Remember – Retrieve relevant knowledge from long-term memory
2. Understand – Construct meaning from instructional messages, including oral, written, and graphic communication
3. Apply – Carry out or use a procedure in a given situation
4. Analyze – Break material into its constituent parts and determine how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose
5. Evaluate – Make judgments based on criteria and standards
6. Create – Put elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganize elements into a new pattern or structure

A sample of what alignment should look like:

Clarifying Objective: AH1.H.5.1 Summarize how the philosophical, ideological, and/or religious views on freedom and equality contributed to the development of American political and economic systems through Reconstruction (e.g., natural rights, First Great Awakening, Declaration of Independence, suffrage, abolition, ‘slavery as a peculiar institution’, etc.).
Tagged: B2 (Understand Conceptual Knowledge)

In Preparation: Set up three learning stations. Place a primary source analysis worksheet at each station (http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Teacher Will Do</th>
<th>What Student Will Do</th>
<th>What Student Should Learn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Write the following questions on the board. “Who or what has been a significant influence in your life? What was it that made you so impacted by them or it?”</td>
<td>Answer the questions in their Social Studies JournalsShare their answers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask for volunteers to share their answers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Project the following image and ask students to interpret what the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tell students to form shoulder buddies and pose the question, “What is Federalism?”

Rotate students through the following stations:
1. The Declaration of independence
   http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html
2. “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” by Patrick Henry
   http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/patrick.asp
3. Join or Die
   http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002695523/

Tell students to reconvene with their shoulder buddy. Based on their work in the three stations, they should revise their definition of Federalism.

Comment on the meaning of the image.

Discuss the meaning of Federalism in pairs and record their definitions in their individual notebooks.

Spend about 15 minutes at each station.

How, why, and to what extent European enlightened philosophers influenced the decisions made by the Founding Fathers and the impact of these philosophies on the creation and development of the United States.

**Statement of Problem**

The problem this dissertation addresses is the misalignment between curriculum, instruction and classroom assessment with the Social Studies Essential State Standards, and the statewide examinations. The focus of this study was on the use of Portfolio Assessment as an effective measure of students’ knowledge, skills, and understandings. The purpose was to diagnose whether this structure of assessment is how educators can implicitly determine if the students can demonstrate that they gained a conceptual understanding pertaining to the big ideas that are represented in the curriculum.
The literature that was reviewed addresses the authenticity of student learning and understanding of instruction over time. The Portfolio Assessment is a student-centered form of assessment that, by design, provides students with more choices. It also provides an instructional differentiation that results when students select multiple methods of articulating what they have come to know, understand and are able to do. The research suggests that when creative thinking is compared with conventional thinking, creative thinking is what leads to the famous works of art, scientific discoveries, various inventions, and the technology that we have today. Portfolio Assessment results in true, meaningful, relevant, and memorable understanding. Portfolio Assessment is not limited to assessing only content knowledge and memorization. Rather, it focuses on real world issues that students have to solve through critical thinking and 21st century skills in order to arrive at understandings that will impact their life decisions (Weisberg, 1986).

The North Carolina General Assembly passed House Bill 48: No Standardized Testing Unless Required by the Federal Government, which eliminated statewide testing in Social Studies (General Assembly of North Carolina, 2011). This law effectively eliminated for both Civics and Economics and United States History, end-of-course tests beginning with the 2011 - 12 school year. These were two courses that were required for graduation from high school. Currently, the only testing requirement in Social Studies are the North Carolina Final Exams (NCFEs) for grades 4 - 8 and the four high school courses required for graduation - World History, American History I, American History II, and American History: Founding Principles, Civics, and Economics. The NCFEs are multiple-choice exams that have one constructed response for grades 7, 8, and the high school courses. The research problem is to appraise student understanding, analyze the portfolio structures and prompts to evaluate the Portfolio Assessment program within a sampling of students, and determine whether the students can
express a greater depth of understanding, quality of thinking, and an overall better experience of test taking.

**Research Questions**

This research addressed the following questions:

(A) How does the design of the Portfolio Assessment align with conceptual understandings in the state standards?

(B) What is the evidence of conceptual understanding in students’ portfolios?

(C) How does the Portfolio Assessment inform teachers about students’ understanding of Social Studies concepts?

**Conceptual Framework**

The general concept identified is alignment. The topics that fall under the umbrella of alignment include: Teaching and Learning Plans, State Standards, Curriculum, Instruction, State Assessment, and Collaboration. All alignment begins with the legislatively approved and mandated state standards, because those standards are the foundation from which all other results must be aligned. This research has been influenced by the articulation and assessment of authors such as Anderson (2001) and Polikoff, et al. (2011) as to why this lack of alignment exists, along with the negative impact that misconfiguration has on students and teachers. Once the State Standards were selected, the concept of the educational aspects was added to the conceptual framework. This combination resulted in State Standards transforming from topical to conceptual in order to make learning more meaningful and relevant to students. The concepts this study addresses include: arrangement of curriculum and assessment, the achievement gap, and school reform.
Assumptions, Limitations and Scope

Assumptions

Standards and assessment must be aligned in order to facilitate proper curriculum and instruction. Various procedures are used to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in these existing methods. “Alignment research is critical for ensuring that the standards-assessment-instruction cycle facilitates student learning” (Martone and Sireci, 2009).

Anderson (2001), Polikoff, et al. (2011), Rhode Island Department of Education, and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc. (2012), have made these observations; therefore an expectation exists that success will be replicated when changing to a different form of assessment.

Limitations

Portfolio Assessment requires the collection of qualitative data, which was evaluated by students themselves and by their instructor or a panel of reviewers; such evaluation inevitably leads to some level of subjectivity. Teachers often already have set expectations for certain students. Even with a rubric, Portfolio Assessment is less objective than selected response assessment. Answers are not always either right or wrong. A strict set of criteria for evaluating the portfolio improves the reliability of Portfolio Assessment (Driessen, Van Der Vleuten, Schwirth, Van Tartwijk, and Vermunt, 2005).

North Carolina Final Exams include mainly selected response items that are best for assessing facts and content (Chappius and Stiggens, 2011), because they are items with a definite right or wrong answer. Since the Essential State Standards in Social Studies emphasize outlining the big ideas and understandings, students should leave their Social Studies classrooms with an understanding of the content as recommended by the National Council for Social Studies.
Consequently, it is the understanding that needs to be assessed, not the just content or specific topics. The current NCFEs do not align to the Essential State Standards, nor do they use what is the most effective form of accessing conceptual instruction (Erickson, 2006).

**Rationale and Significance**

Many factors influence student performance in school. The school’s climate, culture, expectations, community involvement, and socioeconomic status need to be taken into consideration. An additional factor is that teachers’ expectations for all students must be significantly raised (Thompson, 2009).

The current NCFEs do not align with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Social Studies Essential Standards (Principal READY, 2011). The Division of Curriculum and Instruction at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) are strongly invested in addressing this problem. If Social Studies teachers use Portfolio Assessment, teachers in other content areas may also want to change to the Portfolio Assessment model. Statewide data is collected and analyzed most cost effectively by utilizing answer sheets that are scored by means of Scan-trons.

**Definitions**

**Cognitive Framework**

The term cognitive framework refers to the interpretative system through which individuals process information and make sense of their experience (Weick, 2001). The cognitive framework that this research incorporates is based on Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (RBT). RBT outlines how to effectively assess and ensure alignment between standards, instruction, curriculum, and assessment (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).
Content

When the term ‘content’ is referenced in this research, it will be one of three categories: facts, skills, and conceptual understandings (i.e., generalizations or big ideas). Traditionally, instruction has focused on facts and skills; the term content in this research incorporates the third dimension, which is the conceptual understanding (Erickson, 2006).

Best Practices

Best practices in instruction are defined throughout the research in order to articulate how to most effectively facilitate concept-based teaching. (Frey & Lapp, 2011). This innovative way of teaching cannot be effectively judged by using a selected response assessment, which is little more than a convenient questionnaire (Chauppius & Stiggins, 2011). When students save their work in Portfolio Assessment, they house all of their products together. This organizational component that makes up the Portfolio Assessment framework causes students to take a second look at their previous work and reflect on how they can do better on future assignments. The value of Portfolio Assessment as an assessment tool is that it represents the students’ genuine classroom performance and the student becomes more a part of the actual curriculum. Unlike traditional tests, these Portfolios supplement instruction rather than requiring the teacher to take time away from instruction in order to administer an isolated examination. Teachers become better prepared to more accurately measure the students’ mastery of skills and understandings. Then teachers more effectively plan and customize future instructional decisions in lessons (Sweet, 1993.)

Conclusion

Chapter One reviewed the research problem, questions, conceptual framework, assumptions, limitations, scope, rationale, and significance of this research. With so much
emphasis and importance and so many consequences tightly connected to student-based assessments, it is crucial to identify and implement the most effective tool to assess students. Although multiple choice exams are quick and easy to grade (thus fiscally preferred) they are effective only in measuring what students can regurgitate, and ultimately quickly forget. Learning should be more relevant, meaningful, and longer lasting. The new understanding that can potentially occur in the Social Studies classrooms might determine the citizen’s role in future development of the town, state, nation, and world (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014).
Chapter 2

Literature Review

During the research process, the analysis of superior written works of scholars who preceded this study served as dynamic guidance and provided a means of letting the resources lead the researcher. The topics that arose from this research were vast. First, there were inquiries regarding statewide testing of Social Studies and variations in standardized assessment policies from state to state. The reason that the Federal Government started standardized testing was a result of filtered data that reflected international school rankings. President George W. Bush’s attempt to raise the United States’ international education ranking was through the implementation of the No Child Left Behind legislation. President Barack Obama dovetailed this initiative by allowing all states to apply for the Race to the Top grant. The states that were required to sustain standardized statewide testing in Social Studies were states that won The Race to the Top grants (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2016). These standardized assessments measured not only students’ knowledge, skills, and understanding, but also teacher competence. The various forms of conceptual assessment are not new in the world of education. There is a strong pedagogical historical precedent and philosophy that goes hand in hand with the more contemporary research. In addition, these sources defined the criteria that became the conceptual framework, including theoretical concepts. Finally, this chapter concludes with a rationale for the methods of Portfolio Assessment analysis.

Statewide Testing of High School Social Studies

The Social Studies team at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has a responsibility to work with the Governor, the State School Board of Education, and the General Assembly to pass the Essential Standards by which teachers are mandated to teach. From June 2012 until January 2016, teachers worked on teams to write curriculum guides that aligned with
the standards, and, they determined how to implement the instructional strategies. However, statewide teachers and students received an examination that is not aligned with the standards and curriculum guides and instructional strategies. Research suggested that this misalignment is having an impact on the achievement gap and is a nationwide problem. According to Polikoff, et al. (2011), assessments are at the wrong level of the standard’s cognitive domain nationwide. As stated previously, it is estimated 17 – 27 % of the content in all state testing is not even mentioned in the states’ corresponding standards.

Statewide Assessment Policy

Policy makers throughout the nation are envisioning standardized tests that have the power to transform schools from places to achieve to school communities that consistently produce highly competent students. Traditionally, teachers maximized learning by taking advantage of assessment tests and viewed them as an incentive for student achievement. However, assessments have intimidated and pressured students. A far more productive way to structure the evaluation of student learning is Performance Based Assessment, which is further explained in the Analyzing Student Work model (Chappius & Stiggens, 2011).

Effectiveness of Assessment

In 1973, Bruner’s findings contributed greatly to the Cognitive Revolution, which had an impact on both psychology and learning. He argued that when students go beyond the information of the knowledge they are taught is when the students begin figuring out the newly presented concepts. A victory for the teacher and the student is when concepts are organized in the student’s head and a deeper level of understanding has exceeded the intended conceptual understanding. To conclude, Bruner emphasized the significance of self-reflection and facilitation of student reflection.
More recently, Tafton (2013) worked with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) neuroscientists and education researchers at Harvard University and Brown University to conduct studies to discover whether students who were getting increasingly higher scores on standardized tests were also gaining cognitive skills. The results concluded that while some schools improved their students’ standardized test grades, there was no improvement in their fluid intelligence. Fluid intelligence is a term that encompasses entities such as memory, capacity, and speed at which information is processed.

An article by Garland (2014) considered the history of standardized testing and discussed the validity of standardized tests. Although the field of academia emphasizes how important it is to be able to solve problems and think critically, Garland ascertains that standardized tests are not measuring the concept that educators really want students to learn. Garland’s second point is that standardized exams are not reliable because they do not adequately provide information about what the student thinks and how the child can grow scholastically. Finally, teachers take away from valuable instructional time to prepare for an unreliable test that cannot reflect that students are succeeding at 21st Century skills. Her conclusion is that these exams have always been corrupt and have caused damage to education.

**Teacher Competence**

In 1983, Saha specifically compared developed and less-developed societies to examine teacher effectiveness and its impact on student learning. The study concluded that the more effectively trained and experienced the teacher, the more students will excel academically. Further correlations were made with students’ socioeconomic background. Highly trained teachers had the most powerful influence on breaking the poverty cycle (Saha, 1983). Therefore, if society wants learning to improve, teacher training needs to improve.
Historical Precedence for Conceptual Instruction

The emergence of cognitive frameworks that align curriculum, instruction, and assessment were also being advanced with the work carried out by Brown and Day (1983). This source focused primarily on the cognitive benefits of summarization for students throughout their learning processes. Summarization improves student comprehension while the student is reading and by promoting self-testing when applying various strategies. Brown and Day discuss both inductive and deductive summarizing and the crucial role each plays in critical thinking. Most importantly, their research illustrated that summarization had significant effects on student performance, especially with reading comprehension.

In 1984, Sizer argued that high schools do not develop students to expound intellectually through critical thinking and reasoning. This would require a complete overhaul and reorganization of the public school system, not just reforming certain components. The current structures make learning meaningless. His solution was to simplify curriculum in order to facilitate more creativity and activity in student thinking.

In 1986, Weisberg compared ordinary thinking with creative thinking. Weisberg explained how creative thinking leads to the famous works of art, scientific discoveries, various inventions, and the technology of computing that exist as opportunities today. Regardless of its inarguable importance creative thinking is not emphasized enough or reflected in curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

Sylwester (2005) updated educators on the achievements in neuroscience that have been studied and discovered and can help teachers to better organize their content into conceptual categories in order to increase the students’ retention of understandings. Tomlinson and Strickland (2005) built on Sylwester’s guide of brain activity to expand on the need for
Differentiation in instruction. Differentiation does not have to occur by segregating students, but rather through increasingly embedding choices for students through the means of Problem-Based Learning. Differentiation then occurs more seamlessly.

Wiggins and McTighe (2005) emerged as pioneers in curriculum and instruction when they published their book *Understanding by Design (UbD)*. The emphasis of instruction focused on understandings being the key goal in all educational settings. UbD frameworks and trainings became more common and many districts adopted the framework nationwide.

Erickson (2006) and Hansen (2011) supported the findings of Wiggins and McTighe. Erickson created a 12-step process that curriculum writers can use in order to successfully create conceptual units. Erickson and Hansen identified key criteria that are non-negotiable if the teacher wants to change from a traditional “skill – and - drill approach” to a conceptual classroom in which understandings are the goal and knowledge and skills support the obtainment of these conceptual understandings. Performance Task Assessments are a part of the 12-step process as the form of most effective assessment for conceptual understandings.

**Assessment Viewpoints**

Reeves’ (2009) defined 90/90/90 schools as being 90% minority, 90% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, and at least 90% successful on standardized assessment tests. Five common traits were identified in these 90/90/90 schools:

1. Achievement as a major focus
2. Clear curricular choices by students
3. Frequent assessments and many opportunities for students to show improvement
4. Emphasis on writing in all areas of academics
5. External scoring of student work (Thompson, 2009)
Oliver (2015) asked the question: if standardized tests are bad for students, parents, and teachers, then who is benefitting from them? One answer might be testing companies. Pearson, for example, has 40% of the nationwide testing market. Pearson advertises for reviewers on Craig’s List who are held to a quota that requires the reviewers to grade tests such that the scores result in a certain number of ones, twos, threes, and fours. Oliver concluded that the original goal of standardized tests was to narrow America’s achievement gap and boost its students’ scores when compared to the rest of the world. Two decades later the achievement gap has been maintained, and America’s standardized test scores, when compared to the rest of the world, have gone down even further, depending on the student population demographics.

Dunlop (2013) focused on the critical role that creativity plays in student achievement along with the teacher’s role of fostering curiosity through inquiry as a means of effective instruction. Test scores revealed achievement gaps for various demographic groups; Dunlop claimed that the gaps are caused by the structure of the standardized test. When students are examined through a new lens within the context of creativity, each student varying area of strength is revealed. Increased creativity then makes achievement gaps decrease. Rather than using a cookie-cutter approach to assess all students, it is vital to identify each student’s strengths and nurture the strengths of the individual.

**Assessment in Social Studies**

Lesh (2011) addressed the instruction of Social Studies and the tradition this field has maintained: memorization of content that is transferred by means of a lecture. Students are then assessed on what they are able to regurgitate back from their memory. Research conducted by Lesh explained how providing students with historical evidence allows their critical thinking skills and analysis of the evidence to help them arrive at their own conclusions and
interpretations. Thus, there is no one right answer. The result is evidence-based answers regarding multiple perspectives to some of history’s most challenging questions. Evidence-based teaching is another engaging and effective means of organizing curriculum and instruction that has no one correct answer; would require the transformation of current high-stakes standardized selected response questions (Lesh, 2011).

Useful assessment both supports and verifies what a student has learned (Chappius & Stiggins, 2012). Effective assessment data should drive the students’ future instruction; however, the assessment must be accurate. Chappius and Stiggins (2011) presented a paradigm shift from using assessment as a means of accountability to using forms of assessment that teach students. The authors additionally promoted team collaboration as a means of learning faster with the result of a greater depth of student understanding.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Challenges exist in administering tests that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards, which are a set of standards developed by educational representatives from across the country. They were created with the hope that no matter where a child is educated, the child receives the same rigorous instruction (Common Core State Initiative: Preparing America's Students for College and Career, 2009). The Partners for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) exam was created by Pearson and the Smarter Balanced Assessment consortia in anticipation that their assessments could be administered online, but many of the participating states do not administer their assessments online. Technology pertaining to online assessment has additional security concerns because cheating and fraud pose unique challenges (Kober & Stark, 2012).
A study by Haycock (1998) found that the answer to closing the achievement gap is employing good teaching and teachers. Haycock’s research was carried out in Alabama, Tennessee, Texas, and Massachusetts. In all four states, Haycock collected teacher effectiveness data that focused on the teacher having deep content knowledge, strong math and verbal skills, and effective teaching strategies. Haycock correlated quality teachers with class and race and identified the problem as involving race rather than socioeconomic status. A poor white student has a greater likelihood of getting a well-qualified teacher than a poor black student.

The types of sources researched included scholarly literature, books, dissertations, websites, released statewide assessment items, and student scores. In addition, teacher interviews were conducted, assessment item writers, State School Superintendents, Deputy Governors, State School Board members, state consultants in curriculum and instruction, the primary author of Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy, and students.

**Validity of Sources**

Evaluation of the evidence and sources is critical and is a valued practice because most significant and convincing arguments can be made only with valuable evidence. In determining sources’ credibility, ask questions such as: Who is the author? How recent is the source? What was the author’s purpose and/or motive for writing this paper? What types of sources will my audience value? Is my research balanced in both primary and secondary sources? When relevant, have I included the historical context for the time frame this was written? Does my research represent the multiple perspectives of the scenario? What are the consistencies and inconsistencies that I am encountering throughout my research? How do the experts in the field regard this source’s value, validity, and credibility? Am I able to differentiate between fact and opinion in the source? When making a claim, am I able to predict and argue the counter claim?
What are the limitations of this source? (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2001; Teaching Channel, 2016; Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2013)

**Conclusion**

In assisting districts and schools with developing their local curriculum, the Social Studies team at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has focused on developing authentic performance task assessments. This alternative assessment model is called Analyzing Student Work (ASW) and is parallel to a Portfolio Assessment. Portfolio Assessment and performance task assessment lend themselves well to aligning assessment with conceptual instruction that is carried out in a classroom that supports and facilitates inquiry (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014). The instructor is able to assess the students’ critical thinking, interpretation, and understanding of the content, not just the knowledge of the content and skills (which are often the only two aspects tested in other forms of assessment).

A new form of assessment will take time, but it will be the final component to the paradigm shift being encouraged nationally (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014; College Boards, 2016; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2014). With so much emphasis, importance, and now consequences and/or rewards being so tightly connected to the tests, it is critical to identify and implement the best tool for assessing student understanding of concepts. Although multiple choice exams are quick and easy to grade, they are effective only in measuring what students can repeat, and ultimately quickly forget. Learning should be more relevant, meaningful, and longer lasting. The new understanding that can potentially occur in the Social Studies classrooms shapes the future by determining the citizens’ role in future development of the town, state, and nation.
Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter outlines the procedures and the overall research that took place. The purpose of the methodology is to articulate the what and how in which data and information will be collected in order to determine the ways in which Portfolio Assessment is a more effective approach to evaluation.

The following research questions guided the methodology process and collection of data:

(A) How does the design of the Portfolio Assessment align with conceptual understandings in the state standards?

(B) What is the evidence of conceptual understanding in students’ portfolios?

(C) How does the Portfolio Assessment inform teachers about students’ understanding of Social Studies concepts?

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two addressed the authenticity of student learning and understandings of instruction over time. Portfolio Assessment is a more student-centered form of assessment that by design provides students with more choices and instructional differentiation. This design provides the student with multiple methods of articulating what they have come to know, understand, and are able to do (Weisberg, 1986). This study will solve the problem by evaluating Portfolio Assessment and how teachers who have used this form of assessment effectively perceive its value.

The methodology is an Instrumental Case Study Research model. The selected conceptual framework affiliates well with this theoretical framework. The concept map and my General Topic is identified as: Alignment. The five main topics in the framework are: Teaching
and Learning Plans, State Standards, Curriculum, Instruction, State Assessment and Collaboration.

Authors such as Anderson (2001) and Polikoff, et al. (2011) have influenced this research because they addressed the need to articulate and assess why there is lack of alignment between standards and assessment.

**Setting**

The setting for the pilot Portfolio Assessments in the 2013–2014, 2014–2015, and 2015–2016 school years took place throughout the entire state of North Carolina. The population is made up of 71% Whites, 22.1% Blacks, 9% Latino, 2.2% Asian, and 0.1% American Indian. The rate of high school graduation or higher education is 84.5%, residents with a Bachelor’s degree or higher make up 27.8%, and 17.2% of North Carolina residents live in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2014).

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) website posts data from the last three years in which the students took the, which were mandated by the state, North Carolina Final Examinations (NCFEs). The state granted waivers to some districts which meant they did not have to take the NCFEs for one school year. These waivers opened the door for teachers to give Performance Task Assessments in lieu of the state mandated examinations.

The overall state geographic location is North Carolina. The statewide demographics include: 115 Districts, 2,500 traditional public schools, 126 charter schools, and three residential schools for students who have visual and hearing impairments (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015). The demographics of high schools strongly reflects the demographics of the state of North Carolina. American Indian is 1% of the schools’ population, Asian 3%,
Black 27%, Latino 12%, White 52%, two or more races 5%, Females 49%, and Males 51% (U.S. News: Education, 2016).

North Carolina teachers overwhelmingly provided feedback that the state standards did not align to the NCFEs. Therefore, pilot studies to replace the NCFEs with Portfolio Assessments began and took place during the 2013–2014, 2014 – 2015, and 2015 – 2016 school years.

**Participants**

In this instrumental case study, a random sampling of approximately 100 students’ Portfolio Assessments were analyzed. The 100 students represent about 33 from each of three cohorts. This archival data consists of three years of Portfolio Assessment data conducted at the end of the 2013 - 2014, 2014 - 2015, and 2015 - 2016 school years when I worked at the NC DPI. This pilot study was in response to the NC DPI’s research on the misalignment between statewide social studies curriculum and standardized assessment. NC DPI generated and dispersed Listserv announcements asking for Social Studies High School teachers to participate in this pilot study. As a Curriculum and Instruction Social Studies Consultant who was employed by NC DPI and charged with leading the statewide pilot, I had full access to the participating teachers and students. The portfolio data are print records of various types of presentations, responses to prompts, and student explanations about their responses.

Nine teachers were interviewed. With representatives from the three different regions that make up North Carolina: the Mountain Region, the Piedmont Region, and the Coastal Region. Teachers were interviewed regarding their experience with the implementation of student Portfolio Assessments. Three were selected from the first cohort, three were selected from the second cohort, and three were selected from the third cohort.
Data

Portfolio Assessment and Performance Task Assessment to align assessment to conceptual instruction that is carried out in a classroom that supports and facilitates inquiry (Rhode Island Department of Education and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc., 2012). This alignment results in teachers who are able to comprehend an authentically created new student product in which students demonstrate conceptual understandings (Erickson, 2006; Hansen, 2011).

The cognitive framework used in the North Carolina Essential Standards is a Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (RBT) (Anderson, 2001). The RBT outlines how to effectively assess student work and ensure alignment with content standards. For example, if the verb of the standard is “explain,” the assessment should reflect a cause-and-effect relationship. If the verb is “analyze,” students must be given stimulus to break into parts and then use those parts to formulate a new and genuine understanding or interpretation as a means of assessment. If the verb is “evaluate,” then a specific criterion and stimulus must be provided to the student so that the student can effectively evaluate a new conceptual understanding (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001). There are some significant differences between the traditional model of instruction (which leans toward a teacher driven content-focused framework) and a conceptual model of instruction. However, the classroom teacher who uses a conceptual approach encourages a greater use of student-centered inquiry that involves an exploration of big ideas (i.e., generalizations). Classroom instruction involves using concepts as a part of relationships and transferrable understandings (Erickson, 2006; Hansen, 2011).

The Portfolio Assessment is both a process in which teachers collect student artifacts that reflects five instructional Social Studies objectives that represent the curriculum and an
assessment approach. The collection of artifacts then evaluated on one of five corresponding rubrics. Students could choose among the following products to demonstrate their conceptual understanding of the big ideas as outlined by the state standards. Choices included: an electronic presentation, a research paper, a display board, or a skit or other type of performance. All products were accompanied by an annotated bibliography, that included both primary and secondary sources, a peer-to-peer intellectual conversation component, and a self-reflective component. The product answered the students’ selected compelling questions and then followed the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) framework inquiry arc to provide guidance for each student who answered the compelling question that results in an authentic student product. The C3 framework is explained in greater detail in Chapter 4.

For the purpose of this study, the student products of the three cohorts were examined. Each cohort was approximately 33 students in size. The methodology proposed was an Instrumental Case Study Research model. This study examined the work of students who had graduated high school in the previous three years; it included the analysis of portfolio products and teacher interviews.

Specifically, this was an intrinsic case study with the goal of understanding a problem and concluding with an analysis of students’ conceptual understandings of the standards. Various forms of data were collected in order to ensure the triangulation of data. The triangulation included: teacher interviews, student portfolio data, and structure of the Portfolio Assessment. Descriptors and chronology were included and planned for in advance (Creswell, 2013).
**Portfolio Assessment Pilot**

Portfolio Assessments were conducted for three cohorts. This archival data was collected as part of the regular, year-end assessment protocol for classes in the 2013–2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 school years by teachers who volunteered to participate in a pilot study sponsored by the State of North Carolina. NCFE scores over the past three years were documented at the state level. All of this archival pilot data is publicly available on the NC DPI Accountability website.

**Interviews**

Nine teachers were interviewed, three from each cohort that represented the three different regions that make up North Carolina: the Mountain Region, the Piedmont Region, and the Coastal Region. Each of the nine teachers were asked the following questions:

1. How does the design of the Portfolio Assessment align with conceptual understandings in the state standards?
2. What is the evidence of conceptual understanding in students’ portfolios?
3. How does this structure of analysis inform teachers that students can demonstrate and apply social studies concepts?
4. What did you perceive as the most valuable aspect of implementing the use of Portfolio Assessment?
5. What did you perceive as the most challenging aspect of implementing the use of Portfolio Assessment?
Participant Rights

Participants engaged in the interview process were fulfilling one of the components that was a part of the pilot study as outlined by NC DPI. The participants who volunteered were instructed to complete a Google Form, but were not required to sign anything.

Provisions for Subject and Data Confidentiality

In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), the students’ identities are visible only to the researcher and pseudonyms are used in the supporting of the findings (Bonamici, 2012).

For the purpose of this study, the portfolios of three cohorts of students were examined. Each cohort is approximately 33 students in size. This study involved student Portfolio Assessments who have graduated from high school within the past three years.

Potential Research Risks and Benefits to Participants

The study focused on the effectiveness of Portfolio Assessment. Explicit attention was prearranged to specifically observe three factors: the structure of the Portfolio Assessment, the products contained within the Portfolio Assessments, and teacher interviews, which revealed expert perceptions of Portfolio Assessment as an effective assessment tool in measuring a students’ knowledge, skills, and understandings. Although teacher emotional distress is a possible risk, but not likely.

No monetary benefits were provided to the teachers who participated in this study’s interviews. However, teachers who participated in the study may find that this experience resulted in an opportunity for self-reflection on their own practices. The Portfolio Assessment model was found to be useful in its ability to be implemented in both summative and formative
assessment before it is a much more student-centered and customized approach to assessing conceptual instruction.
Chapter 4
Results

Three types of data are presented in this chapter: the structure of the Portfolio Assessment, the student products contained within the Portfolios, and themes from teacher interviews. This chapter describes the analytical method that was to triangulate the evidence. This evidence includes students’ documentation of conceptual understandings. First, the alignment of state standards and the portfolio framework is presented. Then, the analysis that was conducted on the products found in the student portfolio will be described. Finally, teacher responses to interviews are analyzed. These interviews come from a sample of teachers in three regions of North Carolina who have used Portfolio Assessment and measured the value of this type of assessment. Finally, this analysis reveals whether the Portfolio Assessment is geared more for student learning rather than an isolated, more traditional summative assessment.

Portfolio Framework

This section provides the answer to the first research question: How does the design of the Portfolio Assessment align with conceptual understandings in the state standards? The structure of the portfolio is based on the National Council for the Social Studies (2014) College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework. The C3 Framework is a four-dimensional inquiry arc. Inquiry is defined as "a seeking for truth, information, or knowledge - seeking information by questioning." As a general instructional strategy, the C3 Framework is a complex process that enables students to make deeper connections with what they are learning. From a Social Studies perspective, it is hoped that these understandings will lead to students taking more informed action as engaged citizens.
**Figure 2: Chart of C3 Framework – The Inquiry Arc**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Dimension 1</th>
<th>Dimension 2</th>
<th>Dimension 3</th>
<th>Dimension 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Developing the compelling question and planning for inquiry</td>
<td>Applying disciplinary concepts and tools</td>
<td>Evaluating sources and using evidence</td>
<td>Communicating conclusions and taking informed actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drives research and inquiry</td>
<td>• Learn the language of the Social Studies disciplines</td>
<td>• Create well-reasoned claims and arguments</td>
<td>• Opportunities for student voice and choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Engages students’ natural curiosity</td>
<td>• Big ideas become connected and correlated</td>
<td>• Determine credibility in sources</td>
<td>• Argumentative writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Makes learning relevant, meaningful, and memorable</td>
<td>• Gain the understanding of multiple perspectives and the value of selecting a lens to view research through</td>
<td>• Identify author’s line of reasoning</td>
<td>• Service learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Opportunities for student voice and choice</td>
<td>• Identify an author’s agenda and motive for writing</td>
<td>• Problem based learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• So what? Now what?</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
<td>• Students create compelling questions based on a specific criterion</td>
<td>• Identify and apply Social Studies concepts</td>
<td>• Determine whether the source is primary, secondary, or tertiary</td>
<td>• Create argument and claims that are embedded in valuable and credible research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students identify the supporting questions that will need to be answered prior to answering the compelling question</td>
<td>• Interpret a variety of primary sources</td>
<td>• Recognize a source’s historical context</td>
<td>• Public speaking opportunities in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify the discipline’s facts and skills that will be needed in order to complete the inquiry process</td>
<td>• Analyze multiple perspectives on the same topic</td>
<td>• Deliberate with peers, organize, and take informed action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example(s)</strong></td>
<td>• Is Fantasy Football gambling?</td>
<td>• View a map through the lens of cartographer. Then view the same map through the lens of a cultural anthropologist.</td>
<td>• Determine the value and credibility of a source</td>
<td>• Assemble community forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Should prostitution be legalized?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use Meta Code Tagging</td>
<td>• Systematize a letter-writing campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Learn how to navigate scholarly journals and databases</td>
<td>• Harps for Hospice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sponsor your school’s street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Start a garden in the community or at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dimension 1 focuses on the development of questions and the planning of inquiries that help students derive meaning from the complex world in which we live. At the heart of any good inquiry is a thought-provoking question. If teachers want students to be engaged in their study, they must ask questions that matter to them and teach them to ask the right questions. Questions drive the inquiry. The C3 Framework identifies two types of questions: compelling questions that form the inquiry and supporting questions that advance it. Compelling questions engage the personal intellect of a student by reflecting one or both of the following: a societal concern that the student finds interesting and important or an enduring issue in the realm of civics (e.g., Is war ever justifiable? Is the unification of North and South Korea ever possible?). Supporting questions help guide the development of an inquiry by encouraging students to gather descriptions, definitions, and processes on which there is general agreement within the disciplines of Social Studies. These supporting questions require students to gain a deeper level of understanding of factual information in order to respond to the inquiry and to help define the parameters set forth in the curriculum (e.g., What caused the split between North and South Korea?).

Dimension 2 of the inquiry arc is applying disciplinary concepts and tools. A part of preparing students to become not only ready for college and career but also ready for civic action involves equipping them with the knowledge and understanding of the concepts of Social Studies as well as knowledge about how to use the tools and skills of the many disciplines of Social Studies (e.g., politics, history, geography, economics, and psychology). Each of the disciplines of Social Studies offers a unique way of thinking, organizing, and verifying knowledge. Students must be able to understand the language of each discipline. When students begin to use the language of social studies, they begin to build upon their understanding of how to use the tools
and skills of the unique disciplines of Social Studies in answering compelling questions. In social studies, concepts provide the language to help individuals understand the generalizations, or enduring understandings as many like to call them. The connections between the big ideas become the generalizations (understandings). These ideas and understandings are the disciplinary lenses students use to make inquiries that help them address compelling questions.

Dimension 3 focuses on evaluating sources and using evidence. Students should be able to provide well-reasoned explanations, claims, and arguments that are supported by valuable evidence. Not only is it important that students be able to analyze a source through multiple disciplinary lenses, but students should also be able to evaluate the source and determine its credibility, value, and validity. Students should know the difference between an opinion, an explanation, and an argument. This is an opportunity for the student to reflect whether the selected sources represent all the available and valuable evidence that is needed to answer their compelling question.

Dimension 4 is an important part of preparing students to be C3-ready by providing them opportunities to collaborate, communicate, and take action outside of the classroom. Students need to be provided opportunities to collaborate with others as they communicate and critique their conclusions in public venues. Critiquing conclusions requires an examination of sources, consideration of how evidence is being used to support claims, and an appraisal of the structure and form of arguments. The critiquing of arguments and explanations deepens student’s understanding of concepts and tools in the disciplines and helps strengthen their conclusions. Students should be able to express their views in a way that is persuasive and contributes to collective understanding of various issues. This also enables students to write logical arguments based on substantial claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence. Deliverables such as essays,
reports, speeches, panel discussions, proposals, debates, and multimedia presentations offer
students opportunities to represent their ideas in a variety of forms and communicate their
conclusions to a range of audiences. In Social Studies, students use disciplinary knowledge,
skills, and perspectives to inquire about problems, deliberate with others concerning how to
address issues, and take independent and constructive action. Teachers should support students in
determining what they are interested in and encourage them to connect those interests with
actionable issues of community and civic importance. Students should be able to apply what they
have learned to participate in public discourse on issues of significance.

Student Products Found in Portfolios

This section answers the second research question: What is the evidence of conceptual
understanding in students’ portfolios? Examples of products that make up the student portfolios
include authentic student work that demonstrates application of new understandings of
contemporary issues. After students are taught a clarifying objective from one of the state
standards, they apply that understanding by creating a compelling question, also commonly
called a provocative question. This question has multiple truths pertaining to the new
understanding that the clarifying objective addresses. An example of a compelling question is:
“Should euthanasia be legal based on bodily autonomy?”

Next, the students answer the questions grounded in credible research that represents the
multiple answers shared by society. The students then create an annotated bibliography that
reflects the balance of the research and the empathy that they have gained from both sides of the
argument. Once the annotated bibliography is complete, the students can choose to work
individually or in a group of peers (up to five students) on a product that will relay their research.
Product choices include: formal term paper, documentary, display board (mini-museum exhibit), performance/skit, website, Prezi, or PowerPoint.

The rubrics and student samples in the Appendix illustrate that all products require critical thinking and application of a new understanding though writing, visuals, oration, thesis, empathy of multiple viewpoints, peer-to-peer review and feedback, and self-reflection. This dimension concludes with the powerful student voice component. Students declare their conclusion and answer to the compelling question based on their interpretation of the primary resources and credible, valid research.

**Teacher Interview Results**

This section answers the third research question: How does the Portfolio Assessment inform teachers about students’ understanding of Social Studies concepts? The North Carolina Essential Social Studies Standards were written in 2010 after the North Carolina General Assembly passed *House Bill 48: No Standardized Testing Unless Required by the Federal Government*, which eliminated statewide testing in Social Studies (General Assembly of North Carolina, 2011). This law effectively eliminated both the Civics and Economics and the United States History End-of-Course tests beginning with the 2011-12 school year. These courses had been required for graduation. Then, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) won the Federal *Race to the Top (RttT)* grant which meant mandatory state testing in Social Studies in grades 4 – 12. The mandatory tests are multiple-choice exams with one constructed response for grades 7 and 8 and the high school courses.

A purposeful sample of nine teachers agreed to be interviewed, three from each cohort, with representatives from the three different regions that make up North Carolina: the Mountain Region (MR), the Piedmont Region (PR), and the Coastal Region (CR). The Blue Ridge
Mountains serve as a geographic feature that separates the Mountain Region and the Piedmont Region. The Mountain Region, in the western part of North Carolina, is much smaller than the Piedmont and Coastal Regions of North Carolina. The Piedmont Region is the central part of North Carolina. The word “Piedmont” is a French word that means “foot of the mountain.” The Piedmont Region’s geographic feature is hilly land, and it is the fastest growing part of the state in terms of population. Many Northerners and businesses relocate in the central section of North Carolina, close to the capital city of Raleigh. The Coastal Region is the most eastern part of North Carolina. The land is low and flat, and it borders the Atlantic Ocean. The Coastal Region’s claims to fame are that it is where the first Venus Fly Trap was first descended, Pepsi was invented by a pharmacist, and the lost colony of Roanoke is was located.

**Figure 3:** *Teachers Who Participated in the Interview Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher initials and gender</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Years of experience teaching</th>
<th>Course(s) taught</th>
<th>Years of training / implementation of Portfolio Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J.W. male</td>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>American History 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.K. male</td>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>World History</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.F. female</td>
<td>Piedmont</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>American History 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.R. male</td>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Civics &amp; Economics, World History, Civics &amp; Economics</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.M. female</td>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Civics &amp; Economics</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.H. female</td>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>World History</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.M. male</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>World History</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.B. female</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Civics &amp; Economics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.K. male</td>
<td>Coastal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>American History 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each of the nine teachers were asked the following questions, which are shown along with a summary and an analysis of their answers:

1. **How does the design of the Portfolio Assessment align with conceptual understandings in the state standards?**

   The state standards are designed to create future citizens who think critically. This type of thinking must transfer over all content areas and all aspects of an individual’s life. It is critical to use an effective measurement as an assessment model so that it can account for all the different learning styles that each individual possesses. “Portfolio Assessment is the most complete, holistic measure of a student’s demonstrated capability and aptitude.” (J.K.) This form of assessment informs the instructor both about the range of the students’ various understandings, and about the students’ ability to apply the understanding across a variety of contexts. “Students who design thoughtful, artifact-filled portfolios obviously demonstrate the concepts inherent to any given standards.” (S.F.) These teacher responses directly answer the study’s research questions.

   Alignment of the portfolio to standards to assess whether students gained the conceptual understanding become increasingly obvious as a result of the Portfolio Assessment effort. The framework of the portfolio is more comprehensive and has expanded the spectrum of conceptual learning that can be measured. The evidence found in the Portfolio Assessment directly provides the teacher the knowledge as to whether the standard was met.

   Teachers addressed the ways students made meaning of their learning. “Self-reflection from my students. In completing the portfolios, students were able to introspect, and truly grasp the arc of their own growth and development. This is a powerful realization, as it demonstrates tangibly the fruits of one’s labors.” (J.W.) When the Portfolio is compared to more traditional
standardized assessments, its framework provides teachers ways of assessing a student’s ability to utilize skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and communication. The concepts within the state standards are used directly in the portfolio guidelines and provide teachers more access to various content that is taught and intended to create thought and discussion with the students forming their own opinion.

2. What is the evidence of conceptual understanding in students’ portfolios?

Student-generated artifacts are a result of authentic learning experiences, and they represent evidence that reflects a greater depth of understandings. Teachers gave examples from their experiences evaluating student materials, for example:

This grading practice not only mimics a more realistic method of assessing knowledge (goodbye multiple choice!), it also frees students from the fear of failure (since they can reapply for Standards), allows for organic differentiation to take place, and makes risk-taking and reflection a central part of student learning. (M.M.)

The evidence is selected by the student, thus bringing in elements of differentiation and learner agency into the educational process. Students choose products based on their understanding of the teacher-selected learning objectives. Individual students may decide to present completely different evidence for each of the standards. “In other words, the destination is the same, but the journey is different for everyone” (J.R.). Another teacher agreed with this statement by saying, “This is a true mark of creative and critical thinking on behalf of the student. It also makes reflection and a growth mind-set [sic] a normal part of the classroom environment” (H.M.).

Students demonstrate mastery in a broader context. The inclusion of writing and analysis of specific stimulus breaks down the components of at least one Social Studies concept. This
results in a richer balance of understanding and enables the student to make well-informed arguments and claims.

3. How does this structure of analysis inform teachers that students can demonstrate and apply social studies concepts?

Fundamental to any Social Studies curriculum is language and thought. We think in language and we speak in thought. By extension, a portfolio is a form of expression, a portal into the vast expanse of a student's mind. The creation thereof is as much an art as a science, which is no different than composing a poem. (J.K.)

The Portfolio Assessment can be adopted to any class and any curriculum. Portfolios assess the skills necessary to function in an authentic Social Studies environment. Traditional tests assess only some of the content knowledge that is needed to function in a Social Studies setting. “The Social Sciences lend themselves to broader concepts intended to create thought and discussion within the classroom and society. There are very few absolutes within the Social Sciences, which is not the case within other disciplines. (L.B.)

4. What did you perceive as the most valuable aspect of implementing the use of Portfolio Assessment?

“Self-reflection from my students. In completing the portfolios, students were able to introspect, and truly grasp the arc of their own growth and development. This powerful realization demonstrates tangibly the fruits of one's labors” (J.W.). Not only does Portfolio Assessment mimic a more realistic method of assessing knowledge, it also frees students from the fear of failure because they can reapply for Standards and allows for organic differentiation to take place, and makes risk-taking and reflection a central part of student learning. “Students have a deeper analysis and informed opinion and position on the issues” (N.H.). Conceptual
understanding that is acquired remains with the student for a lifetime, affects the student’s future civic participation and contributes to the student’s decision-making process in all aspects of their future.

The portfolio exhibits the range of the students’ various understanding, as well as the ability to apply this understanding across a variety of dynamic context. Students who design thoughtful artifact-filled portfolios obviously demonstrate the concepts inherent to any given standards.” (S.F.)

The conceptual understandings are transferrable and will be revisited both inside and outside of the school house. Critical thinking becomes a skill that students come to increasingly value as reward that reap from making informed decisions and taking informed action.

5. What did you perceive as the most challenging aspect of implementing the use of Portfolio Assessment?

“By far, the greatest challenge is in the recalcitrance of my colleagues. Too many teachers are afraid to learn something new, or are afraid of doing something different” (J.K.). Additionally, there is too much gray area in determining a definition for “proficiency” for some of the standards. Placing a rubric with each standard is not always feasible because doing so often impedes differentiation. Students who are accustomed to a traditional method of assessment and not accustomed to a growth mindset sometimes struggle with this type of assessment. Efficient use of time is always an additional challenge within the classroom. Depending upon the class, the time within the pacing is not always available that the instructor needs to complete exploration of all aspects of the curriculum.
Findings

Findings presented in this chapter addressed were organized into three sections: the structure of the Portfolio Assessment or framework, the student products contained within the Portfolios, and themes from teacher interviews.

The framework section indicates how the portfolio design reflects state standards and the depth of conceptual understanding that a student receives through a four-dimensional framework. This framework creates a student-centered classroom in which students interpret sources for themselves. The teacher takes a facilitator role and is no longer the “sage on the stage.” This manner of instruction promotes an environment in which students arrive at their own conclusions and interpretations, as opposed to having to regurgitate the teacher’s interpretations and understandings.

The student qualitative data section provided evidence of student artifacts and reflections on those artifacts. Product choices include: formal term paper, documentary, display board (mini- museum exhibit), performance/skit, website, Prezi, or PowerPoint. Students follow a teacher-selected inquiry about a compelling question through the four dimensions of the portfolio framework, including:

- the development of questions and the planning of inquiries
- applying disciplinary concepts and tools
- evaluating sources and using evidence
- Engaging in opportunities to collaborate, communicate, and take action outside of the classroom.

They declare their conclusion and answer to the compelling question based on their interpretation of the primary resources and credible, valid research. Additionally, this experience
increases the students’ empathy and better prepares them to be global citizens of the 21st Century.

The teacher interview section provides teachers’ perceptions about their use of portfolio assessment. Students provided their teachers evidence that documented their new knowledge, skills, and ability to apply understandings to contemporary issues. Did the teachers find authentic assessment valuable and effective for determining whether students gained conceptual understandings outlined in the state standards?

The majority of teachers interviewed preferred Portfolio Assessments as a more comprehensive and more formative assessment model. Yet challenges such as teacher buy-in and concerns about subjectivity were also identified as a negative element in the Portfolio Assessment process. Overall, the teachers interviewed found that the benefits of Portfolio Assessment outweighed the challenges. However, some teachers refused my request to interview them. They did not believe Portfolio Assessment to be effective and said that their students would not create the projects. Anecdotal evidence indicates that some teachers did not want to spend the time it takes to frontload and set the stage for success in Portfolio Assessment. Even more frequently, those teachers stated that Portfolio Assessment took too much time to grade. They have become accustomed to “grade cams.” It cannot be denied that grad cams are an extremely expeditious form of assessment. Students complete bubble answer sheets, the teacher holds the answer sheet up in front of the computer, and the computer takes a picture of the answer sheet. Then the grade cam produces a grade and automatically puts the grade in the electronic student score sheet. The process is entirely objective and free of bias. However, using a grade cam means that teachers never really know their students’ strengths and weaknesses.
Differentiation is embedded in Portfolio Assessment, but it is difficult to recognize differentiation through grade cards.

**Summary**

The design of the Portfolio Assessment is based on state standards that assess the correlation of Social Studies concepts and the utilization of content-specific disciplinary lenses. In order to align state standards, district level curriculum, classroom instruction, and assessment, the form of assessment needs to metamorphose along with the alterations made in the state standards. This change results in student products that reflect learner agency, student voice, and student choice. The products in the portfolios are authentic and provide evidence of the student’s holistic understandings.

Teacher interview data reflects their perceptions that the evidence and artifacts that are generated in Portfolio Assessment demonstrate the students’ critical thinking skills that expand well beyond just the knowledge aspect of learning. Additional skills and levels of student competence are revealed to teachers. The data reveals that teachers observe the transference and application of students’ understandings to be the greatest and most unique result of Portfolio Assessment. Teachers continue to report that this level of student evaluation cannot be conducted through multiple choice assessments, and the scores (see appendix) on the NCFEs provide quantitative data that validates the teachers’ claims. It is consistently shown that just slightly under half of all North Carolina students fail the NCFEs.

That Portfolio Assessments provide evidence of students’ conceptual understandings, and this observation was reinforced by the feedback collected during the teacher interviews. The Portfolio Assessment structure of analysis informs teachers whether and to what degree students can demonstrate and apply Social Studies concepts.
Chapter 5

Interpretation of Findings

This was a study of the effectiveness of Portfolio Assessment and if its structure proved to provide the components to increases the alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment. Portfolio Assessment is a form of assessing the knowledge, skills, and understandings of a student in all content areas. This study demonstrated that this method of testing is an increasingly accurate gauge for teachers to identify the nature and level of student mastery and helps them to have a more focused responsive to the level of student’s degree of learning. Through means of his or her instructional plans, the teacher effectively supports the various students’ learning modalities and is responsive to the natural variation of learning that occurs within the classroom. A critical outcome for students is that Portfolio Assessment increases learner agency in which students take a greater sense of possession with regard to their own learning; student accountability increases when they are held to a higher level of responsibility.

The research questions that this study addressed were:

(A) How does the design of the Portfolio Assessment align with conceptual understandings in the state standards?

This question was answered in Chapter 4 when The C3 Framework and each of the four dimensions that facilitate inquiry was explained. This structure was designed purposefully to assess what educators really want to know, including whether the students are implementing critical thinking skills and metacognition. Additionally, teachers gain a better understanding of their students’ strengths and weaknesses, enabling the teacher to customize instruction to meet the students’ needs and plan instructional strategies that create expeditious and increasingly significant growth in students’ knowledge skills and understandings. The conceptual framework
of the North Carolina Social Studies Essential Standards, the newly created C3 Framework (which facilitates students grasp of Social Studies concepts through the inquiry process) and the changes that College Boards have recently made on the Advanced Placement United States History Examination all reflect the paradigm shift that is occurring in Social Studies nationwide. Memorizing dates, names, and historic events are all still important, but the conceptual third dimension answers internally the questions so many students frequently say and think: “Why do I need to know this? Will I ever need this information?”

(B) **What is the evidence of conceptual understanding in students’ portfolios?**

This question was answered when the products in the portfolios (the artifacts, the deliverables, the products that were generated by students) were analyzed by teachers. It was the application of new understanding to a contemporary issue that the students found meaningful. The students took ownership of their own academic development when they created compelling questions and supporting questions. The students used the tools specific to Social Scientists to select a balance of valid and credible sources that they interpret for themselves in order to arrive at their own conclusions. Then they produced a product that reflected the discoveries that resulted from their inquiries. Students had such a purposeful and meaningful experience in the process that they wanted to take informed action through various methods and do something about what they uncovered. The process made a lasting difference in their lives.

(C) **How does the Portfolio Assessment inform teachers about students’ understanding of Social Studies concepts?**

This question was answered by the teachers themselves through the interview process. When teachers implemented Performance Assessment, the framework made it possible for students to presented evidence of their learning. The framework requires students to understand
complex ideas and demonstrate their understanding with real-world applications. Not only was it effective, but it reached a depth of understanding that expanded well beyond traditional assessment for both the student and the teacher. With Portfolio Assessment, instruction is not interrupted. Students do not stop and take isolated examinations. The Portfolio Assessment occurs in stages from day to day, and the student becomes immersed in the curriculum. This staging through the “Dimensions of Inquiry” provided time for self-reflection and metacognition, which are frequently skipped when so much time is devoted to preparing students for an isolated test that adequately assesses only how well the student can memorize and regurgitate knowledge and skills. Standardized tests cannot capture students’ critical thinking skills or depth of understanding. When students are provided the opportunity to self-reflect, they become aware of their strengths and weaknesses again. The students identified what they did well and enjoyed doing and what they can do even better next time. When they set new goals for future Portfolio Assessments, students greatly increase their likelihood of individual academic growth.

**Implications**

Portfolio Assessment allows for differentiation to occur inherently as a result of the purposefully structured student voice and choice embedded in its design and framework. It is a more comprehensive and effective form of assessment that informs the teacher whether their students can think critically and be successful as increasingly competitive 21st century global citizens. Educators are being told they are preparing students for jobs that have not even been created yet. Portfolio Assessment is transferrable to any discipline and to the unpredictable future because it provides the students with a skill set that holds individuals accountable for the choices, actions, claims, or arguments they want to stand behind. The student gains the aptitude of empathy that strengthens their own conviction and prepares the student for the counterclaim.
Additional benefits of increased empathy include advanced negotiation skills, more peaceful, and expeditious decision making, and an increased chance of a more positive outcome for all parties involved.

**Recommendations for Action**

Some teachers do not know what they do not know. Teachers who lack experience with authentic assessment need to learn how to effectively implement Portfolio Assessment, and professional development structures need to be put in place to support that process. Expectations for assessment must be explicitly articulated and adhered to consistently. The Professional Development model by Barrett (2005) recommends a structured method for teachers to successfully implement Portfolio Assessment. Barrett begins with the concept of starting small in order to build capacity. A cohort of teachers should be trained so that they can become trainers for their colleagues. The cohort should create a long-term implementation plan that includes vision, skills, incentives, and resources. The trainer cohort then plans different planning sessions based on teacher needs and readiness. A modeling process is also very helpful. Practice has proven that it is helpful to create a ladder for teachers to climb as they implement Portfolio Assessment. An example of what this ladder may look like is: Step 0: nonuse, still on the ground; Step 1: orientation; Step 2: preparation; Step 3: use that lacks meaning; Step 4: routine use, Step 5: refinement of use; Step 6: full integration; Step 7: renewal.

While this is a linear process, it is also a cyclical one. Once the ladder has been climbed to the top, assessment of teacher competencies should be conducted and individual growth plans can be created to improve effective implementation of Portfolio Assessment.
**Recommendations for Further Study**

The mindset of learning just to pass a test decreases the possibility of future generations making informed decisions and taking cognizant actions. Students and parents fear standardized testing, teachers become discouraged in the meaninglessness of their instruction, and the only individuals who benefit are the business vendors who create the standardized tests. The “one-size-fits-all model” does not work in education. It is hypocritical for administrators to demand that teachers differentiate their instruction when ultimately all of the students take the exact same test. It is as fair as grading a fish and monkey on their ability to climb a tree (Garland, 2014).

The Department of Public instruction has already kicked off a Portfolio Assessment Model and training resources in classes such as Art, Music, Healthful Living, World Languages, and Academic Honors classes. These are foundational resources that districts can modify, customize, and expand to be inclusive of all courses through the previously addressed Professional Development model (The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2014).

**Conclusion**

Standardized testing was initiated by politicians, not educators. The political motive was to raise the achievement level in America’s schools and improve the nation’s academic ranking in the international arena. America is in its second decade of mandated standardized testing, but the testing has not improved America’s international ranking at all, nor has it improved academic success. What has happened in these two decades is an international war, America progressively losing its status as a world power, the Federal Government completely shutting down for weeks at a time, and a growing populace that is swayed by propaganda commercials and biased media coverage (Oliver, 2015).
The findings presented in this study indicate that the more complex and somewhat unique methods of Portfolio Assessment are grounded in research about learning and assessment. Documentation of students’ and teachers’ experience using the portfolio assessment framework was triangulated through the collection of data. Portfolio Assessments provide evidence of students’ conceptual understandings as documented in the feedback collected during the teacher interviews. The purposeful sample of teachers described Portfolio Assessments as a more comprehensive and more formative assessment model. The Portfolio Assessment structure requires comprehensive analysis of student learning and informs teachers whether and to what degree students can demonstrate and apply Social Studies concepts, providing them strategies to be active, informed citizens after leaving high school. When parents and students recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate the rewards of Portfolio Assessment, they will become advocates for more authentic learning and the assessment of that learning. If America is to succeed as a nation and hold any international power, its citizens need to learn critical skills that help them make good decisions and take informed action. The world will benefit when the students’ learning is assessed and best interests as learners are put first.
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August 17, 2016, from

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APPENDIX

Scores from the Traditional North Carolina Final Examinations

The 2013 – 2014 school year North Carolina Final Examination (NCFE) results in the four required High School Social Studies classes are as follows: In American History I, 55% of students in all of North Carolina (NC) passed and 45% failed. In American History II, 57% of NC students passed and 43% failed. In Civics and Economics, 57% of NC students passed and 43% failed. In World History, 49% of NC students passed and 51% failed (The North Carolina State Testing Results, 2014).

The 2014 – 2015 school year North Carolina Final Examination (NCFE) results in the four required High School Social Studies classes are as follows: In American History I, 58% of students in all of North Carolina (NC) passed and 42% failed. In American History II, 59% of NC students passed and 41% failed. In Civics and Economics, 60% of NC students passed and 40% failed. In World History, 54% of NC students passed and 46% failed (The North Carolina State Testing Results, 2015).
## Samples of Student Products in Social Studies Portfolio Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio Assessment Product Level</th>
<th>Portfolio Assessment Assignment</th>
<th>Portfolio Assessment Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>1. Develop the question (10 points)</td>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Create teams of 3 - 4 students, articulate each team member’s role, and identify the perspective the group will use to approach their research.</td>
<td>Browne, Ryan. US Lauds State Sponsor of Terrorism...for Fighting Terrorism” Atlanta, Georgia, 2016. cnn.com/2016/09/20/politics/sudan-counter-terrorism-state-department/index.html, CNN Politics,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Evaluate various sources in terms of credibility, validity and author’s motive or bias (10 points)</td>
<td>Ryan Browne is a national security producer for CNN, whose job is to focus on rights of the people around the world, and should be experienced in knowing the effects of terrorism on people and international affairs, so it should be very easy to trust him and his understanding on The War on Terror. Mr. Bowne is in the position to give credible evidence, and even includes a collaboration with Laura Koran, another member of CNN’s national security coverage team. However, he adds personal stakes on the topic, which is not very harmful to the information he presents us with. Browne is an expert in his field, and he has source material from John Kirby, State Department spokesman, and additions made by Koran. It’s bias mostly spouts from Kirby, when the article is mostly neutral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Rough Draft due first week in October (10 points)</td>
<td>The Author, Lauren Carasik is a Professor of Law and Director of the Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Peer Evaluations - Anonymous through use of A/B Schedule (10 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Final Individual Papers are Due October 11-12 (50 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
8. Group Outline  
October 13-14 (20 points)  
9. Group Presentation  
October 19 - 20 (50 points)

Clinic at the Western New England University school of Law. Because she is a director of Human Rights, it is expected that she will form viewpoints based on her observations of human behavior and probably tries to understand the war on terror from the terrorists’ viewpoints, as well as the viewpoints of Americans. She argues that the war being fought does not focus on the political, economic, and humanitarian statistics, but rather focuses too much on the rise of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, when there are other really important events happening that need exposure. The author has concern for the people caught in crossfire between the two sides, because all American casualties and injuries have been recorded, when most of the civilian and enemy combatants remains only an estimate. Carasik references the Vietnam War, when the fallen American soldiers were all recorded and memorialized, while millions of dead civilian Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians remain lost and uncovered. She has lots of experience in the field of human rights, and many of her concerns revolve around the people in these countries who have lost their lives, when they are innocent, and is successful in demonstrating the importance of knowing what is really going on, that the government tries to cover.


Steven Clifford is a former CEO of King Broadcasting and National Mobile Television. He is very biased based on his experience, the War on Terror subject matter is not one Clifford should be writing about, because he has not entered a field that deals directly with US involvement in Iraq. In his article, he is extremely biased, and his word choices assume a pro-American standpoint and full support of United States involvement against the Jihadist-Islamic organizations in Iraq and Afghanistan. He also makes the “bad guy” and “good guy” narrative, which sends the signal of bias. Clifford also writes his article for The Huffington Post, an online news site that is known for being pro left-wing. The author clearly has personal bias written all over in his paper, especially when he uses “good guy” and “bad guy” to discuss the United States and allies, and Terrorist Organizations and allies.

The author, Elizabeth Goitein co-directs the Brennan Center for Justice’s Liberty that is conducting the War on Terror, and ensuring human rights in the government system, so it is easy to believe her reasoning to be reliable and relatable with her work position. The article can be found on The Huffington Post site, Brennan Center, and Al Jazeera. The author is in a position that allows access to reliable evidence because of her role in the War on Terror. Elizabeth Goitein believes that it is incorrect to call the members of foreign terror groups “bad guys” and it is also incorrect to describe America and its allies the “good guys.” She is an expert in the field, and on the website, there is a video the author uses as evidence. It is evident to the reader that Goitein tries to remain as unbiased as possible, and she makes excellent points when she explains that there may be many reasons why terrorists act the way we do, and Americans should start trying to dig deeper into the reasoning behind hatred of the extremists, instead of calling all Muslims and Middle Easterners terrorists.


These are the words spoken by Osama Bin Laden in 1996, when he proposed Jihad, which is the duty to fight for the cause of God, in Islamic terms against the people of America. The author himself who wrote this down was not including any bias, but was recording the bias
of Osama Bin Laden. He is the leader of al-Qaeda, a group notorious for their responsibility of the 2001 Collapse of the Twin Towers, or informally known as 9/11, after the day the attack was carried out. He explains to the followers of Islam, that in order to restore peace to the Muslim world, the Americans, Christians and their allies must be pushed out to preserve peace. In the name of Allah, the followers of Islam must be willing to lay down their lives, and God will protect them against the evils of America and her allies. If the reader were to be a follower of Islam, and is not American, they might feel persuaded by Bin Laden’s word choices, and the glory of being the wrath of God. However, in Bin Laden’s case, the Bias of religion, and the failure of not looking deeply enough into reason, he is not at all credible.


Michael Mann is a sociology professor at the University of California and an author, and is in position of authority when it comes down to human behavior, communities, and formed organizations when looking at The War on Terror. He recognizes America’s “need” to be the dominant global power has been present since the days of the Cold War and especially after the devastation of 9/11. The source is incredibly biased, which is unsurprising given that this book is a tertiary source, but the author gives lots of his personal inputs and cites a lot of sources which helps him give an explanation for his way of thinking. He is specialized in human behavior, and sees terrorism in not only a political light, but a social light in terms of human interaction and the nature of Americanized Imperialism. He is very biased, but gives new perspective on America’s involvement in international affairs, and this particular book is a great example of American propaganda.


No author is listed, and there is not a lot of personal bias into his/her works. Here, the Author is able to state information without having to put a personal bias or an issue, but talks about the
timeline of the war on terror in a cause-effect style. He/She includes other sources with their points of view, but never formally states his/her own. However, the unknown author from BBC puts things very simply, and elaborates his/her understanding on the subject with the help of more credible sources, such as US Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and Saudi Defense Minister, Prince Sultan to give the material more structure and development using people who know about the current situations in the Middle East, better than an anonymous author can, especially if they have not seen any of the *War on Terror* in a first person view.

| low | • Develop the question (10 points) |
|     | • Create teams of 3 - 4 students, articulate each team member’s role, and identify the perspective the group will use to approach their research |
|     | • Evaluate various sources in terms of credibility, validity and author’s motive or bias (10 points) |
|     | • Annotated Bibliographies will be completed and submitted Sept. 26-27 (40 points) |
|     | The expectation is 7 sources with at least 1 being a primary |

Annotated bibliography

Institute for Women's Policy Research, “Pay Equity & Discrimination.”


The Institution for Women's Policy research provides credible information on the diversities of women's pay. The institution relates to the topic and focuses on the gender inequality in international sports. The Women's Policy participates in many political issues to provide research and information that may be helpful in the policy change. The programs has employees that graduated with Public Administration and Public Policy and Women’s Studies at the University of George Washington. The Institution for Women's Policy has many organizations of about a hundred or higher members. Many of the organizational members are academic researchers and community leaders around the country. The article includes some
source.

- Rough Draft due first week in October (10 points)
- Peer Evaluations - Anonymous through use of A/B Schedule (10 points)
- Final Individual Papers are Due October 11-12 (50 points)
- Group Outline October 13-14 (20 points)
- Group Presentation October 19 - 20 (50 points)

critical information on how men receive and extensive amount of pay such as the gender wage gap is about twenty percent.

Netivist Organization, “Gender Inequality in Sports: Are Professional Athletes Salaries Fair for Women?”

[netivist](https://netivist.org/entertainment/categories/all/)

The literature was surveyed and from the information provided that Netivist is a credible site. The Netivist debate site is a credible source because they are well known for their privacy and will not give out their email. Netivist is very strict about giving their viewers false information and will not even use the information the debaters suggests. Netivist is advertisement free due to them taking their privacy seriously. If the site were to be lying about all of that they would not only be giving inaccurate information but they would also be hurting their reputation as a reliable source.
Clark, Kelsey, “Gender Pay for Women's Athletes”


The author of the article is an athlete herself and is an intern at the Institution for Policy Studies. Kelsey Clark is a senior Political Science major. She served as a staff member for the deputy minister of the Justice Committee. Clark uses reasonable and accurate information throughout the article. The author supports her statements with statistics and facts.

Inequality.org is a project of the Institute for Policy Studies, which is in Washington DC.

Women's Sports Foundation, “Pay inequality in Athletics”


The Women's Sports Foundation is a good resource to use, especially for this topic because the site's main focus is on ensuring equality and access for girls in sports. The Women's Sports Foundation was entrenched in 1974 to influence and improve women's sports. The Founder was Billie Jean King, a legend in professional tennis. Some of the information
states how women and men in national sports are paid the same. Such as at the end of each World Major Marathon (MMM) series both the female and male winner will each win $500,000.

Adelphi University, “A Look at Male and Female Professional Athlete Salaries”

*Sports Management,*

http://sportsmanagement.wdelphi.edu/resources/infographics/a-look-at-male-and-female-professional-athlete-salaries/

This site is credible because it provides some of the sources where they got their information from. Another reason why it could be considered dependable is because of its known for its authority, and its organizational support such as The Princeton Review, U.S News Report. The article claims that in the year of 2014 the National Basketball Association average salary was 4.5 million. That statement was inaccurate, the correct average salary in 2013-2014 was 4.9 million.

Rothenberg, Ben, “Roger Federer, $731,000; Serena Williams, $495,000: The pay Gap in Tennis”

The New York Times newspaper is a great for informing the audience on what is current in the news. The New York Times newspaper is very well know around the world for their current events and providing the readers with as much accurate information. The article is very informative and credible. It is informative and credible because this article provides good information. It also interviews and comments of the professional owners and players of sports. For example and ATP player, Andy Murray, has spoken about the gender wage gap in sports.

Littlefield, Bill, “No Matter the Sport, Women Athletes Are Always Paid Less”


The author is a graduate from Yale University and the Harvard Graduate School of Education Littlefield also writes books. In “No Matter the Sports Women Athletes Are Always Paid Less” it provides credible data. The article says that women are being underpaid compared to the men. That is absolutely accurate and an example of that would be how Roger Federer makes over $700,000 and Serena Williams makes about 450,000. The article give some intake on what other people have said. The article does include some informative information but not much.

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**Reflection**

After concluding my first assignment on euthanasia I have gained knowledge I never imagined I would acquire. I discovered the power of stories when I was empathizing with patients who desired the choice of euthanasia; but I was also able to apprehend the prohibition of euthanasia.

Prior to researching euthanasia, I was unfamiliar with the controversy because this topic had never been prevalent to my life or my family, hence my oblivion. I am able to identify the properties which distinguish the different ways to take a life. For example, euthanasia cannot be
used interchangeably with mercy killing or assisted suicide; and euthanasia can be broken down into passive or active, and voluntary, non voluntary or involuntary. There are simply too many aspects and cases to argue to conclude the research as finalized. Although the assignment is complete, due to its ability to intrigue, I do believe I will continue to update myself with new information on euthanasia.

In the process of completing the assignment I not only learned about euthanasia, I also improved my style of writing by learning new words and practicing grammar. In regards to research, I discovered that government documents and real-life examples are always most valuable. I am also proud to say I have finally grasped the concept of a annotated bibliography, a topic which seemed foreign to me prior to this assignment. These new concepts and improvements will not only aid me in the period of this course but through my entire high school, college, and possibly, professional career.

Although I believe my outcome was successful there is room for improvement. I would have liked to include more solid claims for my argument against the legalization of euthanasia, like the infringement on the Declaration of Independence. I would have also like to include stronger claims for the supporting argument which I found while editing my final draft, such as the cost of terminal illnesses and the support from the 14th amendment.

Like previously mentioned, I am overall pleased with my work and will continue to be fascinated by this topic. The knowledge I acquired has not only applied to me academically but will also have an effect on my life and future decisions.

| medium | • Develop the question (10 points) |
|        | • Create teams of 3 - 4 students, articulate each team member’s role, and identify the perspective the group will use to approach their research |
|        | • Evaluate various sources in terms of |

Can America’s actions be considered Terrorism?

The definition of terrorism according to the Oxford Dictionary is: *unlawful use of violence and intimidation especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political gains.* Terrorism is most often associated with the actions of Jihadist Islamic groups in the Middle East. Can this term also apply to America’s actions leading up to the *War on Terror*?

Many citizens in the United States, will say that involvement in the Middle East is justified and that there should be a military presence at all times. America is needed in the Middle East, according to Steven Clifford with *The Huffington Post*, “The Sunni bad guys assembled Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Shiite bad guys formed the Mahdi Army. Both these groups tried to kill American soldiers when they were not killing each other”. Clifford makes valid points in his reasoning throughout the article, including, that some poor areas of the Middle East need outside help to protect themselves against terrorist organizations. America’s involvement
in the Middle East during the Gulf War, was to oppose Iraqi aggression with NATO allies, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt after the invasion of Kuwait. America has also stationed troops to minimize violence with terrorist organizations. “Some regions are racked by poverty, disease, oppressive but failing states, ethnic and religious conflicts and civil neighborhood wars.” (Mann, Michael, *Incoherent Empire*, Verso, New York, New York, 2003, page 22). The United States’ involvement in Middle Eastern affairs is to protect civilians in the Middle East, and for international safety, so America’s actions should not be considered terrorism.

It may also be said that America’s actions overseas can be considered acts of terrorism. According to the article, “‘Good Guys’ and ‘Bad Guys’ in the War on Terror” by Elizabeth Goitein, the ‘bad guy’ and ‘good guy’ narrative itself is not one that should be used. Not all Muslims and Middle Easterners are terrorists and ‘bad guys’, and Americans are not always ‘good guys’ to the rest of the world. “Such two-dimensional explanations, however, do not count as serious efforts to understand the enemy.” (Goitien, 2013). The argument could be made, that there is not enough focus on the lives of the people, but main priorities being focused on the rise of Jihad Terrorist groups. “The US tracks its own military deaths and physical injuries in Afghanistan and Iraq. Unsurprisingly, there are no conclusive government statistics on casualties and deaths among enemy combatants and civilians” (Carasik, Lauren. “Americans Have Yet to Grasp the Horrific Magnitude of ‘the War on Terror’” (Aljazeera America, 2015.) Carasik, a Professor of Law and Director of the Human Rights, is able to argue the United State’s main focus when looking at ‘The War on Terror’. The Rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is watched over very closely by the American public eye. While that is important, political, economic and humanitarian statistics need to be recognized. The war at hand not only affects the government, but the people under the government. When there is enemy fire in a run-down city, there are also civilians in crossfire. One excellent reference to this is the Vietnam War. During the War, fallen American soldiers were memorialized and recorded. The killed enemy Viet Cong Soldiers remain numberless. Even more, the millions of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians killed in crossfire only remains an estimate. There is no number of how many civilians died after the War from defoliants such as Agent Orange sprayed over the Jungle by American Soldiers.

America’s actions leading up to the war on Terror, could be considered Terrorism. This is because, of the Oxford dictionary definition of terrorism included: “in pursuit of political


points) gains”, which is partly what has driven America to become involved with the Middle East, and have set up bases there. In Incoherent Empire, Michael Mann recognizes America’s global dominance. “This leaves two main areas of serious concern for the US. The first involves the communist and post-communist countries of the world.” (Mann, Michael, Incoherent Empire, Verso, New York, New York, 2003, page 22). Mann brings up China and Russia as intimidating communist countries to America, the situations that have already happened with both Vietnam and Korea before in the past, and the Missile Crisis in Cuba. This leaves the Middle East. During the Cold War, there was a “domino theory”, that Asian countries would all fall to communism, which was the main fear of America and its allies. The Middle East was also expected to succumb to communism. It also was rich in oil, America was seeking nuclear and biological arms to compete against the Soviet Union. “The deployment of US forces there was seen as a historic betrayal by many Islamists, notably Osama Bin Laden.” (US pulls out of Saudi Arabia, BBC News, UK, 2003. news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2984547.stm.). When Osama Bin Laden declared Jihad against America and its allies in 1996, this was one of the reasons why the Al-Qaeda leader declared war. Bin Laden did not want the United States involvement. In the article, “Osama Bin Laden’s Declaration of Jihad Against Americans”, he justifies his reasons for violence against America. “The people of Islam have been afflicted with oppression, hostility and injustice by the Judeo-Christian alliance and its supporters.”. He gives specific examples of massacres in Kashmir, Assam, and others. There are specific reasons why people join terrorist groups, and the United States has not made much of an effort to find the reasoning why young people are joining these organizations. America has not only entered into this ‘War on Terror’ guns blazing and grief stricken by the lives lost on the day of the September 11th, 2001 attacks, but does not take the lives of others in account. What makes terrorism most memorable, is the inhumane nature of the attack.
- Develop the question (10 points)

- Create teams of 3 - 4 students, articulate each team member’s role, and identify the perspective the group will use to approach their research

- Evaluate various sources in terms of credibility, validity and author’s motive or bias (10 points)

- Annotated Bibliographies will be completed and submitted Sept. 26-27 (40 points)
  The expectation is 7 sources with at least 1 being a primary source.

- Rough Draft due first week in October (10 points)

- Peer Evaluations - Anonymous through use
### Schedule (10 points)

- **Final Individual Papers** are Due October 11-12 (50 points)
- **Group Outline** October 13-14 (20 points)
- **Group Presentation** October 19 - 20 (50 points)

### high

- Develop the question (10 points)
- Create teams of 3 - 4 students, articulate each team member's role, and identify the perspective the group will use to approach their research
- Evaluate various sources in terms of credibility, validity and author's motive or bias (10 points)
- Annotated Bibliographie
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