



## Textbooks in Far Northern California High Schools in 2007–2022

**Abstract** At the turn of the twenty-first century, textbooks still show concerning representations of Native American and Mexico and im/migrants. This chapter starts off with a discussion of how the twisted and inaccurate tale of Pocahontas is still being taught in schools today, followed by an analysis of textbooks published in 2007, 2013, and 2019. It also includes an excerpt from Robert Anderson, a teacher at Hoopa Valley High School in far Northern California, describing his qualms with the required problematic texts he is supposed to teach. Even the more recently published textbooks in 2013 and 2019 still make subtle cues towards a White-centric point of view of US history, rather than facing the hard and ugly truths of our nation’s past.

**Keywords** Textbooks • California • Native American • Mexico • Immigrant • Migrant • Pocahontas • Hoopa • White-centric

### INTRODUCTION: STILL TWISTING THE TALE OF POCAHONTAS

It is the fall of 2022, and my family and I have just moved back to Boston after spending the spring semester in far Northern California, where my kids attended the local public schools while I carried out fieldwork. My fifth-grade daughter brings home a worksheet from her Boston public school class titled “Pocahontas Claims and Evidence: Writing Exercise.”

The instructions ask students to use what they have learned in class to fill in the evidence statement about what Pocahontas did. The first claim box states “Pocahontas was a diplomat.” My daughter’s neat handwriting in the evidence box proclaims, “She married a European. This led to the ‘Pocahontas Peace.’” The second printed claim states “Pocahontas was a connector.” Below it, my daughter has written, “She learned to speak English and converted to Christianity.”

My children know what I do for a living. They just spent the previous spring hearing me complain about public school curricula and politics at the end of my fieldwork days. My daughter has been tolerating me critique her social studies lessons for years, and even has a few cameos in my books. Sometimes she rolls her eyes and groans, but this time, her ears perk up when I ask whether her class had learned that Pocahontas was actually enslaved and forced into marriage. “What?!” she exclaims and appears to pay attention to me for a moment. “They made it sound like she *wanted* to get married.”

In general, I am a critic of my children’s large, urban public school, where much of what I hear about in the classroom is socio-behavioral management rather than academic content. Yet, I know that my daughter’s teachers have opted into a pilot curriculum bringing greater consciousness to how Black enslavement is taught—for example, replacing the term “slave” with the more humanizing “enslaved people,” which is one of my indicators of curricular shift in textbook coding—so I am caught off-guard that the tale of Pocahontas is still being told closer to the Disney fairytale version rather than the historical truth. The latter version, in which Pocahontas’s marriage and diplomacy was part of her survival story as she navigated her own abduction and enslavement, is much less comfortable for people than the story of a remarkable female peacemaker.

The Pocahontas trope has been in effect for a long time. In 1846, textbook author Emma Willard, who mostly wrote disparagingly of Native Americans as “savages,” held up Pocahontas’s story as “a unique example of Native American womanhood and female moral authority” (Yacovone 2022: 109). Historian Donald Yacovone, who has written the most recent analysis of how textbooks in the United States reinforce White supremacy, analyzes Willard’s writing and notes that in the eyes of White society “in marrying John Rolfe [Pocahontas] became a hero and white” (Yacovone 2022: 110). The whitening of people of color or other ethnically specific groups based on arbitrary decisions by US gatekeepers is an old story. There are texts about how representations of Jews, Italians, and Mexicans

became whitened over time (Brodkin 1998; Gómez 2018; Guglielmo and Salerno 2003). For Pocahontas, her whitening facilitated a cult status that rewrote the story of her enslavement.

### 2007: *THE AMERICAN VISION* AND ITS RELEVANCE TODAY

The US history textbook *The American Vision*, a 1,137-page tome of the type that likely causes shoulder pain to carry, provides a generic White perspective on history. Published in 2007, it is out of date in many ways that one would expect could be a turn-off to Generation Z<sup>1</sup> students, but it is still circulating as an approved textbook at Hoopa Valley High School (HVHS) in far Northern California. The book contains some updated text regarding classic tropes from the end of the twentieth century. For example, interspersed throughout the pages of *The American Vision* are numerous boxed inserts highlighting problems that affected BIPOC communities throughout history. But overall, the book's emphasis is on battle descriptions and territorial delineation. It provides an assumptive settler colonial history from a White perspective.

*The American Vision* has a text box insert about Pocahontas. In a place of prominence, the authors insert Captain John Smith's tale of an eleven-year-old Pocahontas throwing her body between him and her tribal members on the cusp of his execution in 1607 (Appleby et al. 2007: 62). The authors state that in 1613 Pocahontas was abducted by a White captain, held as ransom, and was not returned to her family and tribe even after they offered up what food and goods they could to the English. Then, "a member of the Virginia Company named John Rolfe announced to the colonial administrator that he and Pocahontas had fallen in love, and he asked to marry her" (Appleby et al. 2007: 62). As the story goes, her father gives his consent, the couple marry and have a baby, then go to England to drum up more investors for the Virginia Company (Appleby et al. 2007: 62).

Within the same textbook, more than 300 pages later, a small correction appears.

The *London Spectator*, reporting on the work of Mr. E. Neils, debunks Smith's tale of the young Pocahontas flinging herself between him and her father's club. The young girl was captured and held prisoner on board a

<sup>1</sup> Generation Z refers to anyone born in or after 1997.

British ship and then forcibly married to Mr. John Rolfe. Comments *Appleton's Journal* in 1870: "All that is heroic, picturesque, or romantic in history seems to be rapidly disappearing under the microscope scrutiny of modern critics." (Appleby et al. 2007: 397)

This correction is shocking. On page 397, the authors are essentially saying that the story of Pocahontas they presented earlier on page sixty-two was not accurate. There is no reference to this correction anywhere else in the book. It is unclear why the corrected text appears so much later in the book rather than alongside the original erroneous textbox. Perhaps it was strictly for ease of updating a later edition's page layout? Leaving aside the fundamental issues around Pocahontas's ability to give consent while trying to survive abduction, it is striking that if the textbook authors knew the correction to the Pocahontas story, that they waited more than 300 pages to offer it, as an addendum, to readers.

How would my daughter's Pocahontas worksheet have looked if she had been taught the addendum? Perhaps she would have noted that, because of her abduction and forced marriage to a White man, Pocahontas learned to be both a diplomat and connector in terms of her own survival and that of her Native American family. Pocahontas learned her survival skills under duress. The structural inequality of colonization forced her to find ways to stay alive in a violent world where women's bodies and lives were meant to be at the service of men.

My own child learns this correction at the kitchen table as we go over her classroom handouts. Though her eyes glaze over as I start in on a socio-historical lecture, I can tell she gets the gist of what I am saying. But what about everyone else's children? They may leave the fifth grade with the Disney version of Pocahontas reinforced. Findings from an analysis of *The American Vision* on the representation of Native American people still shows pervasive silences and inaccuracies that characterize their representation.

**Patriotism in *The American Vision*:** HVHS is a public high school that sits on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation, where a majority of the students identify as Native American or Native-descendent. The reservation is remote by any metric, nestled in a riverside valley more than an hour's drive from the closest large town. Though rich in its own natural resources and cultural continuity, the area reflects the ravages of colonization, with intergenerational legacies of trauma playing out in

contemporary familial and societal issues. Post-colonization, Hoopa Valley has been woefully underserved by the United States government. Services, including medical, wellness, and educational, operate at a minimal baseline. Other civic access issues, such as voting rights protected through ballot box proximity, or food security through grocery availability, have been highly variable for decades.

With this context, the notion of Native American youth sitting down in class and turning the pages of *The American Vision* is an example of a disconnect between educational media and youth identity. What elements of this textbook could help youth on a reservation feel better connected to the United States? The book’s “American Creed” text on page one, boxed next to flag etiquette instructions and the Pledge of Allegiance, reads as follows:

I believe in the United States of America as a Government of the people by the people, for the people, whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a Republic; a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect Union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my Country to love it; to support its Constitution; to obey its laws; to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies. (Appleby et al. 2007)

Though Native Americans have served in the US armed forces at high rates, the intergenerational trauma resulting from loss of population through mission schools, massacres, and disease lend this creed a questionable resonance for them. Similarly, what might it feel like for US-born immigrant-origin students suffering the loss of a deported parent to read this opening page? There are many historical factors we have to set aside to view this text as part of what Deborah Miranda calls a “postcolonial thought experiment” (2012). First, believing in a country as something by and for the people may be difficult to reconcile for many Native Americans and other BIPOC-identified people who have been systematically excluded or forcibly assimilated in order to gain citizenship privileges. Black people whose forebears were forcibly brought to the US may question *which* people the country is really for, and how such founding principles of equality are defined. Therefore, these questions may lead to critical analysis that makes the American Creed unpalatable as truth.

While the American Creed plays a role in the nation-building aspect of US public education, its ability to alienate young people from school, textbooks, and themselves is a risk. To boldly claim the proclamations that the American Creed makes, many BIPOC students would have to set aside their own ancestral stories—including those that include widespread human rights abuses against them—that inform the cultural identities they carry with them when they pass through the schoolhouse door. Genocide, enslavement, deportation, incarceration, and other harms have characterized many BIPOC interactions with representatives of the United States.

Declaring it one's duty to love the United States, or to ascribe to it the values of "freedom, equality, justice" in contrast to one's lived experience, risks rendering the individual-state relationship a farce. This is especially true for BIPOC people who on the daily have to navigate a host of negative things said about themselves or their heritage communities all around them—from the media to their own politicians in elected office. Facing content like the American Creed in schoolbooks that are supposed to convey the history of the country to its residents exacerbates an already heavy burden.

*The American Vision* simply assumes that assimilation into American culture is the positive goal of public education. The text states, "Public schools were often crucial to the success of immigrant children. It was there the children usually became knowledgeable about American culture, a process known as Americanization. To assimilate immigrants into American culture, schools taught immigrant children English, American history, and the responsibilities of citizenship" (Appleby et al. 2007: 485). There is no discussion about what impact assimilation might have on young people, or why it might be a positive or negative process. Instead, the authors assume that schools were a place where students become knowledgeable and assimilated to then be able to undertake the responsibilities of citizenship.

**A teacher's response to *The American Vision*:** Robert Anderson, a US history teacher at Hoopa Valley High School whom I have written about elsewhere (Gellman 2023a), recognizes that *The American Vision* does not speak to his students. The majority of the young people he teaches—more than 80 percent in 2022—are Native Americans (DataQuest 2022). Many of them are the descendants of people who either forcibly or voluntarily went to US boarding schools. The traumas of those experiences have been passed down through the generations. Hoopa residents

know the intentions of the US government in their attempts to assimilate people into what it defines as good “Americans.” Why be surprised when chronic absenteeism reaches nearly 20 percent at Hoopa Valley High School (EdData 2022), given the mismatch between textbooks like *The American Vision* and their readers?

Since 2017, I have been doing mixed methods research in far Northern California, in collaboration with the Yurok Tribe’s Education Department. In the course of that research, I have carried out ethnographic work in multiple US history classes and have also conducted textbook analyses of the books used in classes at multiple schools in the area. Here, I document Mr. Anderson’s response to working with this textbook to show the complicated lines that teachers have to walk when dealing with curricula.

Mr. Anderson has labored to find ways to make his curricula culturally relevant to his students. He teaches all the US and world history classes, in addition to civics, and has been constructing his own curricula to supplement or replace the textbooks that have been approved by his district. I coded several of the textbooks he uses across his various classes, but *The American Vision* (Appleby et al. 2007) is the main US history textbook used at the school and is in line with this study sample.

Anderson describes how the school board has struggled to work with him to find textbooks that meet both the state requirements as well as the needs of his students. He notes that “these titles were adopted some years before my term here” and he wrestles with the texts, sometimes photocopying chapters from other publications to swap for the core textbook reading. The textbook tends to be “ponderous,” in his charitable description, or longwinded in mine. Anderson also describes how his “teaching had begun to rely on lectures to support or substitute from the texts” because the texts themselves do not resonate well with students.

Anderson describes at length his feelings about the textbook in correspondence with me in 2022, and with permission, I share an excerpt here. He writes:

*The American Vision* was written as a tame narrative of tempered American exceptionalism, but without much inclusion of traditionally excluded groups and perspectives. Its staggering deficiency in dealing with Manifest Destiny led me to my first self-created substitute reading for that unit in my second year. This was an issue I dealt with first by lectures that clarified and rewrote parts of their narrative for accuracy and inclusion, but then I’d adapted the narrative of mainstream college textbooks.

All the while, I was hoping for an academic rebellion from our institutions to challenge the flawed and ineffective textbooks available. Instead, I saw the problems growing worse. In 2020, I concluded I had to make for my students the tools that no one else seemed able or motivated to create, and began to write my own textbook in earnest. This proved to be beneficial, for really the countless hours that went into this, as when Covid forced us into remote instruction. Had I only had our textbooks, which I had been fixing through lecture, I would have had to send them to work in their homes without any challenge to those flawed materials without support. Instead, I could force my chapters down into shorter, more easily digested chapters and know that at least the text worked on its own.

The profit motive seems unable to support this kind of work, so it would seem to need to come from someone like me who would be crazy enough to attempt to change the world, [laughs]. Seriously, though, the context of where I work and the supports I have do the most for me in this way. A stronger district might have worked to get me better materials, but they would also be strong enough to smother this ambition of fixing the absence of a supportable and relevant history textbook for the average high school student's use.

I understood the challenges of history instruction from my own experiences as a student, made so clear by reading James Loewen the summer before I joined university with the intent in becoming a high school history teacher. I also understood, in grim theory, what it could look like to teach in the context of a colonized and impoverished community. But, if you were to really know my work, the core of what this is about, at the core of it is not how to work in this context but how to use my work to help transcend this into something that is enriching and affirming of our human potential and framing the ideas and concepts of social studies to support that potential best in our students. The rest is simply the storm tearing through the leaves. (Anderson 2022)

I have written elsewhere about Yurok and Hupa<sup>2</sup> educators who are leading the way in designing culturally responsive curricula within the Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District that HVHS is part of. Yet, teachers like Mr. Anderson are still trying to find their way. Working to meet state requirements while also delivering content that is culturally meaningful is a tall order anywhere, but especially so at a school like HVHS that has so much instability in leadership—a constantly rotating principal and district

<sup>2</sup>Hupa refers to the ethnicity and language, while Hoopa, the Anglicized name, refers to the reservation and valley.



superintendent—and students struggling for basics such as housing and food security. Finding ways to better support educators by innovating the curricula to be more culturally responsive is a difficult but much needed part of educational media updating more broadly.

### 2013: NATIVE AMERICANS IN *HISTORY ALIVE!*

The Teachers' Curriculum Institute's (TCI) 2013 *History Alive! Pursuing American Ideals: Equality, Rights, Liberty, Opportunity, Democracy* was used at Eureka High School (EHS) as a core textbook in US history class for many years, including 2021–2022. At the very beginning of the book, the authors show awareness of bias, something that is unmentioned in the majority of history textbooks. In contrast, this textbook is explicit: "Sometimes a source contains information or conclusions that reflect a distinct point of view. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but historians are careful to look for signs of bias when analyzing evidence. In general, bias is any factor that might distort or color a person's observations" (TCI 2013: 3). Although the TCI textbook authors thus demonstrate an awareness of bias, they then go on to exhibit it themselves in what they do not cover. I mention here just a handful of the silences regarding Native American presence that I observed in this textbook.

The entire first three chapters of *History Alive* fail to mention Native American people. Chapter 4 opens with the year 1620 and the section heading "Colonial Roots of America's Founding Ideals," (29) and tells a White-centric story. When Native Americans are introduced, it is in this way: "The land that drew colonists to America was, of course, already occupied. At first, relations between native peoples and colonists were mutually beneficial ... settlers eventually stripped eastern tribes of most of their land through purchase, wars, and unfair treaties" (31). Though the text uses "of course" to show assumed knowledge of Native American existence, a student must get to page thirty-one before they are mentioned, and even then, Native American habitation is not discussed, but is assumed as background knowledge that students would have prior to reading the textbook.

The Doctrine of Discovery is not mentioned in this textbook, but "Indian attacks" are included in relation to territorial wars between British and Spanish troops (54), railroad expansion (134–135), and Plains land acquisition by colonists (136). Especially within the latter two examples, Native Americans are framed as, in the words of a government official at

the time, being “an obstacle to the progress of settlement and industry” (136). Though the textbook is pointing out that this is the government’s view, it also reinforces it itself, for example in a caption for an image of Chief Geronimo, who, the book states, “refused to settle down” but “finally surrendered ... and took up farming” (136). The patronizing phrasing used to describe Geronimo and other Native Americans who resisted colonization make them seem culpable of obstructing White progress rather than telling the story of colonial violence that spurred genocide and culturecide.

Such subtle cues to readers are enforced through the passive language used to describe White violence towards Native Americans, who “were killed” euphemistically (137) rather than murdered by White people. Syntax as a tool to render White people less culpable of violence appears throughout this textbook. For example, under the heading “Adaptation and Efforts to Assimilate American Indians,” there are passages like this one: “The settlement of the West was disastrous for large numbers of American Indians. Many died as a result of violence, disease, and poverty. Others clung to a miserable existence on reservations. The survivors struggled to adapt to their changed circumstances” (TCI 2013: 137). Through the use of the passive voice and syntax, this textbook avoids clearly showing White responsibility for Native American destruction.

At the end of the chapter on the “Indian Wars” the authors summarize: “The tribes on the Great Plains fought to preserve their way of life. To prevent conflict and open lands for settlement, the government moved tribes onto reservations. Through the Dawes Act, it tried to assimilate Indians into white culture” (141). By avoiding to describe colonization as violence, as this phrasing does, *History Alive* undermines a basic tenet of Native American history—that the colonization of the United States by White people was constituted by genocide and culturecide of Native Americans. Any textbook that does not explicitly say this, and place responsibility where it is due, does a disservice to its students.

**Mexico and Mexican Americans in *History Alive*:** Like predecessor textbooks, *History Alive* describes the Alamo and “Mexican War” in ways that lift US glory, even though the war was provoked by a deceptive President Polk (220–221). The cartoon depiction of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo shows an image of the Mexican Eagle—Mexico’s national symbol on its flag—plucked (222). Though the recounting is factual in relating that the US military conquered the Mexican military

and subsequently took its territory, it is also celebratory. This is in line with every previous textbook reviewed in this analysis.

*History Alive's* approach to immigrants and immigration is also in line with textbooks from the 1990s, with a focus on assimilation as a good and necessary step that immigrants must take to Americanize (174). The 1924 immigration quota system is similarly laid out with keywords from previous texts, although here the authors use the word “Nativism” to describe the xenophobia coloring immigration restrictions more directly (294). Under the heading “Crossing the Southern Border: Immigrants from Mexico,” the authors make no mention of the larger structural connections that provide context for modern migration politics. They do note that:

Like other immigrant groups, the Mexicans often suffered at the hands of native-born Americans. They might be welcomed as cheap labor, but they were commonly scorned as inferior to white Americans. Racist attitudes towards Mexicans, especially those with dark skin, led to discrimination. They were kept in low-level jobs and commonly denied access to public facilities, including restaurants. Many Mexican children were only allowed to attend segregated schools. (TCI 2013: 178)

Several hundred pages later, racism towards Mexican and Mexican American people is countered through the efforts of Dolores Huerta (523) and César Chávez (528), whose activism for farmworkers' rights is described as laudatory. There is also explicit discussion of language politics under the heading “La Raza: A People United,” where the authors write: “A key issue for Chicano activists was bilingual education, or teaching in two languages. In 1968, President Johnson signed the Bilingual Education Act, legalizing instruction in languages other than English” (528). While this is a factual account, the authors neglect to mention that English is not officially the national language in the United States, and therefore the legislating of language politics itself is skewed toward a default English Whiteness that is not made explicit but understood as the expectation.

When the textbook does try for explicitness, it gets it wrong. Under “Diverse People Speaking One Language” the book states “Latinos, or Hispanics, are a diverse group” (527). Here, the authors reproduce conceptual errors widely made by scholars across multiple disciplines, conflating these two distinct terms. “Hispanic” refers to a language group derived from Spanish, so people of Spanish-speaking origins are Hispanic, which

excludes, for example, people from Brazil. “Latino” refers to a cultural group with shared cultural reference points, which would include Brazilians. Through this heading and the mixing-up of terms, this book furthers misinformation about basic ethnic categories.

Another point of misinformation appears in reference to armed service volunteerism and citizenship. The book accurately depicts that people of “Mexican ancestry served with distinction in WWII ... [and] received medals for bravery in combat. Some of these GIs were Mexican nationals—citizens of Mexico living in the US” (406). However, it goes on to say that “Service in the armed forces gave them a better chance to gain US citizenship,” (406) which may have been true in the twentieth century, although the statistics on this are hard to come by. But the truth of military service as a path to citizenship has been a fraught one, and readers of this passage might assume they or family members can join the military and obtain their citizenship. This is a dangerous and irresponsible claim to leave so vague.

In another example, a picture of a Social Security card is accompanied by a text insert box stating: “If you live and work in the United States, you should have a Social Security card and Social Security number. This is the number that the federal government uses to keep track of you, your earnings, and your future benefits. You will have the same Social Security number throughout your life” (376). Of course, this normative statement ignores the situation of many undocumented people, such as those who use other people’s Social Security numbers in order to gain employment, or undocumented children without Social Security cards who might be reading this textbook in high school. Since they are living in the US, but don’t have a card, what does this tell them about the legitimacy of their own lives? While this may or may not be intentional on the part of the textbook authors, the result is the opposite of a trauma-informed approach to this type of information.

Finally, an indicator available in textbooks published after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the US, Mexico, and Canada in 1994 is how NAFTA is discussed. *History Alive’s* approach is to say that “Whether or not NAFTA has been good for the U.S. economy is open to debate” (672) without querying its benefits for all three countries. Given the disastrous effect on the Mexican economy and workers across agriculture and manufacturing sectors, which was widely documented by the time this textbook was published, this omission is another example of US-centrism in the curricula.

**Summarizing the mixed results of *History Alive*:** I conclude that, while it brings more awareness to multiple perspectives, *History Alive* does so through a passive voice that elides White responsibility for violence toward Native Americans, and harmfully reinforces assimilation and Englishization as necessary for im/migrant acceptability, perpetuating a White-centric notion of what the United States is supposed to be. Many additional indicators—the use of the word “slaves” rather than “enslaved people” (31), the omission of Henry Ford’s extreme racism while praising his industrialism (149), and similar silence on Woodrow Wilson’s racism (207) lift Whiteness without an honest presentation of the discrimination that existed in many of these historic accounts.

This textbook does not shy away entirely from difficult pasts. For example, in a section on the Vietnam War, there is the 1963 photo of a Buddhist monk self-immolating in protest of the war in South Vietnam (569), and a photo that textbook author James W. Loewen mentions he was not allowed to include in the young readers’ version of *Lies My Teachers Told Me*, at risk of it being banned by school boards (Loewen 2019: 186). But what is allowed and what is censored reveals something about which histories are deemed acceptable because they are considered too threatening to foundational myths of what the United States is and, especially, for whom.

An additional Teachers’ Curriculum Institute (TCI) textbook I reviewed in the course of this project is also currently in use as the core textbook in Eureka High School’s civics class. *Government Alive! Power, Politics, and You* (2014) does an admiral job conveying many of the basic points of factual civic education that every graduating senior should know. Students can complete their reading of the textbook knowing the basics of how the electoral college works (TCI 2014: 51), and different categories of immigrants and what their labels convey (TCI 2014: 117), to name just a few examples.

However, there is a problematic section titled “Americans’ shared political values” that elicits the same discomfort I had throughout much of *History Alive*. The first parts are generic descriptions of “American values” and though these make the US sound better than it is—espousing Liberty, Equality, and Democracy (123) even though these are not experienced equally by people—it is standard language in this type of textbook. But the entry on “Patriotism” is particularly galling. TCI writes, “Americans feel great pride and loyalty toward their country. Many believe that the United States is the greatest nation in the world. They also take pride in the values

of American democracy” (TCI 2014: 124). There is no critical reflection on this belief by the authors, nor any mention of the damage such belief in US greatness inflicts on others.

It is perhaps this underlying backbone of patriotism that runs through *History Alive*. It alienates me, as a US-born White person. What might it feel like to someone with less individual or structural privilege, someone who sees even less of themselves than I do in statements beginning with “Americans believe...” Through such generalizations, paired with unmitigated patriotism, TCI’s textbooks risk casting many young readers outside the circle of belonging.

### 2019: *UNITED STATES HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY*

A few hours north of HVHS and along the coast, Del Norte High School (DNHS) is the northern-most high school in California before the Oregon border. I didn’t have the chance to carry out ethnographic work in the US history classes there. Instead, I focused my time on the Yurok and Spanish language classes. But I corresponded with the then-US history teacher in 2022, who has since left the school, and she oriented me to the core texts and online resources she used to teach the classes. In turn, I gave feedback about elements of the curricula as they pertain to Native American representation (DNUSD 2022), both to the teacher and to school and district administration. Here, I offer a brief analysis of some key themes from coding the core US history textbook at DNHS.

*United States History and Geography* is written by two of the same authors who wrote the 2007 *The American Vision* textbook that Robert Anderson critiques earlier in this chapter and which ultimately led to his writing his own history textbook. This updated version, used at a neighboring high school, similarly meets some needs of students, and disregards others. In many ways, *United States History and Geography*, and its accompanying workbook, titled *Inquiry Journal* (Appleby et al. 2019a), which I focus on here, play into many of the same tired tropes of Native American subservience to White colonizers, or violence toward colonizers that justified White violence toward them (Appleby et al. 2019a: 48–50). But the authors also use text, images, and questions to assert Native American presence in ways that were not always the norm in earlier books, including in *The American Vision* (2007).

In a section of the *Inquiry Journal* headed simply “Native Americans,” *United States History and Geography* authors pose multiple open-ended questions such as “How was Native American society structured prior to the arrival of American settlers?” or “What led to Native American uprisings against the settlers?” (Appleby et al. 2019a: 48). Questions like this are challenging to decipher in terms of their purpose because the *Inquiry Journal* is linked back to specific pages in the textbook, but the tools to answer the questions are still not explicit. On the one hand, open-ended questions do push students to refer to the text passages and make inferences based on their own analysis. The questions can be used as free-writing prompts to get students thinking critically about the text passages, which show multiple perspectives for students to draw on. But this approach allows for a very wide array of potential answers, from “Native American society was structured in democratic means with local governance structures varying across tribes” to “Native Americans lived simply in nature” (my example answers, not textual citations). Students could come to either conclusion from the text, and it isn’t clear that they would be equipped to decipher in which direction to go from the text alone.

My own research does not include teacher preparation and accountability (Avalos 2011; Sleeter 2017; Taubman 2010), itself an enormous field of study. But this particular passage points to the importance of teacher training as a critical aspect of curricular representation. Whose story is being emphasized and how is something teachers may sometimes address as interpreters of the textbooks within their own lesson plans. Such a role is particularly important when addressing general questions like these.

This open questioning style continues in the *Inquiry Journal* with the section titled “What is Americanization?” In a passage asking students to identify connections, the authors ask, “How did boarding schools, the Dawes Act, the Citizenship Act, and the Indian Reorganization Act each promote or discourage Americanization?” (Appleby et al. 2019a: 48). Here, the question is more specific and therefore has less potential to go astray, although it could still elicit a very standard answer. For example, boarding school “helped Native Americans assimilate” or a more progressively, “each of these things required Native Americans to sacrifice an aspect of their Native culture to access benefits defined as good by colonizers.” It is a question with pros and cons that requires students to consider more than one perspective about Americanization, but the politics of

the answer are still questionable in terms of fair representation for Native American people.

In a section about Native American boarding schools titled “Educating the Indians—a Female Pupil of the Government school at Carlisle Visits Her Home at Pine Ridge Agency,” a young woman is pictured assimilated, in the clothes and haircut of settlers, while her tribe is in stark contrast in their native dress (Appleby et al. 2019a: 52–3). The authors ask, “What possible bias might readers of this magazine [where the photo was first published] have had as they interpreted this image?” (Appleby et al. 2019a: 52–3). Highlighting the way that bias and contrast between cultures was being selectively portrayed can prompt critical thinking in students. However, it might not lead students to question the problem with forced assimilation, as took place at the Carlisle Indian Boarding School, for example, because the text remains relatively vague on the process by which students were remade into assimilated beings.

The politics of such questions are never far away, and the potential to skew towards upholding White glory and justification of violence continues in this textbook. A few pages later, there is a passage asking students to:

Explore the context: In 1864, tensions in Colorado were high between miners entering the territory and the Cheyenne and Arapaho groups already there. Native Americans raided the settlers’ wagon trains and ranches, burning homes and killing an estimated 200 settlers. The governors persuaded the Native Americans to surrender. (Appleby et al. 2019a: 50)

Again, the fact of the raid may be true, but the language makes Native American violence sound far worse, whereas Whites were only “entering the territory” (Appleby et al. 2019b: 50). In fact, as miners, those settlers were looking for land to dig up, water sources to re-route to mining, which would result in environmental contamination and many other impacts that would undermine Native livelihood.

In a final example regarding Native American representation in the *United States History and Geography Inquiry Journal*, under the heading “Termination of Federal Supervision over Certain Groups of Indians” the authors ask readers: “How did this policy aim to assimilate Native Americans into society? Cite evidence from the text. How did this policy change the lives of Native Americans? In your opinion, was assimilation a good idea at the time?” (Appleby et al. 2019a: 334–5). While the first two



questions seem to promote important historical research skills drawing on critical thinking, the last question seems dangerous. What are students basing their opinion of assimilation on? There is so little perspective from Native Americans in this book that, though students have the authors' multiple perspectives to draw on, they have few testimonials to help them reason with whom assimilation was good for, and for whom it was not.

In a way, the question becomes an apologist's inquiry. Students have been given a text rooted in Whiteness, in which Whiteness has been the mission and the vision of the country whose history they are learning. Then they are asked whether it is good to try to assimilate into this social hierarchy; an open-ended question that will lead many students to see the benefits of assimilation rather than to question its detriments, which would be more visible in a book such as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*, where the negative impacts of assimilation on Indigenous people are frankly discussed throughout the book.

**Mexico and im/migrant representation in *United States History and Geography Inquiry Journal*:** Unsurprisingly, many of the same issues that make *United States History and Geography*'s treatment of Native American representation questionable have the same effect on representation of Mexico and im/migrant-origin people. In discussing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the authors display the same open-ended question format, here asking the "Essential question: How should societies settle disputes?" (Appleby et al. 2019a: 40). Asking students to analyze the post-1848 US conquest of Mexican territory, the authors write, "In your opinion, were the treaty's attempts to protect the rights of Mexicans currently living in the newly acquired land enough?" (Appleby et al. 2019a: 41).

Bringing the historical issue into the present, the authors then write, "Mexico is a border country and close ally of the United States. How would you describe how our relationship has evolved since the time of the treaty?" (Appleby et al. 2019a: 41). This last question is enormous and spans 170 years of colonization, immigration policy, and xenophobia, so it is hard to imagine that a high school student would be able to properly understand this question in a chapter that provides almost no context for contemporary US-Mexican relations.

A certain amount of context pertaining to immigration is provided about 150 pages later. In a section urging readers to take action in regard to citizenship, they write:

The cultural identity of the United States continues to shift and change today, in large part through immigration. The issues surrounding immigration are just as important and relevant today as they were in the 1920s. Throughout this chapter you read and learned about aspects of isolationism and nativism, the belief that one's native land needs to be protected from immigrants. Think about the incredible diversity of the US today and the different attitudes toward immigration in our society. Research some of the difficulties and successes of immigration policy. Using your information, initiate an informed conversation with your peers about immigration policy in the US today. Being aware and able to discuss current issues will help you to meaningfully engage in and improve your community. (Appleby et al. 2019a: 196)

This call to critical thinking and action is very progressive compared to other teacher's editions or study companion books I reviewed in this project. At the same time, the authors still use labels like "Wave of Immigration" that repeats old tropes about floods of immigrants (Appleby et al. 2019a: 498).

Other questions that address Mexican American issues squeeze too many marginalized groups into one question to allow for meaningful responses. For example, in the "Overview of Mexican-American Education," the "Essential question" is "How has society changed for students, women, LGBTQ activists, and Latinos?" (Appleby et al. 2019a: 424). Combining marginalized groups is sometimes a way of looking for lines of solidarity across them. Other times, it is a way to spend the least amount of time and cover the widest array of groups possible, which does no favors to the groups covered this way.

In sum, the *United States History and Geography* textbook and its associated *Inquiry Journal* prompts critical thinking for students while still invoking some of the same problematic labels and framing of themes that do not support Native American and Mexican American equitable representation. But the *Inquiry Journal* does push students to consider the "Essential questions" that could guide the rest of the course of study: "Why do some people fail to respond to injustice while others try to prevent injustice?" (Appleby et al. 2019a: 260). At least asking the question might get readers to contemplate which response they choose.

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