The New Politics of the Textbook: Critical Analysis in the Core Content Areas

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In an era when corporate and political leaders are using their power to control every aspect of the schooling process in North America, there has been surprisingly little research on the impact of textbook content on students. The contributors of this volume and its partner (The New Politics of the Textbook: Problematizing the Portrayal of Marginalized Groups in Textbooks) guide educators, school administrators, academics, and other concerned citizens to unpack the political, social, and cultural influences inherent in the textbooks of core content areas such as math, science, English, and social science. They urge readers to reconsider the role textbooks play in the creation of students’ political, social, and moral development and in perpetuating asymmetrical social and economic relationships, where social actors are bestowed unearned privileges and entitlements based upon their race, gender, sexuality, class, religion and linguistic background. Finally, they suggest ways to resist the hegemony of those texts through critical analyses, critical questioning, and critical pedagogies.
CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE: CURRICULUM STUDIES
IN ACTION

Volume 2

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Scope

“Curriculum” is an expansive term; it encompasses vast aspects of teaching and learning. Curriculum can be defined as broadly as, “The content of schooling in all its forms” (English, p. 4), and as narrowly as a lesson plan. Complicating matters is the fact that curricula are often organized to fit particular time frames. The incompatible and overlapping notions that curriculum involves everything that is taught and learned in a particular setting and that this learning occurs in a limited time frame reveal the nuanced complexities of curriculum studies.

“Constructing Knowledge” provides a forum for systematic reflection on the substance (subject matter, courses, programs of study), purposes, and practices used for bringing about learning in educational settings. Of concern are such fundamental issues as: What should be studied? Why? By whom? In what ways? And in what settings? Reflection upon such issues involves an inter-play among the major components of education: subject matter, learning, teaching, and the larger social, political, and economic contexts, as well as the immediate instructional situation. Historical and autobiographical analyses are central in understanding the contemporary realities of schooling and envisioning how to (re)shape schools to meet the intellectual and social needs of all societal members. Curriculum is a social construction that results from a set of decisions; it is written and enacted and both facets undergo constant change as contexts evolve.

This series aims to extend the professional conversation about curriculum in contemporary educational settings. Curriculum is a designed experience intended to promote learning. Because it is socially constructed, curriculum is subject to all the pressures and complications of the diverse communities that comprise schools and other social contexts in which citizens gain self-understanding.
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Textbooks have always been a major force standardizing the curriculum and shaping the work of teachers. At the turn of the 20th Century the prevailing view was that good textbooks were the basis of good teaching and the good textbook, in order to be published, prudently followed the guidance of the academic scholars. Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., a preeminent American historian at the time, put it this way: “whether we like it or not, the textbook not the teacher teaches the course.”

In the 1930s, Bagley found that American students spent a significant portion of their school day in formal mastery of text materials. Research in the 1970s found 78% of what fifth-grade students studied came from textbooks and that textbooks and related materials were the basis for 90% of instructional time in schools.

In his analysis of the history of curriculum centralization, Schubert (1991) points to 1958 as a key turning point in educational policy-making. That year the National Defense Education Act helped to import disciplinary specialists to design curriculum packages for schools. In the social studies these curriculum innovations were collectively called the New Social Studies. The purpose of the New Social Studies was to “capture the main ideas and current approaches to knowledge represented by the academic disciplines.” These curriculum projects focused on inquiry methods and the “structure of the disciplines” approach. Although social studies specialists helped in the development of New Social Studies materials, the curricular focus was on the academic disciplines. These materials were not “teacher proof,” but they are exemplars of teachers-as-curriculum-conduit thinking (Ross, 1994). Developers, who were primarily experts in academic disciplines, viewed teachers as implementers not active partners in the creation of classroom curriculum. Strategies for promoting the New Social Studies as well as other subject matter projects from this era, focused on preparing teachers to faithfully implement the developers’ curricular ideas. For example, schools could not adopt and use the project Man: A Course of Study unless teachers were specially trained.

While the development and dissemination of the curriculum projects in the sixties were well funded, they failed to make a major impact on classroom practices. Some have argued that the “failure” of the projects is attributable to technical problems, such as inadequate training of teachers to use the packages or lack of formative evaluation. In contrast, proponent of grassroots democracy in curriculum offered the explanation that the failure was due to the blatant disregard of teachers and students in curriculum decision making. This is especially ironic inasmuch as those who promoted inquiry methods with the young neglected to allow inquiry by teachers and students about matters most
It is clear that in the past forty years support for educational reform from industry, private foundations, as well as the federal government has produced a more capitalistic, less educator-oriented, and ultimately less democratic network of curriculum policy makers (Kesson & Ross, 2004; Mathison & Ross, 2008; Vinson & Ross, 2004).

In the 1990s states produced curriculum frameworks or standards that were accompanied by mandated standardized tests that insured the “alignment” of classroom practices with state standards (and simultaneously eroded the professional purview of teachers). Regents Examinations in New York State are one of the oldest examples of this approach. And, The No Child Left Behind Act, and Obama’s Race To The Top program, have now enshrined test-driven curriculum across the US. These curriculum standards are intended to influence textbook publishers and establish the means by which students, teachers, schools, and ultimately the curriculum will be controlled and assessed. The creation of state curriculum standards represented a major step toward state control of what (and whose) knowledge is considered of most worth (Gabbard & Ross, 2008; Mathison & Ross, 2008; Ross, 1992). Although states deny that these standards amount to “curriculum,” their practical effects are the equivalent. This is particularly true when curriculum standards, textbooks, and high-stakes tests are aligned.

For the past two decades, standards-based education reform reform has been focused on the deployment of bureaucratic outcomes-based accountability systems in schools, which rely on a regimented curriculum enforced via a regime of high stakes testing. It is clear that government-driven curriculum centralization efforts (supported by every Presidential administration from George H. W. Bush to Obama) have successfully transformed the official curriculum in every content area. The curriculum standards movement is a massive effort at curriculum regimentation and the de-skilling of teachers. Initially lead by state governors and corporate CEOs, the standards-based curriculum movement is a rationalized managerial approach to issues of curriculum development and teaching that attempts to define curricular goals, design assessment tasks based on these goals, set standards for the content of subject matter areas and grade level, and test students and report the results to the public (Ross, 2001). This “accountability movement” has culminated in what is known as the Common Core State Standards initiative, which was adopted by 45 states and a number of US territories in 2010-2011. (Texas and Alaska are the only states that are not members of the initiative and Virginia is the only state that has decided not to adopt the CCSS).

Many states adopt textbooks on a statewide basis and three large “adoption states” (California, Florida, and Texas) exert an enormous influence on the content of textbooks used nationwide. The textbook industry is highly competitive and the industry is dominated by a very small number of large corporations; as a result, textbooks companies modify their products to qualify for adoption in one of these states, which will be must simpler with the Common Core Standards.
the values and politics of adoption committees in those states influence curriculum nationally.

In attempting to reach the widest range of purchasers, textbook publishers promote values (overtly and covertly) that maintain social and economic hierarchies and relationships supported by the dominant socioeconomic class (Anyon, 1979; Apple, 1986; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). James W. Loewen (1995) illustrates this at length in his analysis of US history textbooks. For example, in a discussion of how history textbooks make white racism invisible, he notes:

Although textbook authors no longer sugarcoat how slavery affected African Americans, they minimize white complicity in it. They present slavery virtually as uncaused, a tragedy, rather than a wrong perpetrated by some people on others … Like their treatment of slavery, textbooks' new view of Reconstruction represents a sea change, past due, much closer to what the original sources for the period reveal, and much less dominated by white supremacy. However, in the way the textbooks structure their discussion, most of them inadvertently still take a white supremacist viewpoint. Their rhetoric makes African Americans rather that whites the "problem" and assumes that the major issue of Reconstruction was how to integrate African Americans into the system, economically and politically … The archetype of African Americans as dependent on others begins … in textbook treatments of Reconstruction … In reality, white violence, not black ignorance, was the key problem during Reconstruction. (Loewen, 1995, p. 151).

A primary tension in curriculum reform efforts, today and historically, is between centralized and grassroots decision-making. When there are multiple participants and competing interests in the curriculum making process, the questions arises, where does control reside? The standards-based curriculum movement represents an effort by policy elites to standardize the content and much of the practice of education, with textbooks and tests as major tools. Operationally, curriculum standards are anti-democratic because they severely restrict the legitimate role of teachers and other educational professionals, as well as members of the public, from participating in the conversation about the origin, nature and ethics of knowledge that is part of the enacted curriculum.

In recent years, resistance to the standards-based education reform movement has been primarily focused on effects of high-stakes testing. There have been few academic studies of the role of the textbook in recent years; it has not been since the early-1990s that the role of textbooks in the regimentation of the curriculum has received serious and sustained scholarly attention (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). Thus, with this book, Heather Hickman and Brad Porfilio are filling a substantial gap in our understanding of how textbooks are being used in new political times to define what (and whose) knowledge is considered of most worth and in addition, this book illustrates why and how teachers, students, and local communities resist the ruling ideas embedded in corporate-produced, state-enforced official curriculum.
REFERENCES


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INTRODUCTION

Long before the publishing of Apple and Christian-Smith’s *The Politics of the Textbook* (1991), scholars were analyzing the content of materials presented to students in schools. Educational history is ripe with reform efforts like Progressivism and the life adjustment curriculum that attempt to mitigate the traditional content of course materials and their disconnect in relation to students’ realities. The literature also shows focused studies of textbook content. Today, even satirists are in on the critique of textbooks. Jon Stewart’s publication of *America (The Book): A Citizen’s Guide to Democracy Inaction* (2004) and *Earth (The Book): A Visitor’s Guide to the Human Race* (2010) satirize not only the structure of the textbook (resembling textbooks with their “This Book is the Property of Stamps” in the front cover and end of chapter activities and questions), but also the content of those books. In *Earth*, Stewart et al explain to their alien audience, “the best school textbooks kept up with the latest developments in science in order to deny them” (Stewart et al., 2010, p. 69). While this is a clear swipe at teaching creationism or intelligent design within a science curriculum, it also demonstrates a sharp criticism of the politically influenced content of textbooks in general.

What made Apple and Christian-Smith’s work different, and therefore seminal, was its authors’ attention to doing critical analyses of the content in relation to the political climate of the time. Coming off two decades of civil rights changes for African Americans, Mexican Americans, women, and students with disabilities (among others), educational researchers were beginning to consider how textbooks reinforced the political status quo. They were asking more than “Spencer’s famous question about ‘What knowledge is of most worth’”; they were asking, “Whose knowledge is of most worth” (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991, p. 1).

In 1991, Apple and Christian-Smith recognized that “the centralization of authority over teaching and curriculum, often cleverly disguised as ‘democratic’ reforms,” were on the horizon (p. 2). Today, with the Common Core Standards adopted by 44 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands, that centralizing authority has arrived (as of October of 2011 per corestandards.org). In addition to “what knowledge” being decided on a more centralized scale, “whose knowledge” has also been centralized. Since 1991, the number of textbook publishers has shrunk significantly as companies consolidated. One major company is Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, which is comprised of not only Houghton Mifflin and Harcourt, but also Holt, and McDougal. Although the final standards were only released in June 2010, this major textbook company already has textbooks out for every grade that allege to address “all key points of the Common Core Standards” (from Houghton Mifflin
Harcourt’s website: www.hmheducation.com/sites/na/programs/language-arts/). This feat and this claim are not unique to Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Sadly, since 1991, there has been little research on the impact of textbook content on students (Sedgwick, 1985; Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Frederickson, 2004; Woodrow, 2007). What research has been conducted remains unconnected to other recent studies. For example, Woodrow’s work (2007) considers culture as reflected in middle school science textbooks while Frederickson (2004) examines gender in history textbooks. Individually, these studies suggest the types of “othering” found in textbooks. Bringing these and other studies together in this volume will paint a more clear and accurate view of the impact of politics and commercialism on textbooks and students.

Given the new age of testing ushered in by No Child Left Behind, the corporate dominance over textbook production inside and outside of US, and the US’s quest for cultural and economic dominance since 9/11(Chomsky, 2003) it is important to examine the materials used with children in schools for the messages both explicit and implicit in the content.

For example, the decision by the Texas State Board of Education to “water down the teaching of the civil rights movement, slavery, [and] American’s relationship with the U.N.” (Castro, 2010) is one example of the conservative attitudes impacting curricula. Not coincidently, textbook manufactures and White elite citizens were behind the attempt to propagate lies about the nature of the US society and to further narrow what students learn from textbooks. These groups support their own economic and social dominance when they stymie teachers from reflecting upon what groups enjoy unearned privileges and entitlements due to the institutional arrangements that have been in place in the US for over 400 years. Further, they position teachers to view textbooks as rarified forms of knowledge that not only should never be questioned, but also must be at the center of their instruction, where students continually regurgitate this information to pass a battery of high-stakes examinations and come to believe social and economic inequalities are individual rather than social and economic phenomena. In a similarly narrow move, the Arizona State Legislature passed HB 2281, which prohibits a school district or charter school from including in its program of instruction any courses or classes that: promote the overthrow of the United States government; promote resentment toward a race or class of people; are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group; [or] advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of people as individuals (Arizona H.R., 2010, HB 2281).

This bill limits the availability of classes that might challenge the dominant Western narrative and examine the inherent privileges associated with that narrative.

In each instance described above, states are controlling the content of what students learn in school. In each instance there are clear political and social dimensions to the decisions. This volume will consider how these and other social forces impact the production and reception textbooks.
What does this mean for textbooks, students, teachers, education, and society as a whole? The authors of this volume and its partner (*The New Politics of the Textbook: Problematizing the Portrayal of Marginalized Groups in Textbooks*) suggest that all of this centralization requires even more vigilance on the part of educators and researchers to expose political, social, and cultural influences inherent in the textbooks of core content areas such as math, science, English, and social science. More importantly, they suggest ways to resist the hegemony of those texts through critical analyses, critical questioning, and critical pedagogies.

This volume is broken into four sections. Part I: Political, Social, and Cultural Influence, includes four chapters from scholars practicing around the globe. The first of these chapters is a look at how teachers view textbook prominence in Cyprus, Greece. It demonstrates the interesting phenomena of novice teachers who do not question the assumption that “pedagogical autonomy” can be equated to “arbitrariness,” and it reflects the shift in this view over time. In her conclusion, Koutselini succinctly notes that through the action research it became evident that “the best way to escape from an alienating environment,” such as one created from self-alienating views, “is to identify the mechanisms of alienation and the consequences of one’s powerlessness.” The second chapter in this section examines the textbook adoption process and how it marginalizes non-dominant groups through contradiction, participation restrictions, and other subtle mechanisms. Using Critical Race Theory and democratic participation theories, the authors address the existing process in order to propose changes. The third chapter, “The Ruling Ideas of the Textbook,” draws connections among the corporate elite who profit (financially and otherwise) from marketing educational material that shapes “the way we think about the role of government and the relationship between the affluent class and the rest of society,” the K-12 teachers’ practices in relation to this material, and the US university system. More specifically, the author “posits that an educational industrial complex of test and curriculum publishers, software and technology companies, and entities that market professional development and other reform assistance, share values and interests with other business and educational leaders who advance an ideology of education rationalized by a mechanistic/structural theory of action.” Finally, Lenoir and Jean have included a unique chapter that discusses a study of the competency-based approach to educational reform in Cameroon, Gabon, Mali, Senegal, and Tunisia. This work has strong implications for the ongoing project of critical textbook analysis in the US and around the world as it interprets data from both a teaching and learning standpoint and one related to social analysis. This later level of analysis demonstrates the critical link between textbook production and social reproduction to the benefit of those with power or supremacy.

The second part of this volume looks carefully at math and science education. The first of these five chapters is an autoenthnographic study that considers mathematics as it not only builds “algorithmic or procedural” fluency but does so toward the end of preparing students “for critical participation in society.” Among other important findings, the authors present the “Critical Mathematics Narrative,” which combines a critical lens with a fallibilist lens to generate knowledge.
authors of the second chapter are teacher educators who are aware of the challenges facing teachers today. As teachers are pulled in different directions, it can become a survival technique to rely on textbooks. The authors offer an “analysis of the influence of textbooks” on teachers’ pedagogy and student learning. In addition to this, the authors provide alternatives for teachers who find corporate produced curricula too limiting for their students’ needs in a critical society. Love’s chapter follows and takes the strong stand that an uncritical approach to science “is responsible for hyper-consumerism that has lead to global destruction of ecology.” This assertion is substantiated by a textbook analysis done through an ecojustice frame. While the author does not discount the benefits of a positivist lens in science, he asks readers to acknowledge its limits. After a series of vignettes from textbooks interwoven with a history of scientific thought, the author ponders the possibility of changing the pedagogical paradigm to one that asks students to be “solutionaries” who “critically examine the world in which they live and act to create change.” Following this is a chapter that examines the disparate treatment and presentation of mathematics terminology across textbook publishers of middle grades’ textbook series and the implications of this on teaching and learning. For example, the authors discuss the potential for students to “find themselves outsiders to other discourse communities within the discipline of mathematics” if their understanding of a mathematical term like sequence is not use precisely. From a critical perspective, the authors argue that ambiguous and uncritical use of language denies students the ability to apply the concepts among “discourse communit[ies]” in their education and beyond. Finally, Nichols’ chapter presents the educational framework of earth smarts, “a form of socioecological literacy … based on justly maintaining or improving quality of life” as a tool for critically examining textbook content. This framework is selected to highlight what the authors considers the truism that that there is “no sustainable social justice without [ecological] sustainability.” The chapter describes the components of earth smarts and applies it to not only math and science curricula, but also to other disciplines.

Section three of this volume considers English and the language arts in education. The central premise of the first chapter is that writing programs resultant from mandated testing and corporate curriculum guides silence students and teachers. This is supported through first person account of a long time teacher and scholar. The author does not suggest that critical pedagogues wash their hands of these mandates; instead, we are called upon to “eradicate such systems” while we also “integrate preparing students for these bureaucratic realities in ways that confront them instead of abdicating authority to them.” To that end, the author enumerates many suggestions for challenging the status quo in the teaching of writing. Following this chapter is a critical policy analysis of how ELA content that was once determined by professionals in the classroom has become prescribed and diluted by corporate ideology. Despite longstanding conservative opposition to a national curriculum, a confluence of factors have resulted in corporations producing textbooks that become the curricula and, therefore, a de facto national curriculum. While the author acknowledges that theses packaged curricula “contain
good content” and are created by individuals with “a vested interest and a personal
stake in seeing public school students succeed,” the chapter reminds readers that
despite this, the managed curricula really just enforce “homogeneity and control.”
The author concludes by discussing teachers who choose to work within the system
to teach students to deconstruct text and locate issues of power within. The third
chapter in this section uses a chronology of education reform in California to
highlight the ways in which scripted curricula depprofessionalize teaching and limit
student literacy growth. The rise of scripted programs and their effects on student
achievement are discussed as well as the role of teacher within such environments.
Although it is noted that novice teachers and those who transfer to lower grades
from upper elementary may find use in these programs, their overall mandated use
is contraindicated. The final chapter considering ELA takes a unique perspective
by looking at texts dominant in the past and considering their purpose to “preserve
our emerging republic.” This historic perspective demonstrates the inherently
political and marginalizing nature of these texts and provides a history of American
education through the lens of its texts. While this context may prove the entrenched
hegemonic influence of textbooks, the author also notes how the lessons learned
provide guidance for a “hopeful future.”

The final section of this volume includes five chapters that examine aspects of
social studies and humanities education. First in this section is a chapter that
includes a clear call to action for inservice teachers to examine their texts and bring
the gaps to the surface in the classroom to add a layer of critical discourse to the
social studies curriculum. This call comes following an analysis of the “historical
bias as gleaned through the insights of preservice and in-service educators,” which
reveals, through teacher and student voice, that texts continue to present
incomplete views of history. Next, Sibii considers the national identity of Romania
presented in history textbooks through a critical lens. Specifically, it challenges
hegemonic narratives that suggest that identity is singular and fixed, which is a
notion that transcends boundaries. The chapter includes a narrative personal
account of identity and then uses critical discourse analysis to analyze textbook
content for the ways in which it (among other things) categorizes identity. In its
conclusion, the chapter puts forth specific recommendations for those who author
history textbooks. The third chapter is unique among considerations of history
textbooks as it focuses specifically on the construction of the presidency. As
textbook companies meet the demands of individual state standards and publish
state-specific texts, the place of the president in these texts shifts. This chapter
considers the implications of the presidential place in state history textbooks and
offers suggestions for various audiences to “neutralize the biases and inaccuracies.”
A teacher’s use of alternatives to textbooks is presented in the fourth chapter of this
section. Many studies of textbooks offer suggestions to teachers to challenge the
dominant discourse of the publishers and supplement with critical alternatives to
the textbooks, and the authors of this chapter have done just this and examine the
impact of those textbook alternatives. After a review of the literature related to
history textbooks, the authors discuss the results of a survey and student interviews
that reveal how supplemental materials alter student understanding of history. The
final chapter in this section and in the volume does what none of the other chapters in this volume does, which is examines the examinations associated with textbook content. As the author points out, “the chapters in this book build on a substantial literature that looks critically at the content and uses of textbooks.” This chapter, however, goes beyond the content of the textbooks to the tests. In particular, the author argues that tests, like textbooks, reify particular ideologies.

These sections on their own and combined with those in the partner to this book highlight the continued power of textbooks and related products to shape social views, perpetuate power in dominant groups, demonize or trivialize social groups who are oppressed on the structural axes of race, class, gender, sexuality and (dis)ability, and regulate student thought and behavior. Acknowledging that knowing is not enough, contributors make sense of the political, social, moral, and economic dimensions of textbooks and share ways in which they have (and others can) disrupt this power.

As Apple (2006) notes in *Educating the “Right” Way: Markets, Standards, God, and Inequality*, “in the absence of an overt national curriculum, the commercially produced textbook … remains the dominant definition of the curriculum in the United States” (2006, p. 46). For this reason, textbooks must be reconsidered for the role they play in the creation of students’ political, social, and moral development and in perpetuating asymmetrical social and economic relationships, where social actors are bestowed unearned privileges and entitlements based upon their race, gender, sexuality, class, and religious and linguistic background. Contributors to this and the partner volume move this knowledge to praxis by suggesting how teacher education can reduce the alienating power of the textbooks and how content-area teachers can transform their textbook driven curricula to be critical and transformative despite the textbook’s content.

This volume and its partner have implications for a wide audience. First, it will be appealing to students and educators in colleges of education. Specifically, pre-service teachers and their educators can use this book to facilitate discussion of course content selection and analysis. Further, students and professors in the areas of educational leadership and curriculum and instruction can use this text to consider policy regarding texts and the political implications of choices. School administrators are another audience for this text. Administrators can refer to the volume as a guide when considering textbook adoptions. Likewise, state and local policy makers may find this volume useful when creating policy for textbook adoption and use at the state or district levels.

We hope that you find this book valuable as you take steps to challenge the dominance in the textbooks that you encounter.

*Respectfully,*

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*Brad J. Porfilio, PhD*
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POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE
MARY KOUTSELINI

TEXTBOOKS AS MECHANISMS FOR TEACHERS’
SOCIOPOLITICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL
ALIENATION

For whom do we write textbooks? What is their relationship to curricula? What is
their value for teaching? Whose culture do they present? Do they facilitate teaching
and learning? Do they empower or deskill teachers? What are the politics of
textbooks and what are the roles of teachers? Are teachers the passive medium
between writers and students? Whom do writers represent? What is the relationship
between the official knowledge, the dominant culture, and the textbooks’ content?
Does the replacement of textbooks really mean a change of power holders?

These are the questions addressed at the first meeting of the course “EDU612:
Writing and Evaluation of Textbooks” of the postgraduate program “Curriculum
and Instruction” in the University of Cyprus.

Though the value of textbooks has been disputed (Apple, 1995), they continue
to have a protagonist role in the classroom and on students’ learning. Textbooks
have replaced curricula in various contexts and teachers’ preparation for teaching;
they have downgraded students’ autonomous learning and annihilated teachers’
political sensitivities.

Although in different contexts textbooks play a different role and have different
uses, it is not difficult to point out common negative side effects when teachers rely
on them. Beyond the usually overloaded content of textbooks that forces teachers
to run for covering the content instead of caring about students’ learning, one can
refer to the fact that textbooks in the everyday classroom interaction have replaced
curricula and have become a bad translation of them, a translation that is always
worse than the original; they are used as “holy books” by teachers and parents and
ask students to memorize interpretations and views that, at least in the textbooks of
social sciences, are presented as “facts” and “information.” Replacement of
curricula by textbooks means viewing the teaching process as delivery of a final
product, ready-made in the content of the textbooks, which must be delivered by
teachers and memorized by students.

Moreover, this unquestioned use of textbooks contributes to the unquestioned
preservation of the social, economic and political status quo, and it prevents
teachers’ involvement in changing the monolithic educational agenda. The stable
and leading presence of textbooks in the educational system can be interpreted by
teachers’ supporting attitudes and also by the stakeholders’ lack of confidence in

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the Core Content Areas, 3–16.
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the fulfilment of curricular aims and objectives if they have not been implemented as pages of books.

In Cyprus, the situation is exacerbated because of the content-oriented curricula and the fact that curricula have been totally replaced by one textbook for each subject area. Primary and secondary education teachers have as their primary concern to “cover the content” of the textbook, a concern that promotes the view that teaching means a delivery of the content. The epistemological side effects of such an approach and understanding are obvious: Students’ needs and dispositions are not taken into account, and the lack of communication between teachers and students becomes larger from year to year of schooling. Moreover, in Cyprus, the production of textbooks has been centralized, with the majority of textbooks being imported from Greece and others are written by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Centralization of the textbooks used in public schools in Cyprus prevents teachers, students, and parents from becoming aware of other perspectives and views, a fact that contributes to the unquestioned acceptance of textbooks’ content.

Nevertheless, the debate about the cultural and political role of textbooks has recently been rekindled because of the 2008 attempt in Greece to replace the history textbooks. In Cyprus, the public dialogue on textbooks and their role has been intensified in the last three years after the commencement of the 2000 educational reform, which has been welcomed by all of the political parties and is now realized by the new government with a leftist president. The reform includes the development of new curricula and the writing of new textbooks. The debate over the curricula and textbooks of history reveals the cultural and political expectations that all political parties and citizens have on the teaching of history. The right-wing parties interpret the replacement of textbooks as an attempt from the Ministry of Education to promote the communist ideology and cut off the strong historical and cultural relationship between Greece and Cyprus, whereas leftists declare their intention to write books that can cultivate attitudes of re-approach between Cypriot-Greeks and Cypriot-Turks.

The re-approach politics has been inserted in the Cyprus political agenda after the 1974 Turkish invasion and the military occupation of north Cyprus, which continues today. Re-approach is both an attempt to reach an agreement with Turkish-Cypriots and a strategy for mutual understanding of the different cultures of the two communities. An ineffective attempt was also made by the so-called neo-Cyprian Association, established immediately after the invasion, to interpret the re-approach policy as a process for establishing a new neo-Cyprian identity, common for Turkish- and Greek-Cypriots.

The main aim of this chapter is to present the results of an action research study with 25 primary and secondary school teachers enrolled in the postgraduate course “Seminar on Textbooks’ Writing and Evaluation” during the academic year 2010–2011 and understand how novice teachers’ views of curricular purposes and dominance change over time. The aim of the action research was twofold: first, to develop participants’ awareness and sensitivity about the textbooks’ pedagogical,
political and cultural functions; and, second, to support teachers’ change of attitudes, understanding, and use of textbooks.

ACTION RESEARCH AS A META-MODERN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Although it did not establish action research, critical pedagogy, especially its emphasis on the improvement of social conditions through participation and awareness building, has had a profound influence on the embracement of this form of research by critical pedagogues (i.e., Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2010; Freire, 1972). Action research as a process of teaching and learning in a meaningful environment facilitates teachers’ self-understanding and supports the generating of new knowledge, which can in turn raise awareness about deficiencies, imposed limits, and boundaries. In this context, the assumption underlying educational action research is that teachers are trapped in prescribed everyday routines without realizing that they have been alienated from their pedagogical role to decide ad hoc about their teaching in a way that respects the needs of the specific students in their classrooms. Moreover, the assumption is that alienation from their pedagogical role has indirect side effects to their political and cultural participation. Thus, action research aims at enhancing participants’ self-awareness about their own attitudes, beliefs, and actions (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). The heuristic, cyclic, and collaborative investigation taking place during action research motivates participants’ souls and minds, allowing for change to happen in their understanding and attitudes. This approach contradicts the modern paradigm of teachers’ training in which teachers attend courses by experts in the field who impose their wisdom, which can later be transferred by the audience to the classrooms. The action research meta-modern paradigm (Carr & Kemmis, 2010; Koutselini, 2008) is based on self-development processes, in which experts and teachers participate as researchers and learn from their experiences. A meaningful environment involves action, reflection on the action, and new action that is composed of new knowledge and understanding (Koutselini, 2010).

During the semester, all participants, tutors, and teachers had 12 meetings that led to gradual self development and understanding. Situated learning, collaboration in small groups, and reflection in both groups and diaries supported participants’ meaning-making and understanding in a nonlinear process of concept and attitude building, reconstruction, and rebuilding.

THE THREE CYCLES

The First Cycle (Three Meetings): Dispute and Hesitation

In the first meeting, all participants individually answered the questions presented at the beginning of this chapter, thus expressing their views concerning the use of textbooks and their role. Participants were advised to keep their answers written and unchanged in their notebooks and use them during the discussion in the plenary session. They were also informed that the discussion had not been
predetermined and that there were not any correct or wrong answers or thoughts, but different views that should be presented.

It was not surprising that the participants did not like the open environment and especially the fact that the instructor had no intention to give them the “correct” answer for the questions (Koutselini, 2008). When the idea of teaching without using the single textbook provided by the Ministry of Education had been expressed, the majority of teachers, especially teachers with more teaching experience, responded negatively. They started to murmur, complaining between them, and when they were encouraged to express their hesitations aloud, they expressed ideas about value, reliability, and ease for teachers saying,

“We must value the support given by the textbooks.”

“How much more difficult is it to teach without books?”

“How do we know that the books we read from are reliable?”

Secondary school teachers supported the view that “textbooks are necessary for students’ learning at home.”

After the first meeting, teachers were asked to reflect on the way they use textbooks and to record their observations and thoughts in their diaries. The second, third and fourth meetings were scheduled for discussion and reflection on selected extracts from scientific articles with the cultural, political, and pedagogical functions of textbooks as their main ideas. The discussion of these extracts in small groups gave them the opportunity to exchange ideas without the restriction of the reactions of a big audience. The groups were formed randomly in order to bring together people who had never collaborated in the past and could express divergent ideas. All groups needed some time for trust building among the members of the group, and at the beginning the participants seemed very reluctant to express ideas and objections. The discussion in three groups (five members each) revealed two different and antagonistic views: The one view expressed “second thoughts about the restrictions imposed on teachers by the textbook writers” and the “control of heterogeneity” in the teaching and viewing of social events; the other view was in support that “homogeneity in teaching ensures that at least all teachers maintain the standards” and that “it is difficult for teachers to search all the time for new material and assignments for each lesson. They completed this view by saying that centralization and homogeneity of textbooks and materials safeguarded textbooks” pedagogical and scientific appropriateness. They also argued that parents could not trust the school and teachers to decide about what and how their children are going to learn.

Moreover, teachers of the latter view argued that one of the main functions of textbooks must remain cultural transmission, which is something different from the political parties’ varying views. They explicitly referred to the different views of the parties about the Greekness of Cyprus, as well as the different and contrary mottos adopted by the supporters of the left party (the supporters of the neo-Cypriot identity and conscience) and the “conservative patriot Greeks,” who
support that Cyprus culture is indisputably Greek. This debate was recently revived during the public debate of the ongoing educational reform that focused on the question: Does the Education of Cyprus remain Greek? Since 1960 – the Independence of Cyprus – the aim of curricula declared that education in Cyprus is Greek.

Beyond the ideological and cultural roots of teachers’ hesitation about the content of textbooks, the first four meetings revealed two very important issues concerning teaching from textbooks: First, the issue of controlling teachers, and second, the legitimacy of knowledge. Moreover, during the discussion teachers expressed attitudes and dispositions of mistrust towards their ability to act as professionals. In his context, they expressed the view that teachers are not capable of choosing their material and that they are not trusted by parents to do so. Their implicit belief was that they needed to be instructed and also to be controlled not only by the legal authorities, supervisors and the Ministry of Education, but also by parents and other teachers.

Therefore, during the groups and plenary discussion, the teachers disputed their own ability to activate their pedagogical autonomy. Upon analyzing their views, especially through their reflections in the diaries, one can see that not only did they dispute their own ability but also, and centrally, the ability of “other teachers”:

“Is it possible to trust the next door teacher to change the content of the lessons?”

“What are the qualifications of teachers that make them experts in choosing the material?”

They also disputed “the ability of other teachers.” They expressed this view openly by saying the following:

“I would not want to know that the teachers of my own child have the authority to decide what to teach.”

“I cannot imagine that a leftist teacher or a socialist or a rightist would express their political views in the classroom; then teaching becomes propaganda.”

It was obvious that they interpreted pedagogical autonomy as arbitrariness, which could jeopardize the education of their children, and that they could not understand that education always has ideological roots (Apple, 2006).

As it has been argued (Koutrselini, 1997), the case of Cyprus, a state with a long unresolved political-national problem, requires new theoretical insights that will not only account for the clash between different ideologies, but will also explain the domination of a stable and protected educational policy, which can safeguard the survival of the Greek culture and civilization in the island. Turkish invasion and continuous military occupation, along with threats against Cyprus independence and new claims about the existence of Cyprus as a European state, explain why any intention of change to the Cyprus cultural pattern is considered a threat that gives privileges to the Turkish and damages the national tradition of Greek Cypriots.
Taking into account that the educational system, curricula and textbooks are associated with a context embedded in specific time and space, one can interpret why in Cyprus teachers hesitate to trust teachers’ initiatives in choosing textbooks and curricula; the unresolved political problem enhances the power of politicians and political parties, who are considered “responsible” for advocating reforms, curricula and textbooks that ensure national and cultural interests. Moreover, the long lasting control exercised on teachers through the one textbook teaching (a situation established since the 1960 Independence of Cyprus) transforms them to become indecisive human beings that condemn other teachers, who are only the “next-door” persons. It is surprising that the concept of “colleague” was not expressed during any of these meetings.

One meeting was dedicated to reflection and self-reflection on issues concerning autonomy and arbitrariness: What are the limits of autonomy and arbitrariness in the process of choosing material and teaching methods? How can one historical event be presented differently by writers with different ideologies? Teachers were assigned to use the history textbooks, to work in groups and to evaluate–based on their own criteria–the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the existing textbooks.

The surprising fact was that the participants never thought that textbooks receive their legitimacy from the curriculum and that the primary source of what has been agreed to be taught is not textbook but curriculum. They put down scientific and epistemological criteria, as well as pedagogical criteria, such as methods of teaching and activities. No one mentioned the curricular criteria, or the fact that textbooks should conform to curriculum principles, recommendations and syllabus, a situation that could partly explain why teachers hold textbooks as a sort of holy books that contain all the wisdom teachers have chosen to transmit to students’ heads. Also, no one mentioned the political and cultural criteria, a fact that indicates the lack of any awareness of such issues and the role of textbooks as transmitters of political ideas.

The discussion of the issue of cultural and political transmission was very difficult and participants were very hesitant to touch it. To some extent, this hesitation can be understood–as it has been explained above–by the fact that the political problem in Cyprus is still open and that questioning the textbooks and the cultural heritage that they transmit would be interpreted as questioning the Greek ideals and the identity of Greek Cypriots. The question of whether education in Cyprus remains “Greek education” is one typical and regular question addressed to the Minister of Education in the last three years, during the ongoing educational reform. In the final analysis, the investigation of textbooks’ chapters from various political views proved to be a very empowering tool for starting a rewarding discussion on these issues.
The second cycle of action research comprised four meetings and preparation for action at schools. The aim was the construction of self-respect and trust building among teachers, an endeavour that needed to be grounded on experiences of success at schools. Participants were reluctant to undertake action and change the delivery of teaching from textbooks. The easy questions that arose were: “What next? How do we replace textbooks? What do we teach?” Two groups disputed the whole procedure and they addressed questions such as, “Why do we change the textbooks’ content? Why would one make teaching difficult?” Teachers reiterated ideas, which indicate their trust on authenticity, experts, and textbook writers by stating, “The writers and the minister know better.” They also asked, “Who shall evaluate the teachers’ products?”

Reducing external control, willingness to obey the evaluators and the questioning of their own ability to produce legitimate knowledge were the themes that continued. During the plenary session, some teachers proposed, for the first time, for the curriculum to act as a measurement of legitimate changes. Participants started to think about textbooks and teaching in the context of curriculum. Surprisingly, the secondary school teachers stated that there were not any curricula on secondary subject matters, a statement that proved wrong, since the curricula existed, but had been totally replaced by textbooks.

The biggest impediment for teachers’ action at schools was the lack of confidence on the effectiveness of their initiatives, especially because of the “lack of specialization.” Primary school teachers spoke about lack of specialization in relation to content, since primary school teachers in Cyprus are considered able to teach all subjects, without being specialized in any subject matter. On the contrary, secondary school teachers considered themselves specialized in different subject matter areas but adhered to teacher and content-centred teaching, because of the lack of broad pedagogical knowledge. Thus, teachers considered textbooks and readymade knowledge that could be delivered to students as a lifebelt that could cover their deficiencies either on content knowledge or on pedagogy. This is an additional reason for Cyprus teachers’ adherence to textbooks’ teaching.

As a first step for action-taking at schools, participants decided to proceed to the evaluation of the chapters that they were scheduled to teach. They compared history textbooks and curricula to see whether textbooks corresponded to curriculum guidelines and syllabus (curricular criterion). Participants produced and implemented a variety of criteria and shared their understanding and evaluation perspectives during the plenary session: Does the textbook correspond to format criteria concerning color and layout of pages in order to attract students (format criteria)? Do they include activities that can motivate students? Are there any hidden messages promoted through the pictures or the activities and the content? What is the official knowledge presented in the textbooks (political and cultural criteria)? Does the text facilitate reading and comprehension (pedagogical criteria)? All questions were discussed in depth and the discussion in groups provided the
opportunity for students to gain awareness about the multi-level and different functions of textbooks. Participants’ voices indicated their anxiety and concern for the fact that in their final analysis, teachers, textbooks and teaching becomes a mediation of imposing the government’s view in the heads of students:

“What counts as knowledge?”

“Everybody in control changes narration of historical events in the way that supports their ideologies and view.”

“Why must teachers play their political theatre?”

The change in Greece in regard to the primary schools’ history textbook for the 4th grade and the comparison of the different narration of the historical events concerning the Turkish invasion in Cyprus functioned as evidence for the different views when interpreting facts. Importantly, the change of textbooks evidenced especially for the government’s selection of the view projected in the textbooks, a view that serves the governmental, political and social strategies. But the most important part of the participants’ shift is the development of a new perspective concerning official knowledge, cultural transmission, and legitimate knowledge. They admitted that, “History textbooks do not simply present ‘facts’ objectively but from the writers’ perspective, which provides also the interpretation of the facts.” During the plenary session, participants pointed out and discussed “whether teachers become the mediators of the government’s view and to what extent teachers’ different views should be presented in the classroom.” The teachers’ role as “passive receivers and transmitters” was theoretically rejected, but participants admitted that this was finally what they actually did.

One more perspective that enlightened the participants’ understanding concerned the crucial question that they shared during the plenary session: Do textbook content and activities support the needs of all students in mixed ability classrooms?

Extracts from their diaries show how exciting and enlightening the questions about the differentiation of teaching and learning according to the needs of the students have been:

“The most I gained today is the confidence that I can evaluate textbooks with criteria that facilitate learning as I experience them in the classroom.”

“Finally, this is the answer to my question, ‘Why do we need to change teaching for textbooks – the mixed ability classrooms and the textbooks’ inability to correspond to the different needs of students’.”

“I have never thought that I might use inappropriate material to teach. I feel more sensitive to students’ needs and textbooks’ readability and comprehensiveness.”

“Do students in mixed ability classrooms really learn from textbooks and textbook based teaching? Surely teaching should result in learning for each student. But do we really want learning for all students? This is in final analysis, the question. When we
are obliged to teach and deliver the textbooks’ content without having the time to look back, we surely do not expect that all students will learn.”

However, the participants continued to insist on the “principle” that teachers must not present their own views and their ideological disposition. Participants also argued that official knowledge and cultural heritage are not the same, since sometimes political parties with a small percentage of votes become governmental parties with the support of other political powers. They pointed out issues related to William’s (1961) selective tradition and the conflict of interests over curricula and textbooks (Apple, 1990, 1993). They were also given extracts from the book *The Subaltern Speak* (Apple & Buras, 2006), and they gained awareness regarding the “struggles of dominant and subaltern groups to define what counts as knowledge and to appropriate political, economic, cultural, and social resources in a range of educational contexts, both national and international scope” (p. 6).

It was important that participants changed considerably their views and that they supported the view that when governments produce textbooks with their views and ideological interpretations, they circumvent the dominant culture and present as legitimated knowledge what is an artificial “official one.” Questions and issues regarding the dominant culture as oppressing minorities or persons with marginalized social identities and political roles promote discourse on multicultural education and inclusion. It had been recognized that the official aim of Cyprus education includes multicultural education and inclusion, but this remains a rhetoric declaration that has not been realized in praxis, mainly because schools’ classroom provisions and textbooks’ content do not take into account their own different needs.

Participants concluded that responsibility for the nonrealization of multicultural education and inclusion might be shared by textbooks and teachers.

THIRD CYCLE (FOUR MEETINGS): NEW THEORETICAL INSIGHTS AND UNDERSTANDING

At the end of the second cycle of action research, participants were given three scientific articles to read and reflect upon. The concepts of “situated learning” and “school-based decision-making” prevailed in one article whereas the other two were concerned with the political consequences of textbooks’ production and monopoly in teaching.

In the second meeting for this cycle of action, research participants were placed in groups at schools, four persons in each group, two classes in each school, with their previous experience as criterion. At least one participant without any school experience had been assigned in each group. The purpose behind this was to push teachers in real action research by motivating them to take action in order to answer their own questions and construct their philosophy (Elliott, 1983) instead of blindly accepting that “all the others” know better and that imposed central knowledge through textbooks must remain indisputable. Thus, “retrospective understanding” should lead to “prospective action” (Carr & Kemmis, 2010, p. 59).
The aim of this third cycle of action research was to create a trustful situated learning environment for teachers who had to teach children in a multicultural inclusive environment as opposed to teaching from the textbooks. Teachers were encouraged to informally assess students’ learning, students’ difficulties in studying textbooks, and their attitudes towards learning from textbooks. Students’ reactions and responses surprised a number of teachers, as they admitted during the plenary session. They also enjoyed sharing responsibility and decisions at schools that changed the school ethos and their isolation in decision-making and experiences. Selected articles and classroom readings that completed what they had already started to construct as new knowledge enhanced conceptualization of the textbooks’ role.

It is acknowledged that action research cycles and incidents within cycles can support the participants’ understanding of self and their confidence as well as enhance the search for meaning-making in relation to the problem under investigation, but it is also the truth that the construction of knowledge is not totally innate – in the platonic sense of innate ideas that come into light inductively. Teachers’ action and experiences need an interpretive context, which will bind together all ideas derived from action and reflections and transform them to scientific knowledge that remains and empowers teachers and teaching. The knowledge we gained, as participant-researchers, is that when teachers start building their knowledge and give meaning to their experiences, they themselves search for more sources and readings. Thus, the usual complaint from academicians who ask, “Why do students not want to read?” as well as ask, “Why are they reluctant to search for more readings on a topic?” finds an answer: Students want to be responsible for finding readings that answer their own questions and complete their experiences through theory and not vice versa. They are inspired when they build their knowledge inductively, based on context-bound environments and questions, and they enrich their experiences and new knowledge with readings, actions, and new reflections.

Questions and issues concerning legitimization of textbook knowledge and socially tailored curricula (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991) have been in the core of group and plenary discussions during the incidents of action research. From that point of view, participants were not expected to fully theorize the topic under investigation, unless they invested their experiences and reflection with readings and scientific knowledge. It is true that trust and self-confidence is gained when they realize that their interpretation of their experiences is in line with the scientific knowledge in the field.

THE ROUTES TO TEACHERS’ SOCIOPOLITICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL ALIENATION

Alienation in this paper is defined in terms of an individual’s feelings and dispositions towards self, others, and one’s own work. In this context, action research on textbooks’ role and evaluation indicated that textbooks have been the mechanisms of teachers’ sociopolitical and pedagogical alienation, a means of
alienating teachers from their main role, the pedagogical role, that gives them the authority to decide what, how, and when to teach, as well as how to differentiate teaching and learning for students with different needs and backgrounds.

The hidden and powerful routes of alienation estrange teachers from their own community and from the other teachers, who are viewed as next-door persons, and they trap them in blind faith for authority. This situation also has a political dimension, since faith in legitimate knowledge is attributed to the powers of control, “those who know” in contrast with teachers who are not entitled to decide. Thus, a certain group holds all the knowledge, power, and control while all the others, those who do not have the legitimacy to decide, are distrusted. Adherence to textbooks is also a means of annihilation of the concepts of collegiality and situated learning, and, consequently, of all the feelings that empower members of the same community, schools, and social context. The attitude of apathy in relation to student failure is cultivated through the implicit belief that teachers must aim to cover the specific content presented in textbooks, a belief that is grounded on the “easygoing” theory of life. This apathetic stance gradually develops to lifestyle, philosophy, and political attitude, according to which nothing makes a difference, an attitude alienating teachers and citizens from their political, social, and educational involvement and concerns.

It is important to say that the routes of alienation derive from the modern educational view, according to which difference is an exception from the omnipotent rule to which all persons must match. In this system persons are not allowed to have personhood but only the ability to reach the standards of the market, which have been transmitted in the textbooks (Koutselini, 1997, 2006). The modern uniformity in education is the cause of a number of negative side effects: lack of authentic communication between teacher and student; teaching without taking into account the needs of different students; material that is supposed to meet the needs of a non-existing homogeneous classroom; teachers that follow textbooks’ prescriptions of routine teaching procedures and activities; rhetoric about multicultural education for all; and inclusion without discrimination that cannot be transformed to school-based and societal praxis (Nieto, 2000). Within this modern and technocratic paradigm, teachers view themselves as transmitters of textbook knowledge and their students as knowledge consumers, depersonalized and trapped in the replication of uniformity.

A crisis of self-confidence and confidence among teachers was obvious in the participants’ discourse and diary reflections. This situation can be described as self-alienation, since doubting a teacher’s ability to act pedagogically is the same as doubting their own identity. What literature calls self-estrangement and lack of self-realization at work is also present in the teachers’ work at schools when they teach textbooks while neglecting the students’ learning. As Apple (1995, p. 128) has argued, this situation deskills teachers and reduces them to textbook guides. The conviction that teachers are or are called “intellectuals” (Sultana, 2001, p. xv) was not verified in the case of novice teachers of Cyprus, who participated in this study. Teaching from textbooks provided by a central governmental source limited teachers’ authentic and original thought about important educational,
political, and cultural problems; it made them receivers and mediators without the freedom to think and decide on considerations such as what schooling is more appropriate for in developing good citizens and who, in final analysis, achieves true citizenship in the contemporary society.

In the last meeting, participants were asked to answer the questions we posed at the beginning of the course and to compare their answers with those given in the first meeting. It was not surprising that they all said that there was no relation between their first answers and the new ones. Their reflections on the questions in their diaries showed new theoretical insights and a lot of considerations that made them able to not only dispute but also to give alternative answers to their considerations, by taking into account the influence and the conflicting interests of social, economic, and political factors on education (Apple, 1993, 1995).

Concerning the ideological impact on the textbooks’ content of the political party in government, the predominant idea during the closing session was that, when in power, a powerful right-wing or left-wing government tries to impose its own interpretations and beliefs. In Cyprus, Neo-Cypriots promote denationalization of Cypriot culture as a means of their re-approach policy, and right-wing policies try to enhance the national feeling as the only feature that guarantees the survival of Greek civilization under the threat of Turkey. The social aim of providing advantages for the unprivileged is not disputed by any political party; but given the prioritization of the national-political aims, the differences between right-wing and left-wing governments focus on matters of culture and identity. This picture is the one we can trace in the change of textbooks, and especially in the Greek and Cyprus History textbooks.

CONCLUSION

Action research was expected to result in a gradual shift from imposed, unquestionable acceptance of textbook-based teaching and legitimated knowledge to flexible and differentiated learning that associates textbooks and teaching with socioeconomic, political, and cultural issues. A first concluding remark is that participants’ diaries and classroom discussions, along with their action at schools, proved that their participation was rewarding and empowering in terms of new understanding and change of attitudes towards both the abilities and skills of teachers and the use of textbooks through “counter hegemonic practices” (Smyth, 2010, p. 371).

Overall, the best way to escape from an alienating environment is to identify the mechanisms of alienation and the consequences of one’s powerlessness. Teachers in schools do not have the time to consider, look back, and to reflect on their own practices, dispositions and relationships. Action research cycles give teachers the opportunity to subject their own lives to introspection and analysis, reflect on their beliefs and dispositions, and understand why they do not appreciate their role and their colleagues – a process that emancipates and equips them with self awareness and also understanding of the collective power that teachers must have in the
working environment and the society. However, the lack of role models in society makes teachers’ transformation difficult, though not impossible.

Michel Apple in his book *Cultural Politics and Education* (1996) wrote: “Cultural politics in education is not only about the complex issues of what and whose cultural capital becomes official knowledge” but is about “to defend those counter hegemonic forms that now exist or to bring new forms into existence” (p. 21). The Cyprus paradigm taught us that it is difficult to “name the world differently” in an occupied country with long lasting open national-political problems.

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

1. What are the relations between cultural heritage, dominant culture and official knowledge in a multicultural society?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of educational action research for understanding the role of textbooks as mechanisms of alienation?
4. What are the political indirect results of teachers’ pedagogical alienation?
5. What does the Cyprus political paradigm imply about dominant culture and the parties’ priorities?

**REFERENCES**


CURRICULUM defines what counts as valid knowledge (Bates, 2005). As a social product, curriculum and its construction and dissemination (i.e., textbook selection) are strongly influenced by systems of social and cultural control. It is a key vehicle for forming individual attitudes about other groups, and helps shape a student’s fundamental attitudes toward society (Greaney, 2006). As major staples in the curriculum of K-12 schools since the 1900s, textbooks contribute to the production of knowledge. In the U.S., the time students spend using textbooks is estimated at 75 to 90 percent (Ajayi, 2005; Watts-Taffe, 2005; Wiley & Barr, 2007). U.S. secondary school teachers, according to Apple (1991), have been found to devote three-quarters of their classroom time to textbooks, which also make up approximately 90 percent of homework time (Greaney, 2006). As noted in the report A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (1983), individual teachers have little influence in critical professional decisions such as textbook selection. However, teachers can exercise some authority over the curriculum and autonomy by using textbooks and other instructional materials selectively (Doyle, 1992).

Today, 21 states (Florida included) “exert control at the state level for aspects of curriculum regulation such as standard setting, textbook review, and assessment of student learning” and since the advent of the federal policy No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2001), states have assumed “more authority for setting curriculum standards” (Hirsch & Reys, 2009, p. 750). In addition to the role of teachers in how textbooks enter the curriculum, the voices of parents and other local community stakeholders are also worthy of consideration.

While access to textbooks has been identified as one of the most effective ways that schools can raise academic achievement (Greaney, 2006), controversies over their content suggest that their significance extends beyond academics to include politics, ethics, and aesthetics. Curriculum policy concerning the selection of instructional materials engenders and rests on power dynamics that affect the exclusion and inclusion of voices in their production and dissemination. Current policies and pending changes to the process for selecting instructional materials implicate issues of voice and silence in decisions about what students learn. We focus on the participatory opportunities and obstacles facing racial and ethnic groups that are political minorities and generally people of color who historically have been marginalized in U.S. education policy-making decisions affecting them.
(Marsh, 2007). An analysis of documents related to Florida’s textbook adoption process (i.e., rubrics for the evaluation of instructional materials, interest group letters, State Adoption Process Chart, and an online training course on the adoption process) illuminates some of the opportunities and obstacles to their participation. Emphasized is “the importance of policy analysis which explicitly links the ‘bigger picture’ of global and national policy contexts to the ‘smaller pictures’ of policies and practices within schools and classrooms” (Vidovich, 2007). Analysis of the Florida textbook adoption processes, proposed changes, and review of literature through Critical Race Theory (CRT), multicultural education and democratic participation theories point to the need for active participation by local stakeholders if they are to gain or retain presence and influence in the processes that help to determine what is taught in schools.

We consider two primary questions: (1) To what extent can diverse educational stakeholders (students, parents, teachers) participate in policy decisions concerning the curricular needs of students? (2) How can counternarratives serve to affect macro level policy that determines what counts as knowledge? We discuss the importance of voice and the possible benefits of including a diversity of voices through counternarratives in curriculum policy development and implementation. Consequently, this research will advance our knowledge and understanding of the impact and potential for the use of personal narratives in curriculum policy reform (e.g., Griffiths & Macleod, 2008). Background context on the textbook adoption process is provided, followed by the theoretical framework and review of literature.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXTBOOK ADOPTION PROCESS

States are referenced by the approach they use to adopt textbooks: adoption state or open state. An adoption state has a two-tier process. In the first tier the state determines a list of texts that will be provided to the students for free (the state covers the charge). In the second tier, districts and schools make a selection from a preapproved list. The disadvantage in this process is that funds are not provided for texts selected which are not included in the preapproved list. However, most states have a waiver policy allowing states to make a case for purchasing a text outside those on the approved list. “If the waiver is accepted the state provides funds for the selection. If not, the district must provide its own funds for these texts” (Watts-Taffe, 2006, p. 109).

Statewide adoption was created to provide uniformity in texts used by an increasingly mobile student population and has remained relatively unchanged since the early 1900s (Watts-Taffe, 2006). In the second type, an open state, school districts may choose from among all textbooks on the market (Watts-Taffe, 2006). In the United States there are 22 adoption states (including California, Texas, and Florida) and 28 open states.
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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Analysis of curriculum policy and politics through a critical race lens helps to illuminate the challenges and possibilities for the participation of people of color in the processes of textbook selection and adoption. CRT has five defining elements reflecting its basic assumptions, perspectives, and pedagogies: a focus on (1) race and racism, (2) social justice and social justice practice, (3) historical context, (4) the contestation of dominant ideology (i.e., White supremacy), and (5) the recognition of experiential knowledge (Villalpando, 2004). This critical theoretical framework centers race as a socially constructed concept that is deeply ingrained in American culture given its role in the historical development of the U.S. The tenets create a theoretical framework that not centers race and racism but also focuses the analysis on the historical context of curriculum and how racial and ethnic groups have attempted to contest the dominant ideologies reflected in curriculum and instructional materials such as textbooks as an expression of social justice.

Counternarratives provide an avenue for contesting dominant racial ideologies embedded in the artifacts of education (policy, instructional materials). As Swartz (2009) asserts, instructional materials that portray African Americans as “devoiced victims” even when there is evidence to the contrary are “in need of counternarratives that speak and act back on the hegemonic and hierarchical use of knowledge that historic systemic forces continuously work to maintain” (p. 1061). The element of the tenet of experiential knowledge takes into consideration the lived realities of those who express critique but generally do so outside the mainstream political discourse. In the field of education, “the lived reality of families, students, and educators is out there and often not represented by educational policy actors” (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005, p. 86).

This analysis of opportunities and obstacles to the participation of groups underrepresented in policy development and implementation is also informed by the literature on democratic theory and participatory democratic theory concerning individuals’ involvement and power to participate in decisions affecting them (Marsh, 2007). Participatory democratic theory helps identify components of joint work and community practice and speaks to how decisions are made, who is at the table (whose voice matters), and how those representations and competing values affect desired outcomes (Marsh, 2007). Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin (2005) offer a model for understanding educational politics and policy that draws on multiple critical and postmodern theories. They suggest the inclusion of counternarratives and counter publics in decision-making processes to center the needs and lived realities of those marginalized by the hegemonic policy arena. Through the framework comprised of CRT and democratic theory (i.e., deliberative democracy) we consider the potential of counternarratives and counter publics to shape critical policy narratives that would articulate a sense of priorities and refocus the prevailing discourse on the unmet needs of those historically excluded from constructing knowledge through textbooks and curriculum materials distributed for use in K-12 classrooms.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The average person views the acquisition of knowledge as a functional process in which one learns to read, write, speak, calculate, and listen in order to become a productive citizen with opportunities for upward mobility. In this manner, knowledge is perceived as a nonpolitical function. Michael Apple’s (2000) description of knowledge challenges traditional perceptions by illuminating that a root cause of struggles between groups is to have their knowledge and history included in curriculum. As educators, Apple (2000) argues, “our aim should not be to create ‘functional literacy,’ but critical literacy, powerful literacy, political literacy which enables the growth of genuine understanding and control of all of the spheres of social life in which we participate.” (p. 42). Essentially, knowledge is socially constructed and associated with power and the small percentage of people (usually within a capitalist market) that recognize that knowledge is power also realize that the circulation of knowledge is a part of the social distribution of power, and tend to hold on tightly to their span of control expressed through the determination of not only what books are published but the content of those books. The importance of textbooks within our nation’s school districts derives from their role as a vehicle through which culture is taught, a culture representing interests relating to what people hold dear: their experiences, struggles, contributions, and overall history. Furthermore, textbook content has the ability to influence the direction students take as they venture through life. The relationships between voice, representation, knowledge/power, and identity can be exposed through the interrogation of textbook selection and adoption processes.

STRUGGLES OVER CONTROL OF KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS

Controversies over what should and should not be taught in schools, who has access to particular content, and how people are represented often center on the textbook, a major instructional material used in K-12 schools. The production and dissemination of textbooks coincides with the production and dissemination of knowledge. Precisely “because of their power to define what gets taught, textbooks have been socially contested for decades” (Sleeter, 2005, p. 85). According to Spring (2008), from World War II to the present, Native Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans have demanded that public schools recognize their distinct cultures and incorporate these cultures into curricula and textbooks. On the other hand, there have existed policies intended to force groups of people to abandon their cultures, language, and customs in order to indoctrinate them to accept governmental policies and pledge allegiance to the U.S. As Spring (2008) reminds us:

In 1889, Commissioner Morgan wrote a bulletin on Indian Education that outlined the goals and policies of Indian schools. Williams T. Harris, commissioner of education, praised the new education for our American Indians, particularly the effort to obtain control of the Indian at an early age, and to seclude him as much as possible from the tribal influences. The systematizing of Indian education was demonstrated through
English only language requirements within schools and program emphasis on vocational training for jobs identified as patriotic. Indians were not allowed to speak their native languages or practice native customs, but were instead required to attend character trainings were saturated with moral ideas, love of truth and fidelity in duty, duties of citizens, and systematic habits of patriotism. (p. 35)

The following section reveals the struggles that many racial and ethnic minority groups (i.e., African Americans, Mexican Americans) have engaged in to have their histories and perspectives infused into the instructional material and overall curriculum in schools.

CONTESTING MASTER NARRATIVES OF DIVERSITY AND DOMINANCE

Education is a key vehicle for forming individuals’ attitudes about other groups, both domestically and in other countries; education also helps shape a student’s fundamental attitude toward society (Greany, 2006). The presence of even a small amount of biased reading material can be a problem since reading material can contribute to the development of stereotypical negative attitudes, especially when it confirms unjustified perceptions held by others. In both developed and developing countries, textbook publishers have tended to devote insufficient attention to the positive and negative roles that reading materials play in framing young people’s attitude toward others. Although most textbook content does not contain material that overtly fosters inappropriate views of others, some materials, especially history books, promote versions of history and views that have the potential to undermine social cohesion (Greaney, 2006, p. 48).

Textbooks, in particular, have helped promote highly idealized views of one nation or group of people (Elson, 1964; Greany, 2006; Venezky, 1992). In contrast, the content of textbooks tends to misrepresent political minority groups’ histories in the struggle to gain their civil rights (Aldridge, 2006; Bose, 2008; Brown & Brown, 2010a). For instance, researchers have noted the prevalence of textbooks to downplay the agency and voice of African American activists such as Martin Luther King (Aldridge, 2006) and Rosa Parks and their activism, for instance during the Montgomery Bus Boycott (Kohl, 2005). Aldridge (2006) describes how master narratives have operated in high school history textbooks to portray the work of Dr. Martin L. King Jr. He argues that these representations reproduce master narratives that not only misrepresent the context of the struggle but also preclude students’ adoption of critical perspectives.

Similarly, Swartz (2009) describes how textbooks reflecting hegemonic diversity “provide token inclusions; sanitize oppressive, violent, and unjust conditions through distortion; and deny access to the emancipatory messages inherent in more accurate accounts of history” (p. 1060). For example, Brown and Brown (2010b) analyzed K-12 textbooks using a framework of CRT and cultural memory and found that racial violence toward African American receive minimal and/or distorted attention in most K-12 texts. Bose (2008) has raised similar concerns about cultural memory and accuracy in the controversy over the representation of Hindu history in California social science textbooks. Researchers
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(Aldridge, 2006; Brown & Brown, 2010b; Pinto, 2007; Swartz, 1992, 2009) express concerns about the limitation that such texts pose for the capacity of students to fully understand race and racial inequality in the history of the United States. When students interact uncritically with such texts there is the risk of indoctrination, which is “inconsistent with a democratic vision of education” (Pinto, 2007). Loewen (2009) also critiques American history textbooks and provides recommendations for history teachers to increase students’ critical literacy by confronting marginalized histories.

More recently, in 2010, Mexican Americans have been fighting with school officials to include the roles Mexican Americans have played in American history in textbooks with the intention of exposing all students to contributions from diverse groups to American history. However, neither the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE), an elected 15-member board including the Commissioner of Education, is responsible for overseeing the public education system nor the Arizona Governor Jan Brewer shared the perspectives offered by Mexican Americans on the telling of American history. Governor Jan Brewer signed HB 2281, which outlaws ethnic studies in public and charter schools in Arizona and according to Kramer (2010), specifically targets one such program in Tucson that incorporates the teachings of Paulo Freire, including his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). HB 2281 also bans classes that it claims:

- Promote resentment toward a race or class of people;
- Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group; or
- Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.

On a similar note, Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) recommended that César Chávez, a Mexican American civil rights leader who co-founded the National Farm Workers Association, be excluded from textbooks. This recommendation was later rescinded. However, it was reported by James C. McKinley in the *New York Times* that one Hispanic board member walked out of the meeting in frustration saying, “they can just pretend this is White America and Hispanics don’t exist” (*New York Times*, 2010).

According to Swartz (1992) the debates over issues of diversity in the curriculum are about struggles between emancipatory curriculum and hegemonic curriculum based on Eurocentric master scripts that K-12 schooling imparts to students. “In education, the master script refers to classroom pedagogy, and instructional materials—as well as to the theoretical paradigms from which these aspects are constructed—that are grounded in Eurocentric and white supremacist ideologies” (Swartz, 1992, p. 341). Instead, Swartz argues that emancipatory narratives that draw on African and Indigenous worldviews should permeate the curriculum. However, this seems increasingly unlikely as “market mergers of the past decade have put the production of vast amounts of school knowledge for U.S. children in the hands of European corporations which own a majority of the major textbook companies” that produce textbooks for the U.S. market (Swartz, 2009, p. 1069). In other words, those who produce and profit from the sales of textbooks...
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that present master scripts idealizing European cultures are typically not those who
have been raised with African and Indigenous worldviews and cultural memory.
Swartz (2009) asserts that master scripts operate through systemic forces that are
political, economic, social, and historical.

Concerns over who has the authority and expert knowledge to represent a
group’s history and cultural memory complicate notions of representation and
voice. As Bose (2008) describes in the textbook controversy that occurred in
California during 2005-2006, multiple groups with divergent perspectives
challenged the content and offered contradicting positions on the
(mis)representations of Hindu religion and culture. This account of textbook
controversy details the complexity in the politics of representation due to multiple
communities and group heterogeneity. This complexity suggests that we provide
some explanation of how we intend to deploy the related concept of voice. Baker
(1999) asserts that voice, identity, and representation have been considered cognate
terms and presumed to bear some relationship to the construction of knowledge
and the circulation of power. She adds that voice is (among other things) a political
strategy, suggesting that systems of inclusion/exclusion do not lie in direct parallel
with vocal expression and silence. For instance, power can be veiled in silence.
Censorship is one method used to silence what can be said through textbooks,
which too often are those experiences that are of interest to students (Ravitch,
2004). There are also areas of silence that occur between the policy and practice of
textbook adoption processes.

Those who convene policymakers, draft policy, translate policy into practice,
and make critical decisions play an influential yet largely invisible role in what
later presents as controversies. What happens during policy development and
change or during the pre-adoption phase sets the stage for later controversies over
what is content is reflected in textbooks. More research is needed that explores the
forces that create conditions for the reproduction of master scripts in textbooks and
the social exclusion of actors in decisions affecting textbook adoption. Despite the
controversies over the content within textbooks there has been little research
conducted on textbook adoption processes (Tulley & Farr, 1985; Pinto, 2007;
Stein, Stuen, Carnine, & Long 2001; Watts-Taffe, 2006).

The practice of asking who participates in the production of knowledge is also
the practice of deliberative democracy. Deliberative or discursive democracy
reflects

a joint activity of people talking about something that happened outside of their
immediate setting; making practical decisions about what is to happen next; and then
publicly reflecting on what just happened … [and] … rationally weighing alternatives
on the basis of earlier knowledge. (Varenne, 2007, p. 1569)

Deliberative democracy that brings counterpublics together to critique inequalities
offers the best possibility for change in a democracy (Fraser, 1994). The
identification of critical perspectives and multiple voices focused on how racism
operates through policy advocacy and implementation becomes an important
component in promoting equitable curriculum/instructional policy. We suggest
counternarrative methods for bringing multiple perspectives and voices (and lack thereof) to the forefront of policy development and implementation.

METHODS

Public documents from the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) describing the state of Florida’s policy and practices related to curriculum were collected for review; these included: rubrics for the evaluation of instructional materials, interest group letters, State Adoption Process Chart, project charter on Florida’s plan for digital instruction, and an online training course on the adoption process that has been part of the preparation of committee members involved in the selection, evaluation, and adoption of instructional materials. These documents were analyzed for the presence of dominant narratives, expressions of power, and the opportunities and challenges they present for the participation of competing voices in the curriculum. Document analysis through the tenets of CRT focused attention on the role of individuals and organizations in shaping policy development and concern on the representation of people from racial and ethnic political minority groups (i.e., Asians, Hispanic/Latinos/as, African Americans). The following section presents the textbook adoption process in Florida relative to current state statutes and pending policy changes concerning the adoption of curricular and instructional materials.

ASPECTS OF THE PROCESS OF ADOPTING CURRICULAR AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL IN FLORIDA

In 2008, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 1908, now Section 1003.41, Florida Statutes – Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS). In the FDOE’s report Priorities for Evaluating Instructional Materials (2008), attention is given culture and diversity and more specifically, the misrepresentation of minorities and cultures. The author of the report cites Watts-Taffe (2005) and her recommendations on how to rectify the problem of the peripheral treatment of diverse groups: 1) Include items related to respect for diversity in evaluation protocols and 2) build respect for diversity into frameworks and standards and in any bid specifications for publishers. The report describes the importance of multicultural fairness and advocacy in the evaluation of materials. “Fairness requires a balanced representation of cultures and groups. The materials should support equal opportunity without regard for age, gender, disability, national origin, race, or religion, and should represent multiple settings, occupations, careers, and lifestyles” (Priorities for evaluating instructional materials, 2008, p. 34). Furthermore, the report Priorities for Evaluating Instructional Materials (2008) describes what is meant by multicultural advocacy:

Advocacy requires embracing a multicultural context, not just through pictures, but through information about ways to honor differences and deal with conflicts, promote a positive self-image for members of all groups, and provide for the development of healthy attitudes and values. Portrayals must promote an understanding and
appreciation of the importance and contributions of diverse cultures and heritage. (p. 34)

The report notes the following strategy offered by Watts-Taffe (2005) for promoting respect for diversity during the selection process: “Compose evaluation committees to include diverse perspectives, which are representative of the diversity in the community, subject-specific knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge” (p. 114). This recommendation also includes suggestions made by Chambliss and Calfee (1998) to construct committees comprised of teachers who are knowledgeable in the subject-matter content and pedagogy, from diverse backgrounds, and educated and experienced in teaching a wide variety of students. They also suggest that the diversity among participating parents can serve to represent the diversity among the student population served.

To what extent are these recommendations for assuring multicultural fairness and advocacy, and convening diverse committees evident in the policies and procedures of textbook selection? Swartz (2009) speculates about the conditions that make it possible for master scripts to enter social studies textbooks even when more accurate scholarship is available. She suggests,

either the experts gathered together to produce social studies textbooks are decidedly Eurocentric in their knowledge and perspectival frameworks or these expert voices are submerged by editors, who in line with corporate interests … use an additive approach to include ‘others’ without changing the basic master narrative. (Swartz, 2009, p. 1063)

The evaluation of instructional material is dependent on committee membership, so in order to understand how state policy is implemented and to determine which instructional materials enter classrooms there needs to be more attention given to who is selected, who hails from diverse backgrounds, and how the committees are formed at the state and local levels.

DIVERSITY OF THE COMMITTEE

Textbook adoption is not only controlled by the market, but also by state textbook adoption policies. Given that textbooks are a key vehicle for forming students’ attitudes about other groups and shaping their fundamental views toward society, the role of textbook selection committee members is a crucial one. Committee members are imperative because they represent multiple stakeholders. Who are the committee members? What are their experiences? How do the committee members come to be selected? First we introduce the statute guiding the selection of the committee and requirements for committee participation.

The Department of Education receives nominations from school districts, professional and educational associations, and civic organizations and makes appointments to the committee. The Florida Commissioner of Education will select a minimum of ten members for each subject area committee to review and recommend instructional materials for adoption. The committee is comprised of ten or more members who should represent the demographic and cultural diversity of
the state. At least 50 percent of the members are required to be classroom teachers certified in an area directly related to the academic content area or level being considered for adoption. The remainder of the committee is comprised as follows: two lay citizens, one district school board member, and two supervisors of teachers. The term of appointment is 18 months. According to the document *Priorities for Evaluating Instructional Materials* (2008), “committees are expected to reflect the diversity of Florida’s population and to have the capacity/expertise to address the broad racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and cultural diversity of students in Florida’s schools” (p. 83). According to the census bureau (2009), the racial diversity in Florida is as described below (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Groups</th>
<th>Percentage of Florida’s Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White persons</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black persons</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native persons</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian persons</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander persons</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons reporting two or more races</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White persons not Hispanic</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the recommendation for diverse representation among the committee members, one would expect the racial and ethnic diversity of the committee to be reflective of the state’s population. Additionally, as a measure of accountability, the FLDOE was charged with making public not only the names and addresses of committee members but their racial and ethnic diversity as well.

In our view, the State of Florida has presented a number of opportunities for multiple voices to participate in the state adoption committee. For instance, as stated above, state policy provided for diverse ethnicities, community voices, and content area experts (to include 50% of the instructional personnel actually utilizing the curriculum on a daily basis). However, despite the opportunities made available for equal utilization of voice as democratic participatory theory suggests, information is not made available specifying how one may take advantage of the opportunities delineated on the website. The ambiguity related to the selection process creates a barrier to the good faith efforts on behalf of the state to create and make such opportunities public and available.

Furthermore, according to the *Instructional Materials Nomination form*, in order to be eligible to serve on the SIMC, a nomination form completed by a nominator is preferred but not required. However, the website does not indicate the requirements necessary to become a nominator or even how one becomes eligible to serve as a nominator. Although it is not required for a prospective SIMC member to be nominated by a nominator, one seriously interested in serving as a
member may want to know the specific requirements of a nominator in an effort to identify and increase one’s opportunity for selection. Similarly, we would like to reflect on the previously stated Florida’s evaluation rubric. “Diversity: Committees are expected to reflect the diversity of Florida’s population and to have the capacity/expertise to address the broad racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and cultural diversity of students in Florida’s schools” (Priorities for evaluating instructional materials, 2008, p. 83).

The Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction should be commended for supporting the selection of committee members that have the expertise and background to identify curriculum that will reflect the diverse population of Florida and its students. According to 1006.29 State instructional materials committees, each school year, not later than April 15, the commissioner shall appoint state instructional materials committees and make the names and mailing addresses public. Yet after our extensive search of the website after April 15th to identify the committee members we were unable to identify any information regarding the names, occupations, backgrounds, expertise or other demographic data reflecting the priority outlined above. Four months after requesting information from the commissioner regarding the committee members, we have yet to receive a response.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE EVALUATION OF MULTICULTURAL CONTENT

There is a section on the evaluation form to be used by committee members in their evaluation of instructional materials for multicultural representation which asks the following questions: “If gender, ethnicity, age, work situations, and various social groups have been portrayed, has the portrayal been fair and unbiased? Is there a balanced representation of cultures and groups in multiple settings, occupations, careers, and lifestyles? Is there an integration of social diversity throughout the instructional materials?” (Priorities for evaluating instructional materials, 2008, p. 3) This approach to the evaluation of multicultural representation reduces the evaluation process concerning diversity to a few questions that stand alone rather than serve as a lens to be used throughout the evaluation. The questions suggest that committee members focus on the representation of diversity in the materials while ignoring the diversity of the student population to be served by the instructional materials. Also problematic is that questions in other sections of the evaluation form are written as if evaluators are to consider a monolithic, rather than culturally diverse, group of students: “Are the language and concepts used familiar to students?” (State Committee Evaluation Form, p. 6) “Are there tasks related to student interests, and activities relevant to the student’s life?” (p. 7) Who are the students one considers when faced with these questions? Do they share languages, interests, and activities?

Furthermore, even if a committee member or members evaluate the material as inadequate in its satisfaction of the requirements under the section on multicultural representation, is it only one of eight areas under content to be reviewed alongside: alignment with curriculum, level of treatment, expertise of authorship, accuracy,
currentness, authenticity, and portrayal of humanity. Content is only one of three areas, and the only to raise attention to issues of social diversity. In this construction diversity remains marginalized in the overall evaluation process. Where the process is structured to marginalize diversity concerns in the evaluation and selection of instructional materials, the requirements for 1) training that supports cultural sensitivity and 2) diverse backgrounds of the committee members and education or experience with a diversity range of student populations ought to help maintain concerns for diversity in the process. It is to these two areas (training, committee membership) that we now turn our attention.

**STATE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS TRAINING PROVIDED**

Historically, many adoption processes have been criticized for not providing adequate training for selection committee members. However, the online instructional materials training program is a legal requirement for all persons serving on the instructional materials committee to participate in training before beginning the review and selection process as defined by Florida State statute 1006.295. This comprehensive training program models the policies and procedures aligned in the Florida Instructional Materials adoption catalog and is meant to “assist committee members in developing the skills necessary to make valid, culturally sensitive, and objective decisions regarding the content and rigor of instructional materials” (Priorities for evaluating instructional materials, 2008, p. 83). The training is comprised of 5 modules also accessible to the public. The goal of the training is to adopt the highest quality instructional material for Florida’s teachers.

Florida refers to the term *adopted* as materials of the highest quality recommended for public schools. The word *quality* quickly takes precedence in the context of what we consider appropriate content knowledge for k-12 students and is defined by Merriam-Webster as a degree of excellence and superior in kind. Given that each committee member is charged with fulfilling the role of evaluating how well instructional materials meet the State of Florida evaluation criteria and making recommendations to the Commissioner of Education, it is imperative that there be a thorough process to ensure the selection of committee members in an effort to identify persons with the knowledge and experience necessary to select the materials that will shape the minds and possible the future direction of students. Again, one would have to gain access to that information in an effort to make a sound judgment of the level of background and expertise a committee member has that will impact their ability to choose texts to best meet the needs of all students.

The online training includes a description of the adoption process, explanations of the modules, training, frequent learning assessment quizzes, and instructional evaluation activities that provide trainees and opportunity to apply content to the evaluation of a fictitious text. It is a comprehensive program that covers the five modules as follows:

Module 1. Introduction – Provides an overview of the adoption process. The major objectives of this module is to assist committee members with understanding
the evaluation process, learning how to use state committee evaluation forms, and how to rate instructional materials according to specific evaluation criteria. This module prioritizes the criteria for evaluation beginning with content (what is taught and if it meets benchmarks), followed by presentation (graphics, colors, ease of use, pacing, readability, and organization) and concluding with learning (instructional methods and assessments).

Module 2. Content – Orient committee members to applying content criteria to the evaluation of instructional materials. The content review includes determining whether the content aligns with curriculum, the appropriate level of treatment, authors’ expertise for content development, accuracy, currentness, authenticity, multicultural representation, and humanity and compassion.

Module 3. Presentation – Evaluates the comprehensiveness of student and teacher resources by the integrity and alignment of instructional components with each other, organization, readability, pacing, and ease of use.

Module 4. Learning – Applying the various learning criteria by reviewing instructional materials for motivational strategies, teaching a few big ideas, explicit instruction, guidance and support, active student participation, instructional and assessment strategies, and features that maintain learner motivation.

Module 5. Summary – Summarizes the training and outlines the next steps in the process for committee members. A value is assigned to the modules in terms of importance with content being the lead.

The e-forum is available for committee members to share ideas regarding previous and current adoption processes and the training, thereby leaving room for continuous improvement. However, the information is available to the public as a “read only” leaving no discussion/comment forum public to ideas related to the adoption process. The public and the State Instructional Materials Committee (SIMC) stand to mutually benefit if given the capability to post online comments related to the example, a fictitious Health textbook accompanies the training with the intent to provide trainees opportunities to apply curriculum evaluation skills acquired in the content, presentation, and learning modules. Guests participating in the training may have valuable ideas based on their evaluation ratings. However, online discussions from the 2009 mathematics adoption were partially available with differing levels of access threads including new (new posts made since you last viewed this thread), locked (no new post made in this thread), open (all committee members view and post in this thread), and closed (only the original poster and designated Office of Instructional Materials staff may view and post to this thread), and sticky threads (threads sorted at the top of the forum index). All discussion forums were made available for the most recent science adoption and the 2011-2012 social studies adoption.

CRITERIA OF OBJECTIVITY IN SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT

In the social studies specifications for the 2011-2012 state adoption of instructional material is the criterion Accuracy of Content: Content must be accurate in historical context and contemporary facts and concepts. This criterion is based on
Objectivity. Content that is included in the materials must accurately represent the domain of knowledge and events. It should be factual and objective. It must be free of mistakes, errors, inconsistencies, contradictions within itself, and biases of interpretation. It should be free of the biased selection of information. Materials should distinguish between facts and possible interpretations or opinions expressed about factual information. Visuals or other elements of instruction should contribute to the accuracy of text or narrative. (Social studies specification, 2010, p. 72)

Furthermore, Section 1003.42, F.S., requires instruction that presents American history through one perspective. “American history shall be viewed as factual, not as constructed, shall be viewed as knowable, teachable, and testable, and shall be defined as the creation of a new nation based largely on the universal principles stated in the Declaration of Independence” (Social studies specification, 2010, p. 3). This requirement guides content included by publishers as well as the evaluation process of the selection committee. This section contrasts the recommendations for multiple perspectives, forecloses postmodern and critical approaches to teaching that bring attention to multiple realities, perspectives, and master narratives such as the only principles operating are those in the Declaration of Independence. For instance, American history viewed as “the creation of a new nation” based the principles stated in one document (the Declaration of Independence) contrasts views that the creation of the new nation in American history included the destruction of many older nations. Despite claims of objectivity in American history textbooks, they tend to serve the interests of some groups (i.e., elite, White, English speaking) over others (Anyon, 2011).

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: A HUMAN RELATIONS APPROACH THROUGH CONTRIBUTIONS AND ADDITIONS

According to section 1003.42, F.S., required instruction includes attention to particular ethnic and racial groups. The statute focused on African American history reads:

(h) The history of African Americans, including the history of African peoples before the political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to America, the enslavement experience, abolition, and the contributions of African Americans.

(Social studies specifications, 2010, p. 3)

Four of the five sections of the statute that include attention to African American history focus on slavery. This does not reflect an interest in seeking balance concerning the history of African Americans. Implied in this framing is that the history of African people pivots on the institution of slavery rather than more complex structures such as imperialism and colonialism. A balanced representation in the statute toward multicultural fairness concerning African American history would encourage more than the contributions of African Americans to society. The emphasis on contributions can be fulfilled through curriculum devoid of conflict.
To address the contributions of African Americans to American History in a balanced manner one would have to acknowledge the obstacles to their participation and the many forms and faces of oppression that continue to exist such as violence, cultural imperialism, powerlessness, exploitation, and marginalization (Young, 1990).

A single and explicit focus on contributions occurs in the statute regarding teaching about Hispanics (Latinos/as) and women: “(p) The study of Hispanic contributions to the United States and (q) The study of women’s contributions to the United States” (Social studies specifications, 2010). This section of the statute does not operate in isolation, but is informed by other sections such as those that support patriotic goals and are delineated as Required Instruction in Section 1003.42 of the Florida Statutes in relation to social studies content (i.e., flag). For instance, section “s” reads: “The character-development curriculum shall stress the qualities of patriotism,” while section “t” reads, “In order to encourage patriotism, the sacrifices that veterans have made in serving our country and protecting democratic values worldwide” are to be included in the curriculum (Florida Statutes, p. 3). The focus on contributions challenges the purported purpose and completeness of social studies education in Florida. “A complete social studies education ensures our nation an informed, responsible, and well-educated citizenry” (Social Studies Specifications for the 2010-2011 Florida State Adoption of Instructional Materials, 2010, p. 1).

Multicultural theorists have criticized the advancement of depoliticized and sanitizing approaches (such as the contributions approach and the additive approach) to multicultural curriculum (none of which were cited in the report guiding the evaluation of instructional materials). “Most textbooks reflect an additive approach to multicultural curriculum” (Sleeter, 2005, p. 87) in which concepts, themes, or content is added to an otherwise unchanged lesson, unit, or course (Banks, 1999). A similar approach is the contributions approach, described by Sleeter and Grant (2003) as the inclusion of content that consists largely of cultural artifacts, holidays, heroes or heroines. In other words the contributions of groups are added without attention to their daily navigation of complex structures or that which challenges dominant narratives of American society as a model for the values of equality and fairness. Textbooks tend to sanitize what they mention about racial issues when they are contributed and fail to include counternarratives that offer historical accounts and interpretations that run counter to the dominant narratives (Sleeter, 2005). The contributions approach and the additive approach are two that reflect the human relations approach to multicultural education (Sleeter & Grant, 2003). This approach to multicultural education is popular among White elementary teachers and most reflective of assimilation as cultural differences are taught only to the extent necessary to improve students’ self-concepts (McDougall, 2003).

In the effort to increase academic achievement and motivation for students, teachers should make learning relevant to the real life experiences, backgrounds, and interests of students. High quality educational experiences do not exist when ethnic groups and their contributions to the development of history, life, or culture
are ignored or demeaned (Gay, 2000). Including content about diverse cultures, ethnic groups, and their contributions to society into curriculum combined with employing teaching strategies and activities in response to the content creates a culturally responsive classroom. Multicultural content provides a broad understanding of culture to all students, creates an environment that restores trust in democracy through the equalization of knowledge of various cultural and social contributions of diverse groups, and most of all it establishes “educational relevance so that students of color may perform successfully on all levels” (Gay, 2000). However, textbooks identified as multicultural textbooks also reproduce culturally harmful knowledge about groups (i.e., racial, ethnic, rural) historically devalued or ignored (Ayalon, 2003; Wynter, 1990). Therefore the educational experience and training of committee members must extend beyond a superficial exposure to multicultural education to include critical literacy (Apple, 2000).

TASK FORCE ON AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

One of the requirements of membership on a form detailing information for prospective members of the state instructional materials committee is the stipulation for lay citizens. SIMC requires that persons serving as lay citizens may be parents, community members, or retired educators having an interest in education but are not currently professionally associated with education. There are organizations with a primary charge to assure that groups that have historically been devalued or ignored in curriculum are infused in the curriculum and represented appropriately (free from negative and harmful stereotypes) whose members can serve as lay persons.

An example of such an organization is the State of Florida’s African American History Task Force. The task force advocates for teaching the history of African peoples and the contributions of African Americans to society to students in Florida’s schools. The goals of the task force include promoting awareness, understanding, and the infusing of the required instruction legislation that addresses the African and African American experience into the curriculum of Florida’s schools, the development of instructional guidelines, standardized framework, and supplemental materials/resources that include the African and African American experience, providing pre- and in-service training for implementation of the required instruction using various technologies and materials, and making recommendations to the Commissioner of Education and the appropriate Florida Department of Education leaders that support the full implementation of the required instruction mandate.

The task force also works to ensure awareness of the requirements, identify and recommend needed state education leadership action, assist in adoption of instructional materials by the state, and build supporting partnerships (Mission Statement). The task force can be instrumental in assuring that African American history is included in the curriculum. However, all of their efforts and contributions are not clearly delineated on the website and are consequently not widely
publicized. Whether politicians utilize their efforts as a voice to actually influence policy is not discernable from the information provided.

TRAINING PROCESSES AND RESOURCES FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

While completing the evaluation exercise utilized a fictitious health book, we came to an important observation. Within the textbook, figure five on page eight displays a picture of a boy who appears to be a person of color (perhaps from a Latino ethnic group) with a caption above that reads “Living in an area with a high crime rate increases stress.” Also, on page 12 - figure two, are two boys who appear to be of African descent with a caption above that reads, “An addiction to illegal substances can impact you physically and emotionally.” To the right of that image and caption in the Reading Check section the statement reads, “Risky behaviors like consumption of alcohol or drugs, reckless driving or pre-marital sex can be reduced and avoided by examining one’s own behaviors and making necessary changes.” This information is applicable to all teens as indicated in the question, however, anti-social behaviors were paired with pictures of Black and Brown complexioned youth. This pairing demonstrates the need for members of the state instructional materials committee to have expertise in diversity and sensitivity within textbooks in an effort to eliminate the possibility misrepresenting groups by assigning and reinforcing negative stereotypes (overgeneralizations about groups of people based on preconceived notions). The pages in the textbook were not pages from an actual textbook, but were created for training purposes. Trainees were expected to evaluate the text and assess their rating by comparing their evaluation rating to that of the instructional materials trainer rating.

Throughout the training our ratings tended to be consistent with the trainer ratings. However, after having confidently rated multicultural content as insufficient due to the stereotypical images with captions we found our rating differed from the trainer ratings (which provided a higher rating). As a result of the different ratings, we focused again on the pending questions related to the demographic makeup and experience of the committee as well as the level of involvement the task force has in the adoption process. As groups vie for voice at the decision making table regarding textbook adoption, are authentic opportunities made available for their participation? Do they really have seats at the table?

FINDINGS

Our research suggests that there is a lack of transparency in the textbook selection process, insufficient information on the opportunities available for democratic participation, and an imbalance in the groups’ participation in the process of selecting instructional materials. Furthermore, there are missed opportunities for increasing participation among groups representing a broad spectrum of cultural and racial diversity.
Lack of Transparency and Insufficient Information on Participation

Requirements for persons interested in becoming a member of the SIMC Committee were available on the website. However, no information was available in terms how one would come to be selected other than the availability of a nomination form. The requirements state that although not mandatory, it is recommended that a nominator nominate a prospective committee member. Information was not available detailing a list of nominators or the criteria for becoming a nominator. Democratic participation, which provides opportunities for participation and the equalization of voice, is not possible without sufficient information indicating how one may become involved in the process. While this could be an oversight, analyses through a critical race lens beg the question of whether the lack of transparency is a structurally embedded strategy of silence and invisibility facilitating social exclusion or marginalization. The fact of marginalization raises basic structural issues of justice concerning the appropriateness of a connection between participation in productive activities of social cooperation on one hand and access to the means of consumption on the other. Marginalization involves deprivation of institutional conditions necessary for exercising power in a context of recognition and interaction (Young, 1990).

Participation Imbalance

At the local level teachers select from texts that have been pre-identified by the SIMC committee, so they have little influence to determine curriculum or opportunity to make their voices heard at the decision making table. Currently, the SIMC guidelines call for 10 or more members composed of at least 50% certified classroom teachers in subject area, two lay persons, two supervisors of teachers, and one district school board member. However, the state board of education has a five-year timeline for a project to have all instructional materials provided in digital formats. The shift to digital instructional materials includes proposed changes to the adoption process that threaten to minimize the opportunities for democratic participation and social justice for culturally diverse groups.

The proposed changes to the committee design include the substitution of the aforementioned participants for post secondary experts in content areas who will review digital content submitted for adoption and provide feedback through a digital review system. Teachers would then review expert recommended content digitally to ensure usability of digital content and provide feedback to the department (Project Charter on Florida's Five Year Plan for Digital Instruction, p. 3, 2011). This proposed change to the adoption of instructional materials reduces the role of teachers in the process as well as lay persons who are not mentioned at all in the proposed process. Furthermore, the entire process would result in a digital review of materials in place of the now required face-to-face meetings and paper evaluations and ballots.

There is the possibility that imbalances in representation will be further veiled by a process that is entirely online and obscure questions necessary for awareness
and critical literacy about textbook adoption that stakeholders need in order to participate in the processes and policy making. On the other hand, there are possibilities that digital media provide for stakeholders to participate in the development of policy concerning the use and adoption of instructional materials. The possibilities for the use of narratives in a digital age to inform policy affecting the adoption of textbooks and other instructional materials are discussed as recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of current policy, practices, and pending changes concerning the adoption of instructional materials reveals several areas that fail to foster fairness in racial group representation during textbook adoption (transparency in committee representation, training, evaluation), instructional content (i.e., statutes forwarding a contributions approach), and in the participation of stakeholders (task force). Given this, we offer the following recommendations.

Counternarratives: Little Stories Can Tell the Bigger Picture

Counternarratives are stories that reflect the critical perspectives of storytellers and challenge injustice. Critical literacy can be coupled with narratives of those whose stories are seldom told for their perspectives can be used to foster critical policy analyses by communities and by teachers. Critical policy analysis that brings together macro- and micro-level perspectives can facilitate empowerment leading to active participation in both policy interpretation and policy construction (Vidovich, 2007). While narratives have been used in England to inform policy development (Macleod & Griffiths, 2008) they have not been as welcome in the development of educational policy in the United States. However, Griffiths and Macleod (2008) suggest that autobiographical methods are suited for inclusion in decisions that guide policy as little stories have the potential to refine the bigger picture.

Finally, because of the ability of auto/biography to capture the individual experience in the wider social context, and to represent complex and nuanced situations, this approach has a contribution to make not simply to questions of ‘what works?’ but issues such as why, when and in what circumstances, what works, and why, when and where it does not. (Griffiths & Macleod, 2008, p. 38)

Recommendations for countering the resistance to the participation of more diverse groups and inclusive practices are the use of personal narratives in curriculum policy reform (Griffiths & Macleod, 2008). More specifically, we suggest the construction of individual and composite counternarratives in the tradition of CRT (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Since stories shape what, or how people think by influencing the readers’, listeners’ or viewers’ perspectives about a problem or issue; and therefore can change values and decisions. Thus it is imperative that the voices of students, parents, and teachers be included in policy in an effort to
transform policy to directly meet the curricular needs of students. The voices of those excluded (especially those for whom the policy is intended to serve) can be useful in policy making related to the selection of instructional materials.

**Digital Initiatives and Narratives in Curriculum Policy**

With technological advances come changes that can both hinder and advance participation concerning various aspects of curriculum policy. While counterpublics are generally convened as face-to-face encounters, digital forms of communication and collaboration can also take place in communities that have been on the fringe of participation. Australia provides an example of a country’s use of multiple methods (online surveys and face to face forums) to encourage participation in curriculum policy development and implementation. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) sought feedback from teachers, school leaders, students, professional associations, universities, teacher unions, parents, industry and the general public on a draft of a national curriculum. The survey provided qualitative and quantitative data through open-ended questions and rating-scale questions. In order to login and view content, survey takers had to provide some personal information rather than participate anonymously. ACARA received 3650 responses to the survey. Furthermore, the survey was coupled with public forums across Australian Territories and components of the curriculum were piloted in various schools. A report on the collection and analysis of data is accessible online in the *Draft K-10 Consultation Report V 4.*

The increasing development in digital textbooks promises to bring an expanded range of content and foster collaborative decision-making on content in Florida (Mardis, Everhart, Smith, Newsum & Baker, 2010). Students and teachers will increasingly gain the ability to create custom textbooks in which they can combine chapters from books or other resources, including material they have constructed in a digital platform (i.e., Flexbook). Advances in the use of digital media can also provide an outlet for the creation and dissemination of narratives by various stakeholders. Online discussion forums that are accessible to the public can provide an opportunity for the participation and inclusion of community voice in the adoption training and overall process of selecting instructional materials. Additionally, we recommend that state instructional materials staff develop an online discussion thread for community voice as a vehicle for improvement and resource for committee members.

**CONCLUSION: CONSTANTLY SHRINKING VOICES**

In the midst of research for this chapter concerned with including and expanding the voices of community and educational stakeholders in the textbook adoption process, the participation of multiple and diverse voices continues to dwindle. The governor of Florida, Rick Scott, has approved legislation that reduces the current ten-member committee responsible for reviewing materials and making
recommendations to the educational commissioner down to two subject matter experts selected by the commissioner. As a result, Citizens for National Security, a volunteer group, “formed out of concern about terrorism, is suing governor Rick Scott for what it deems a threat to public schools: new textbook adoption process,” according to a reporter with the Tampa Bay news (Sanders, 2011). They claimed that the law does not provide for transparency in the experts’ discussions and citizens are disenfranchised in the selection process. This news report also states that former Democratic state Rep. Barry Silver asserted that Governor Scott’s procedures push his agenda rather than inviting the voices of the people in Florida to participate in education policy.

The concerns expressed by Citizens for National Security reflect some of those that were raised through our analysis and review of the literature. “In the process, they disenfranchised not just us but all citizens from the selection of textbooks,” said William Saxton, Citizens for National Security chairman (Sanders, 2011). However, while the rationale behind the lawsuit headed by the Citizens for National Security arises from concerns about the infusion of Islam into the curriculum, our inquiry was not motivated by such concerns or fears. Rather this chapter proposes to paint the landscape of policy change in Florida with a broader brushstroke. Reduction in the participation of diverse voices (i.e., educators, stakeholders, political and social minority groups) in education policy and practices, especially those concerning curriculum and instruction, and their trend toward shaping policy that is more exclusive than inclusive is both problematic and contradictory for a pluralistic nation that prides itself on having democratic roots and ideals.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. To what extent are diverse educational stakeholders’ (students, parents, teachers) narratives present and influential in policy decisions concerning the curricular needs of students?
2. How can counternarratives serve to affect macro level policy that determines what counts as knowledge?
3. How does the absence of information influence democratic participation in educational policies and practices?
4. In what ways can we increase educational stakeholders’ knowledge of multicultural education?
5. What affect will digital textbooks have on the issue of “voice”?

REFERENCES


RANDRIA WILLIAMS & VONZELL AGOSTO


MISSING AND SHRINKING VOICES


