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Silent Voices, Silent Stories: Japanese Canadians in Social Studies Textbooks

The purpose of this article is to illustrate the importance of reading social studies textbooks through a critical lens. Students and teachers who engage in critical interrogation of texts will broaden their understanding of history and the inequities that have shaped Canadian society over time. Informed by both critical and postmodern theory, this analysis of three commonly used grade 10 social studies textbooks elucidates the limitations inherent in each textbook's discussion of the history of Japanese Canadians. It also illustrates the failure to contextualize specific events in history, potentially leaving students with a narrow conception of historical events. Historical sources written by Japanese Canadians were used to gain a better understanding of their experiences and to strengthen the analysis. The implications of the limitations for students and teachers are discussed, as well as how textbooks can be used more productively in social studies classrooms.

Le but de cet article est d'illustrer à quel point il est important d'aborder d'un œil critique la lecture de manuels d'études sociales. Les élèves et les enseignants qui font une lecture critique des manuels approfondiront leur connaissance de l'histoire et des iniquités qui ont influencé l'évolution de la société canadienne. Reposant tant sur les théories de la critique et du postmodernisme, cette analyse de trois manuels fréquemment employés dans l'enseignement des études sociales en 10^e année souligne les limites inhérentes dans la présentation qu'on y fait de l'histoire des Japonais au Canada. L'analyse démontre également le manque de contextualisation d'événements historiques précis, lacune qui risque de fournir une interprétation limitée de l'histoire aux élèves. Des textes historiques écrits par des Canadiens Japonais ont été consultés pour mieux comprendre le vécu des Japonais au Canada d'une part et pour renforcer l'analyse d'autre part. L'on évoque les implications pour les élèves et les enseignants des limitations et on explique comment les manuels d'études sociales peuvent être mieux employés.

Introduction

Students in grade 10 social studies classrooms in Alberta learn a detailed history of Canada, beginning before confederation and ending in contemporary times. An emphasis in this course is on Canada's involvement in World Wars I and II and the effect that these events had on Canada as a nation. However, the telling of these events seems to reflect a narrative in which members of the dominant social group receive most of the coverage in historical discourse. Individuals and groups who occupy spaces outside of this narrative are often excluded, or at best given cursory attention in discussions of historical events (Ellsworth, 1994). The representation of Japanese Canadian experiences appears to be no exception. Yet through their voices and stories students and teachers are better able to understand the historical experiences of Japanese Canadians. As with any minority group that has suffered at the hands

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of the majority, Japanese Canadian experiences illustrate the racism that has plagued Canada throughout its history and reflects the challenges that these groups faced, and continue to face, in this country. These insights, however, are often not part of social studies textbooks' telling of history, although mention is made of Japanese Canadians, reaffirming that historical writing is informed by a particular perspective (Anyon, 1979; Lerner, Altheak, & Rothman, 1995; Sadker & Sadker, 1988; Tetreault, 1986).

The Textbook as Curriculum

The curriculum that students encounter in schools seems to mirror a particular view of the world, conservative in nature, in which the experiences of only select individuals or groups are valued (Bernard-Powers, 1997). According to Banks (2001), school subjects are often "taught to students as a body of truth not to be questioned or critically analyzed" (p. 9). Banks suggests that this approach to curriculum and teaching prevents students from understanding embedded cultural assumptions and perspectives in specific subject areas. Curriculum knowledge includes dominant ideologies that disguise and hide inequalities embedded in social relationships on which social and cultural power is established (Noddings, 1992).

Because school textbooks are one of the major conveyors of the curriculum in classrooms, they may become tools for the maintenance of control and perpetuation of existing social structures (Sleeter & Grant, 1991). In addition, if these textbooks are used as the primary vehicle for learning, and if teachers and students do not interact with them critically, it is possible that students will leave their social studies classrooms with a narrow view of the world. They may come to see history not from a series of diverse perspectives and experiences, but from the perspective of a dominant social group. As a result, education and schooling can perpetuate present power arrangements in society through practices that marginalize certain groups while privileging others. In a democracy these practices are troublesome because they are unrepresentative, unfair, and result in distortion in the collection, analysis, and presentation of knowledge.

In Canadian schools students are in danger of learning history that includes only the voices and experiences of individuals who belong to the dominant cultural group. Social studies textbooks appear to be privileged spaces in which differences in power mediate who speaks, under what conditions, and for whom (Giroux, 1998). According to hooks (1995) it is important to "search the debris of history for traces of the unforgettable, all knowledge of which has been suppressed" (p. 41). It is important to ask why this unforgettable knowledge has been suppressed and why school textbooks rarely include the "debris of history." Has it been suppressed in order to prevent a critique of history, thus perpetuating the status quo? Sifting through such debris would require a new approach to textbook writing that deviates from the long-standing tradition of telling the stories of dominant social groups.

The construction of the social *other* is reinforced through the discursive message of the dominant cultural group that finds its way into school textbooks (Weis, 1995). According to Giroux (1998), the traditional view of the *other* is that of a disruptive outsider, and discussions about race are limited to the problems that minority groups pose for the dominant group. There is a danger

that the content and language of social studies textbooks position certain cultural groups in ways that sustain biases and have the potential to influence students' attitudes toward these groups. However, it is important to keep in mind that textbooks, if used critically in the classroom, can be vehicles for the interrogation of biases and assumptions that shape the histories students encounter in the curriculum.

To illustrate this point, I examined three of the most commonly used social studies textbooks in Alberta's Social Studies 10 Program of Studies using critical discourse analysis, which recognizes the non-neutrality of knowledge and language. The examination attempts to elucidate the limitations of the historical discussion about the Japanese Canadian community specifically and the limitations of textbooks generally. The questions that guided my analysis included: How much text was devoted to a discussion of the experiences of Japanese Canadians? How was this discussion positioned in the textbook? What language was used to frame the discussion? and What cultural assumptions might students be exposed to through the discussion?

Although the representation of Japanese Canadians has been selected as a means to point out some limitations of the textbooks, it is important to note that it is not merely the treatment of Japanese Canadians that is problematic. This study could just as well examine the representation of First Nations peoples or the representation of women to illustrate the overall shortcomings of textbooks. However, the history of Japanese Canadians has been selected because of my own familiarity with it, and because of the availability of rich accounts by Japanese Canadians of their historical experiences (Adachi, 1991; Kitigawa, 1985; Oiwa, 1991; Omatsu, 1992; Sunahara, 1981). Further, discussion about what is absent in this discursive framework illuminates the need to include in classroom discussions the "forgotten" or "suppressed" forms of knowledge if students are to understand better the history of Canada. Banks (2001) refers to this as "content integration," as teachers seek to use examples from various cultural groups to supplement the history that they are required to teach.

Granted it is impossible to include the histories of all people, but it is possible to explore with students how textbooks may silence or privilege certain groups. Thus my analysis also illustrates the importance of engaging with textbooks critically so that they may be used as tools to enhance rather than limit understanding.

Identity as Other

Much literature on the topic of Japanese Canadian history is written not by Japanese Canadians, but by white historians, who by definition are reading history from a significantly different lens. To understand the injustices that Japanese Canadians have faced throughout the last century, one must read accounts of these events from the perspectives of the Japanese Canadians themselves. When voice and agency are denied Japanese Canadians in the pages of social studies textbooks, their lived experiences are negated, and little is done to foster empathy and understanding among students toward the Japanese Canadian encounter with racism and discrimination.

The concept of agency has only recently been discussed in relation to historical interpretations. According to some theorists, individuals are conceived of as "being in relation to something external to themselves called

'society' which acts forcefully upon them and against which they can pit themselves" (Davies, 1991, p. 42). Although society may act forcefully on them, individuals are able to respond actively to this force through actions of their own. They are not merely passive recipients of external behaviors and policy, but agents of their own responses. In this respect, a dichotomy is created between the individual or group and society, and identities are shaped in part as a result of this dichotomy. Individuals perceived as being in relation to, or outside of, the dominant group are understood by that group as *other*, different from and external to. Thus the *other* is a social construction whose existence depends very much on the recognition of difference.

Multiple Subjectivities

Postmodern discourse theorizes that the experience of being a person is captured in the notion of subjectivity. This subjectivity is created through discourses that position people at any given time, through their own and others' acts of speaking and writing (Davies, 1991). Thus when the history of Japanese Canadians is written by white historians, Japanese Canadians tend to be positioned as marginal, outside the main historical discourse. Their stories and accounts of resistance to discrimination are often not included in interpretations of events. As well, elucidation of the Japanese Canadians' ability to make choices in the shaping of their histories is often not included in this discourse. Rather, they are often spoken of in a passive voice as being acted on.

Much of the writing about Japanese Canadians has been a "history in a passive voice." Oiwa (1991) writes:

In the prewar, wartime and immediate postwar years, Japanese Canadians almost always appear in history as victims of discrimination, uprooting, incarceration and dispersal. It is as if the history of the persecuted could be reduced to what their persecutors did. We rarely encounter accounts of what the persecuted themselves felt, thought, wished to do, and actually did or failed to do; what meanings they attached to their thoughts and action. There seems to be a blank space in Japanese-Canadian history. (p. 15)

Because textbooks are an important means of influencing the discursive framework of the classroom, the presentation of history in which a people are denied agency and depicted as being the objects of other people's thoughts and actions can result in a distorted understanding of past events. Postmodernism becomes a vehicle through which traditional concepts of language, thought, and knowledge may be expanded by "exploring their limits and questioning their validity" (Gilbert & Cook, 1989, p. 70). It offers teachers a means to explore the limits of the information contained in textbooks with their students, an important step toward knowledge transformation.

Postmodernism also reminds us that it is crucial to recognize the existence of multiple identities. Japanese Canadians themselves, through the telling of their stories, create identities that are not *other*. These stories illustrate their resistance to the practices of dominant groups in their quest for fair and just treatment. It would be beneficial if textbooks embraced an approach to the teaching of history that does not deny particular, multiple, and specific identities or the concept of agency (Giroux, 1998). Each lived experience is unique and should not be undermined through a process of *othering*. If teachers and

students understood the process of *othering* that can occur in textbooks, they might use this understanding to interrogate how lived experiences are represented textually and inequities are perpetuated.

Critiquing the Textbooks

To explore the representation of Japanese Canadians' history as presented in social studies, three textbooks—*Canada Today* (Scully, Smith, & McDevitt, 1988), *Spotlight Canada* (Cruyton & Wilson, 1996), and *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* (Eaton & Newman, 1994)—were analyzed with particular attention given to how the experience of internment during World War II was manifest. All these textbooks are currently used throughout Alberta in grade 10 social studies classrooms to teach the history of Canada from pre-confederation to modern times. The textbooks reflect a political, economic, and military orientation to discussions of history, with little emphasis on Canada's social history. Because of this, the Japanese Canadian experience is limited to discussions in the context of World War II, which is why internment appears to be the beginning of Japanese Canadian experiences in Canada. The proportion of each textbook dedicated to discussions of Japanese Canadians was noted, as well as the positioning of each discussion in relation to the main text. Next the opening passages of each section on "Japanese Internment" were analyzed both in terms of how the discussion begins and how the Japanese are represented.

The opening passages are probably the students' first encounter with Japanese Canadian history in the textbook and frame the discussion. These passages may influence students' perceptions, opinions, thoughts, and feelings regarding the history of Japanese Canadians and their subsequent readings of the textbook. Further, what was omitted from each of the text's discussions of "Japanese Internment" is noted, using external historical sources to inform the analysis. Particular attention is paid to the concept of *resistance* as embodied by the Japanese Canadian people in the textbooks. Finally, the implicit message in the language used to describe the Japanese is analyzed.

How Much History do Japanese Canadians Have?

Each textbook dedicates a small proportion of its content to discussions of the history of Japanese Canadians. *Canada Today* dedicates two of 446 pages to Japanese Canadian history, or 0.4% of the entire text. *Spotlight Canada* dedicates five of 422 pages, or 1.2% of the entire text, and *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* dedicates 3.5 pages of 423 pages, or 0.8% of the entire text.

In each of the three textbooks two pages are set apart from the main body of the text in special frames denoted by borders and colors entitled "Japanese Internment," "Life in an Internment Camp," and "Reflections on an Injustice." This physical act of marginalization has the potential to trivialize the importance of this history, and it seems to devalue the impact of historical decisions on the Japanese Canadians themselves. Although the intent may be to highlight these sections and make them appear significant, research shows that it is easy for both teachers and students to skip over these parts of the text and continue with the main body of the text, and that such omissions do occur (Hahn, 1996). As a result, the experiences of Japanese Canadians may seem of little value.

The Mis/Representation of History

As stated above, attention is given to the opening lines of each section pertaining to Japanese Canadians. *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* begins with a brief discussion of Japanese Canadians:

In the early 1940s, about 22 000 people of Japanese descent lived in British Columbia. The first Japanese immigrants had come to work on the railways and in mines and lumber camps. Later, many settled on the coast, where they bought fishing boats or plots of land. Most earned their living from fishing, market gardening, and small business. Their hard work was paying off, and some Japanese Canadians were beginning to prosper. (Eaton & Newman, 1994, p. 249)

It is not noted that most of the Japanese Canadians faced racism as they made their homes in Canada. They were exploited by the dominant society as cheap and expendable labor on the railways and in mines. Based on this passage it would seem that as long as the Japanese Canadians worked hard, they could assimilate into the dominant society and "prosper." Japanese Canadian experiences are thus valorized only insofar as they conform to the ideals of the dominant culture.

The Voices of History

In *Canada Today*, an example of history in the passive voice is found in the delineation between the Japanese Canadians and the dominant group, positioning Japanese Canadians as *other*:

When Canada and Japan went to war in December of 1941, British Columbians feared a Japanese invasion. They felt that Canadians of Japanese origin might assist in such an invasion. Many Japanese Canadians earned their living by fishing, and it was feared that spies could easily pass secrets to Japanese submarines, or co-operate if an invasion should occur. (Scully et al., 1988, p. 360)

This also occurs in *Spotlight Canada*, where the opening lines read:

One of the most significant events in the war at home was the internment of Japanese Canadians and other "enemy aliens." Shock and anger gripped many Canadians when they heard that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbour. That same night the Royal Canadian Mounted Police swept through the Japanese community in British Columbia and began to make arrests. (Cruxton & Wilson, 1996, p. 236)

Both passages seem subtly to sanction the internment of the Japanese by a white society through the suggestion that concern existed among Canadians regarding the intentions of Japanese Canadians. These passages also have the potential to "recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination" (Apple, 1981, p. 111). Students may learn that fear and suspicion were directed toward Japanese Canadians because of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. However, the passages do not contextualize the fear and suspicion in a history of racism and discrimination. The passages also do not acknowledge that not all white British Columbians agreed with the actions of the government and the RCMP and in fact spoke out against them.

Beyond the Textbooks

Reading sources beyond the textbooks, we learn that although Japanese Canadians were perceived by some as a threat, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were adamant that there was no evidence to support this, nor was there cause for alarm (Ward, 1990). In fact, a committee was struck in 1940 to ascertain whether any Japanese Canadians posed a threat to national security. Witnesses were called, including eight of Japanese origin and several members of the anti-Japanese front. No concrete evidence was presented to the committee that supported the claims of disloyalty and subversive activity directed at Japanese Canadians, and the police confirmed that in all of their investigations of subversive activity over the years, in no instance were they able to find substantiating evidence (Adachi, 1991). *Canada Today* goes on to qualify that in fact "there was no evidence that any Japanese Canadians were aiding Japan" (p. 361), but *Spotlight Canada* does not.

The federal government's decision to intern Japanese Canadians was not merely a result of the immediate fears following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Rather, the decision was grounded in a long history of racist policies and practices aimed at the Japanese Canadians in British Columbia. In fact three months prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, all Canadians of Japanese origin were required by the federal government to participate in a special registration, despite the Prime Minister's official assertion that the *majority* (my emphasis) of Asians in British Columbia were loyal Canadians (Adachi, 1991).

Despite his public declaration, Mackenzie King was not so convinced of Japanese Canadian loyalty and believed that the imposition of a special registration on Japanese Canadians was indeed necessary (Adachi, 1991). *Canada: A Nation Unfolding*, although indicating that no sign of treason was ever uncovered, suggests, contrary to the previous statement, that the King government would not have taken "harsh measures" on its own, but felt compelled to do so as a result of public pressure (p. 250).

Such measures were not invoked against Italian and German Canadians, although Canada was currently at war with both Germany and Italy. Some German and Italian Canadians thought to be spies were interned, but not the majority of their population in Canada. The federal government ordered the wholesale removal of all Canadians of Japanese ancestry from coastal areas of British Columbia to internment camps in the interior on February 27, 1942. In all, more than 90% of the entire population of Japanese Canadians were relocated to internment camps in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario (Ward, 1982). Persecution of Japanese Canadians was not caused so much by the necessities of war, but because of racism and political expediency (Omatsu, 1992). This information is omitted from all three of the textbooks. *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* suggests that the bombing of Pearl Harbor was the catalyst for opening the "floodgates of long-standing racial hostility" (p. 250). However, no further exploration of the preexisting racism is provided.

The Language of the Textbooks

Canada: A Nation Unfolding describes the Japanese Canadians as "being herded" onto trains (p. 360), and *Spotlight Canada* describes them as "packed into trains" (p. 237). Based on these descriptions, it would seem that Japanese

Canadians were not unlike cattle or luggage and not people in their own right. In this context they are not able to construct their own identities.

Further, in all three textbooks brief discussion is given to immigration, voting, and professional restrictions placed on Japanese Canadians. In these instances the texts do not differentiate between prejudice and discrimination, the latter being the underlying cause of the restrictions placed on the Japanese Canadians. This sentiment tends to devalue the impact of the discriminatory acts on Japanese Canadians. Moreover, the lack of discussion about these historical events detracts from an understanding of the racism embedded in them.

Immigration restrictions directed toward the Japanese were a result of many British Columbians' desire for a white homogeneous society and their belief that the Japanese Canadians, because of their physical differences, could not be assimilated. The Gentleman's Agreement of 1908 was the first instance of concrete restriction of Japanese immigration, following the Powell Street Riot of 1907. In this riot the businesses and homes of Japanese Canadians in Vancouver were attacked by white people attending a rally and parade organized by the Asiatic Exclusion League. The crowd, some 10,000 strong, began to drift toward Japanese homes and businesses along Powell Street, less than a block from City Hall where the rally was being held. Damaged buildings and broken glass were left in the mob's wake (Ward, 1990).

The Gentleman's Agreement between Japan and Canada effectively limited the number of passports issued to male laborers and domestic servants to a maximum of 400 per year (Adachi, 1991). However, many British Columbians were not satisfied with these measures and continued to pressure the federal government for stricter legislation. As a result, in 1928 the federal government passed legislation that limited the number of Japanese immigrants to Canada to 150 per annum. In addition, the new legislation put an end to the migration of picture brides from Japan, effectively reducing Japanese immigration to Canada to a trickle (Ward, 1990). *Canada Today* softens the reality of a racist society by suggesting that Japanese Canadians experienced a "great deal of prejudice" (p. 360).

With restrictions on immigration, Japanese Canadians were denied the franchise beginning in 1895 (Ward, 1990). This policy continued well after World War II, despite the fact that many Japanese Canadians were by this time Canadian-born or naturalized Canadians. This policy appropriated political power from the Japanese Canadian community in an attempt to perpetuate its subordinate position in society. Once again, not discussing the rationale of this exclusionary and racist policy diminishes the effect such actions had on Japanese Canadians.

What the Textbooks Forget to Tell Us

Japanese Canadians did not passively accept these discriminatory actions, however, and those whose claim to the franchise was the strongest (Canadian-born) formed the Japanese Canadian Citizens' League (JCCL) (Sunahara, 1981). The purpose of this organization was to address racist policies in an effort to alleviate them. This information is not included in any of the textual discussions of racism directed at the Japanese in the three textbooks I considered. There is a danger that such readings of historical events will prevent students

from understanding the active role that Japanese Canadians took in resisting discrimination, and from comprehending the extent of the inequalities embedded in social relationships.

Both *Canada Today* and *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* indicate that despite restrictive measures aimed at Japanese Canadians, 22,000 still made their homes here. This discussion could be interpreted as an attempt to reduce the impact of racist policies on the Japanese Canadian community. It could also be understood as implying that conditions must not have been so bad if 22,000 Japanese Canadians still chose to live in this country. It could also be viewed as crediting Japanese Canadians with residing in Canada despite the restrictions they encountered. However, because the discussion of restrictions is so limited, this interpretation seems less likely. Had such stringent restrictions not been imposed on immigration, it is possible that many more Japanese would have made their homes in Canada. The perspectives of Japanese Canadians themselves regarding these measures and their decisions to remain in Canada are not included in any of the three textbooks. These silences, if left unnoticed, prevent richer understandings of past events and may perpetuate the cultural assumptions that underlie the dominant narrative.

Although each text provides a discussion of Japan's entry into World War II and the subsequent actions taken against Japanese Canadians, neither *Canada Today* nor *Spotlight Canada* discusses the motivations for these actions in relation to the strong anti-Asian sentiment that existed in Canada. They also fail to discuss the reactions of Japanese Canadians to the seizure of their fishing boats and the arrest of members of their communities. Japanese Canadian fishermen cooperated when the Royal Canadian Navy began impounding their vessels, but they did so with a degree of bitterness that intensified as it became apparent that they and their possessions were not being treated with respect. They witnessed the mishandling of their boats during the transport to the assembly points. Many Japanese Canadians had been ordered into their vessels without notice and were not sufficiently clothed and provisioned for the journey they were about to make (Sunahara, 1981). By the time the endeavor was completed by the Royal Canadian Navy, 162 of the fishing boats had sunk due to mishandling.

The seizure of fishing boats and arrests were not the only actions taken against some Japanese Canadians in the weeks immediately following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The Canadian Pacific Railway dismissed Japanese Canadian workers, as did hotels in Vancouver, and mills and factories throughout the West Coast (Adachi, 1991). The Japanese Canadian community, despite its loyalty to Canada, was being punished because of ethnicity. The bombing of Pearl Harbor was used to justify further persecution of Japanese Canadians. The racism embedded in these actions is noted only in *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* (p. 250). Although the bombing of Pearl Harbor was a catastrophic event and the hysteria that followed is understandable from a sociological perspective, I suggest that it was the long history of racism toward Japanese Canadians more than the bombing itself that prompted the actions against them. Despite these measures, Japanese Canadians remained optimistic and continued to express their loyalty to Canada publicly and through letters to the government (Sunahara, 1981).

Reading (Mis)Information in Textbooks

Equally problematic in *Canada Today* and *Spotlight Canada* is the information about the registration of Japanese Canadians, even if they were born in Canada. Both textbooks suggest that the registration was a direct result of war with Japan, when in fact (as noted above) it was completed almost three months before declaration of war in the Pacific. Also, the two textbooks indicate that the government's decision to intern the Japanese Canadians was due in part to a desire to protect them from the dominant social group. *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* does not mention Japanese Canadian registration at all, only the subsequent internment of Japanese Canadians in camps as a result of public pressure.

This distortion of information contained in the texts, or left out as in the case of *Canada: A Nation Unfolding*, appears to justify the racist practices by the dominant cultural group. It is easier to exonerate the government from blame if its actions were in response to the declaration of war with Japan. However, it is less likely that the actions are so easily dismissed if they are viewed in the context of preexisting racism and discrimination for the sake of maintaining power and control. The failure of the three textbooks to contextualize racism prevents students from fully understanding the experiences of Japanese Canadians as they related to internment unless they have the opportunity to read beyond the textbooks.

Including Internment?

Each textbook dedicates at least a paragraph to discussions of Japanese internment during World War II, yet it is difficult to gain a genuine sense of the impact this action had on the Japanese community in Canada. Nor is there much describing the conditions in the internment camps and the inhabitants' reactions to them. For example, in *Canada: A Nation Unfolding*, Japanese Canadians are described as living in "shacks or makeshift houses measuring about 4 x 8 metres. Some shacks had no running water or electricity, and none were built for the bitter mountain winters" (p. 250). Conditions in the camps are described in *Canada Today* as having "few comforts and conveniences" (p. 361), and in *Spotlight Canada* as "crude" with "huts" having "two bedrooms and a kitchen shared by two families" (p. 238). The latter does note that conditions were poor enough to warrant food packages sent from Japan via the Red Cross, but no further description of the poor conditions ensues.

Touching on the internment of Japanese Canadians in a cursory manner deters students from enhancing their understanding and awareness, especially when one considers that this act is one of the most blatant and disturbing examples of entrenched racism in Canada's history. *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* and *Spotlight Canada* do attempt to provide insight into the lived experiences of Japanese Canadians in the internment camps in special sections of text, physically separated from the main text. Each of these sections contains the voice of a single Japanese Canadian—in the former, David Suzuki and in the latter, Shizuye Takashima—both children at the time of internment. As noted above, these special sections are easily skipped by students and teachers and perpetuate the marginalization of Japanese Canadian voices and experiences (Hahn, 1996). In each textbook the voices of Japanese Canadians are recorded in the main text once and named in two of the three instances, except in the case

of *Spotlight Canada* where Japanese voices are recorded twice but not named. Not naming the voices prevents the speakers from having individual identities and prevents them from moving away from the category of *other*.

Securing Cultural Authority

Based on these textbook portrayals of history, it would seem that Japanese Canadians have little to say about their experiences. This supports Giroux's (1998) assertion that in the context of curriculum, particular forms of cultural authority are being secured. In this case the dominant narrative secures the authority of the dominant culture in relation to Japanese internment by not acknowledging the multiple subjectivities of the Japanese people. Further, absent from the textbooks is any reminder of what is valued in the historical narrative; not the perspectives of those persecuted and marginalized who are so often excluded from historical discourse. None of the three textbooks mentions that before internment Japanese Canadians were sent to Hastings Park in Vancouver where they were made to live in cattle stalls while they awaited deportation, or "evacuation" as it is called in *Spotlight Canada* (p. 238).

Also missing from the discourse of the text are accounts of the resistance to being held in Hastings Park. The Japanese Canadian prisoners did not passively accept their treatment by armed guards, and were indignant when they believed injustices were occurring. One woman, in response to a Mountie waving his crop and yelling at a group of women, confronted him. Yelling "Stop that! How dare you! What do you think we are! Cattle?" she attempted to restore some dignity to these women and protest their treatment (Kitigawa, 1985).

This incident was not isolated, nor was it the only example of resistance to appalling treatment. However, based on the information in the textbook, it would seem that the Japanese lacked agency and were most often acted on. *Spotlight Canada* states that Japanese Canadians were "allowed to take 68 kg of clothing" to the internment camps (p. 238), and that they were "taken from their homes" (p. 237). This textbook does mention that Japanese Canadian "men who resisted were separated from their families" (1996, p. 237), but there is no description of the act of resistance itself.

Canada Today states that "the Japanese Canadians were rounded up and forced into camps" (p. 361). In its last paragraph this textbook makes some effort to grant agency to the Japanese when it is briefly stated that "Mitsui was so enraged that he threw his medals on the floor and asked 'What good are these?'" However, the tone of the text appears paternalistic, implicitly suggesting that the actions of Mitsui were childlike as he threw his medals on the floor, much as a child having a tantrum would do with his or her toys. Similarly, *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* describes how male Japanese nationals were "rounded up and taken to internment camps" (p. 250), but provides no information about their resistance. The potential message to students is that Japanese Canadians passively accepted their fate.

Yet Japanese Canadians did not passively accept their fate, and their resistance took many forms from hunger strikes to written protests. Several Nisei in Vancouver refused to be taken to work camps until they knew their families would be safe. As a result, they were arrested and interned at Schreiber,

Ontario, but preferred internment to the work camps as a means of protesting “the hairy beast racist discrimination” (Boyko, 1995, p. 136).

Koichiro Miyazaki was a prisoner in the Petawawa and Angler prison camps in Ontario. When arrested by the RCMP, he was asked to sign a paper agreeing to be sent to a work camp. Refusing to sign, Miyazaki stated that these camps violated international law and were not democratic. As a result, he was sent to the Angler prisoner-of-war camp reserved for Japanese “agitators” and “dissidents” (Oiwa, 1991, p. 41). However, this was his choice and he recognized that he was a prisoner because he chose his own path. He wrote, “I am after all an actor and author of my own tragedy” (Oiwa, 1991, p. 43). Others, like Miyazaki, made choices that would affect their situations over the next few years, but such information is not found in the three textbooks.

When the government decided to intern Japanese Canadians in camps, there was little time to prepare for their departures. At this juncture, it is crucial to note that the Nisei, second-generation Japanese Canadians, could not be interned under the Geneva Convention, which stated that internment was only applicable to aliens. Thus the Nisei were never legally interned, but “detained at the pleasure of the Minister of Justice” (Sunahara, 1981, p. 66). None of the textbooks notes this.

When the Japanese Canadians were interned, the federal government promised that their homes and possessions would be placed in protective custody and returned only when the war was over. Early in 1943, however, the federal government authorized liquidation of these goods without the consent of the owners. Over the next few months, the property and possessions of Japanese Canadians, their lifetime accumulations, were systematically sold off for a portion of their value. The government claimed that this action was necessary due to the cost of keeping the Japanese Canadians in internment camps, and the funds from the sales served this purpose (Ward, 1982, p. 14). In a letter to the Custodian of Property, Kitigawa (1985) wrote:

Who would have thought that one day I would be unable to stand up for my country's government, out of sheer shame and disillusion, against the slurs of the scornful? The bitterness, the anguish is complete. You, who deal in lifeless figures, files, and statistics could never measure the depth of hurt and outrage dealt out to those of us who love this land. It is because we are Canadians, that we protest the violation of our birthright. If we were not we would not care one jot or tittle whatever you did, for then we could veil our eyes in contempt. You ... and by “you” I designate all those in authority who have piled indignity upon indignity on us ... have sought to sully and strain our loyalty but, I'm telling you, you can't do it. You can't undermine our faith in the principles of equal rights and justice for all, with “malice towards none, and charity for all.” (p. 17)

The letter illuminates the impact the sale of their property had on individual members of the Japanese Canadian community. It also illustrates that they did not passively accept the sale of their property, but responded to it through letters expressing frustration and displeasure. If textbooks included letters such as this in discussions of internment, students would have the opportunity to read about the perspectives and voices of Japanese Canadians themselves.

Conclusion

The racism, discrimination, and persecution Japanese Canadians endured are made marginal in the discursive frameworks of these three social studies textbooks, and there is no attempt to contextualize the racism that the Japanese experienced. Although the textbooks have provided students with an account of the history of Japanese Canadians, this account is brief, and the voices and writings of Japanese Canadians are either marginal or nonexistent in the text. This seems to be endemic in textbooks as they become compelled to cover as much of the curriculum as possible at the expense of covering selected topics in detail.

Japanese Canadians, along with all members of marginal social groups, have not been merely passive victims in history, although in all three textbooks they would appear to be. Many members of the Japanese Canadian community chose to resist the injustices they faced. Regardless of the outcome of these choices, they illustrate an ability to take action and not be merely passive victims of the dominant social group.

The representation of Japanese Canadian history in these textbooks is akin to the representation of all *others* in a plural society who live outside of privileged spaces. Schooling, as noted above, introduces students to the organization of culture and certain cultural assumptions. Curriculum demonstrates who is authorized to speak about particular forms of culture, which cultures are valorized, and which cultures or groups are considered unworthy of public esteem (Giroux, 1998).

As long as textbooks continue to be informed mainly by the experiences of the dominant social group, as are *Canada Today*, *Spotlight Canada*, and *Canada: A Nation Unfolding*, inequalities embedded in social relationships will remain relatively hidden. Thus it is essential that nondominant forms of knowledge be included in the discursive frameworks of textbooks, or at the very least, that teachers be made aware of the shortcomings of textbooks and so they can work with students to identify and interrogate these shortcomings.

Preservice education programs are one forum where future teachers may be exposed to the importance of critical reading and content integration. Practicing teachers, through professional development and inservicing opportunities, may also gather the tools necessary to create richer and more critical learning experiences for students. Because one of the stated goals of social studies in Alberta is to cultivate critical thinking, it makes sense that textbooks be used critically. Teachers can involve students in this project by asking them to seek perspectives outside the textbook. Students can then be led to ask how adding these perspectives to the stories they have read in their textbook changes the stories. Classrooms are diverse spaces, and we must remember that our own students may be our best resource. It is important that we are not complicit in this project, that as educators we are committed to exploring with our students the diverse experiences that shaped history. This in turn reflects a commitment to the diverse experiences of our students in a plural society. Granted, teachers are busy and social studies courses are already content-heavy. Yet using textbooks critically as vehicles to interrogate the biases inherent in dominant narratives does much to deepen students' understandings of the world in which they live.

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