Asian/American Curricular Epistemicide
From Being Excluded to Becoming a Model Minority
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Chinese labor during the California Gold Rush. Japanese internment. Geopolitical segregation. Racial stereotypes. Asian/American Curricular Epistemicide: From Being Excluded to Becoming a Model Minority delves into how these events and issues are portrayed—or, in some cases, ignored—in today’s K–12 social studies curricula. The authors’ scholarly and personal backgrounds and experiences have specially situated them to undertake this objective yet critical analysis, as they examine the constructed historical narratives of Chinese and Japanese immigration, multiculturalism, and the overall hegemonic narrative as it has been shaped by the politicization of social studies curricula.

This content analysis is intended to initiate a broader conversation about the methods behind a curriculum’s formation. How is historical information selected, then molded into a particular narrative for public consumption? Through the authors’ insightful exploration, educators and citizens alike may better identify how influential entities and agendas shape curricula behind the scenes. The authors hope that the light they bring to bear on this topic will equip readers to conduct their own analysis and to be more aware and constructively critical of our K–12 educational system.

"At last, a book-length study that investigates Asian American representation in official school knowledge! Despite an extensive body of curriculum research on inclusion and representation of historically marginalized groups, Asian Americans and their perspectives have rarely received attention in and of themselves in curriculum studies. Despite some, although still incomplete, progress in curricular treatment of historically marginalized groups, Asian Americans are still almost absent, and when they appear, they are generally misrepresented in school textbooks. Hartlep and Scott’s detailed and powerful analysis of Asian American representation in school textbooks and teaching materials used in K–12 schools makes a significant contribution to the curriculum research and curriculum writing toward a more inclusive, just, and transformative teaching and learning of the past and the present of the United States.” — Sohyun An, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Social Studies Education, Kennesaw State University, USA

Cover idea by Tak Toyoshima
Asian/American Curricular Epistemicide
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*From Being Excluded to Becoming a Model Minority*

*Foreword by Guofang Li*

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“Race in the United States is both unabashedly transparent and strangely elusive. At the same time it establishes clear borders of difference, it confounds us with its hidden shadows and double meanings. It is the foundation from which grows solidarity and justice, while at the same time, it is the very seed from which stems horror, discrimination, and heartbreak. The ways in which race manifests in all our lives, people of color and White, are not reserved by one over another, but rather unfold into our broader understanding of self and world, a world that is shared by all.

In this important book, Nicholas Hartlep and Daniel Scott conduct a thorough investigation into the ways that racial epithets about Asian/Americans enter into textbooks and teacher manuals commonly used in elementary and secondary schools. In a detailed analysis of both visual and historical representation across 3,600 pages of text, the authors push the conversation into a discussion on the desirability of Asians as a socially constructed and mythical model of success.

As Asian experience continues to be a phenomenon largely understudied and misunderstood, the authors ask teachers to critically question the processes of dehumanization that occur when groups of people are reduced and overgeneralized as stereotypical imagery. At its end, this book makes a significant contribution to scholarly work that seeks to foster meaningful engagement with issues of race in K–12 curriculum.”

– Debbie Sonu, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Social Studies, Hunter College

“The quest to diversify and make the social studies curriculum more equitable has seen some major strides over the last century. Yet, as Nicholas Hartlep and Daniel Scott illustrate, the social studies field has a long way to go by failing to present the full humanity of Asian/Americans through history. *Asian/American Curricular Epistemicide* is a smart, engaging, and thorough account of how social studies curriculum still serves as an influential racial apparatus of stereotyping Asian/Americans through a single narration. This book heightens our racial consciousness and refutes the racial
liberal narrative presented by most social studies textbooks. This book is required reading for social studies teacher education programs, teachers, and curriculum developers.”

– LaGarrett King, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Social Studies, University of Missouri
Nicholas dedicates this book to his wife Stacey and his three children, Haejin, Hana, and Eunhae

Daniel dedicates this book to his grandfather Jack LeFevre
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*Guofang Li*

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WHO SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT ASIAN AMERICAN STEREOTYPES IN TEXTBOOKS, AND WHY?

As you pick up this book, probably after seeing yet another headline on Black shooting and White supremacy or the growing Black-White achievement gaps in America, you are probably thinking, “Why should we care about Asian American stereotypes in our textbooks? They are doing so well!” You are not alone. Many people share your sentiment of the irrelevance of Asian Americans’ problems in light of the heated Black-White racial conflicts in the United States. Jack Linshi, who wrote about Asians in the Ferguson uprising for *Time* magazine, described how people assumed that the common stance Asian Americans should take in the Black and White racial war was one of detachment and disassociation, because

> [t]hey are neither white nor black; they assume the benefits of non-blackness, but also the burdens of non-whiteness. They can appear innocuous on nighttime streets, but also defenseless; getting into Harvard is a result of “one’s own merit,” but also a genetic gift; they are assumed well-off in society, but also perpetually foreign. (Linshi, 2014, p. 1)

Asian Americans have once again been constructed as the “good minority” that can succeed on their own and be used as a political instrument to shame the Blacks for their underachievement and their fight for equality. Over and over again, the media has been telling “a single story” about Asian Americans to the public for the past fifty years. The consequence of this fabricated story is that it “discourages others—even Asian-Americans themselves—from believing in the validity of their struggles” (Linshi, 2014, p. 1).

In this important book, Nicholas Hartlep and Daniel Scott’s detailed analyses on both visual and historical representations of Asian Americans in textbooks and teacher manuals used in our elementary and secondary schools poignantly tell us that generations of children are growing up being fed this single story about Asian Americans. As Hartlep and Scott write,

> Asian/Americans are portrayed in a single “new immigrant” narrative [Asians being pulled from their old traditional life to achieve the American Dream] that detracts from the foundational role played by
FOREWORD

them in the creation of the United States of America, modern America, as well as the shaping of the geopolitical realities that we face today…

They reveal, shockingly today in the 21st century, that students in American schools are still being exposed to a limited, partial, and selective picture of Asian American history and reality and are acquiring the “desirable” or preferred attitudes toward Asian Americans and other racial minorities, steered by textbook publishers. Miseducated in this fashion, generations of students reproduce and pass on the stereotypes through the school system, bringing them into higher education, work, and society. These stereotypes are then confirmed and solidified by those reports in the media, constructing an imagined, false history and reality about Asian Americans.

In fact, these seemingly innocuous and even positive stereotypes have proven to have insidious side effects as they have been found to be uniquely capable of reinforcing cultural stereotypes and producing antiquated beliefs towards members of the target group, beliefs that people explicitly eschew as racist and harmful (Kay et al., 2013). Based on their social experiments on the effects of positive and negative stereotypes on African Americans, Kay and colleagues found that exposure to positive stereotypes towards African Americans actually led to stronger negative beliefs about Black people than the negative ones. My work and the work of others (e.g., Li, 2008; Li & Wang, 2008; Ma & Li, 2016) have demonstrated that students, both Asian and non-Asian, American-born and foreign-born alike, can take up these stereotypes about different racial groups early on; and these stereotypes can have profound negative impact on their school learning and peer relations in increasingly racially diverse schools. Hartlep and Scott’s work in this volume answered one critical question I did not address in my work: how did students acquire these deep-seeded stereotypes and so early? The answer is clear and straightforward: Because these stereotypes are entrenched in our textbooks and curriculum throughout the school system.

As evident in the pages that follow, such simplistic overgeneralization of Asian Americans often leads to difficulty in fostering true, in-depth understanding of and meaningful engagement with a subject. Therefore, the education system is doing students a disservice by teaching them erroneous information about history and reality. Worse yet, it “inadvertently can create an environment that fosters cultural stereotypes and ‘othering’” (Hartlep & Scott, this volume).

Whose interest does this systematic practice of stereotyping serve, then? In an analysis of the various representations of race in the media, Kim (2008)
argued that often the “racial sidekick” serves to enhance the white (often male) superiority in the text. Kim (2008) explained,

The function of stereotype is to display and express power. Using stereotypes is not only a way to disempower, debase, or humiliate the target of a stereotype, it is also a means to benefit a comparative figure, that is, the lead character in relation to, literally, the supporting character. (pp. 454–455)

Hartlep and Scott’s documentation of systemic narratives of stereotypes of Asian Americans represented in elementary and secondary textbooks revealed an invisible powerful group (e.g., the so-called “non-profit” education companies) in shaping and controlling the misinformation and miseducation that students receive in our schools. All stakeholders, teachers, parents, and researchers must become critically aware of this invisible powerful force that serves to disempower Asian Americans and debase them as “absent allies” to other minorities such as the Blacks.

Within the current educational context under the Common Core State Standards where texts and textbooks have taken the center stage of teaching and learning in American schools, Hartlep and Scott’s close examination of the textbooks and teacher manuals is both timely and critical. Our children deserve to learn the true history of Asian Americans and others in this country. This book will be an important resource for teachers and educators as they work to encourage critical, close reading of complex texts offered in our schools. Whether you are an Asian American or not, I hope you see now where Asian Americans stand in the Black-White racial spectrum, and I encourage you to read on, with a new lens, about how and for whom Asian American history was interpreted and represented in our school curriculum.

Guofang Li
Vancouver, Canada
Spring 2016

REFERENCES
FOREWORD


CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This original book-length study commenced officially in August of 2013, when Dr. Nicholas D. Hartlep received a small research grant from Illinois State University, which helped fund a graduate assistant. Mr. Daniel P. Scott was selected to be the graduate research assistant for a variety of reasons, the primary one being his extensive expertise in the history of World War II and the Korean War. Mr. Scott also had a deep interest in becoming a published author while completing his master’s thesis—he brought much-needed energy with him to the project.

Why is a book like *Asian/American Curricular Epistemicide: From Being Excluded to Becoming a Model Minority*—which examines teacher manuals and student textbooks—important? Because English (1980) was probably accurate when he said, “Too often, the textbook is the teacher’s lesson plan” (p. 275). If it is true that teacher manuals serve as K–12 teachers’ lesson plans, what is the consequence for student learning? What is the consequence for student learning if textbooks contain inaccurate and stereotypical material? These practical questions are what led to our interest in treating teacher manuals and student textbooks as our units of analyses. Moreover, what are the implications of K–12 teachers’ overreliance on teacher manuals? A related issue is the nation’s need for more certified and competent social studies teachers.

*We Need Social Studies Teachers*

There is a national shortage in certified social studies teachers, which may be partially explained by the fact that becoming licensed to teach social studies requires passing the Praxis Social Studies exam, one that does little to prove content knowledge (cf. Hughes, 2011). Hughes (2011) explains that the state’s “reliance upon a Praxis exam that is exclusively multiple-choice and contains so little historical content is especially disappointing” (p. 11). According to him, this leads to a “soft certification” of social studies educators who are not qualified in the knowledge content that they are teaching. According to Hughes (2011), there are only six states that require
future educators to also pass exams beyond the Praxis, “which recognize the role of history as the core of the social studies and assess historical thinking through primary sources and historical interpretation” (p. 11). These certification requirements prohibit the proper education of social studies and history students whose capstone requirement in high school consists of exams with “230 multiple-choice questions [...] in either U.S. history, European history, or World history” (Hughes, 2011, p. 13). This does not include the Advanced Placement (AP) exams that focus heavily upon “essays involving primary source documents and requiring substantial historical analysis and interpretation” (p. 13).

In addition to our nation’s need for more social studies teachers, research carried out by the Education Trust (2008) has documented that 1 in 6 social studies classrooms in the United States has a teacher who lacks certification in that area. It is quite possible that K–12 teachers who lack certification may be less able to recognize inaccurate curricula than teachers who are certified. Although we do not have empirical evidence to draw from to make such claims, the inference appears reasonable. If true, then it is also more likely that students will be exposed to biased and stereotyped curricula. To move beyond speculation, we carried out our own original research. Before we share our methodology (Chapter 2) and findings (Chapters 3–5), we highlight the unique contributions this volume makes to the literature, followed by a review of the relevant literature.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS LITERATURE

This book makes two significant contributions to the literature. First, by carrying out original research on the treatment of Asian/Americans’ history and their representation in K–12 social studies and history teacher manuals, we update outdated research. Second, because Asian/Americans are currently the fastest growing ethnic/racial group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), textbooks and teacher manuals must be diverse and culturally sensitive, sharing learning materials in non-stereotypical ways. This is especially necessary if teachers lack training or confidence in teaching the material, because when teachers do not write their own curricula, they necessarily rely on the publishers’ materials. Meanwhile, because the K–12 teaching force remains highly white and monocultural, the need for, and importance of, culturally responsive curricula becomes more obvious (Howard, 1999). It has been said that culturally relevant curriculum serves as both a “window” and a “mirror” into the lives of the students it supposedly instructs (Style, 1988).
Who loses when teacher manuals and textbooks don’t reflect reality? We believe everyone.

**Voice and Representation in Textbooks and History**

As a Social Foundations of Education professor and a historian, we are both intimately aware of the importance of “voice” and “representation” in our respective fields (e.g., see Hickman & Porfilio, 2012; Morelli, 2006; Novick, 1988; Takaki, 1989). Accordingly, a critical analysis of the representation of Asian/Americans in K–12 teacher manuals and student textbooks is worthwhile because there are “dangers” in perpetuating a single story. As Dr. Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie explains in her highly-acclaimed TEDTalk “The Danger of a Single Story,” “How [stories] are told, who tells them, when they’re told, how many stories are told are really dependent on power.” Related to the danger of a single story is the famous line from Toni Morrison’s (2004) novel *Beloved*: “Definitions belong to the definers, not the defined” (p. 190). We feel that historians and teacher educators have done a poor job teaching about the history of Asian/Americans (for exceptions see Chen & Omatsu, 2006; Takaki, 1989), which is why *Asian/American Curricular Epistemicide: From Being Excluded to Becoming a Model Minority* is a necessary and timely volume.

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Previous research has investigated and analyzed textbooks (e.g., see Hickman & Porfilio, 2012; Kane, 1970; Wade, 1993; Wirtenberg, Murez, & Alspektor, 1980; Yee, 1973). In 1949, the American Council on Education was concerned that minorities were being misrepresented in textbooks (e.g., see Cook, 1950, 1952).

In 1961, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) published *The Treatment of Minorities in Secondary School Textbooks*. Lloyd Marcus examined the treatment of minorities in social studies textbooks. Marcus discovered that social studies textbooks were rife with distorted history and stereotypes. He found that Asian/Americans were presented in the texts as sub-human or racially inferior (pp. 59–61).

In 1970, Michael Kane authored the book *Minorities in Textbooks: A Study of Their Treatment in Social Studies Texts*, in which he analyzed 45 secondary school textbooks. He focused his analysis on how textbooks treated Jews, minorities under Nazism, Black Americans, and other minorities in the United
States (i.e., American Indians, Oriental Americans, and Spanish-speaking Americans). Kane (1970) wrote, “This study was undertaken to determine what progress, if any, has been made in textbook treatment of minority groups since the completion of the original ADL report on this topic in late 1960” (p. 138), emphasizing that “[t]here has been virtually no improvement of Americans of Oriental descent. The achievements, varied characteristics, and current status of Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans are still a neglected subject” (p. 136).

Yee (1973) found that the involvement of Asians in American history is barely mentioned or neglected completely when he examined American social studies textbooks for elementary and secondary schools. Yee’s study concluded that the information shared in the textbooks reinforced stereotypes. Seven years later, Wirtenberg, Murez, and Alspektor (1980) reviewed the literature on characters in reading, mathematics, science, and foreign language textbooks, finding much had stayed the same. They affirmed that “there is extensive stereotyping of Asian and Pacific Island Americans in widely used reading and social studies textbooks” (p. 9).

Because there is a tremendous amount of literature on textbook analyses, we categorized it into four major thematic bodies that were relevant to our research. The four categories are as follows: (1) Textbook Adoption: Politics, Policies, and Practices; (2) Stereotypes of Asian/Americans; (3) Asian/American History; and (4) Other.

**TEXTBOOK ADOPTION: POLITICS, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES**

*Politics*

The policies and practices of textbook adoption began to be directly influenced by politics during the Cold War (Hartman, 2011; Scribner, 2012; Zimmerman, 2002). Zimmerman (2002) provides examples of this politicization process, such as the ultra-conservative publication *Educational Reviewer*, which was established in 1949. *Educational Reviewer* accused Magruder’s—a high school government textbook—of “including a Communist party line” (as cited in Zimmerman, 2002, p. 85).

Efforts to influence what was (and was not) included in textbooks and covered in classrooms took a firm hold during the early 1950s—the height of McCarthyism. Conversations about communism were taboo during this period, and K–12 teachers were afraid of being publicly denounced or blacklisted for being “Communists” (Scribner, 2012, p. 355). Thus, in the 1950s, the only coverage and discussion of Communism that was allowed
was in the form of lectures (given inside and outside the classroom) by the American Legion (p. 356). It was not until the Soviet Union’s successful launch of Sputnik in 1957 that the United States Congress intervened and passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which led to Communism being included in K–12 curricula nationwide (p. 351).

While states accepted the NDEA, it was enacted differently throughout high schools in the United States. Scribner (2012) explains that communities in Florida and Wisconsin were opposed to providing their students equal coverage of American and Soviet governments, and this style of teaching communism was known as American versus Communism (AVC). In Florida, ultra-conservative groups lobbied for a “strictly anti-Communism propaganda course” instead of AVC because they worried that “students would get the wrong ideas about communism if it were compared with American democracy,” citing specifically the “Negro pupils” (p. 358). The community of a small town in southeastern Wisconsin was also opposed to the idea of an AVC methodology out of fear that their students could become indoctrinated with “socialistic or Communistic theories” (p. 361).

According to Thompson and Austin (2011), history textbooks have intentionally avoided controversial history so as to avoid conflict in the classroom. However, in the process of trying not to offend dominant groups—or their dominant ways of knowing and learning—K–12 textbooks have essentially become instruments that teach “boring, passionless, and meaningless” (Fitzgerald, as cited in Thompson & Austin, 2011, p. 40) historical information. Fitzgerald (1979) explains why this is true in her book America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century; namely, the subject matter contained in history textbooks is a function of the political climate of the time, not the historical evidence available to students. Using and relying on non-controversial history textbooks rather than historical evidence is damaging for student learning primarily for two reasons: (1) It causes history to be perceived as boring and inconsequential, and (2) it is ahistorical. Loewen (1995) believes that “the teaching of history, more than any other discipline, is dominated by textbooks. And students are right: the books are boring” (p. 13). Ayers and Ayers (2011) agree, stating, “We have too often banned truth-telling and the fully passionate side of life from our classrooms in favor of formality and politeness, cool rationality and distance” (p. 72).

Evidence for this argument can be found in the 2014 political response to the information included in an AP History examination. In a letter to David Coleman, President and Chief Executive Officer of the College Board,
“concerned citizens and elected officials” (two conservative groups: the American Principles in Action and Concerned Women for America) cited the alarming direction that the new “AP U.S. History Framework” had taken. Their specific argument revolved around the idea that this new curriculum “inculcates a consistently negative view of American history by highlighting oppressors and exploiters while ignoring the dreamers and innovators who built our country” (para. 4). Concerned citizens and elected officials decried the “inaccurate” reinterpretation of “Manifest Destiny from a belief that America had a mission to spread democracy and new technologies across the continent to something that was built on a belief in white racial superiority and a sense of American cultural superiority” (para. 5). However, their criticism of this “reinterpretation” dismisses new historical works, such as Thomas R. Hietala’s (2003) *Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism & Empire.* When it came to the curriculum’s coverage of World War II events, it was deemed that too much emphasis was given to the controversial issues of the war or, as they wrote, “[the curriculum] focuses solely on the negative aspects of America’s involvement in the war: The internment of Japanese Americans, challenges to civil liberties, debates over race and segregation, and the decision to drop the atomic bomb raised questions about American values” (para. 6). The detractors of the new AP exam preferred to instead focus upon the heroes of the war—“America’s Greatest Generation”—who rescued the world from the perils that sought to control it. This group concluded their argument by emphasizing the point that they believed that the proposed new AP curriculum held a “negative content and tone” (para. 15).

In 2004, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute issued *The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption,* a critique of the textbook adoption process. *The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption* questions the validity of textbook adoption in improving student skills and test scores. One of the more poignant arguments in this book is the fact that states like California and Texas have repeatedly scored in the bottom half of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The evidence compiled by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute raises questions as to the actual educational benefit of textbook adoption. Following their critique of education textbooks, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute recommended vast changes in textbook adoption; for instance, place more trust in teachers. According to the Institute, “Better-trained teachers ultimately must be a linchpin of any campaign to improve K–12 textbooks and instructional materials. … Eliminating statewide adoption and devolving responsibility to teachers to pick instructional
materials that best serve their students would radically reshape the American textbook industry” (p. 68). While we agree that practicing K–12 teachers ought to be listened to and trusted more when it comes to their curriculum choices, we must reiterate what we noted at the beginning of this chapter: It is quite possible that K–12 teachers who lack social studies or history certification may be less able to recognize inaccurate curricula than teachers who are certified.

**Policies**

English’s (1980) examination of the policies behind textbook adoption uncovered a sinister system that can only be characterized as being a “for-profit” enterprise. He explains that as a result of how textbooks are adopted, textbook publishers focus on meeting the needs of the most profitable regions: California, Florida, and Texas. This results in CA, FL, and TX heavily influencing the content that is presented in the textbooks that are sold to the rest of the United States. Melissa Ezarik describes this problem well in her article “The Textbook Adoption Mess, and What Reformers are Doing Next.” Ezarik (2005) documents that because Texas receives the most attention by textbook publishers, “[i]n some instances publishers will create a separate version of a book for a single state, but most of the time the Texas books are used by the rest of the country” (p. 64). Because of its large size, it is Texas that wags the tail of the textbook adoption process.

A recent study by Stephanie Simon (2014) provides a pristine example of how politics influence the information that is found in textbooks. Simon notes that the National Center of Science Education (NCSE) analyzed the Texas Board of Education’s textbooks and concluded that the Texas Board of Education-approved sixth-grade textbooks mislead students when discussing global warming. A problematic statement made in one of these textbooks is the following: “Scientists agree that the Earth’s climate is changing. They do not agree on what is causing the change.” The NCSE condemns the secondary source evidence presented in the textbook, explaining that the information “misleads students as to good sources of information, pitting an ideologically driven advocacy group … against a Nobel Peace Prize-winning scientific body.” It is fair to conclude that the textbook adoption process is highly politicized, and ideological, despite its claims to be otherwise. For instance, “A 1995 Texas law prohibits rejecting books based on an ideological viewpoint. Only texts with factual errors and those not meeting state requirements can get the no vote,” writes Ezarik (2005, p. 64, italics added).
CHAPTER 1

Practices

It is clear to see that the practice of textbook adoption is a very tenuous set of affairs for school administrators and textbook adoption committees who are charged with the responsibility of selecting the curriculum that its students will learn from. Because of this tension, individuals and institutions have resorted to using evaluation tools that can guide their decision-making process. These tools frequently include questions that should be asked when reviewing textbooks. These questions, in essence, gauge whether or not a textbook should be (or even can be) adopted for use. Table 1 below shares criteria that can be used to avoid adopting anti-Asian/American materials.

Despite the valiant efforts of the creators of these screening instruments, textbook adoption policies have remained poorly formulated. For example, Woodward’s (1992) study of the instruments used to evaluate elementary social studies textbooks in thirty-three school districts found the process to be haphazard. Meanwhile, Sadker and Sadker (1988) wrote that a direct consequence of efforts to make books appear more multicultural is their tendency to become overly superficial, i.e., the “mentioning phenomenon."

STEREOTYPES OF ASIAN/AMERICANS

Yee’s (1973) study examined 300 social studies textbooks designed for elementary and secondary schools. Yee’s research uncovered “an interesting pattern of neglect and stereotyping” of Asians and Asian-Americans (p. 107). For example, Yee describes the coverage and discussion of Chinese railroad workers as “overcome with superficiality and misrepresentation” (p. 108).

Fisher’s (1974) study is one of the earliest pieces of literature to examine secondary U.S. history textbooks with the goal of determining what information students are exposed to with regard to Asia. Fisher’s investigation of thirty-five textbooks concluded that “[t]he general impression a student would receive, unless he were an unusually careful thinker, is that Asian countries are peopled by Communists, militarists, and those unable to govern themselves or do business well” (p. 34). These stereotypic renditions are extremely problematic for student learning because they are not accurate representations of the majority Asian nations. What these textbooks did represent, however, was the political ideology during the Cold War. It was during this period in history that leadership in Washington, DC believed that the “Far East” (i.e., countries in Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Japan) was of strategic importance to the United States during the Cold War. Therefore, the
Table 1. Questions to ask when examining K–12 curricula for accurate coverage of Asian/Americans

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<th>Overarching questions</th>
<th>Underlying questions</th>
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| Does the curricula accurately reflect the past and present realities and ways-of-life of Asian/American people? | - Do the settings, behavior, customs, festivals, and clothing depicted in the curricula accurately capture the diversity of the Asian/American people?  
- How are Asian/American families and foodways presented?  
- Does the curricula emphasize that Asian/American immigrants have achieved the American Dream? |
| Does the curricula transcend stereotypes of Asian/Americans?                           | - Does the curricula avoid the model minority stereotype of Asian/Americans both textually and visually?  
- How are Asian/Americans characterized in terms of their occupations, names, and behaviors?  
- Does the curricula overemphasize the familial, traditional, and sociocultural beliefs of Asian/Americans? |
| Does the curricula seek to rectify historical distortions and/or omissions?            | - Does the curricula avoid essentializing the reasons for Asian/American immigration?  
- Does the curricula consider the push and pull factors as to why Asian/Americans chose to immigrate, such as famine, flooding, and poverty in Asia?  
- Are the historical achievements of Asian/Americans discussed in the curricula?  
- Does the curricula detail the oppression, persecution, and racism that Asian/Americans experienced beginning with the Chinese Exclusion Act during the 1880s and continuing through to the internment of the Japanese during the 1940s? |
| Does the curricula reflect the racial diversity of Asian/Americans?                   | - Does the curricula cover exclusively Chinese, Filipin@, Japanese, Vietnamese, and/or Korean/American people?  
- Does the curricula avoid “Orientalizing” Asian/Americans?  
- Does the curricula present Asian/American families as being diverse (such as adoptive and non-nuclear)? |

Note: Modified from the Council on Interracial Books for Children (1976, p. 5)
United States sought to maintain control, or to influence the allegiances of Far East nations, thereby prohibiting the possibility of them aligning with the Soviet Union. Officials in Washington believed that if nations of the Far East allied themselves with the Soviet Union, global security would be threatened because of the Soviet Union’s access to natural resources throughout the Far East. These natural resources would enable the Soviet Union’s military to challenge the United States.

In 1976, the Asia Society, with support from the Ford Foundation, published a report entitled *Asia in American Textbooks*. This report compiled the work of over 100 scholars and educators, sharing their critiques of over 306 social studies textbooks that were published between 1974 and 1975. *Asia in American Textbooks* found that 99 of the 263 most recently published textbooks were Eurocentric, “portraying Asia as catching up with the West” (p. 11). One example of Eurocentrism that the report found was contained in an excerpt from the textbook *Living World*, published in 1974 by Scott Foresman: “In the twentieth century, the peoples of Asia and Africa have come alive. They have adopted the nationalistic creeds, the democratic ideals, and the modern science of the West, and they have demanded freedom from imperial rule” (p. 11). *Asia in American Textbooks* also examines the lack of Asian sources or the Westernization of Asian sources. Our criticism here is that often textbooks “fail to provide identification” when retelling Asian myths, legends, folktales, or history (p. 24). This makes it not only difficult, but often impossible to “know whether the story is authentically Asian” (p. 24). The Ford Foundation concludes its report by restating that Asia is portrayed through Western eyes, not accurately.

Wirtenberg et al. ’s (1980) examination of sex, race, and cultural characters in education textbooks uncovered the common exotification of Asian/Americans. His research concludes that textbooks often portray “contemporary” Asian/Americans in two different views: The first representation is often achieved in the form of “exotic dress observing ancient customs” (p. 12). The second “contemporary” presentation of Asian/Americans is their representation as the “successful model minority…employed…as laundry workers, waiters, and gardeners” (p. 12).

 Twelve years after the Asia Society’s (1976) comprehensive report, Hurh and Kim (1989) investigated the historical evolution of the perceptions and racial stereotypes of Asian/Americans in the United States. Hurh and Kim explain that the American image of Asians falls into four phases.

*Phase 1* (the period of immigration by Chinese [1850–1940] into the United States): During this phase, Asian/Americans were stereotyped as
“unassimilable, inscrutable, tricky, and immoral heathens” (p. 515). The authors point out that these beliefs formed the foundation for the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1908, the Alien Land Act of 1913, and the Immigration Act of 1924.

**Phase 2** (1941–1945): During this period the United States was at war with Japan and allied with China. The stereotypes applied to Asians reflected the political relationships of that historical moment. Japanese were perceived to be “cruel, disloyal, and enemy aliens” (p. 515). Conversely, the Chinese were stereotyped to be “faithful allies,” the result of which was the U.S. Government granting Chinese immigrants’ eligibility for naturalization in 1943 (p. 515).

Phases 3 and 4 point to a shift from “negative” to “positive” stereotypes of the Japanese and Chinese.

In **Phase 3** (1946–1965), both the Chinese and the Japanese were labeled “industrious, quiet, and law-abiding,” resulting in the “cultural assimilation and emergence of Chinese/Japanese American middle class” (p. 515).

In their discussion of **Phase 4** (1966–1980), Hurh and Kim explain where the “successful, intelligent, hardworking model minority” originated from; in contemporary times this would include all new Asian immigrants to the United States—Koreans, Filipinos, Asian Indians, and Indochinese (p. 515). According to Hurh and Kim, these “positive” stereotypes had negative consequences since they “disguised underemployment, exclusion from minority programmes, false consciousness among Asian Americans (assimilation and mobility myth), and the legitimation of the ‘open’ society and downgrading of other less ‘successful’ minorities” (p. 515). Hurh and Kim concluded that “ethnic stereotypes, whether they are positive or negative, are an incorrect or insufficient picture of reality” (p. 533).

San Juan’s (1991) work examined the history of Asian-Americans in U.S. political and ethnic studies. San Juan asserts that the creation of the “model minority” narrative was a political vehicle that soon became “[p]ropagated by schools, the mass media, and all the ideological apparatuses of the state” (p. 471). The images of Asian-Americans that are perpetuated by textbooks and the media, writes San Juan, are of Asians who are “treacherous, evil, lacking any respect for human life … [i]mages of yellow hordes committing hara-kiri or banzai attacks,” which represent Asian-Americans as “degenerate and barbaric” (p. 477). Furthermore, he explains that an image shift has taken place supplanting the “docile and subservient worker” with “the image of Asian whiz kids and aggressive Korean merchants” (p. 477). San Juan concludes that it is the responsibility and challenge of ethnic studies “to
critique the utilitarian ethic that has become normalized … [in] everyday life” (p. 472).

Zagumny and Richey’s (2013) critical discourse analysis (CDA) of six high-school world geography textbooks (published by Glencoe, Holt, and Prentice Hall) sought to better understand how textbooks teach about Southwest Asia. Their CDA revealed that world geography textbooks represent Southwest Asia in ways that reinforce an Orientalist discourse. The authors noted that the “complexity and diversity of Southwest Asia… are reduced to an iconic other that is known only through its objectification” (p. 1334). The historical dynamics of the Cold War in Asia and the United States have had a lasting influence on how K–12 textbooks in the United States objectify Asian/Americans. Similar to what Zagumny and Richey (2013) found, this Cold War ideology is interrelated to the modern day forms of Orientalism explained by Edward Said. According to Said (1994), “without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (p. 3).

ASIAN/AMERICAN HISTORY

Ronald Takaki, a well-known champion of Asian/American history and author of two major works, Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans (1989) and A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America (2008), should be included here. As pointed out earlier, if teacher manuals or textbooks wish to be culturally responsive, they should serve K–12 students as mirrors and windows. As Takaki (2008) explains, history ought to be “[r]eflected in a mirror without distortions” (p. 18). However, the literature on textbooks reveals that Asian/American history is largely distorted, and the literature below confirms that it has remained so for a long period of time.

For instance, Romanowski (1995) examined the coverage of Japanese internment camps in the United States during World War II in five of the most widely used secondary school U.S. history textbooks. Romanowski concluded that these popular textbooks failed to develop the coverage of Japanese-American internment beyond what he described as “technical treatment” (p. 37) of the historical event. Romanowski argued that historical events such as WWII require a critical analysis, which means that K–12 teachers are required to deviate from the basic knowledge of the textbooks in
order to adequately educate their students. As we have already made mention of earlier, if K–12 teachers lack this counter-knowledge, do not possess necessary skills, and are unable to employ a critical perspective, history will be treated in technical terms rather than historically accurate ones (e.g., also see Loewen, 1995).

In another study, Violet Harada (2000) analyzed the treatment of Asian-Americans in high school history textbooks (Addison-Wesley; Glencoe; HarperCollins; Heath; Holt, Rinehart, & Winston; Houghton Mifflin; McDougal Littell; Scott Foresman) published between 1994 and 1996 and used in Hawaii. Harada’s content analysis sought to quantify and compare the spatial coverage of various Asian-American groups in terms of both textual references and graphical/pictorial representations, identify and quantify frequency of textual references to historical events involving Asians in the U.S., identify and quantify frequency of textual references to Asian-American personalities, identify and quantify textual references to multicultural concepts relating to Asian-Americans, and determine whether or not the overall text treatment “depicted Asian Americans as passive objects of discrimination or as active agents of self-improvement and achievement” (Harada, 2000, p. 9). She found that Japanese and Chinese were the most frequently mentioned Asian-Americans in the textbooks, and that they were also the most likely to be visually present in the textbooks. Her findings confirm earlier research carried out by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (1976), which reviewed 66 children’s books that focused on Asian/Americans and found that the Chinese and Japanese were the most discussed categories of Asians. Also, according to Harada (2000), “All texts referred to the economic and academic successes of Asian Americans; however, this model minority emphasis diverted attention away from the inequities that many of them still experience” (p. 14).

Ogawa (2004) conducted a content analysis in which he analyzed six U.S. history high school textbooks that were adopted for use in Idaho schools in 2002. His study focused exclusively on the internment of Japanese-Americans. Ogawa found that of the six textbooks that he reviewed, many failed “to develop students’ critical-thinking skills and critical knowledge about [Japanese American internment] by presenting a mystified representation of American history” (p. 45). The majority of the textbooks lacked enough visual displays and primary sources to be helpful for students to cultivate critical thinking. Japanese-American internment could have been demystified and history more authentically taught had the textbooks included more materials, such as maps, photographs, and personal
accounts. As Ogawa points out, the textbooks could have readily provided maps of the locations of the internment camps, which would aid student learning.

Hawkins and Buckendorf (2010) analyzed the treatment and internment of Japanese-Americans in United States history textbooks. Drawing on the content analyses conducted by previous researchers (see Harada, 2000; Ogawa, 2004; Romanowski, 1995), but updating the content by including textbooks with more recent publication dates, Hawkins and Buckendorf (2010) analyzed sections of textbooks that addressed the treatment and internment of Japanese-Americans in the United States. The researchers note that their study “found that the most recent United States history textbooks continue[e] to improve their depiction of the treatment of Japanese Americans and their treatment” (p. 39). However, Hawkins and Buckendorf’s study, as their data is presented, disallows for such comparative claims to be reached. Because Hawkins and Buckendorf’s (2010) content analysis was so poorly conceived and carried out, per the guidelines and recommendations made by Wade (1993), comparative claims such as the one above cannot be validated. Indeed, because the researchers neither reported using a system of enumeration nor discussed reliability, readers are unable to confidently believe in their study’s findings.

OTHER

The amount of power and influence that curriculum publication giants have held has grown significantly over the last 50 years. In 2007, the education publishing divisions in Harcourt were sold to the Houghton Mifflin Company. This transaction created what journalists, such as Andrew Trotter and Kathleen Kennedy Manzo, have called the “Big Three” of the textbook publishing world. The “Big Three” refer to Houghton Mifflin, Pearson PLC, and McGraw-Hill. Since the mid-1990s the “Big Three” have systematically “cornered the textbook publishing market.” Their “monopolization” is not of their own creation, but is the result of their shrewd business model within the broken system of textbook adoption. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2004) reports that “textbook adoption created a textbook cartel controlled by just a few companies” (p. ii). Costs for producing textbooks have increased because publishers posted performance bonds, stocked outmoded book depositories, and produced huge numbers of free samples. The result of escalating costs “has frozen smaller, innovative textbook companies out of the adoption process,” placing the “Big Three” in “control of the $4.3 billion [dollar] textbook market” (p. ii).
“Cornering the market” refers to the process by which companies may charge higher prices for their products without fear of losing too much business. Evidence that the “Big Three” have cornered the market can be seen in the fact that the three publishers accounted for an estimated 45.7% of the $7.03 billion industry in 2012 (c.f., In Tablet World, 2013).

The lucrative business of education publication and the expansion of primary and secondary education standardized testing have motivated the “Big Three” to continue their monopolization of the education market. A 2015 study conducted by the Center for Media and Democracy (CMD), a watch dog group based out of Wisconsin, uncovered the lobbying practices of Pearson Education, Educational Testing Service (ETS), Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and McGraw-Hill. CMD explains that from 2009–2012 these four companies “collectively spent more than $20 million lobbying in states and on Capitol Hill.” According to the findings of Jonas Persson (2015), this lobbying paid off in a big way in May 2014 when “Pearson was awarded a contract on an unprecedented scale (estimated to be worth in excess of $1 billion dollars) to develop and administer Common Core testing” for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). Persson’s discovery became even more unsettling when it revealed that there were no other bidders. Further investigation reveals that these corporations have been able to gain influence not only through political lobbying but also through political penetration. In September 2012, New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo, in the midst of a 5-year $32 million dollar deal with Pearson Education, appointed David Wakelyn as Deputy Secretary for Education. Wakelyn serves as a “Senior Associate for America’s Choice School Design, which is now a leading Pearson sub-division.”

Wakelyn’s appointment is not the first example of “for-profit” attitudes and policies by so-called “nonprofit” education companies. Javier C. Hernandez of the New York Times published an article outlining the muddled failure of Pearson using its non-profit charities as a means to advertise and market their education materials. The attorney general found that Pearson “had hoped to use its charity to win endorsements and donations from a prominent foundation.” In addition to these findings, Hernandez writes that the attorney general also investigated “a series of education conferences sponsored by the Pearson Foundation, which paid for school officials to meet their foreign counterparts” all around the world. A related 2011 New York Times investigation conducted by Michael Winerip examined, in a separate case, the state commissioners who were fully sponsored by the Pearson Foundation to attend a similar meeting. Winerip discovered that of the 10
state commissioners, “at least seven oversee state education departments that have substantial contracts with Pearson. For example, Illinois—whose superintendent, Christopher A. Koch, went to Helsinki in 2009 and to Rio de Janeiro—is currently paying Pearson $138 million to develop and administer its tests.”

WHY IT IS WORTHWHILE TO ANALYZE STUDENT TEXTBOOKS AND TEACHER MANUALS

While textbook reformation has resulted in a more inclusive form of content by publishers, their explanations and adjustments are often broad generalizations. Early victories are evident when consulting the work of Alan Moriyama and Franklin Odo (1976). Moriyama and Odo’s investigation uncovered extensive stereotyping of Asians and Asian-Americans. They documented specific generalizations found in textbooks, such as the work that the typical Asian immigrant did during the California Gold Rush (1848–1855) and during railroad construction beginning in 1863. Moriyama and Odo explained that textbook publishers overlooked the important push/pull factors that provide an explanation as to the reasons behind the immigration of these Asian workers.

We feel that the findings of our research validate its importance as well. While research has led to publishers modifying how they portray Asian/Americans and presenting more historical material in textbooks, often it is the case that these adjustments are merely token. For this reason, our textbook analysis will provide textbook publishers (if they read it) a critique not only of the coverage of subject matter but also of errors and generalizations that require their attention.

NOTES

1 Palumbo-Liu (1999) inserts a backslash/ between Asian and American instead of a hyphen to situate the dynamic and hybrid identities for those with an Asian heritage, including those who self-identify as Asian nationals, Asian-Americans, or any other mixture of Asian identity. We adopt this practice in this book.


INTRODUCTION


6 It is important to note that the Thomas B. Fordham Institute’s critique pre-dates the Common Core.


REFERENCES


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