

**Discourse of the Dominant:
Biased Language in Textbooks and the Continuance of Racial Oppression**

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“Of all our studies, history is best qualified to reward our research. ”—Malcolm X

*“Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.”
—George Orwell*

Introduction

During the spring semester of my junior year of college I spent five months living and studying in Ghana, West Africa. The most poignant experience I had while abroad was my tour of the two slave “castles,” one in Cape Coast, the second in Elmina. These dungeons, the two most significant artifacts left standing from the horrific four hundred year history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, are arguably two of the most important historical artifacts in the world. These edifices epitomize an extensive part of history—one that forever changed Europe, the Americas, and most importantly the continent of Africa. As can be expected, my tour of these dungeons was excruciating but also unquestionably informative. People are rarely able to physically touch history and for me to walk, touch, and even smell hundreds of years’ worth of blood, bodies, death, and oppression left my hands tingling and my mind spinning.

Imprinted in the wall of the Cape Coast Castle is a powerful plaque that states the lasting importance of these sentiments. It reads:

In Everlasting Memory
Of the anguish of our ancestors
May those who died rest in peace
May those who return find their roots
May humanity never again perpetrate
Such injustice against humanity
We, the living, vow to uphold this.

This commanding plaque nods to the profound importance of understanding our collective history. It calls for those who are living to appreciate the past for the ways in which it has shaped our present. And it was here, after reading this plaque and seeing the ripples of this history permeating the streets of Ghana today, that I began to comprehend the serious relevance of reflecting on the past as a guide for the future.

At the secondary school level, history is arguably the most valuable subject as it is the only subject that is solely about “us,” the people. Moreover, it helps young students develop their sense of self and gives them the ability to contextualize their lives within a larger social framework. Without a memory of the past, those in the present have no basis for understanding the institutions that surround them, nor do they have the context to effectively place themselves within a collective memory—both personal and public.

Historians have often defined themselves as the investigators of this collective memory, as they seek to publish decided explanations about historical events, trends, and controversies (Bain, 2080* See Citation 1). As a result of these investigations, many professional historians have produced works of analysis and final conclusions. These analytic conclusions are then often used to write the narrative of history textbooks. Contrary to how historians employ questions, decisions and heuristics when they piece together a historical narrative, most secondary school textbooks are only focused on facts, events, and people. As a result, history textbooks often lose their subtlety and nuance. Textbooks present histories as finished and complete stories, thus preventing the students reading

them from being able to consider all factors and come to their own critical conclusions. As Professor Bob Bain explains in his article regarding the hidden authority present in history classrooms, teachers reverse the logic of historians by presenting the finalized answers first while asking questions about the text, secondarily (Bain, 2081). This reversed logic limits the space in which students can engage in questioning and constructing their own historical narrative.

Moreover, the story being told through textbooks holds a particular danger as the printed and therefore finalized histories in these texts also assume a special authority in classrooms. Textbooks are large, heavy, and often the only source of information used to illuminate the past, thus teachers and students treat them “as the authorized version of a society’s valid knowledge”—one that is beyond criticism (Olson, 233-43). The authority textbooks hold also affects the ways teachers explain history as a relatively objective and unquestionably finalized story.

Michael Romanowski’s article entitled *Problems of Bias in Textbooks*, asserts that history textbooks are not as objective as they seem because they “incorporate attitudes and ways of looking at the world” (Romanowski, 170). He goes on to say that “in making judgments about what should be included and what should be excluded, and how particular episodes in history should be summarized, textbook authors assign positive or negative interpretations to particular events thereby asserting a set of values” (Romanowski, 170). Nancy Ogden, Catherine Perkins, and David M. Donahue in their article entitled *Challenging Students’ Assumptions about Slavery in U.S. History*, acknowledge a shift of social scientists in the last quarter of the twentieth century from an understanding of history as objective towards an

ability “to see their work as based in the assumptions, values, language, and perspectives (grounded in identities like race, class and gender)” (Ogden et al., 472). The often subtle and subversive presence of authors’ outside judgments is important to remember within the context of the production, distribution, and consumption of textbooks.

Through the comparison of three standard high school textbooks used in public schools throughout the United States and Ghana, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that the “finalized” story of the Trans-Atlantic Slave is consistently presented from a Eurocentric perspective and that the language employed to describe this history only confirms the normalcy of Europe’s involvement, while at the same time demonizing and dehumanizing Africans.

Historical Context and Current Discourse on Racial Oppression

It is particularly important to be aware of textbook authors’ outside biases—particularly racial biases—when considering how they describe the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade as an institution was supported by a racist discourse of (white) superiority and conversely (black) inferiority. This discourse was dominated by the conceptualization of black and brown bodies as “Other,” which were defined as such by Europeans (Omi & Winant, 53). Upon initial European African contact (before the establishment of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade) this process of “othering” was created in response to Europeans’ questions regarding difference in bodies, culture, and language (Omi & Winant, 54). The biologically based differences that the Europeans saw between themselves and

Africans were related to both skin color as well as varying mental capacities (Doyle-Wood, 60). Historically, the seemingly biological differences between the races were used to separate, differentiate and stratify persons.

Because oppositional dichotomies rarely represent different but equal relationships, they are inherently unstable. Tension is resolved by subordinating one half of the dichotomy to the other. Thus whites rule blacks...The foundations of a complex social hierarchy become grounded in the interwoven concepts of either/or dichotomous thinking, oppositional difference, and objectification. With domination based on difference forming an essential underpinning for this entire system of thought, these concepts invariably imply relationships of superiority and inferiority, hierarchical bonds that mesh with political economies of race, gender and class oppression (Collins, 70).

What this quote highlights is that in the creation of the Other, which for the purpose of this thesis refers to the European conception of an inferior identity for black and brown bodies, a white identity was simultaneously co-constructed. As Europeans oppressed an entire group of people, they were concurrently creating their own identities as individuals with the inherent ability to manifest power and dominance. Historically, this created hierarchy, which placed white Europeans on the top and black and brown African "Others" at the bottom, was used as means to justify the exploitation of Africans in order to support the economic investments of Europeans.

The results of this "othering" of bodies had consequences on a global scale. The practice of inscribing a "race" upon another human being was also the process of locating them and subjugating them in an emerging world order of "modernity" (Winant, 30). An important book entitled *All the World is a Ghetto* by Howard Winant raises the point that both the emerging racial formation and the economic development it simultaneously created (through "free" labor), established what we now understand as the modern world (Winant, 30). This system of economic

development (with the undertones of racial formations) was one of “accumulation and unequal exchange, a set of world-embracing institutions of domination, rule, and authority, only to the extent that it was racialized” (Winant, 30).

Of course it must be highlighted that the ways in which this global and trans-Atlantic structure specifically manifested itself in each context explored in this thesis—Ghana and the United States—is different. However, between both contexts the exploitation of a group of people (Africans) for the economic gain of another group of people (Europeans) was the same. In Ghana, this history developed in the form of colonialism and although the structure of colonialism looked different than the use of slave labor in the Americas, the same system of domination over one group of people as a means for another group to assert power and control are fundamental linking factors between these two contexts. As can be seen by Winant’s arguments above, this structure of exploitation was not a localized form of power; it created similar social structures of control around the world. Moreover, in response to these ideologically comparable social structures of exploitation, there were also great similarities amongst the black freedom struggles in Ghana and the United States that fought against this oppression. For example, during the 1950s and 1960s both Ghana and the United States were in the midst of individual and yet ideologically similar fights against the power system that had historically decided to “other” and exclude them. In Ghana these fights were channeled through a liberation movement, while in the United States African Americans fought for dignity through the Black Power and the Civil Rights movements (Winant, 31). Each of these movements questioned and actively fought against the “terms upon which racialized

labor would be available for exploitation in the colonies and neo-colonies” (Winant, 31). It is in these key links that the comparisons between the two contexts analyzed in this thesis are relevant.

It is crucial to remember that although the concepts of the “Other” are historically rooted, they have continuously been maintained throughout history and still permeate many areas of society today. Through the continued maintenance of “othering” it can be seen that the history of race is neither stagnant nor static but in fact fluid and builds upon itself. Although a historical moment is specific to its time it is not isolated. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade marked the beginning of a structure of African American oppression in the United States. Once the Slave Trade was abolished, a parallel system of racial oppression remained in the form of plantation slavery. After plantation slavery was no longer legal, Jim Crow laws were instituted to maintain the social hierarchy that both the Slave Trade and plantation slavery had been engaged in for hundreds of years. Finally, today, each of these historical moments has been superseded by mass incarceration resulting in a hauntingly unequal number of African Americans behind bars: arguably yet another form of systematized racial oppression.

Particularly significant for this thesis is the frightening fact that in the United States the fluidity of a racial history is often forgotten and instead the term “post-racial America” is used to describe our current racial climate. The concept of a “post-racial America” points to the election of our first black president as an indication that America presents an “equal opportunity” playing field where race does not matter anymore because we are in fact “beyond race.” Despite major gains in the

politics of race (pioneered by the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, ect.) there are still definite and sometimes even extreme advantages and disadvantages afforded to people based on their supposed race, or more acutely just the color of their skin.

Furthermore, the danger of thinking that we live in a “post-racial America” makes history static and implies the irrelevance of the historic creation of race as a fluid system with lasting structures and implications on society today. This thesis seeks to add to existing research on “post-racial America”. As this thesis shows, the Eurocentric nature of the contextualization and language employed to describe the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade reproduces ideologies of whiteness as the “norm” and dominant identity, while co-constructing blackness as the demonized “other”. In this way, the language and content of history and social studies textbooks quite overtly maintain systems of racial oppression rooted in the past. The objectives of the history and social studies textbooks analyzed in this thesis consistently emphasize learning about the past because of its relevance to students’ personal and collective lives in the present. However, through content and language analysis, the lack of emphasis that each text gives to the fundamental role the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade played as the basis for current racial oppressions stands in stark contrast to these objectives.

Methodology

In this thesis, four high school level textbooks were analyzed for the language and content they used to describe the same story: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. These four textbooks are a world history text (used in the United States), a United States history text, and two social studies textbooks used in junior high schools in Ghana, West Africa. The junior high school Ghanaian social studies textbooks were chosen in place of history texts because history is not a required class for Ghanaian high school students.

Each textbook was selected based on their popularity of use. Both of the textbooks from the United States are produced by one of the largest publishing companies in the country: McGraw-Hill Publishing. Conversely, the government produces and distributes textbooks in Ghana so the popularity of publishing companies is irrelevant. Instead, both of the Ghanaian textbooks used in this study were chosen based on field research I conducted in four schools in Cape Coast, Ghana during the months of April and May 2013. The textbooks used in this thesis are the textbooks used in those schools.

The analysis of these texts took the form of a language and content comparison. All three texts were compared in content by examining each text for its factual inclusion, omissions, and linguistic distortions regarding the telling of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Word choice that either acknowledged or distorted the historical facts of the trade, as well as word choice that was used to describe Africans and Europeans was also compared.

Literature Review

Social Studies/History Textbooks and Linguistic Choices

Research by linguists has explored significant connections between history textbook objectives and the ways in which grammar employed by textbook authors confuses these objectives. Specifically relevant to this thesis is a study conducted by Scheppelgrell et al., which demonstrated how these linguistic patterns have grave consequences on the way students learn about history. In their focused study on language as a “meaning-making resource,” Mary J. Scheppelgrell, Mariana Achugar, and Teresea Oteíza found that textbooks hold incredible weight in history and social studies classrooms mostly because these textbooks present the bulk of information that students are expected to learn (Scheppelgrell et al., 73). Not only does the amount of reading and writing found in social studies and history classes far surpass reading and writing found in other subjects (such as math or science), but the reading that students must complete in social studies and history is long and filled with abstract and unfamiliar concepts and schema (Short, 591). A study conducted by Beck, McKeown, and Gromoll (1989), found that the convoluted writing of elementary school history texts does not provide “relationships among ideas, motivations and consequence” (Beck et al., 147). Additionally, in 1993, Eggins et al. found that in order to understand history, students “need a sense of time, [a] cause-effect relationship, an understanding of the interaction of past and present, and an understanding that history is a dynamic relationship of people, place and time” (Eggins et al., 75). Furthermore, Eggins et al. discovered that these necessary objectives are often not achieved because, through the linguistic choices made in

textbooks, “people are effaced, actions become things, and sequence in time is replaced by frozen settings in time” (Eggins et al., 75). This latter observation is particularly relevant to the analysis of the Ghanaian social studies textbook, whose verbiage creates an almost incoherent story.

Textbook Bias

Previous researchers have also explored the hidden racial bias overshadowing many of the linguistic choices made by textbook authors. In 1992, Joyce King conducted an important study that examined what she found to be prejudicially racialized stories in history texts. In particular, King found that many history textbooks recommended for use in California contained “egregious racial stereotyping, inaccuracies, distortions, omissions, justifications, and trivializations of unethical and inhumane social practices, including racial slavery” (King, 322). King’s study further asserts that, “these books fail(ed) to meet the standards...for cultural diversity, ethical literacy, historical accuracy, opportunities to examine controversial issues and to develop critical thinking and democratic social participation skills” (King, 322). In particular, these textbooks dangerously set up an interpretation of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade by placing it within a context in which immigration was a process of assimilation and where all history regarding Africans was only addressed when in direct relation to slavery and nothing more. In the case of immigration, King explains that the textbook described a typical immigrant’s experience as one of assimilation and acculturation (King, 326). This then “obscure[d] and contradict[ed]” the racial injustice of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade by misquoting the Middle Passage with Ellis Island (King, 327). If the same

immigrant pattern of assimilation was applied to the African American experience, the textbook inherently implies that African Americans' personal failures are their lack of ability to assimilate and acculturate into American society (King, 326). If this comparison is true then the discrepancy between white and black people's educational and economic standings would not be viewed as symptoms of larger socially constructed hierarchies, but instead as a result of intrinsic qualities of failure. Ultimately, the immigrant story creates the African American experience as an anomaly rather than a cause of an American reality (King, 327).

Another study, conducted by Sadker and Sadker, explored the prevalence of sexist language in instructional materials (Sadker & Sadker). For their research, Sadker and Sadker used content analysis to investigate how instructional materials wrote about sexism, sex differences, experiences, and contributions of women, as well as the total text content afforded to females and males (Sadker & Sadker). They found an overwhelming lack of information concerning sex equity in education, and ultimately concluded that language reflects the biases of society (Sadker & Sadker). As a result of their observations, they identified six overarching forms of bias that can be found throughout all instructional materials: invisibility or omission, stereotyping, imbalance and selectivity, unreality, fragmentation and isolation, and linguistic bias (Sadker & Sadker). The first form of bias, invisibility, is when particular groups are omitted or not fully represented in the text (Sadker & Sadker). The second bias, stereotyping, occurs when there is an oversimplification or a lie told about the traits and behaviors of a certain group of people (Sadker & Sadker). Imbalance and selectivity, the third bias, arises when a culturally privileged

perspective is the only one being reported, which ultimately leads to an imbalanced account of a situation (Sadker & Sadker). The bias of unreality is present when the text ignores facts that are unpleasant or negative (Sadker & Sadker). The bias of fragmentation is when nondominant groups are kept on the perimeter of the page or described on the fringes of power (Sadker & Sadker). Finally, the last bias—language—highlights how word choice and metaphors can depict cultural biases (Sadker & Sadker).

This thesis calls upon similar linguistic and content observations as a means to explore misleading word choices and the distortion consequences they have on what is often thought of as an “objective” history. What separates this thesis from past research is its comparative approach to an analysis of the same history across continents. Comparing and contrasting the telling of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade across countries is significant because it further exemplifies and calls for an exploration of the reasons behind any apparent differences and even similarities in the telling of the same story.

As follows, in Section I of this thesis I analyze the linguistic as well as content choices employed to tell the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in a world history textbook used in high schools across the United States. I draw specific conclusions about the implications that the textbook’s language has on its stated objectives as a world history text. In Section II, I employ the same linguistic and content analysis on two Ghanaian Social Studies textbooks used in junior high schools in Ghana, West Africa. Some comparisons are made between the language choices of these textbooks and the world history text. This section concludes with a look at the specific

accomplishments the Ghanaian text achieved. In Section III, I analyze the telling of the Trans-Atlantic Slave from the perspective of a United States history textbook. Some comparisons are drawn across all of the texts analyzed, and the specific accomplishments of the United States history textbook's language and content choices are highlighted. Finally, in the first part of my concluding section, I discuss some overarching linguistic and content patterns found across the textbooks. The second section of the conclusion explores the lasting importance of this research. Finally, I call for further research to investigate the potential detrimental effects biased language in textbooks may have on students' development of their racial identities.

I. *World History: The Human Experience: World History from a Eurocentric Perspective*

About the Authors

United States textbooks tend to be the product of a collaborative writing and editing process of various authors, and academic consultants including both professors and secondary school teachers. In the case of this world history textbook, *World History: The Human Experience*, the text has two authors: Mounir Farah, and Andrea Karls. Dr. Mounir A. Farah is a research historian as well as the director of the Middle East Studies Program at the University of Arkansas (Farah & Karls, ii). Dr. Farah has taught at other universities including New York University and Western Connecticut State University. He was named Outstanding History Scholar-Teacher in New England, and was the past president of the Connecticut Council for Social Studies (Farah & Karls, ii). Dr. Farah is also the coauthor of another textbook entitled *Global Insights: People and Cultures* (Farah & Karls, ii). This textbook's second author, Andrea Berenes Karls, is also an educator as well as the coauthor of *Global Insights*. She was educated at Wellesley College and Harvard University and has taught both elementary and secondary school. She is a member of the National Council for the Social Studies and the American Historical Association (Farah & Karls, ii). Aside from these two authors, the other academic consultants for this book include six professors (five history professors and one professor of geography), three associate professors, and eleven high school teachers (Farah & Karls, ii).

Stated Objectives of the Textbook

As outlined by this textbook, the objective of the subject of history is to “understand the past and recognize its contributions to the present and future” (Farah & Karls, 11). The text goes on to explain that, “world history tells of significant people and events...It also encompasses broad historical themes that happen again and again, providing meaning for events in the past and showing how they affect contemporary life” (Farah & Karls, 11). Specifically, the authors describe this particular textbook as introducing “nine key historical themes. Each chapter highlights and develops several of these themes that demonstrate the interconnectedness of ideas and events. These events help organize your [the student’s] study of world history and make connections across time” (Farah & Karls, 10). The textbook’s themes are as follows: cooperation and conflict, revolution and reaction, change, diversity and uniformity, regionalism and nationalism, innovation, cultural diffusion, movement, and relation to environment (Farah & Karls, 10).

Structure of the Textbook and the Contextualization of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Out of the total 1022 pages of this book, only one and a quarter pages are dedicated to the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Specifically, this history is located under Chapter 17, entitled “Expanding Horizons” (Farah & Karls, V). The Eurocentricity of this chapter is promptly explicated with the Eurocentric quality of this chapter title, as the “expanding horizons” the authors refer to involve only the explorations of Europeans. Although in a more detailed description of this section the authors implore their readers to consider what the “result of cross-cultural contacts from the 1400s to the 1700s” was for Europe, Asia, Africa, and the

Americas, the disposition for understanding these contacts has already clearly been established from the perspective of Europeans.

The chapter's inclination towards Eurocentric views continues as the authors delineate the themes students are asked to identify throughout their reading. These themes are: innovation, movement, and change (Farah & Karls, 432). In their description of the first theme, innovation, the textbook presents the benefits Europeans gained from "borrowing" technological innovations from Asia. It should be noted that there is no explanation of any effect this "borrowing" may have had on Asians themselves. For the second theme, movement, the authors highlight only the travel made by Europeans during this time. Through the omission of any other movement of peoples during this period, the authors negate the existence of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. For the last theme, change, the authors explain how Europe developed from newly gained wealth generated by their colonies (as discovered and conquered during their explorations), while forgetting to mention the costs for those who were colonized (Farah & Karls, 432). As the authors describe them, each theme relates back only to the benefits that Europe gained from all of its new colonies. As we shall continue to see, even when the text is discussing a definitively non-European history, the authors still manage to present the narrative from the disposition of Europeans. Furthermore, the discussion of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade serves as the perfect example for the textbook's general Eurocentricity.

The history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is found in Chapter 17: Overseas Empires. Just below the "Guide to Reading" for this section is the "Section's

Storyteller;” John Sparke, a European male who traveled with English admiral John Hawkins to explore the coast of Florida and its “inhabitants” in 1589 (Farah & Karls, 440). Although after this brief mention, John Sparke is not discussed for the rest of the chapter, the mere selection of a white European male as the section’s “storyteller” denotes a plainly European perspective from which students are asked to read the rest of the chapter.

To set the exact stage, just before the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is discussed, the contextual scene is set through the authors’ review of initial expedition voyages Europeans made to “unchartered territory” (Farah & Karls, 440). The Portuguese empire’s exploration is the first to be described. The authors assure their readers that Portugal’s main exploratory interests in Africa and Asia were not in colonization but rather in trade (Farah & Karls, 440). After describing Portugal’s conquests in China, Japan, and Brazil, the authors go on to talk about a second wave of explorers; the Spanish conquistadores (conquerors) and the countries they colonized (Farah & Karls, 441). Next, the conquests of the Netherlands, followed by the French and English are illustrated (Farah & Karls, 442-444). After ten and three quarters pages of the authors fully establishing the great power and control that many European countries exercised across the world, the book finally discusses the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Language Employed to Describe the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

As mentioned above, the text begins this section on the Slave Trade with a specific discussion of Portugal’s involvement. The textbook explains that Portugal

began settling in Brazil but “because the local population did not supply enough labor, enslaved people were brought from Africa” (Farah & Karls, 440). The use of the word “because” in this sentence is problematic. According to Webster’s Dictionary, the word because is defined as “on account of the fact that; on account of being; since” (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary). This definition implies that to use the word “because” is a means to explore justified reasoning behind a particular action. In the case of the textbook’s employment of this word, the authors use “because” as a subtle rationalization for the utility of enslaved labor as a supplement to local labor in Brazil.

The justification for enslaved labor becomes a pattern when, following the discussion of Portugal’s empire in Brazil, the authors describe Spain’s presence in the Americas and again rationalize their use of slave labor. “As sugarcane production soared, more and more Africans arrived to work in the fields and in various trades” (Farah & Karls, 442). Primarily, this sentence vindicates Europeans from using slave labor as it characterizes their employment only as a means to meet growing production needs. Furthermore, the usage of the verb “arrived” in this sentence as the way to illustrate how Africans got to the shores of the Americas is noteworthy. Instead of coming to terms with the involuntary journey of millions of people across an ocean, the textbook instead decides to offer its readers a passive explanation. The supposed explanation the textbook gives when it resolves that Africans “arrived” on the shores of the Americas, inherently discounts the forceful removal of Africans on the part of Europeans. In other words, the use of the verb “to

arrive” dismisses any and all of the egregious actions perpetuated by Europeans when they forcibly removed Africans from their homeland.

Below is the textbook’s introduction to the specific discussion of the “Slave Trade” (as it is labeled by the authors).

In the 1600s European territories in the Americas based their economies on agricultural products that required intensive labor. Enslaved Africans planted and harvested sugar, tobacco, and coffee crops. They also worked silver mines. (Farah & Karls, 444)

It is interesting that the story of the “Slave Trade” in this textbook begins in the 1600s and on the continent of the United States. Although it might be true that in the 1600s the Americas established their economies on a slave based agricultural system, the transport of Africans across the Atlantic (i.e. the “Slave Trade,” or the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade) was not a consequence of this economic structure. In fact, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade itself began a century beforehand: in the 1500s (Eltis). In omitting the existence of a Slave Trade prior to the use of slave labor for American economies, the authors not only ignore a large part of the story, but also quite clearly prove that their disposition is only to discuss the world’s superpowers in connection to this history.

Following this short but powerful introduction, the section specifically begins to address the Atlantic trade itself. In this section, entitled “The Triangular Trade,” the authors explore the technicalities of how millions of people were transported across the globe.

The slave trade was part of what was called the **triangular trade** [textbook’s emphasis]. Ships sailed across the legs of a triangle formed by Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Typically, European ships left their homeports carrying manufactured goods—knives, swords, guns, cloth, and rum. In West Africa

the ship captains traded their goods with local rulers for enslaved people, most of whom were war captives (Farah & Karls 444).

Through the language used in this introductory paragraph, the authors introduce their readers to Africans as complacent traders who benefited from the highly sophisticated and developed “manufactured goods” brought to them by Europeans (Farah & Karls, 444). Not only are Africans presented as complicit, but as the textbook presents it, West African rulers are also demonized.

Although it is true that during the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade (which predicated the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade) Africans were already engaged in the enslavement and trade of other Africans, the implication that Africans were the primary captures for the Slave Trade is false. Problematically, the authors support their misleading claim when they go on to explain, “Captured by other Africans, enslaved Africans were sold to European slave traders along the coast for transport to American plantations” (Farah & Karls, 445). There are in fact two problems with this statement. The first is the assumption that fellow Africans captured and sold all of those enslaved. Although some Africans did sell their war captives to Europeans, the number of enslaved peoples acquired through this manner was nowhere near the total number of enslaved Africans brought to the Americas (King, 333). In addition, implying that Africans were selling their fellow Africans is misleading for readers today. Although today we understand the identity of an African as an individual part of a larger collective, the conventionalization of a commonly shared identity was not created until after captured Africans arrived on the shores of the Americas (King, 333). Moreover, the concept of a shared African identity on the continent itself was an even later creation. In fact, at the time the first

European/African contact was made, Africans viewed themselves as loyal not to the continent, not even to their specific region, but to their own ethnic or tribal group. The idea of a consolidated African identity did not come to fruition until much later when, in the 1950s, Kwame Nkrumah, in his fight for the freedom of Ghana from British rule, created the theory of Pan-Africanism in order to unite all Africans across the continent and even the world (Winant, 34). Similar to the conceptualization of an African American identity, Pan-Africanism was employed by Africans in order to fight for their personal liberation as well as for the collective liberation of all African people across the continent and beyond (Winant, 34). Without the historic contextualization for the lack of a unified African and African American identity, a high-school student reading this text would not necessarily have enough information to properly ponder and understand why some Africans may have sold others into slavery.

Not only does the textbook ignore the historical context for the creation of an African identity, but the text also fails to explain that those Africans trading their fellow Africans were not actually aware that their war captives would be sold into a slave trade (Winant, 42-43). Had they been privy to this information there is no way to know whether or not those who participated in this “trade” with Europeans would still have sold their captives.

The chapter’s section on the Slave Trade concludes with a brief interpretation of the “resistance” many enslaved individuals exercised against their oppressors.

In addition to its inhumanity, the slave trade wrenched untold numbers of young, productive Africans from their homelands. This population loss at

least temporarily weakened many African societies. As a result, many Africans tried to resist the slave trade (Farah & Karls, 445).

The paragraph above, the introduction to the final conclusion, illustrates a crucial final layer of Eurocentricity overshadowing the textbook's telling of this story. Firstly, although the authors recognize population loss as a consequence of this trade, saying that it only "temporarily" weakened African societies is disconcerting. The use of the word "temporarily" stands in direct opposition to the authors' stated objectives of this textbook. If the subject of history is to emphasize the importance of how and why certain social and structural phenomenon are taking place in our world today, why would the textbook use a word such as "temporarily" to illuminate the lasting implications of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade? Furthermore, by only acknowledging "population loss" as the cause of weakened African societies, the textbook is being unfaithful to the reality of the multilayered exploitation Europeans exercised against Africa and her people. The forced removal of people was not the only "resource" stolen from African countries (Winant, 91). Europeans came to Africa and succeeded in exploiting not only her people but also her natural resources. Consequently, population loss cannot be and should not be the only factor considered when examining how Europeans' involvement in African countries crippled local African communities.

Ultimately, it is essential to remember that the information above is coming from a world history textbook. One might believe that a world history text would feel a responsibility to paint a more comprehensive and global picture of the lasting effects (as the textbook describes them) sustained by a given historical moment. This text even prefaced the chapter in which the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade appears

by stating that the authors would hope students could learn about the lasting effects that this moment in history had on “Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas”. A lack of acknowledgement for the lasting negative effects of slavery in African countries is this textbook’s final and most deplorable omission.

II. Junior High School Social Studies Textbook Form One and Form Two: Ghanaian Social Studies and an Emphasis on Tourism

Before I begin this section on the Ghanaian textbooks, I first want to acknowledge that for this section I have chosen to analyze two social studies textbooks simultaneously: one Junior High School Form One, and one Junior High School Form Two. I felt it necessary to utilize two textbooks instead of one because of how short each text is. Textbooks in Ghana do not contain the same detail nor are they as comprehensive as textbooks in the United States. Whereas the world history textbook analyzed in this thesis is 1022 pages, and United States history textbook is 1059 pages, each Ghanaian textbook is just over one hundred pages. Due to the limited content available in just one text, I felt two textbooks would provide a sufficient amount of information for a more comprehensive analysis.

About the Author

Unlike the co-authorship and collaborative writing structure used for the world history textbook, there is only one author, Bin Jasim, who has written several if not all of the most recent social studies textbooks in Ghana. That being said there are three editors that worked on this textbook in conjunction with Jasim. Surprisingly, no background information on the author or any of the editors is provided. Upon further outside research, it was discovered that each of these editors are also authors of another Computer Skills textbook used in Ghana, however, no further information was found regarding Mr. Jasim.

Stated Objectives of the Textbook

As written by both the Junior High School Form One (J.H.S. Form 1) as well as Form Two (J.H.S. Form 2), “Social Studies is the integrated study of the Social Sciences and Humanities to promote effective citizenry” and that it is meant to “equip the students with...skills and attitudes that will help the students develop a broader perspective of Ghana and the world” (Jasim, Preface). The textbook goes on to explain that social studies, “is also the study of problems of society. The subject prepares the individual to fit into society by equipping him/her with knowledge about culture and ways of life of their society, its problems, its values and its hopes for the future” (Jasim, Preface). Additionally, social studies is defined by the author as a subject that helps “students to understand their society better; helps them to investigate how their society functions” (Jasim, Preface).

Junior High School Social Studies Textbook, Form Two

Before I begin my analysis in these next two sections, I would first like to acknowledge my linguistic decision to refer to the Cape Coast and Elmina castles as dungeons. Although it is historically accurate to refer to these monuments as “castles,” I believe this word is an inaccurate representation of what these edifices stood for. As defined by the dictionary a castle is, “the residence of a prince or noble in feudal times” (Merriam-Webster). It would make sense that when the word castle is used thoughts of royalty and nobility are elicited. Contrary to these associations, the Cape Coast and Elmina castles were not used to house any royalty or nobles. Instead, most who were housed in these “castles” were captives kept in large dungeons spanning the majority of the buildings’ square footage. I believe that the

continued reference to these edifices as “castles” only whitewashes the use of them as torture chambers.

My personal decision to refer to these edifices as dungeons also directly relates to my dispute with the language used to describe them in the Ghanaian social studies textbook. Throughout the entire text the monuments are consistently referred to as castles. The reference to them as “castles” neatly supplements a more general sense of apathy surrounding the history that took place behind their walls. A clear step towards combating this apathy is a more conscious understanding and use of the word dungeon in place of the word castle. Furthermore, it seems logical to use language that most clearly and precisely describes the actual function of these “castles”.

Structure of the Textbook and the Contextualization of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The entire Ghanaian social studies textbook for Junior High School Form Two (J.H.S. Form 2) can be read without one mention of the word slavery. The only indirect reference to the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade falls under the chapter entitled “Socio-Economic Development: Tourism, Leisure and Development”. The introductory paragraph to this chapter discusses how “tourism has become an integral part of everyday life” and how “tourism abounds in places of scenic interest” (Jasim, 1659). Jasim goes on to explain how important this industry is to Ghana as after gold and cocoa “tourism is the next industry that gives our [Ghanaian] economy enough revenue and foreign exchange” (Jasim, 1659). The fact that out of only ten chapters the author decided to dedicate one entire chapter just

to tourism speaks volumes. This decision proves the overtly strong emphasis that has been placed on Ghana's tourism industry.

Particularly intriguing is that the slave dungeons in Cape Coast and Elmina are listed as one of only four tourist destinations mentioned in this chapter. The other sites include a national park, a lake, the famous Boti Waterfalls, as well as a monkey sanctuary (Jasim 1665-1671). The textbook's assertion that these slave dungeons are a valuable component of Ghana's tourism industry—one of the most cherished industries in Ghana today—places a clear emphasis on their relevance for foreign interest while at the same time negating their relevance for Ghanaians. Because the textbook only mentions the slave dungeons is in this chapter and nowhere else throughout the book, it seems clear that more importance is being ascribed to their revenue production capabilities rather than their historical and personal pertinence for Ghanaians.

Language Employed to Describe the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

As was seen in the section above, there is an obvious stress placed on the relevance of these dungeons for tourists instead of for Ghanaians themselves. The language used to describe the dungeons only reiterates this message. Jasim explains that these "sites [the Elmina Castle and Cape Coast Castle are where] tour guides explain many things about the slave trade to tourists" (Jasim, 1701).

Not only does Jasim place a pronounced stress on the foreign appreciation of these dungeons, but he also asserts that part of the reason for an emphasis on foreign interest is because Ghanaians lack interest in visiting any tourist sites.

“Though our government obtains much revenue from the tourism industry, many Ghanaians do not show interest in visiting tourist sites” (Jasim, 1668). Jasim does later acknowledge the fact that most Ghanaians do not have the time to invest their financial resources because they are too preoccupied with daily survival.

Most Ghanaians are so pre-occupied with activities to get their daily bread that they do not devote enough time for rest and leisure. Consequently we [Ghanaians] do not see the value of tourist centers and do not take advantage of them. (Jasim, 1662-1668)

Unfortunately, Jasim blames Ghanaians for not seeing “the value of tourist centers” when he explicates that this lack of interest is based on misconceptions of tourism. As he says it, Ghanaians are unable to see tourism as anything other than a “pleasure for the rich” (Jasim, 1668). Jasim follows this statement by asserting that it is not only poverty but also a lack of appreciation for beauty that prevent Ghanaians from enjoying tourist experiences: “people [Ghanaians] do not see anything special about scenic places of interest that they must spend money to visit such places” (Jasim, 1710). Jasim continues to blame Ghanaians by saying that they don’t see the “value” in leisurely activities. “Unfortunately, many Ghanaians do not see the value of leisure. People therefore consider leisure and tourism as a waste of time and resources” (Jasim, 1710). Value, is defined by Merriam-Webster as “relative worth, merit, or importance,” and so when Jasim states that Ghanaians do not see the “value” of leisure, what he is really saying is that they do not see the worth or importance of it. These statements turn a socially constructed system of poverty into a character flaw by faulting Ghanaians themselves with a lack of interest in their country’s assets. The author is not recognizing the larger system of poverty that keeps them from investing in such leisure.

Overall, through the language and content of this chapter, Jasim obviously places an enormous emphasis on the value of foreigners for Ghana, while at the same time overtly remarking on the lack of involvement Ghanaians have in such an important industry. Furthermore, the language used to describe why Ghanaians are not interested or invested in tourist attractions is hugely problematic. The constant critiquing of Ghanaians for not being part of a tourist industry that they have been systematically ostracized from due to a general state of low-SES is an unfair devaluation of their commitment to tourism.

Overall, these statements covertly privilege the knowledge of foreigners (more often than not Westerners) who are traveling to Ghana and actively seeking out two of the most important historical artifacts in the world. It is crucial to see that Jasim's devaluation of Ghanaians' knowledge and concern for these monuments is embedded within a story that stresses the value and benefits of tourists' interest in the "castles" and Ghana at large. The result of these concurrent discourses is that they do not simply run parallel to each other but actually feed off of one another and subsequently create a story in which foreigners' have a greater inherent value for Ghana than Ghanaians themselves.

Perhaps the most frightening fact of all is not that Ghanaians are criticized for their lack of involvement in this industry but that these internationally important historical monuments have been completely removed from the everyday lives of Ghanaians, and placed solely within tourism. Just the fact that schools are using textbooks, which emphasizes to young adolescents the categorization of these

monuments as tourist attractions, distances the students from internalizing the importance they have on their own history.

Junior High School Social Studies Textbook, Form One

Structure of the Textbook and the Contextualization of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Compared to the Social Studies Form Two (J.H.S. Form 2) textbook, the Social Studies Form One (J.H.S. Form 1) textbooks discussion of the Slave Trade is a bit more extensive. The Slave Trade is addressed under the chapter “Colonisation and National Development”. Starting from the title alone, this chapter clearly calls into question the relationship between the effects that Europe (the colonizer) had on Ghana. In this chapter, Jasim focuses on Ghana’s contact with the British, the effects of colonization on the country, as well as more specific details regarding the Slave Trade.

Problematically, and yet perhaps unsurprisingly, pairing the words “colonization” and “development” sets the student up to read this chapter from a Eurocentric disposition. Development is defined as “the act or process of growing or causing something to grow or become larger or more advanced” (Merriam-Webster). Therefore, the association of the idea of “development”, or growth, paired with the term colonization suggests that the textbook is connecting these two concepts in a positive way. The linguistic association between colonialism and development shows that the textbook is equating European dominance with national development and progress in Ghana. By contextualizing the Slave Trade in

this way, this textbook seems to be no different from the world history textbook's Eurocentric disposition.

Before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is directly mentioned in this chapter, the author explores Ghana's contact with the British as well as the effects that this contact had on the country. To begin, the chapter defines colonization as "the system of government in which a country is totally ruled by another country" (Jasim, 515). The text goes on to explain that the "British controlled every activity of Ghanaians. Our [Ghanaians] defense, economy, law and the entire day-to day administration of the nation" (Jasim, 515). The use of the word "control" as a description of the relationship between the British and Ghanaians is important as it serves to recognize of the lack of agency Ghanaians possessed during this time of domination. However, the text quickly reverts back to its original Eurocentric positioning when it interprets the reasoning behind British "control".

The British came to Ghana to trade with people. They began to make laws to deal with cases of disobedience and crime in their settlement on the coast and the immediate neighbourhood. The British hoped that by this, they would create an atmosphere of peace, order and security necessary for the growth of their trade. From 1820, the British began to interfere with the affairs of local rulers in Southern Ghana (Jasim, 515-528)

The governor of the forts and castles, Sir Charles MacCarthy, established courts in the Cape Coast castle to try cases involving natives.

The British also brought the Ashanti under their control to ensure peaceful trade. The first half of the nineteenth century was period of many wars between Ashanti and the southern states...If Ashanti was defeated, the governor [Sir Charles MacCarthy] believed, trade would be free from being impinged upon by the hostilities (Jasim, 528).

Read word for word, the narrative above is almost nonsensical. The lack of segues between each paragraph prevents students from gaining any cohesive story

of the Slave Trade. The author jumps from one example to the next with hardly any clear or coherent transitions amongst ideas or concepts; resulting in the loss of a logical narrative. And what is history without narrative? History is nothing but a story. Historians weave facts around a timeline of causation that, when seamlessly presented, brings light to a series of events. In comparison to the world history text, the Ghanaian text's narrative is not necessarily misleading students towards a more Eurocentric perspective, but it is instead leaving them without any formal story at all.

Although students may not be grasping a cohesive history, the word choice used in the narrative above, as disjointed as it may be, is in fact communicating a linguistically biased story. Just in the first sentence Jasim establishes Europeans as only traders coming to Ghana to participate in a communal act of equal exchange. Moreover, as the author describes it, the initial contact made between the British and the Ashanti kingdom seemed to serve as a means to secure peaceful agreements with the indigenous rulers of Ghana. What the text fails to illuminate however, is how those interactions between the British and local leaders were more accurately characterized by force rather than peace. Furthermore, nowhere are the tactics of coercion or misinformation as tools for Europeans to acquire trust with local leaders explained (Winant, 42-43).

Jasim continues with this discourse of Europeans' good intentions when, in the second sentence, he showcases them for generously creating a system of management in order to control Ghanaians' "disobedient" and "criminal" behavior. Tragically, the description of this system not only creates the generalizing and

dehumanizing assumption that Ghanaians were somehow inherently “criminal” (needing to be managed and controlled), but it also further validates a positive association between British colonization and the forward “development” of Ghana.

Language Employed to Describe the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

To begin the specific section on the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the text begins with reasons why Europeans engaged in this trade (Jasim, 595). Two out of the five reasons are listed below:

1. The labour for the slaves was needed in the mines and on plantations in the Caribbean and America...
2. The native Indian population was initially used to supply labor in the mines and on the farms. The increasing demand for labour as more mines were opened and more plantations established mean that the native Indians alone could no longer be relied upon for labour. (Jasim, 595)

As was seen in the world history text, the use of the word “needed,” as well as the justification for slave labor due to the depletion of the local worker population in the Americas, sets the stage for the justification of Europe’s involvement in the “required” exploitation of Africans. In addition, the Ghanaian text, just like the world history text, nearly overlooks the entire history of the Slave Trade prior to the “need” for slave labor on plantations in the United States. Just as was “forgotten” in the world history text, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade began many years before slave labor was used to fuel the growth of these plantations. The only acknowledgement the text gives to the existence of a Slave Trade prior to transport of Africans to the Americas can be found on the following page:

Europeans were already acquainted with slave labour in Africa. Portuguese settlers put up plantations and used African slave labour successfully on Cape Verde Islands and in the Bight of Biafra. The strength and endurance of

the African slave was an invitation to use slaves from Africa to meet labour demands of plantation and mine owners in the Indies and the Americas (Jasim, 615).

Firstly, it is factually problematic that the text omits any recognition of the Netherlands' involvement in the trade prior to the arrival of the British. Secondly, and more importantly, the use of the word "invited" is not only another justification of the enslavement of Africans, but also an obviously unfair way to blame the victims. When the text describes the Portuguese's' African slaves as naturally strong and possessing good endurance, it implies that Africans were inherently good slaves because they possessed the natural qualities for arduous agricultural work. To use the example of their work ethic and strength from the Cape Verde Islands as an "invitation" to be enslaved in other nations is egregious. Finally, in a last attempt to further criminalize the victims of this situation, Jasim describes those that were enslaved as "criminals, debtors, offenders, thieves, adulterers and stubborn children" (Jasim, 615). If the enslaved persons were inherently bad but also hard and strong workers, then Europeans' use of them for labor seems only to be taking advantage of an obviously beneficial situation.

Although there are clear patterns between the Eurocentricity of the world history text and this Ghanaian textbook, there are a few important distinctions to be made. Firstly, this text does recognize the acquisition of Africans through organized European raids on towns and villages (Jasim, 615). In addition, this text and the J.H.S. Form Two text are the only two that write about the use of dungeons as holding zones for Africans. However, although these dungeons are acknowledged they are not by any means described in full detail. In fact the only detail used to

describe them in J.H.S. Form One textbook is that they “were poorly ventilated” (Jasim, 615). Lastly, this text is the only one to conclude with a list of long-term effects from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Africa. This list includes depopulation, a loss of self-respect, the creation of ill-feeling between ethnic groups, the African Diaspora (although it is not called as such), the “retardation” of economic development in Africa due to the loss of man power, and finally the suppression of handicraft industries (Jasim, 635-697). This list at least fulfills the objectives of social studies: to make children aware of the past as the foundation for the present and future. Although each of the texts analyzed in this thesis initially outlined this intention, the Ghanaian text is the only one to fulfill such an objective.

III. *The American Vision: United States History, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and the Foundation for American Racial Hierarchies*

The last text analyzed in this thesis is a United States history textbook. Analysis and conclusions from the other two textbooks have proved a clearly Eurocentric undertone to the telling of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Interestingly enough, although there are some problematically biased statements and omissions, this text gives the most objectively honest description of this history.

About the Authors

Like the world history text, this textbook also used a collaborative writing process. Although there are only a couple of authors and multiple contributors on the world history text, this textbook, *The American Vision*, has five authors, one contributing author, eleven academic consultants, and sixty teacher reviewers. Particularly relevant for this thesis is the fact that two of the authors have a clear focus of research on African Americans—the first on the Civil War, the second on African American studies. Salient to note here is how an author's values, perspectives have a significant influence on their writing. Romanowski (1996) states that, "in making judgments about what should be included and what should be excluded, and how particular episodes in history should be summarized, textbook authors assign positive or negative interpretations to particular events thereby asserting a set of values" (170). As mentioned above, the United States history textbook presents the most factually accurate and un-biased telling of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. This could perhaps partly be due to the fact that two of the textbook's authors specialize in African American studies.

Stated Objectives of the Textbook

In the preface, under the heading “Big Ideas in History,” the authors define the themes of this textbook as “concept[s] that happen again and again throughout history. By recognizing these themes you [the student] will better understand events of the past and how they affect you [the student] today.” (Appleby, Brinkley, Broussard, McPherson, Ritchie, xxviii). The reoccurring themes are as follows: culture and beliefs, past and present, geography and history, individual action, group action, government and society, science and technology, economics and society, trade, war, and migration, and a struggle for rights (Appleby et al., xxviii-xxix). All of these themes are important markers for how the authors interpret and present their understanding of major historical moments addressed throughout the book. For this thesis, it is useful to notice how each theme sets the tone for a student’s interpretation of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

For example, a compelling theme to consider is that of individual action. The text defines this theme as, “responsible individuals who have stepped forward to help lead the nation. Americans’ strong values have created such individuals” (Appleby et al., xxix). The reference that is made to “Americans’ strong values” points to a serious discourse and topic in American history: the concept of democracy. The ideology of democracy is a critical component to United States history, as it is the fundamental base to the ideals of American society. What democracy means and how it is interpreted in the context of the United States history has been highly contested. As this U.S. History textbook defines it, “the

foundation of democracy is the right of every person to take part in government and to voice one's views on issues" (Appleby et al., xxix). The simplicity of this definition is complicated by the reality that certain Americans have historically been excluded from the fundamental privileges that a democratic government should afford all citizens. For the purposes of this thesis, it is relevant not only to remember the systematic ways in which African American men and women were kept from participating fully in America's "democracy," but also how the fundamental stages of institutionalized restraint can be traced all the way back to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Structure of the Textbook and the Contextualization of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The specific history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is much more difficult to locate within this United States history textbook than it was in the world history textbook and the Ghanaian social studies texts. This may be true because in the context of the United States, the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is overpowered by the history of plantation slavery. Although the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is only mentioned twice throughout this text, the history of slavery in the United States can be found throughout many themes and chapters of this book. For example, slavery is dealt with especially in sections regarding the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights Movement. It should be noted that when referring to slavery, the authors refer only to it as an institution. The continued emphasis on slavery as an institution results in a lack of acknowledgement for the individual actions slave owners perpetuated against slaves.

Language Employed to Describe the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The first mention of the history of slavery, and the first hint towards the establishment of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, is found under the heading “Europe Begins to Explore”. This section of the text is unsurprisingly about the initial explorations that Europeans made as they worked their way across oceans looking for trade and technology (Appleby et al., 14). In the middle of this section there is a small one-page segment about “African Cultures,” and it is here that the Trans-Atlantic Trade is first addressed. After just a brief half page description of the established empires in West Africa, the authors describe the indigenous system of African slavery that was similar to—although not entirely the same as—the system that Europeans adopted in their own territories (Appleby et al., 16-17). In the textbooks words: “as in other parts of world, slavery existed in African society. Most of the people enslaved in African societies had been captured in war” (Appleby et al., 17). The mention of an already established system of slavery present in African countries prior to the arrival of Europeans is a subtle justification that was also employed by the world history textbook. Just like in the world history text, the relevance of mentioning that slavery already existed in African societies prior to the arrival of Europeans allows the text to set the stage for Europe’s later involvement a previously established system. The United States history textbook contends that Europeans were only following in the steps of Africans as they “*also* [emphasis mine] sought enslaved Africans” (Appleby et al., 17). The use of the word “also” subtly asserts that Europeans did not change the climate of an already stable system

set in place by African and Arab traders (involved in indigenous trade) before them. If Africans were already enslaving other Africans, and Arabs were already trading goods for people then what was stopping Europeans from doing the same? In this text, Europeans seem only to be benefiting from a pre-established system of slavery and trade by “also” seeking enslaved Africans just like the Arab and Africans that preceded them (Appleby et al., 17).

In its defense, and contrary to the bias of the world history textbook, this text does allude to some key difference between the indigenous system of African slavery and the European system to come. However, the lack of elaboration on these differences leaves students without the complete story. The textbook explains that, “most African societies would either ransom captives back to their people or absorb them into their own society” (Appleby et al., 17). Unfortunately, this clarification only grazes the surface of the largest and most crucial difference between the structure of African and European slave labor. Although the slave was viewed as a commodity in both the African and European contexts (Perbi, 4), slavery as previously practiced in Africa did not dehumanize its victims (Yboah, 37). In Africa the slave was still regarded as a human being—an individual person who was still entitled to rights and privileges (Perbi, 4). Unlike in the West, whenever a slave was acquired in Ghana for example, he or she was integrated into the family (Perbi, 8). The slave in Ghana thus became a member of his or her owner’s household and a part of the owners’ family, lineage, and clan (Perbi, 8). To further amalgamate the integration of the slave into the family unit, slaves in Ghana were always given the name of their owner (Perbi, 8). In summary, “what gives African slavery its

particular stamp, in contrast to many other slave systems, is the existence of this slavery to the kinship continuum” (Perbi, 8). Europeans changed this more benign system when they broke Africans of their cultural traditions, defined them as Others, and subsequently placed them on the bottom of a hierarchical system of dominance and oppression. In the West, the slave had no rights at birth (Perbi, 9). Europeans changed the worth of the slave from that of a human to that of chattel when they decided that Africans were not only inherently lesser than Europeans, but in fact should not be afforded such basic human rights as the ability to vote, own property, or participate in a more equal workforce. Without the proper and complete exploration of this difference between the indigenous practice of African slavery and the European system, a high-school reader would never fully be able to understand and/or interpret the dehumanization that characterized Western slavery.

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is not mentioned again until twenty-two pages later in a section entitled “Trade and the Rise of Cities”. As described by the textbook, this section is about the growth “American colonies experienced...through national increase and immigration” (Appleby et al., 42). The “Main Idea” of this section is to highlight that, “Cities [in the United States] prospered and grew through trade with England, Africa, and other colonies” (Appleby et al., 38). Below the outline of this “Main Idea” is a picture showing the movement of exports and imports between the three continents involved, and yet nowhere in this section is this trafficking of human bodies mentioned.

The system of buying and trading humans is not mentioned until five pages later under Section 5: A Diverse Society. There are few written words dedicated to this excerpt, which is unfortunate as it is the only section that gives its full attention to the “Atlantic Slave Trade” (as labeled by the text). Instead of text, this section is mostly dominated by “Primary Source” imagery, which includes a drawing of a small group of Africans sitting on their “beds” in the belly of the slave ship, a map of the continents involved in the Slave Trade, an image of one of the many dungeons the slaves were held in before their long journey across the Atlantic, and a painting capturing the arduous work enslaved peoples were forced to participate in once they were brought to their final destinations (Appleby et al., 44-45). Although this primary source material is powerful, the small blurbs of information attached to the images hardly provide a sufficient stage for students to understand and contextualize the pictures.

Under the section “Africans in the Colonies” the authors elaborate on how some Africans in America made it across the shores:

For Africans, the voyage to America usually began with a forced march to the West African coast, where they were traded to Europeans, branded, and crammed onto ships. Chained together in the ships’ filthy holds for more than a month, they were given minimal food and drink. Those who died or became sick were thrown overboard.

Historians estimate that between 10 and 12 million Africans were enslaved and sent to the Americas between 1450 and 1870. On the way, roughly 2 million died at sea (Appleby et al., 44).

Out of all of the textbooks analyzed, this description of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is by far the most open and honest narrative. Although it is brief, this text is the only one to include such details as the actual numbers of Africans who were both transported, as well as estimates about those who tragically passed along the

route. Although this information on the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade is the most honest, it is peculiar that in a United States history textbook none of the implications of the African Diaspora are explored. One might think that because the Americas received so many enslaved Africans that the authors would want to explore the Diaspora community of those Africans spread around the world. Moreover, the textbook objective's emphasis on the importance of the past as a guide for the future further questions this lack of acknowledgement of the African Diaspora.

Furthermore, the lack of recognition for the influence the trade had on institutions that continued to maintain systematic racial oppression—plantation slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration—discounts the lasting effects of a four hundred year history. A more detailed appreciation for the hierarchy of races that the Slave Trade institutionalized would allow for a better and more comprehensive understanding of the systems that were later established to maintain that hierarchy.

Textbook Patterns

Through an analysis of the language and content used to discuss the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, three clear themes were found across all four textbooks: the Eurocentric disposition from which the story was told, the demonization of Africans, and the justification for Europe's involvement in the trade. Consequently, all of these themes aid the reproduction and maintenance of a hegemonic discourse of Eurocentricity.

An influential metaphor used to summarize the consequences of this hegemony is that of "the margin and center". The "center" of this metaphor represents the "knowledge, values, or beliefs of the dominant culture" (Byrne, 32). In the case of this thesis the culture that holds power in both contexts—Ghana and the United States—is Europe (i.e. white culture). Throughout all of the textbooks Europeans' experiences are situated at the "center" of the discourse and thus their lives are perceived as "normative," whereas Africans and African Americans are situated on the "margin," making them appear deviant and "non-normative".

Although biased language choice played a large role in the production of this Eurocentric discourse, the textbook authors' linguistic choices were not the only means to which they presented a limited and distorted view of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. "In making judgments about what should be included and what should be excluded, and how particular episodes in history should be summarized, textbook authors assign positive or negative interpretations to particular events thereby asserting a set of values" (Romanowski, 170). Across each textbook it was clear that certain key historical facts regarding the Slave Trade were forgotten.

These omissions were crucially important to framing the Slave Trade because through the careful decision of what facts to include or exclude “it is possible to construct arguments that can be wholly one-sided, yet can be asserted to “fit the facts” (Romanowski, 170). For example, even though the United States history textbook was the most factually accurate it still neglected to include any information on how the racist ideology used to support the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade played a critical role in setting the foundation for U.S. race relations today. Due to an insufficient recognition of the fundamental effect the Slave Trade had on systemic racial oppression in the United States, the authors subtly support a static understanding of systemic racial subordination. To think of our history as individually isolated events negates the continued creation of parallel systems actively engaged in reproducing racial domination.

“People get used to anything. The less you think about your oppression, the more your tolerance for it grows. After a while, people just think oppression is the normal state of things. But to become free, you have to be acutely aware of being a slave.”—Assata Shakur

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”—Nelson Mandela

Implications for Teachers, Students and Further Research

The textbooks analyzed in this thesis are engaged in a discourse of cultural hegemony that seeks to enshrine dominant group values and perspectives. These textbooks are occupied by the creation of ideological justifications for racial domination and therefore do not actively challenge our dominant system of power. Problematically, textbooks have the ability not only to create the status quo but also to “shape people’s perceptions and ideas about themselves and society” (King, 321). As a result, textbooks hold immense weight both in and out of the classroom. In the quote below, researcher Cherryholmes deftly summarizes the decidedly authoritative power of textbooks:

They [textbooks] make statements about subject matter, social values and arrangements, what counts as knowledge and what information is more or less important. They assert by inclusion and exclusion what is important and unimportant to study and present meaning of words as fixed. (51)

Moreover, the linguistic choices textbook authors use to describe the subject matter included have consequences on the overall impression students’ gain about history.

What sticks to the memory from those textbooks [from her schooldays] is not any particular series of facts but an atmosphere, an impression, a tone. And this impression may be all the more influential just because one cannot remember the facts and arguments that created it (FitzGerald, 18).

Further research might explore the specific affects racially biased language could have on the personal perception both black and white students have about

themselves and their places in the world. Children spend some of their most formative years in school. It can be presumed that if their days are inundated with biased information about racial history that the development of their racial identities could be negatively affected. Further research on the potentially influential affects biased language has on the development of racial identity would crucially supplement my research.

The racially biased conclusions found throughout this thesis call upon the necessity for students to learn and engage in critical reading. Students must be made aware of the bias in textbooks so that they can critically see how authors never produce work that is value-free. In order for students to be equipped with this critical lens, teachers themselves must first recognize the subjectivity of textbooks. Furthermore, teachers must question and re-understand the authority that textbooks hold in classrooms. A textbook is not and should not be considered the ultimatum of historical information, and teachers should actively be asking students to question the authoritative power textbooks have by presenting them as one single source of biased information. Moreover, the representation of Africans, Europeans, African Americans, and any other racial or ethnic group for that matter, is dependent upon textbooks almost as much as it is upon teachers. Teachers have the capacity, and I would argue the responsibility, to “present material that accentuates contributions, challenges historical givens, empowers the marginalized and, above all, raises awareness of and reflection upon race and racial stereotyping and the impact they have on the historical interpretations of American history”

(Lintner, 27). This kind of curriculum, along with a higher level of critical consciousness would create a more dynamic and inclusive history classroom.

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