



CHAPTER 1

Why and How Textbooks Matter for Youth Wellbeing

Abstract This chapter presents what is at stake regarding representation in US history textbooks. The chapter highlights why education is so strongly linked with youth identity, and what the implications are for minority students who do not see themselves represented accurately or even at all in their history textbooks. The data sample, textbook coding methods, literature review, ethnographic data, and terminology are all described to ensure readers know the research context of this book.

Keywords Identity • Wellbeing • Education • High school • History • Textbooks • Methods • Literature • Ethnography • Terminology

INTRODUCTION: THE DANGERS OF MISREPRESENTATION

History, the saying goes, is written by the victors. In the United States (US), this means that the recounting of history is told mostly through a lens of White settler glorification that supports the colonization of land and people, and the drawing of borders to keep others out. Such practices are fairly standard in contexts of nation-building and nationalism. But what does it mean for young people to be told each day in the classroom that their ancestors were strong or weak, conquerors or the conquered? What are the long-term effects of misrepresentation in US history textbooks in relation to pluriethnic, multicultural democratic coexistence?

Training for a patriotic shared identity begins in the early years of schooling. In one textbook for second graders, currently on the market and already picked up by all fifty US states, the problematic myth of the Thanksgiving holiday is reproduced in full, with Pilgrims and Wampanoag peoples sharing a meal to celebrate a good harvest after the Wampanoag helped the Pilgrims learn to hunt and farm (Teachers' Curriculum Institute 2016: 190–1). The statement, “In November, Americans celebrate Thanksgiving and give thanks,” (191) implies that anyone who does otherwise is not included in the “American” label. Textbooks throughout the K-12 curriculum are rife with these types of stereotypes and misinformation, which boils acts of political violence down to the benign friendship of Thanksgiving.

In this book, I focus on high school-level curriculum textbooks. In US high schools—upper secondary education—US history is a required course for most eleventh graders (sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds), although some high schools may offer it at a different time. Students offered Advanced Placement US History (APUSH) may score well enough on the APUSH test that they can waive a history requirement in college. For some college graduates, this means that *one* US history class in high school may be all they know of United States history by the time they finish a bachelor's degree.

In my ethnographic work, I have examined how curricula that are meaningful to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students support their wellbeing by affirming identities that are often marginalized elsewhere. In this book, I analyze how representation operates for minority groups, who are frequently presented as passive recipients of White power in the US education system and society at large. While this is true for a range of minority identities, I focus on Native American and immigrant-origin people, especially Mexicans, because I have also been working ethnographically to document the impact of educational experiences on students from these backgrounds.

TERMINOLOGY

Before proceeding with this brief introduction, I offer a note on terminology. I capitalize the word “White” throughout this book, despite the fact that the Associated Press's (AP) Stylebook does not yet do so. The AP capitalizes terms like Black and Latino but leaves white with a lowercase *w* (Daniszewski 2020), which the movement for “grammatical justice” has

explicitly rejected (Mack and Palfrey 2020). I also use many terms in this book which themselves are politically potent and not always agreed upon, but they show my best effort at representation.

For example, there is no consensus on best practices regarding use of the terms “Native Americans” and “American Indians.” The term “Indian” is codified in US federal law and brings with it certain rights, and it is used by some people throughout the US as a self-referential label. The term “Native American” and “Native” are also common self-referential terms in far Northern California, mostly used when people are speaking more broadly beyond their specific tribe.

I use the term “Native American” throughout this book because, while recognizing its politically charged significance, it was the most common term used both in textbooks and by people in my fieldwork who themselves identified with it. In far Northern California, although the term “Indian” was sometimes used to self-label, it was far less common or acceptable for non-Native people to use that term. For example, even though many of my interviewees over the years have used that term for self-reference, they also cited examples of discriminatory behavior where White people used the term Indian in derogatory ways. In conversations with Native American stakeholders in multiple projects over many years, it was agreed upon that the term Native American was the logical one for me, as a non-Native person, to use. In general ethnographic practice, I work to name the specific tribe of the people I speak with as their identity, but I use Native American as the general term when a specific tribe name is not available and when directly quoting texts.

Because I discuss textbooks coded specifically for references to terms such as Mexico, Mexican and Mexican American, I use each of these terms to refer to a specific status. I use the term “im/migrant” to encompass those who themselves have crossed borders, or have been crossed by borders, and subsequent generations born in the United States but with family roots elsewhere.¹ This terminology, which is beginning to be used more in the United States, is part of an attempt to be as inclusive as possible of a range of identities impacted by migration. Sometimes I use the term “Latinx” to connote people of Latin American origin beyond Mexico, with the final *x* used in place of an *o/a* to avoid gender binaries. Although Latine is also used as a non-binary term, especially among youth, it is not

¹ I thank Elizabeth Vaquera and Elizabeth Aranda for introducing me to this term at the 2022 Conference on Im/migrant Well-Being.

yet the norm within academia. The labor to create a gender-neutral set of terms that are in line with Spanish grammar rules is still a work in progress. I do not weigh in on it here, but I use this term available at the time of writing, recognizing that terms are likely to change in the future.

Many textbooks use the term “Hispanic”—which technically connotes someone of Spanish-speaking heritage—so I place this term in direct quotes if it is used in a textbook. Very few students I engaged with ethnographically used the terms Hispanic or Latinx/e/o/a without prompting, even when directly referring to textbook content. Instead, most defined themselves as Mexican, regardless of how many generations removed from migration they were. Though my textbook coding included data on representation of many other groups, including African Americans and Asian Americans, I limit the data here to how the original settlers of the United States—Native Americans—and other original inhabitants of the pre-1848 west and southwest—im/migrant Mexicans—are treated textually.

Although I separate the sections analyzing Native American and Mexican-origin representation in this book, in fact, these categories are intersecting Venn diagrams. Many Latin American im/migrant people in the US are themselves Indigenous, and this is particularly so in California, where many robust Indigenous Mexican-origin communities reside. Indigenous Mexican im/migrant students therefore bring experiences of intergenerational trauma from state policies of forced assimilation or annihilation that are part of US and Mexican history, politics, and culture, and are ever present in educational settings. Indigenous Mexican im/migrant youth face unique challenges in US schools because they are stigmatized twice. First, they are a minority in general, and second, they are stigmatized within the colorism and racist social hierarchies of Latin American culture as well.

In some cases, Indigenous im/migrant youth may identify more with other Indigenous people, including Native Americans, than they do with Mexicans or other non-Indigenous Latinx people. For example, Indigenous students from Mexico now residing in California may find Mexican im/migrant identity conflictual because as Indigenous people they have been rejected from Mexican mainstream society, but in the White gaze of California, they may be rendered Mexican and not their specific Indigenous identity. I divide the textual analysis in order to simplify identity categories, while recognizing the compromises that such a choice entails.

Finally, the term “minority” is often taken as controversial on topics pertaining to identity politics. Native Americans were not a minority

before colonization, and frequently ignored acts of violence rendered them so, and the use of the term “minority” rarely captures that. I use the term here in the most basic social science way—to refer to people who at the time of this writing are numerically smaller than a dominant group, while acknowledging the dissatisfying limitation of that use. In sum, labels remain inadequate to capture the lived experience and political turmoil behind them. I offer these terminological clarifications to help readers contextualize the terms employed in the following pages.

SCHOOL AND TEXTS AS NATION-BUILDING

For many people globally, school is the place one goes to learn, or the place one sends their children to be cared for so that they can go to work. Educational content is not often rigorously interrogated by the general public if the basic schedule and logistics meet the needs of working families. As Simone Lässig writes, “Textbooks reflect the knowledge and values defined by a given society, and particularly its political elites, as essential and thus suitable for passing on to the next generation” (2009: 2). In most contexts, schooling is designed by elites for the masses as part of socialization and state-building. Because textbooks bear “a claim to truth and to general validity,” Lässig observes, such educational media “transport specifically authorized information” in ways that embed social and political hegemonic power (2009: 2).

Previous scholarship has looked deeply at textbooks as highly politicized documents that encode societal values within them. Fuchs and Bock’s comprehensive edited handbook, for example, includes thirty chapters dedicated to unpacking aspects of textbook theory, creation, use, and impact, including how issues such as colonialism, LGBTQ+ rights, and human rights appear in textbooks (Fuchs and Bock 2018). By elucidating the history, present practice, and future agenda for textbooks in formal education, Fuchs and Bock contribute to formalizing the field of textbook studies and shining light on the many controversies textbooks embody. Such textbook studies are particularly important in light of the purported “truth” that textbooks are generally seen to contain (Lässig 2009: 2).

In fact, what constitutes truth has been under fire in the United States, where a culture war is currently under way, and schools and teachers are in the crosshairs. Heated debates in the United States about teaching critical race theory (Ladson-Billings 2021) and ethnic studies (Scott and

Perez-Diaz 2021) are rampant, and it is evident that educational policies are major sites of controversy. Education is, at its base, political (Oakes et al. 2015; Spring 2017). In fact, what gets taught in the classroom has been politically tense at the state and national level from the beginning of the modern nation-state system and continues to be so to this day.

As European states crystalized their borders in the aftermath of wars that lead to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, states also began nation-building projects to create homogenous populations that saw themselves as cohesive wholes. Textbooks were sites for nation-building in many contexts (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017), such as rebuilding from war (Bentrovato et al. 2016; Gellman and Bellino 2019; Ingrao 2009), and navigating globalization (Zajda 2022). Inculcated with a specific national identity through their schooling, such citizens were then poised to support and defend the sovereignty that undergirds the foundation of the modern state system. Education was not single-handedly responsible for citizenship production, however. Scholars document the use of mechanisms such as the printing press, the census, and museums (Anderson 1991), alongside war, military service, a common language, and the schoolroom to foster national identity (Hobsbawm 1990; Weber 1976).

The impact of multiple forms of globalization—political, economic, and cultural—on education systems and the identities such systems work to produce, have changed over time. The dominance of some languages over others, as in the Englishization movement, is one way this has been made visible (Dor 2004; Kachru 1994; Schmidt 2014; Wickström 2016). Educational content decisions are made in the midst of these social tensions. For example, minority rights regarding language use in schools and elsewhere have been constantly contested and impact national and community identities as part of these globalization dynamics (Gellman 2019, 2020, 2023a, May 2012; Telles and Sue 2019; U.S. English 2021).

In many parts of the world, as governments passed labor laws decreasing the allowable hours that children could work, and increasing the legal requirements for school attendance, public education became more and more a central axis of identity formation for global youth. In the United States, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, which applied to elementary and secondary education, granted federal recognition and funding for English-language learners. For the first time, bilingual education became part of the grammar of equal educational opportunity. The Bilingual Education Act recognized the right to differentiated services, and to this day cultural and language rights activists reference the Bilingual Education

Act in their demands for culturally sensitive education. Prior to 1968, it was routine for im/migrant students who spoke languages other than English to be segregated into less advanced academic tracks. Such tracking still happens, but it isn't supposed to.

In many districts today, Native American students are subject to merely updated versions of the White supremacist curricula that shaped the education of their grandparents. While no longer beaten for speaking Indigenous languages, they still see their cultures represented as conquered, or as obstacles to progress, if they are represented at all. The achievement gap between Native American and White students is well documented (Simon et al. 2020). Some schools, like the ones where my fieldwork took place, are changing this very slowly. By inserting Indigenous language into formal school curricula, the languages, and their associated cultures, histories, and contemporary presence, have become part of the educational canon in these schools (Gellman 2022, 2023c).

In some similar but also different ways, im/migrant students of Mexican origin face many ongoing obstacles. Even with the legal rights ascribed them under the Bilingual Education Act, schools are still mostly English-immersion affairs, even if they provide multilingual support classes or other academic spaces where instruction in a home language is allowed. In two of my case study high schools, for example, recent newcomer students fluent in Spanish had one to two class periods a day of English Language Development or an associated support class, but spent the rest of their time in English-only classes where they tried to gain language skills through immersion. Their grades reflected their ability in the material, and hence many were not doing well, as the language barrier stood in the way. Both groups of students—Native Americans and im/migrant students—struggle to see a place for themselves in schools that are bastions of White domination. These students code-switch constantly between home and school, not only linguistically, but also in terms of the stories they hear about their people from family members versus those presented in educational media such as textbooks. Schools that value multilingualism and center culturally relevant curricula in a social justice lens may have different effects on students than those that operate from deficit perspectives, viewing non-English speaking students as problems that need fixing.

What does it mean for Native American and im/migrant students to see themselves represented in certain ways, or absent from US education in the first place? Educational media may reinforce or undermine acceptance of students and their cultures of origin depending on the content.

Specific textual descriptions, and how such concepts are utilized by teachers or reinforced by other media, play a role in the impact of representation. How much culturally conscious content teachers choose to bring into the classroom, and how *effectively* such content is incorporated into lesson plans and in the school environment can wield influence over youth identity and wellbeing (Gellman 2023a).

Other factors at play in youth identity include school, community, and family environments; attitudes towards people of different backgrounds; family and community migration patterns; and the regional, state, and international context of inclusion or exclusion that students may be exposed to through news or social circles. In addition, variables like physical insecurity can strongly inform youth wellbeing. In sum, the narratives students encounter depicting people with their own backgrounds matter in the classroom. When people feel invisible or misrepresented, it can be damaging to self-esteem, which in turn inhibits a range of other pro-social behaviors such as joining clubs, playing sports, running for student government, or other typical high school-aged activities. Similarly, the absence of content about things that have impacted people, their families, or communities, can make textbooks seem, at best, out of touch, and at worst, deliberately censoring.

Textbooks are artifacts of culture in any society. They convey the values and norms that people in positions of power have decided that others should follow. Patriotism and nationalism are regularly the lenses through which historical content is filtered before it makes its way into the schoolroom. Such filtration ensures socio-political reproducibility for elites and operates as a policy of narrative replication. Formal education provides a means to incorporate people into a set of shared norms and values, thus facilitating integration. But integration into *what* is a question not asked enough.

PURPOSE AND CONTRIBUTION

High school is a time of immense identity exploration, when young people often begin individuating from their families and defining who they are on their own terms. This happens both in social and familial contexts and in response to the formal curriculum they are exposed to in school. Representation of Native American and im/migrant people in high school history textbooks informs this identity formation process. My analysis, surveying US history textbooks that have been used in formal educational

settings from the 1950s through the present day, shows which kinds of stories are present and absent in the curriculum. How representation happens has an impact on how youth see themselves in the world.

I make two core contributions in this book. First, I document the textbook landscape to show what representation of Native Americans and Mexican im/migrant people has changed over time and what continues to persist. To do this, I present findings from an original textbook analysis data set. This consists of US history textbooks used in three regional public high schools in far Northern California, in addition to textbooks used in United States history classes from 1954 and into the twenty-first century sourced from the library at the George Eckert Institute, for a total of twelve textbooks. My analysis accounts for the ways that Native Americans and Mexican im/migrant people are discussed across spectrums of factual accuracy, including the presence or absence of representation and agency in relation to White settler-colonialism (a major topic in US history courses). I am particularly attentive to the power relationships that play out in textual form.

Second, I look at how textbook representation intersects with youth identity formation to inform the academic and life success of young people in precarious circumstances. The struggles to exist in multiple worlds, maintaining both home and school identities, are particularly acute for Native American and Mexican im/migrant students, many of whose families maintain traditional cultural practices, including heritage languages, while also urging young people in their communities to succeed in White-dominated English-medium schools. Educational media, including textbooks, play a role in shaping student identities and the aspirations that accompany them. How can students imagine successful futures when history classes include a litany of past failures or the subjugation of their ancestors?

This contribution rests on two streams of data. One stream of data was curated in 2022 while carrying out a Senior Fellowship at the Leibniz Institute for Educational Media/Georg Eckert Institute (GEI), in Braunschweig, Germany. Housed within this illustrious institution, the Georg Arnhold Program on Education for Sustainable Peace has an explicit mission to look at the applied aspect of education in addressing conflict. GEI is part of Germany's legacy of the Holocaust. Its founder, Georg Eckert, launched the International Institute for Textbook Improvement at the Kant Teacher Training College in 1951, which formed the foundation of the present-day GEI (Fuchs et al. 2022). Eckert

joined the National Socialist Students' Association (NSDStB) in 1934, and the Nazi party in 1937, and later joined the Greek Resistance (Fuchs et al. 2022: 10; GEI 2023). His inner turmoil over his previous Nazi association likely drove his institution-building, which was premised upon a vision of democratically reconstructing Germany's education system after World War II (Fuchs et al. 2022).

Germany's leadership on themes of memorialization after violence extends to the role of schools and educational media by recognizing that both are prime sites of ideological indoctrination. To that end, GEI has curated the most extensive library of German and international textbooks in the world. Scholars come from all corners of the globe to conduct research on educational media and how such media inform democracy and coexistence. From German textbooks with photos of Adolf Hitler on the first page, to Mexican social studies books from a range of states and school years, the GEI library is a comprehensive collection devoted to educational media and stewarded by expert librarians and staff. During my fellowship, I made use of this library and selected my case study textbooks from it.

I immersed in a second stream of data through in-depth mixed-method fieldwork I conducted in California schools in 2018–2022. Here, I draw on interview and focus group materials that are connected to larger bodies of work published elsewhere. While the fieldwork focuses primarily on Native American and im/migrant student experiences, I also include students from many demographics, including the regional White ethnic majority. During this fieldwork, I also examined many additional forms of educational media, such as films and film clips, podcasts, murals, student art, and more traditional products such as supplementary readings and assessment tools. Taken together, the textbooks, educational media, and student interviews and focus groups directly contribute to this portrait of how some identities are represented or silenced in educational settings.

TEXTBOOK DATA SAMPLE

In 2022—the time of my data collection—the GEI library had a total of 2,636 books in its United States collection. Of those, 853 were at the upper secondary (high school) level. Of the high school level books, 314 were in the general social sciences, including 243 textbooks, with the remaining seventy-one textbooks in math, science, and other subjects

outside the social science scope of this study. In addition to using the online catalogue filtering capacity to procure these numbers, I also relied on my own visual assessment of the collection based on time spent in the stacks.

The 243 textbooks cover topics including geography, civics, world history, and US history. It is the last category that I focus on here. A visual approximation based on book titles in their respective categories on the shelves shows that the high school level social science books are relatively equally divided across these four fields, meaning that there are about sixty US history, government, and civics textbooks in the GEI collection.

Of these, I selected sixteen books that were most clearly for use at the high school level in US history classes, which I read thoroughly, while taking extensive notes. Then, I coded the content across themes identified to examine representation of Native American, Mexican, and im/migrant people more broadly. Twelve of these books are then presented in depth here, with four books deemed beyond the scope of this project, as they were intended for civics or government, rather than history classes. I deliberately included four contemporary US textbooks that are in current or recent use at three of the high schools where I carried out fieldwork.

The other sample category included eight textbooks that were used as US history textbooks in schools from 1954 through the twenty-first century and provide historical reference points for how representation has or has not changed over time. These older books were randomly selected from a larger universe of twentieth century history textbooks, with a deliberate selection of at least one book written or published roughly within each decade.

In addition to cover-to-cover analyses of the selected textbook samples, I also surveyed several additional books from each decade this study covers, focusing in a more targeted way on specific passages that included keywords shared with the core sample texts. This survey technique allows me confidence in claims that the selected text per decade is sufficiently representative of others of its time as to not have selected exceptional textbooks, but rather ones with shared features across their time and genre. Both the changes and the lack of changes revealed shifts in popular culture, as well as recalcitrant places of White domination. The textbook list is in Appendix 1.1 and many of the works also appear in the bibliography of this book.

Case justification and context: Native Americans and Mexican im/migrant people share some common experiences but have distinct political

and racialized experiences within the United States. I am not conflating or simplifying those complex experiences by studying them in a historical comparative framework. Rather, after years of working ethnographically with students of both backgrounds in public high schools in California, I wanted to investigate in more depth the kind of textbooks that were shaping young people's curricular experiences, and those of their parents, teachers, and other generations. I had heard many complaints from students who identify as Native American, Mexican, or Mexican American with their heritage community's depictions in their textbooks, but I had not yet taken the time to analyze the textbooks in depth myself.

As an outsider to both communities—I am a White, Ashkenazi Jewish college professor from California, now based in New England—I have spent years cultivating trusting and collaborative relationships with stakeholders from both communities in California and Mexico. I write about the collaborative methodology we engage in elsewhere (Gellman 2023a), but I mention it here to explain why I focus so closely on these two particular groups in the textbook analysis. The textual exploration was undertaken with research questions derived from student analyses of their own educational environments that I had heard about for years in interviews and focus groups. This context may also help readers navigate the multiple layers of analysis in the chapters to come. Predominantly, there is a focus on textbooks created at the national level, without an explicit assessment of their state- or local-level implementation. However, the ethnographic chapter honors the origin of this project by returning to high school students in California looking at problems of textbook content in their own words.

Textbook coding methods: In order to create a manageable manual coding strategy for thousands of pages of text, I created a list of key words and historical incidents relating to Native American and Mexico and Mexican im/migrant people. For example, keywords for representation of Native American people include: American civilizations, Thanksgiving, *terra nullius*, missions, Pocahontas, Manifest Destiny, Chief Joseph, Oregon Trail, Settling the West, assimilation, land theft, Sand Creek massacre, Sitting Bull, Tonto, and termination. Keywords for representation of Mexico and Mexican im/migrant people include: War with Mexico, ranching and cattle drives, assimilation, nativism, Gold Rush, farmworkers, immigration, borders, Zoot suits, Hispanic American Organizations, Dolores Huerta, César Chávez, Bilingual Education Act of 1968, bilingualism, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), wall, and alien.

I read each textbook with the keyword lists next to me, making note of quotes, page numbers, and analytic commentary as I read. For example, I examined references to terms or sometimes unstated ideas such as the Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny in every textbook. The absences of key terms are as much data points as are their presence and stated definitions. For example, several textbooks did not reference the Doctrine of Discovery, but took the notion of the United States as *terra nullius* as fact. For data regarding Native American representation, I paid special attention to keyword references of first contact. The politics of Thanksgiving versus the National Day of Mourning, or of Pocahontas as willing savior of a White man versus a coerced subject, are still under scrutiny but have not yet reached consensus. In fact, the Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. had highly relevant curated exhibits on both these topics in 2022, speaking to their ongoing complexity in the public sphere.

Other topics, such as the impacts of Spanish missions and western expansion on Native American populations, have been long documented in the literature—populations were decimated and have not recovered from these acts of colonization—but remain strangely invisible in high school-level textbooks. Some tactics of certifiably genocidal policies like land theft, enslavement, and forced reservation relocations are presented in sanitized form only, while others, such as the Dawes Act and termination, are presented through different lenses depending on the era of publication of the textbook.

Similarly, there was remarkable consistency of presentation for some keywords and concepts pertaining to representation of Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican Americans. Patriotism, American civilization-building, including the decline of the Spanish and French empires, and the US war with Mexico, all changed very little in textbooks spanning the mid-twentieth century through the new millennium. There was more evolution in discussion of subjects including assimilation, nativism, migration, Hispanic American political organizing, and in issues of language use in California schools. Generally, to foreshadow the findings, twenty-first century textbooks were more apt to show cultural rights for im/migrants in a more positive light, while those from the 1960s to the 1980s maintained assimilatory frameworks.

In addition to documenting Native American, Mexico, and Mexican im/migrant representation in the textbooks, I also assessed the textbooks in relation to numerous additional terms pertaining to BIPOC

representation. For example, I noted the terminological shift over time from referring to “slaves” versus “enslaved people” in the antebellum United States, the way the Ku Klux Klan is discussed, the internment of Japanese and Japanese Americans during the World War II era, and how terrorism is described in post-9/11 sections. Overall, these additional coding categories served as further indicators of how each textbook frames racial politics in relation to structures of White power. Including these additional categories allowed me to make broader assessments of the political orientation of each textbook and broadly gauge its potential impact on students.

For each of these topics, I analyzed relevant images and maps in addition to the text itself and took dozens of pictures throughout the coding process. While I was ultimately not able to include the images in this book, I describe some of them in depth in the respective textbook sections. The image analysis contributes to assessing what was thought of as worthy of inclusion in the textbooks, but many also reveal commentary about racial and ethnic dynamics at the time of the textbook’s production.

I organized each textbook coding in a table under the following four column headings: keyword/theme/topic, excerpt/quote, page number, and analysis. The keywords generally reflected the chronological pattern of the textbooks. In total, the textbook coding resulted in more than 21,000 words of quotes and analysis across the sixteen textbooks. I selected representative examples to share in this book, recognizing that there is a large array of accompanying points left out, as is the case with any presentation of research. In addition, the textbook coding was accompanied by my review of related literatures on schooling, representation, and success for BIPOC students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

I am by no means the first person to carefully read, code, and analyze history textbooks. GEI hosts numerous staff researchers as well as visiting scholars who conduct their own research across all subjects of the social science and humanities, and occasionally the natural sciences, and use their findings to inform textbook commissions and other curricular decision-making bodies. It is a humbling place to work, being amidst those making direct interventions in how history is taught. Yet for many students, and their teachers as well, the politics behind textbook content may be invisible. In the United States, textbooks are frequently taken as fact by the

masses, even as small groups of powerful decision-makers may battle over the content.

Historians and others have documented many instances of White glorification and misrepresentation of BIPOC populations in educational media. Prior to embarking on the textbook coding, I read my way through much of this literature, noting the patterns and changes in the work over time. Canonical texts include James Loewen's (2018) *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, Howard Zinn's (2015 [2003]) *A People's History of the United States*, or the versions of both these texts for younger readers (Loewen 2019; Zinn 2009). Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's (2014) *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* is complemented by applied interventions such as the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (2020), which has supported the development of curricula that stipulate the teaching of Native American rights. Other scholarship also problematizes inclusionary efforts (Foxworth et al. 2015).

On the role of education in relation to power, peace, and democratic coexistence, the literature is similarly rich and growing (Bentrovato et al. 2016; Bettinger 2021; Vera and Fuchs 2018). I have contributed to this stream of research in the past through an examination of different kinds of silencing in history textbooks, as well as representation in schooling more broadly in Mexico, El Salvador, Turkey, Sierra Leone, and the United States. In some of those earlier works, I showed how the decisions about whose perspective is included or silenced act as affirmation of who is a valid actor in society. Indigenous people, for example, were frequently written out of history textbooks and replaced by class-based identities.

I also follow literature that looks at im/migrant-origin student experiences with schooling in the United States (Arora et al. 2021; Cammarota 2007; Hernandez et al. 2022; Kirova 2001; Lander 2019, 2022; Maramba 2008; Murillo Jr et al. 2009; Sánchez and Machado-Casas 2009). Scholarship on the challenges for im/migrant, undocumented, and mixed-status family members is highly relevant for understanding additional variables that interact with schooling experiences for BIPOC youth (Andrews 2018; Calderón 2005; O'Leary 2014; Sepúlveda 2018; Stephen 2007).

The literature shows overlapping evidence that BIPOC young people are subject to myriad identity-based harms in their education, and that undermining confidence in relation to identity has real impacts on student success. There are two key points that I draw from these literatures that

contribute to my own findings. First, schools are set up to facilitate White achievement and reproduce White narratives of historical success. Textbooks are one of many spaces that do the work of maintaining White supremacy in schools, but the textual problems are often mentioned without a deeper dive into their substance.

Second, it is difficult to find viable recommendations for educational interventions. Identifying concrete suggestions for intervention in schooling to support BIPOC success runs up against numerous obstacles. From budget constraints to cultures of complacency, school districts devise many ways to rebuff or diminish interventions that could be transformative for BIPOC students. As a tangible product directly under the purview of district curriculum committees, textbooks are direct spaces of representation that educators and policymakers have immediate jurisdiction over.

Curricular decisions can be economical. Some of the suggested alternative titles like Dunbar-Ortiz's *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* is far less costly (US\$11 average) than the 1,000-page hardcover tomes (US\$100 average) usually purchased for eleventh grade US history classes. I do not get into the economics or politics of textbook publishing, but other researchers have (Apple and Christian-Smith 2017; Sewall 2005; Watt 2007), and I hope will continue to do so. It is a big business, and changing representation will implicate publishers as much as individual authors or curriculum committees.

While some variables, such as school and community climate, or immigrant documentation status—both of which considerably impact student wellness—may be beyond the scope of what educators or administrators are able to influence, textbooks are not. Textbook reform, alongside other viable solutions such as introducing new, up-to-date alternative resources to students, teachers, and staff can move the United States towards an education system that better facilitates the wellbeing and success of all students, and BIPOC students in particular.

ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA

I utilize textbook analysis alongside political ethnography, qualitative interviews, focus groups, and surveys in four schools in far Northern California as core data for this book. Combining the textbook research with this ethnographic fieldwork allows the benefit of mixed-method insight triangulated across a range of data sources. The majority of the ethnographic data analysis is presented elsewhere (Gellman 2023a, in

progress) but I include a small selection of data in this book to situate and complement the textbook analysis. For this reason, I briefly describe the methodology and methods of the human-involved research.

The Yurok Tribe, located in far Northern California, is the largest tribe in California, with more than 6,400 members. Much of my California-based research has been in partnership with the Tribe and with its Language Program and Education Department. I have worked with the Yurok Tribe's Education Department since 2016 to design collaborative research, where Yurok colleagues participate in co-designing the research questions and data collection instruments with me. With permission from them and the Yurok Tribal Council, from district and school administrators and teachers, as well as opt-in permission from students and their guardians, I carried out mixed-method research in four public, regional high schools from January through May 2022, conducting more than forty open-ended interviews with students and adults in the education community, alongside eleven focus groups with forty-nine total participants, and sixty-six surveys. I also carried out dozens of hours of classroom observations. A fraction of this data is referenced in this book, but it informs the larger framework of the study and is discussed in more detail in Chaps. 3 and 5.

This human-centered research complements the textbook research by eliciting meaning from people as to how they are personally affected by the representations that the textbook analysis describes. Taken together, the textbook analysis and the ethnographic data build on existing literature to show how representation or misrepresentation informs youth identities. Such identity, partially constructed by and through classroom curricula including textbooks, informs political consciousness and can also translate into behavior.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

In this introduction, I have shown what is at stake regarding textbook content in relation to curricular inclusion for Native American and Mexican im/migrant students. Through a description of the research puzzle, data collection sample, and methods used to form the basis of this study, I have shown the roadmap for how I undertook the research and for what purpose.

The subsequent chapters are as follows. Chapter 2 presents the results from coding and analyzing eight textbooks published between 1954 and 1999. I focus on examples of misrepresentation of Native American,

Mexican and im/migrant-origin people in these books. Given the racial overtones of the 1950s–1960s, these early textbook examples demonstrate teachings under the shadow of White supremacy. The effects of these textbook implications on BIPOC students are not overly belabored but are evident in the examples themselves. As textbook publishing adapts to the political environment and social awareness of each decade, the textual politics of the books change in some ways while other attributes remain consistent over time.

Chapter 3 focuses the textbook analysis on US history books in use in far Northern California high schools, where I have carried out extended ethnographic work on both this and other related projects. I engage both the textual content, as well as the school and community environments where the content is delivered to highlight why curricular revision is so crucial.

Chapter 4 looks in depth at the politics of Advanced Placement US history through a textual analysis of the textbook used for the APUSH class in one far Northern California high school. In addition to the central themes of Native American and Mexican im/migrant representation, I also briefly review the politics of Advanced Placement more broadly.

Chapter 5 brings the voices of students and alumni to the forefront as they articulate how they have experienced the representation of groups that match their own identities in textbooks. Chapter 6 concludes the book by emphasizing the findings and crafting a call for a textbook reform effort to undo White supremacy as the guiding filter through which US history is taught.

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